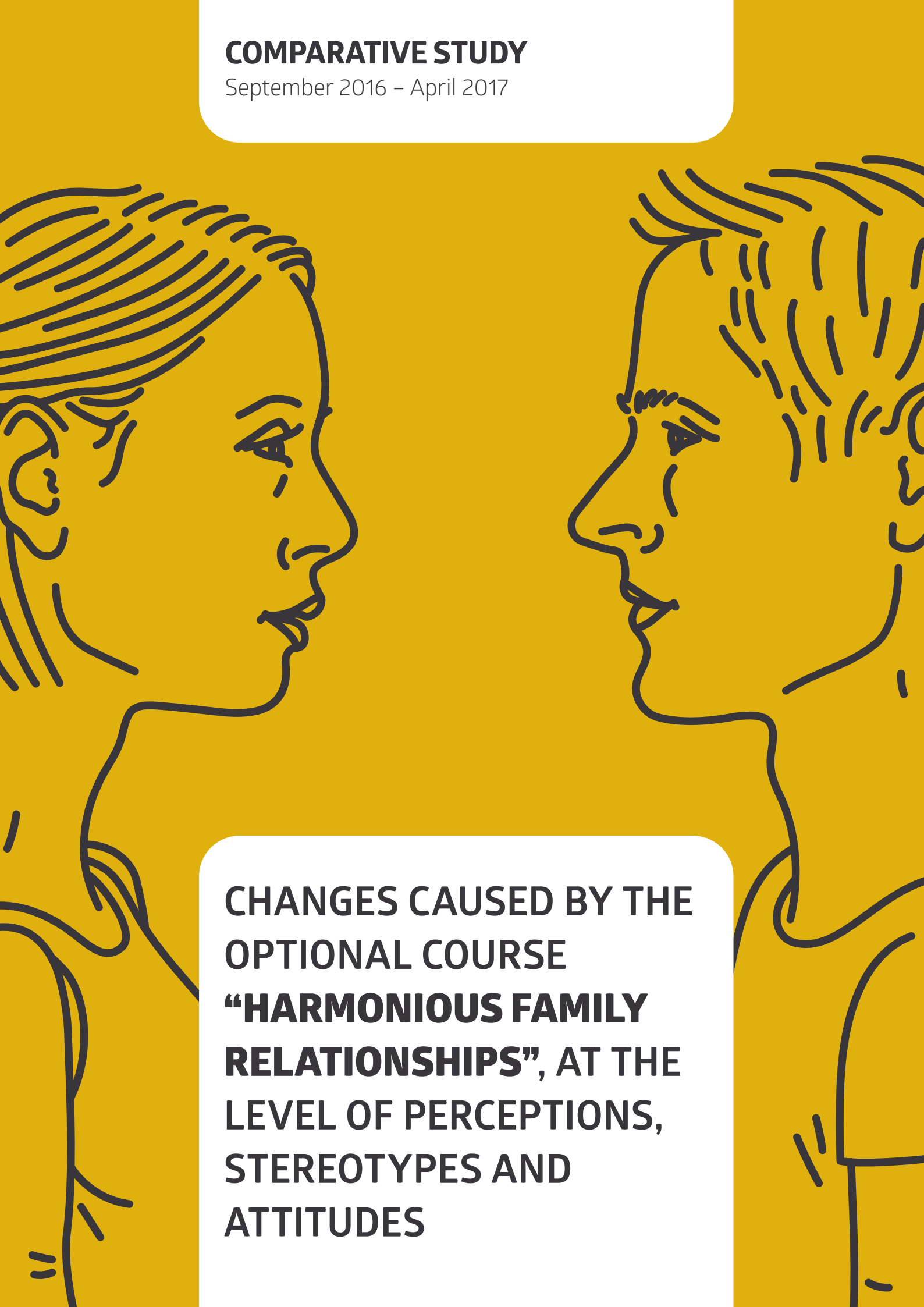


# COMPARATIVE STUDY

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.

**Coordinator:**

Daniela MISAIL-NICHITIN

**Author:**

Diana CHEIANU-ANDREI

**Editor:**

Diana SENIC

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**International Center “La Strada”**

Chisinau, MD-2012  
P. O. Box 259  
Republic of Moldova  
Tel.: + 373 22 234 906  
Fax: +373 22 234 907  
[www.lastrada.md](http://www.lastrada.md)

**Center for Investigations and Consultancy “SocioPolis”**

Chișinău, MD-2064  
39/2, Ion Creanga Str,  
Republic of Moldova  
Tel.: + 373 22 582 983  
Fax: + 373 22 582 983  
e-mail: [info@sociopolis.md](mailto:info@sociopolis.md)  
[www.sociopolis.md](http://www.sociopolis.md)

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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: (i) perceptions and attitudes towards premarital relations, including abusive relations at the premarital phase; (ii) informing about the risk behaviors at the premarital phase; (iii) attitudes towards the values of a happy family; (iv) knowledge of gender stereotypes in the family; (v) perceptions and attitudes towards the role of women and men in the family and family responsibilities; (vi) informing about domestic violence and the institutions what provide assistance, (vii) the expectations of youth from the optional course "Harmonious family relationships"; (viii) the need for the optional course, according to parents' opinion; (ix) the usefulness of the course "Harmonious family relationships", in the opinion of youth and teachers.

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 for data triangulation<sup>1</sup>. Both quantitative (sociological survey based on a questionnaire) and qualitative (focus group discussions) methods were used. At the Baseline phase, the goal was to assess the knowledge, perceptions and attitudes of students and teaching staff (23 teachers), 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. 440 students participated at both research phases: 220 students as the main sample and 220 students as a control sample. 288 parents of children who had attended the optional course participated in the Endline research.

### **Need for and usefulness of the optional course**

- 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.
- 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. Thus, 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, rape) – 40,7%, the couple, the family: legal aspects – 40,2%, the subtleties of falling in love, and of love – 35,5%.

- 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 challenges in the modern Moldovan society: 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 it is very important for the teacher who teaches the course to 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.
- 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

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

materials, too many individual tasks in the Student's Notebook, difficulties in understanding specific topics etc.

- Students found difficult the topics related to gender aspects and mono-parental families. In their opinion, complicated / hard to understand terms are: multiculturalism (10%), interculturalism (5,9%), inter-knowledge (5,5%), emotional intelligence (4,1%), dissensions/ conflicts in relationships (4,1%), borders within relationships (3,6%) etc.
- 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 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.
- 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 positive changes.
- If before attending the course some students were paying attention to physical aspect while choosing a partner, the final research data show that they became more informed about the aspects they should know about their partner. They understood that they should see things overall. Now, they are paying attention not only to the physical aspect of the person, but also consider his/her inner side.
- The Baseline data showed that at the premarital phase young people do not perceive and do not understand the signs of manipulation and abuse. Only 1/3 of teenagers mentioned them correctly. The Endline reveals that the students' knowledge in this area increased.

After attending the course, over 50% of students could name various signs of manipulation and abuse. In addition, it was determined that the knowledge of signs of the manipulation and abuse at the initial phase of relationship also increased among teachers.

- The knowledge of risk behaviors among teenagers improved. The great majority of youth understood the importance of informing, taking responsibility and controlling the behavior, in order to prevent unintended pregnancies, abuse and manipulation at the premarital phase. Thus, the share of those who expressed disagreement about the fact that a woman is the only responsible for protection against pregnancy increased from 51,4% to 69,5% (+18,1 p.p.). Although, the answers to this question differed significantly depending on gender. The number of girls who expressed their disagreement is higher than the number of boys – 72,7% and 62,9%, accordingly.
- During the optional course teenagers learned how to say “no” to a partner who insists on sexual relations: (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 reveals positive tendencies in changing some perceptions and stereotypes related to rape: the number of teenagers who disagree that girls and women from financially secured families do not become victims of rape increased (+23,7 p.p. among the attendees of the optional course, compared to and increase by only 1,8 p.p. among the teenagers who did not attend the course). In addition, the number of those who disagree that a man from a financially secured family cannot be a rapist also increased (+ 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 of provoking the rape – from 35,5% to 46,8% (+11,3%), as well as the disagreement with the fact that if a girl or a woman didn't shout and didn't show resistance during the forced sexual intercourse, the deed cannot be considered as rape – from 23,2% to 35,5% (+12,3 p.p.). Positive changes in the perception of rape were also identified among the teachers who implemented the optional course. Although, the Endline data reveal that the change of stereotypes in this area is a difficult process, and as long as the teachers don't change their perceptions, we cannot expect these changes among students.

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

- Both research studies 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 believe 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%), coop-

eration (+14,5%), faithfulness (+13,2%), flexibility (+10,9%). 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%).

- 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.). 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.
- 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.

- During the Endline, over 73% of girls said (totally or partially agreed) that if the husband wants to meet his friends alone, he should inform his partner, a statement that is less supported by boys (65%). Comparatively, 77% of girls and 82% of boys (totally or partially agreed) believe that if the wife goes out to meet her friends alone, she should inform her partner. 13 teachers agreed (totally or partially) with the statement that the husband should ask for permission from his wife if he wants to go out with his friends or vice versa.
- The Baseline research showed the presence of stereotypes among teenagers on the image and roles of women in the household. Thus, a good housewife and wife must know how to cook (85,2%), like cleaning (70,2%), 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%), to have higher education degree (22,5%). The Endline research reveals some improvements 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, compared to those who didn't attend the course. The share of students who believe that it is important that “a good housewife” has her own opinion increased, and the share of those who mentioned beauty, “forgiving” the husband when



he offends his wife, cleaning responsibilities, obeying the husband etc. decreased.

- Stereotypes were also related to the man's role in the family. The Baseline research shows that in the opinion of teenagers, 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 if his wife 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 body (25,2%), be handsome (18,6%). The Endline research indicated significant changes in the perception of the man's role in the family: on one side, there is an increase in the share of students who appreciate when a householder has his own opinion (+20,4 p.p.), and involvement in house cleaning (+15,2%), on the other side, there is a decrease in giving importance to beauty (-11,2 p.p.), shaped muscles, listening to wife's opinion (-8,0 p.p.), and "forgiving" the wife when she shouts (-7,1 p.p.).
- The teenagers' vision of family responsibilities is influenced by the education provided in their original families. The research data reveal that the course "Harmonious family relationships" managed to cause significant changes in the attitudes of more than 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).

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

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- 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 students 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. Gender differences on this subject are lower: 88% of girls disagree, compared to only 82,1% of boys who attended the course.
- 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 by 21,4 p.p. 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 (+27,3 p.p.), relatives (+25,5 p.p.), friends (+16,4 p.p.), social worker (+15,5 p.p.), doctor (+13,6 p.p.), teaching staff (+9,5 p.p.). 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.
- 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 identi-

fied: 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.).
- 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, 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.

- 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 institutions 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. We observe that 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 found out 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 0 8008 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.
- The results of the study give floor to the following recommendations:

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#### **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, the changes in the family relations, migration of parents, lack of some family models, because 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”.

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#### **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”.

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#### **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.

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**For the teaching staff:**

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- Revise the curriculum structure together with the representatives of the International Center “La Strada”, taking into account the students’ preferences;
- 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 the experience of teachers who implemented the course in other educational institutions.

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 all parents and students from the Republic of Moldova.

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**Chart 6.** 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, %

**Chart 7.** Values required for a family to be happy. Multiple answer, teaching staff, persons

**Chart 8.** Strategies for managing family conflicts. Multiple answer, students who attended the optional course, %

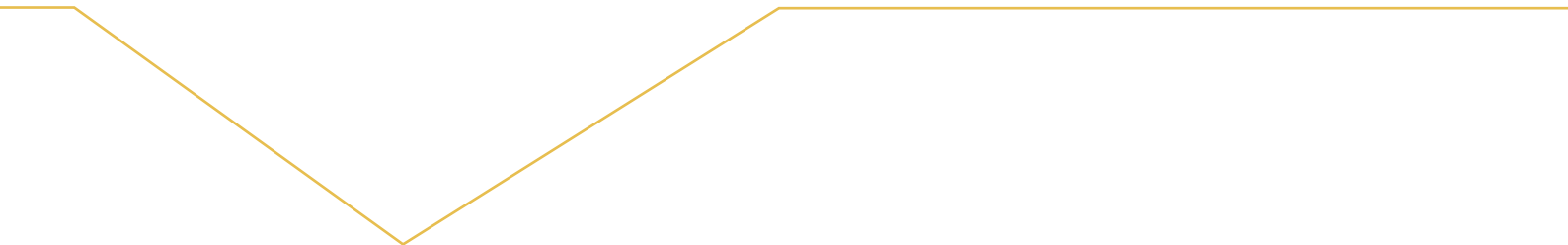
**Chart 9.** The progress of answers to the question “Which strategies should be used to manage family conflicts?” between the Baseline and the Endline studies. Students who attended and those who didn’t attend the optional course, comparative data, %

**Chart 10.** Strategies for managing family conflicts by sex. Students who attended the optional course, divided by sex, %

**Chart 11.** 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 12.** 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, %

**Chart 13.** Who should interfere in situations of domestic violence, in the opinion of students, attendees of the optional course, %



**Chart 14.** 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, %

**Chart 15.** Who should interfere in situations of domestic violence, in the opinion of teaching staff, persons

**Chart 16.** Students’ knowledge about the forms of domestic violence, students who attended the course, %

**Chart 17.** The progress of answers to the question “Which are the forms of domestic violence?” between the Baseline and the Endline studies. Students who attended and those who didn’t attend the optional course, comparative data, %

**Chart 18.** Situations when we can state that there is domestic violence, in the opinion of students, %

**Chart 19.** The progress of answers to the question “Which are the situations when we can state that there is domestic violence?” between the Baseline and the Endline studies. Students who attended and those who didn’t attend the optional course, comparative data, %

**Chart 20.** Situations when we can state that there is domestic violence, in the opinion of the teaching staff, persons

**Chart 21.** Knowledge of protection measures that the victims of domestic violence have the right to, students who attended the optional course, %

**Chart 22.** Knowledge of protection measures that the victims of domestic violence have the right to, teaching staff, persons

**Chart 23.** The usefulness of the course, Endline, students, %

**Chart 24.** The most useful subjects, in the opinion of students, % (open question)

**Chart 25.** Topics/subjects that haven’t been sufficiently discussed, in the opinion of students, % (open question)

**Chart 26.** Topics/subjects to be introduced in the optional course, in the opinion of students, % (open question)

**Chart 27.** The share of students who told their parents about the optional course “Harmonious family relationships”, %

**Chart 28.** Topics discussed with parents during the optional course, %



# 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 latest 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, psychologic and social) both in present, as well as in future.

Domestic violence is a well-spread phenomenon in the Republic of Moldova. The study “Violence against women in families in the Republic of Moldova”, 2011, conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics among women aged 15-65, reveals that 6 of 10 women aged 15 and over, have been at least once submitted to a form of physical, psychologic or sexual violence during their life, by their husband/partner. A more recent study, conducted by the International Center for Protection and Promotion of Women’s Rights “La Strada”<sup>1</sup>, reveals that violence in the family/couple is perceived by 49% of young people aged 15-35 as an acute problem for the Republic of Moldova.<sup>2</sup> Over 1/3 of teenagers mentioned that the violence phenomenon in the family/couple is quite spread in their community. This situation shows the need for an educational program for young generations, which will be focused on creating harmonious families, with no

violence, where problems would be discussed, analyzed and solved amicably. The adolescence period is the most indicated for developing the skills of building interpersonal relationships.

**The data provided by the General Police Inspectorate reveal an increase in reporting cases of domestic violence – 9203 reported cases in 2015, 10459 reported cases in 2016, including protection orders for victims of domestic violence, issued by the court and referred to police forces for supervision – 828 in 2015, 916 in 2016<sup>3</sup>**

Still, often the victims of violence do not report the cases of violence to authorities because of fear or shame. The causes of such situations refer to the tolerant behavior coming from the family of origin, but also favored by the myths existing in the society (if he beats me, it means he loves me; unbeaten wife is like unswept house etc.). Accepting violence is usually supported and encouraged by the closest people.

Youth need information and guidance in developing habits of nonviolent life, that would help in building harmonious and sustainable families, based on gender equality.

1. In the report, we will use the short name of the International Center „La Strada”.

2. Opinions, perceptions and experience of teenagers related to violence in the family/couple. – International „La Strada”, CBS-Axa, 2014.

3. Informative note on the criminal cases against life and health of persons, as well as those committed inside the family during the last 12 months of 2016, p.4-5, [http://politia.md/sites/default/files/ni\\_violenta\\_in\\_familie\\_2016.pdf](http://politia.md/sites/default/files/ni_violenta_in_familie_2016.pdf)



For this purpose, the International Center “La Strada” developed the curriculum for the optional course “Harmonious family relationships” for students from 10th – 12th grades, as well as the Guide for teachers, Course informational support and, last but not least, the Student’s Notebook.

In order to learn about the impact of the optional course “Harmonious family relationships” on students and the possibilities of improving some aspects of the optional course, it was decided upon conducting quantitative-qualitative research among students who attended the course (main sample) and those who didn’t attend (control sample), the teaching staff from all those 22 educational institutions at the beginning of the academic year (August-September 2016 – Baseline Research) and in the end of the academic year (April-May 2017 – Endline Study).

**Specific objectives of both research studies focused on evaluation of changes that occurred in the following:**

- perception of and attitudes towards premarital relationships, including abusive relations at the premarital phase;
- knowledge about risk behaviors at the premarital phase;
- attitudes towards the values of a happy family;
- knowledge about the gender stereotypes in the family;
- perceptions of and attitudes towards the role of the woman and the man in the family and towards family responsibilities;
- knowledge about the domestic violence and the institutions that provide assistance
- teenagers’ expectations from the optional course “Harmonious family relationships”;
- the need for the optional course, in the opinion of parents;
- the usefulness of the course “Harmonious family relationships”, in the opinion of teenagers and teaching staff.

**The research included the following target groups:**

1. teaching staff who teach the optional course (Baseline and Endline phases);
2. students from the 10th – 12th grades who attended the optional course (Baseline and Endline phases);
3. students who didn’t attend the optional course (Baseline and Endline phases);
4. parents of students who attended the optional course (Endline phase).



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

# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY



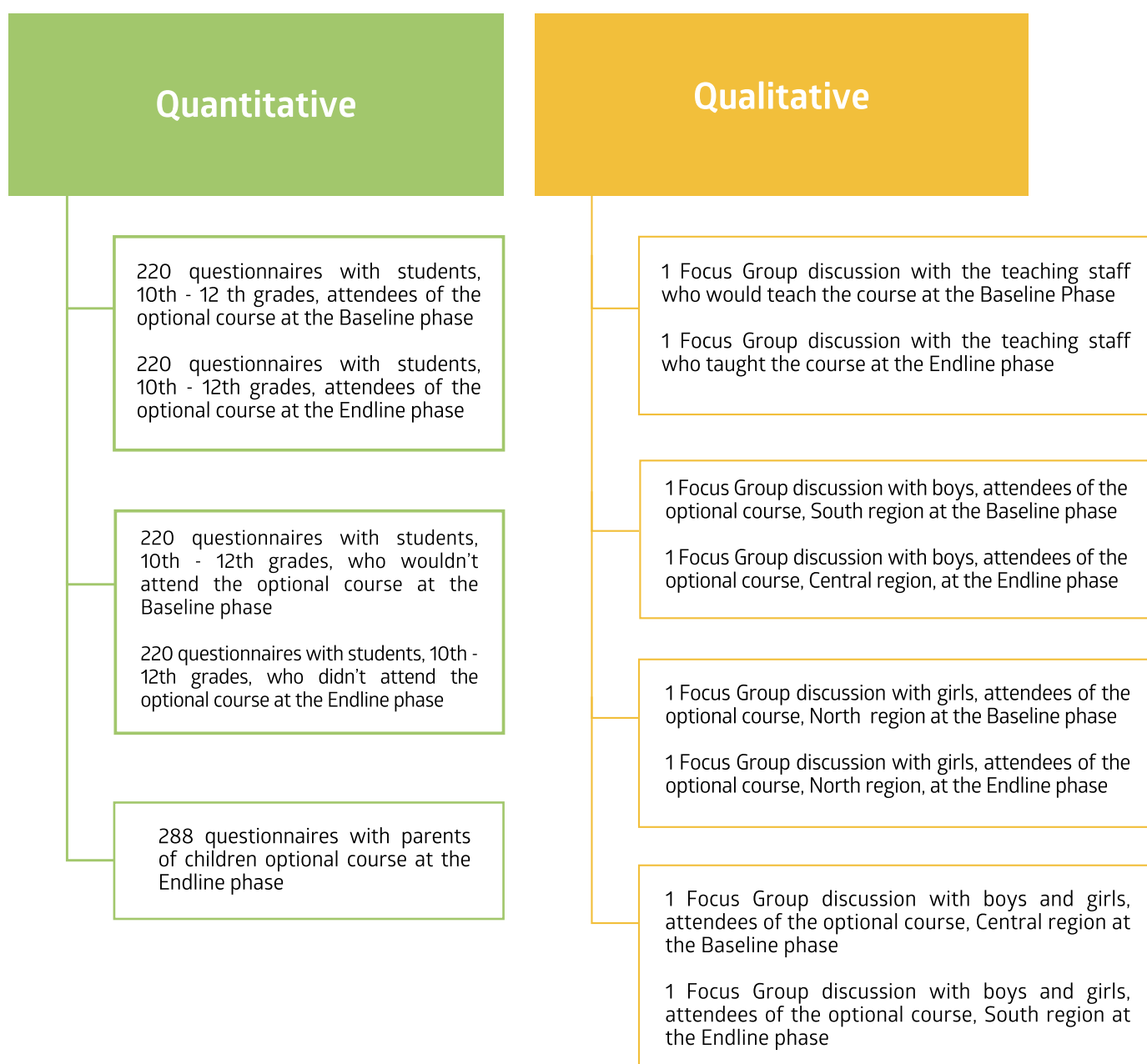
In order to reach the research goal and objectives, a complex methodological approach was proposed, focused on measuring the knowledge, the perceptions and the attitudes of students and teaching staff in the field of couple relationships, at the initial and at the final phases of the project, which would allow for the triangulation of data<sup>1</sup>. At the Baseline phase, the goal was to assess the knowledge, the perceptions and the attitudes of students and teaching staff, and at the Endline phase to measure the changes caused by the course “Harmonious family relationships”, at the level of knowledge, perceptions and attitudes of students and teaching staff, difficulties during the course implementation process, as well as examples of best practices. Thus, quantitative and qualitative research methods were applied while interacting with students, the teaching staff involved in the course teaching, and also with parents of students who attended the optional course (see Chart 1. Research methods at the Baseline and the Endline phases). The quantitative methods (the sociological survey based on a questionnaire) favored the assessment of knowledge, perceptions and attitudes of students and teaching staff related to couple relationships, but also the awareness of difficulties met by the teaching staff while teaching the optional course, of some examples of best practices, and last but not least, of parents’ opinions about the need for the course, and the topics they discussed with the children. The qualitative methods (focus group discussions) applied during the interaction with students and the teaching staff, helped us understand the opinions about the optional course and deepen some aspects identified within the quantitative research.

## **The research instruments used (questionnaires and moderation guidelines) focused on the following aspects:**

- premarital relationships, from the gender perspective;
- responsibilities of young people at the premarital phase;
- identifying characteristics of an abusive relationship at the premarital phase, and strategies to finish an abusive relationship;
- risk behaviors in premarital relationships and ways to overcome them;
- family roles and stereotypes related to this issue in the Republic of Moldova;
- responsibilities of partners in the family;
- domestic violence and stereotypes related to violence in the Republic of Moldova;
- teenagers’ expectations from the optional course “Harmonious family relationships”;
- evaluation of the optional course by teenagers, teaching staff, parents;
- the need for the optional course according to parents’ opinion, and the subjects that students discussed with their parents;
- the usefulness of the course “Harmonious family relationships” in the opinion of teenagers and the teaching staff.

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.

**Chart 1. Socio-demographic structure of samples at the Baseline and Endline phases**



## Analysis

The analysis of quantitative data collected included bivariate frequencies and correlations and was completed with the help of SPSS sta-

tistical program for each data base – students, teaching staff, parents, according to the sample type (sex, school grade, in case of students).

## Socio-demographic structure of samples at the Baseline and Endline phases

### *The sample of students*

The sample of students consisted of 440 students at the Baseline phase and 440 students at the Endline phase (220 students for the main sample and 220 students for the control sample for each phase) from 22 educational institution (21 Lyceums and 1 voca-

tional school), from all three regions of the Republic of Moldova (North, Center, South). 50,9% from the main sample were girls and 49,1% - boys. From the perspective of grades – 44,1% of students were in the 10th grade, 34,3% - in the 11th grade and 21,6% were students in the 12th grade.

**Table 1. The sample of students, %**

		Total Students %	Main Students%	Control
Total		100	100	100
Sex	male	49,1	47,3	35,0
	female	50,9	52,7	65,0
Grade	10th grade	44,1	44,5	43,6
	11th grade	34,3	32,3	36,4
	12th grade	21,6	23,2	20,0
Living with	both parents	70,0	66,4	73,6
	only mother	15,2	17,7	12,7
	only father	5,2	5,9	4,5
	grandparents	4,5	5,5	3,6
	other relatives	4,1	3,6	4,5
	alone, with brother/sister	0,9	0,9	0,9

**The sample of the teaching staff** The sample of the teaching staff consisted of 23 persons from 22 educational institutions (21 Lyceums and 1 vocational school) from all the regions of the Republic of Moldova. 21 of 23 teaching staff are women. From the age perspective, the sample of the teaching staff is heterogeneous and includes 8 persons aged from 23 to 29, 8 persons aged from 37 to 44 and 7 persons aged between 47-54. The

education level is high - 22 persons are higher education degree holders, including 1 person with PhD. Almost half of the teaching staff studied the education sciences – 10, but there are also teachers from the field of social and economic studies (7), humanities, including arts (4), and exact sciences (2).

**Table 2. The sample of the teaching staff, persons**

<b>Total</b>		<b>Persons</b>
		<b>23</b>
<b>Sex</b>	male	<b>2</b>
	female	<b>21</b>
<b>Age</b>	23-36 years	<b>8</b>
	37-44 years	<b>8</b>
	47-57 years	<b>7</b>
<b>Education</b>	high, incomplete	<b>1</b>
	high complete	<b>21</b>
	high complete, including PhD	<b>1</b>
<b>Education field</b>	education sciences	<b>10</b>
	social sciences, economics	<b>7</b>
	humanities, arts	<b>4</b>
	exact sciences	<b>2</b>
<b>Teaching experience</b>	1-8 years	<b>9</b>
	10-21 years	<b>9</b>
	26-35 years	<b>5</b>
<b>Pedagogic degree</b>	no didactic degree	<b>6</b>
	II didactic degree	<b>9</b>
	I didactic degree	<b>7</b>
	superior didactic degree	<b>1</b>
<b>Employed</b>	full time	<b>18</b>
	part time	<b>5</b>

The teaching experience is different: from young specialists, to those with an experience of 35 years. The majority of the teaching staff hold a didactic degree – II degree (9 persons), I degree (7 persons) and superior degree (1 person) and are employed full time (see Table 2).

### The sample of parents

288 parents of students who attended the optional course participated in the Endline research, of which 77,4% mothers and 22,6% fathers. It was established that 85,5% of students told their parents about the optional course (see Table 3).

**Table 3. The sample of parents, %**

		Parents, %
Sex	male	22,6
	female	77,4
With students going to the	10th grade	31,3
	11th grade	32,2
	12th grade	36,5
Parents whom teenagers told about the optional course "Harmonious family relationships"	yes	85,5
	no	14,5

# STARTING COUPLE RELATIONSHIPS

## 1.1. Perceptions of and attitudes towards premarital relationships from the gender perspective

The research data demonstrate that the optional course “Harmonious family relationships” caused changes in the attitude of students towards premarital relationships (see Table 4). The number of students who disagree with the fact that a girl who lives with a boy before marriage has an indecent behavior increased. The changes in perceptions on this subject are more significant among the attendees of the optional course (+21,8 p.p.), rather than among those who didn’t attend this course (+14,1 p.p.).

Also, the number of students who disagree that if a boy has sex with a girl before marriage, he is not responsible for her increased from 53,6% to 73,6% (+20,0 p.p.) among the students who attended the optional course. For this position, there is a difference in the share of girls and boys who disagree with this statement (77,3% of girls and only 65,7% of boys). At the same time, while the perceptions of students who attended the course improved, the wrong perceptions keep dominating among the rest of the students.

**Table 4. Attitudes towards premarital relationships, students, %**

Students <b>disagree</b> with the following statements	Main sample			Control sample		
	Baseline	Endline	Progress (p.p.) <sup>6</sup>	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

1. 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.



<b>If you don't have intimate relations with your partner, you could lose him/her</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>72,3</b>	<b>+2,3</b>	<b>62,3</b>	<b>63,2</b>	<b>+0,9</b>
<b>If there is strong sexual attraction, there is also big love</b>	<b>53,2</b>	<b>70,5</b>	<b>+17,3</b>	<b>55,9</b>	<b>62,3</b>	<b>+6,4</b>

An increase was observed in the number of students from the main sample who disagree with the fact that a girl can prove her partner that she loves him only by having intimate relations (+8,7 p.p.) and with the fact that if there is strong sexual attraction, there is also big love (+17,3 p.p.). Still, there are slight differences in the opinions of girls and boys related to these subjects – 99,3% of girls, compared to 90,0% of boys disagree that a girl can prove her partner she loves him only by having intimate relations with him, and 75,3% of girls and 60,0% of boys disagree

that if there is strong sexual attraction, there is also big love. In the control sample, the changes are quite insignificant (+2,7 p.p. and 6,4 p.p.).

At the same time, the optional course had a lower influence (+2,3 p.p.) on the students' opinions about the fact that if you don't have intimate relations with your partner, you could lose him/her. Also, it should be mentioned that there is big divergence between the opinions of girls and boys – 78,7% of girls disagree with this statement, compared to 58,6% of boys.

**Table 5. Attitudes towards premarital relationships, teaching staff, persons<sup>1</sup>**

	Baseline		Endline	
	Totally or partially agree	Disagree	Totally or partially agree	Disagree
<b>A girl who lives with a boy before marriage has an indecent behavior</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>If a boy has sex with a girl before marriage, he is not responsible for her in any way</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>A girl can prove her partner that she loves him only by having intimate relations with him</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>If you don't have intimate relations with your partner, you could lose him/her</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>If there is strong attraction, there is also big love</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>20</b>

1. In the case of the teaching staff, since we only had one group and not two, as in the case of students (main and control samples), we can see both total and partial agreement, as well as the disagreement of the teaching staff with specific perceptions, stereotypes and attitudes.

The analysis of the teachers' opinions on the subjects mentioned above reflects slight changes. Thus, of 23 teachers:

- 20 disagree with the statement that if a boy has sex with a girl before marriage, he is not responsible for her in any way;
- 20 disagree with the statement that if there is strong attraction, there is also big love;
- 21 disagree with the statement that if you don't have intimate relations with your partner, you could lose him/her;
- 22 disagree with the statement that a girl who lives with a boy before marriage has an indecent behavior (see Table 5).

At the Baseline phase, students mentioned that when choosing a life partner, it is important "to know yourself" and then you can also choose him/her. Young people believe that people should be compatible in character, temperament, but also in the way of life – "to have something in common". When choosing a partner, his/her family should be analyzed not only from the point of view of the social status, but also in terms of relations inside the family, because "a leopard cannot change its spots" (FG\_1\_B\_S\_B). The partner's friends should not be neglected either, because they also reflect a certain way of spending time together. Respect for other persons, attitude towards children – "to love children", towards the ex-boyfriend/girlfriend, but also his/her values in life are also important – "if the partner doesn't respect them, I think there is no sense to continue" (FG\_3\_M\_C\_B).

Some boys mentioned that the physical aspect of girls matters – "she should take care of herself" (FG\_3\_M\_C\_B), but also meeting the persons who contributed to her upbringing and education. Knowledge of past is mandatory – "to see whom she dated". Health aspects were also more often mentioned by boys – "if she doesn't have venereal diseases" (FG\_3\_M\_C\_B). For boys, it is important that the future wife "is able to have chil-

dren, one cannot create a family without children" (FG\_1\_B\_S\_B). Some important issues also refer to the positions in the relationship, nobody should have a superior position and dictate "how to dress" (FG\_3\_M\_C\_B), common problem solving, decision making at the beginning of the relationship and choosing the life partner.

The Endline data show that teenagers became more informed about the issues they need to know about the partner at the beginning of a relationship: "what is her/his mentality", "what kind of family she/he comes from, how are her/his parents", "the age", "the friends". Boys also mentioned the need to know about the former partners – "to find out why they broke up" (FG\_2\_B\_C\_E). The optional course made teenagers more attentive not only to the external, but also internal features of every person – "we are attracted by physical appearance, but should also get to know the soul" (FG\_1\_F\_N\_E). It was also identified that teenagers became more realistic in choosing their partners. After attending the course, they are informed about the fact that things should be analyzed as a whole – "if it seems that the partner is ideal, something is not right. And you should be more careful" (FG\_3\_M\_S\_E).

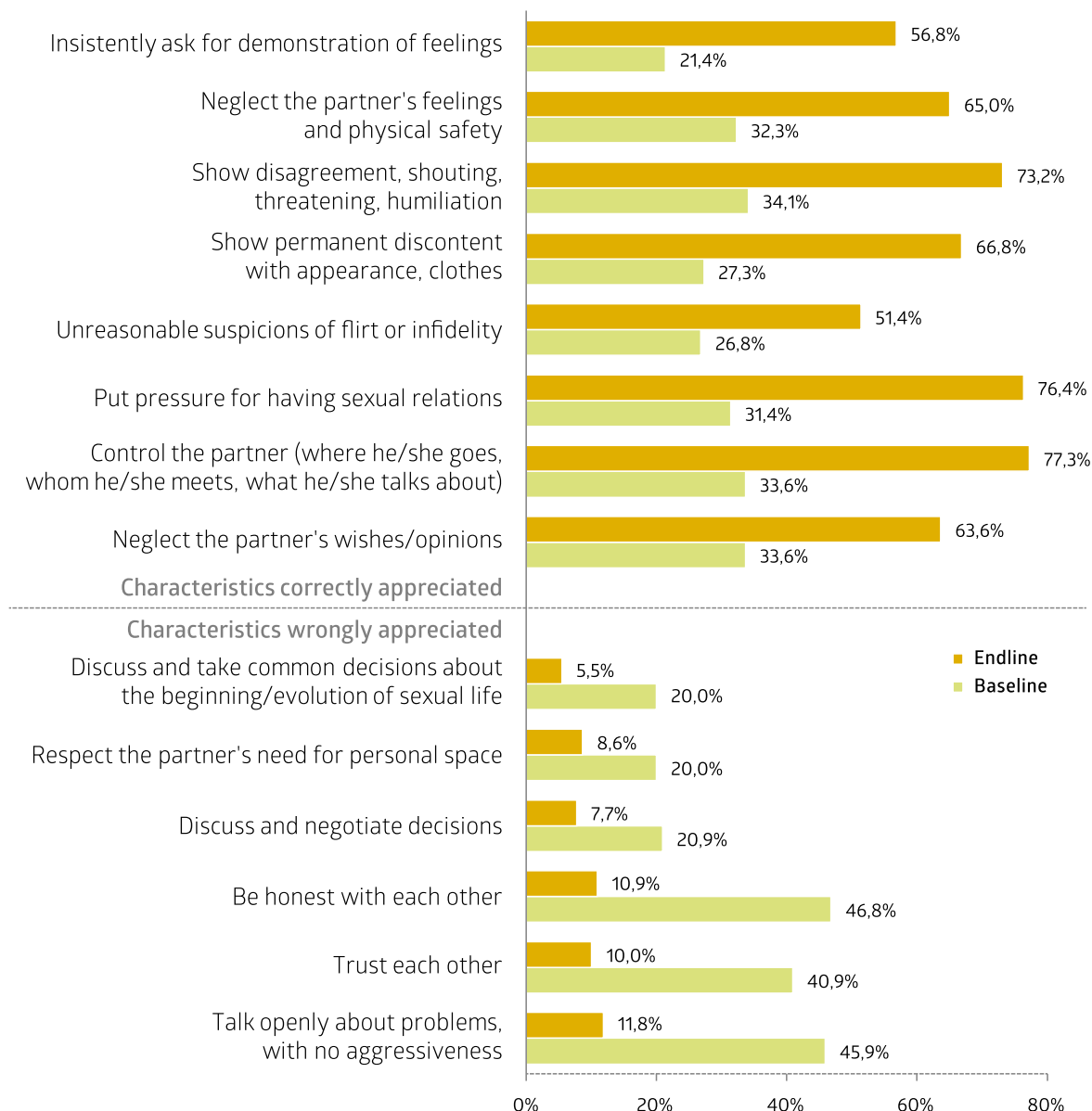
## 1.2. Perception of abusive relations at the premarital phase

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 correctly the signs of manipulation and abuse, at the initial phase of a relationship (see Chart 2).

During the focus group discussions, students named the following signs of an abusive behavior at the premarital phase: (i) cold communication

– “sometimes talking to you more harshly (ii) aggressive behavior; (iii) setting constraints; (iv) consume of alcoholic drinks. Observation of gestures and mimics (non-verbal signs) are other elements which can help identify the aggressive behavior of the partner. Also, it was mentioned that sometimes, partners can hide their aggressiveness – “they show calm behavior” and there is need for “a fight, to see what they can do” (FG\_2\_F\_N\_B).

**Chart 2. Signs of manipulation and abuse at the premarital phase, students who attended the course, %**



In the opinion of teenagers, abusive relations at the premarital phase imply the following risks: frequent fights, development of psychological traumas that contribute to the destruction of personality, beating that can cause serious physical trauma, suicide. As a consequence of an abusive relationship students also mentioned the fact that “often partners make mistakes, and, after breaking up, despise the ex-partner, don’t greet him/her and reveal his/her secrets to the public, humiliate and offend him/her etc.” (FG\_3\_M\_S\_E). Thus, teenagers start thinking of suicide, that is why, the problem of suicide for love or passion should also be discussed during the optional course.

Abusive relationships cannot contribute to the creation of a happy family. Thus, the teenagers mentioned that they have to make the right choice of partner, in order to avoid persons with aggressive behavior. In this regard, they would need more knowledge and guidance, because the only mean of defense from abusive behavior that they named was to keep quiet – “to shut up”.

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. The teenagers were informed about the phases of a relationship and the risks at every phase – “from the beginning we see everything in pink, and then other phases begin” (FG\_1\_F\_N\_E).

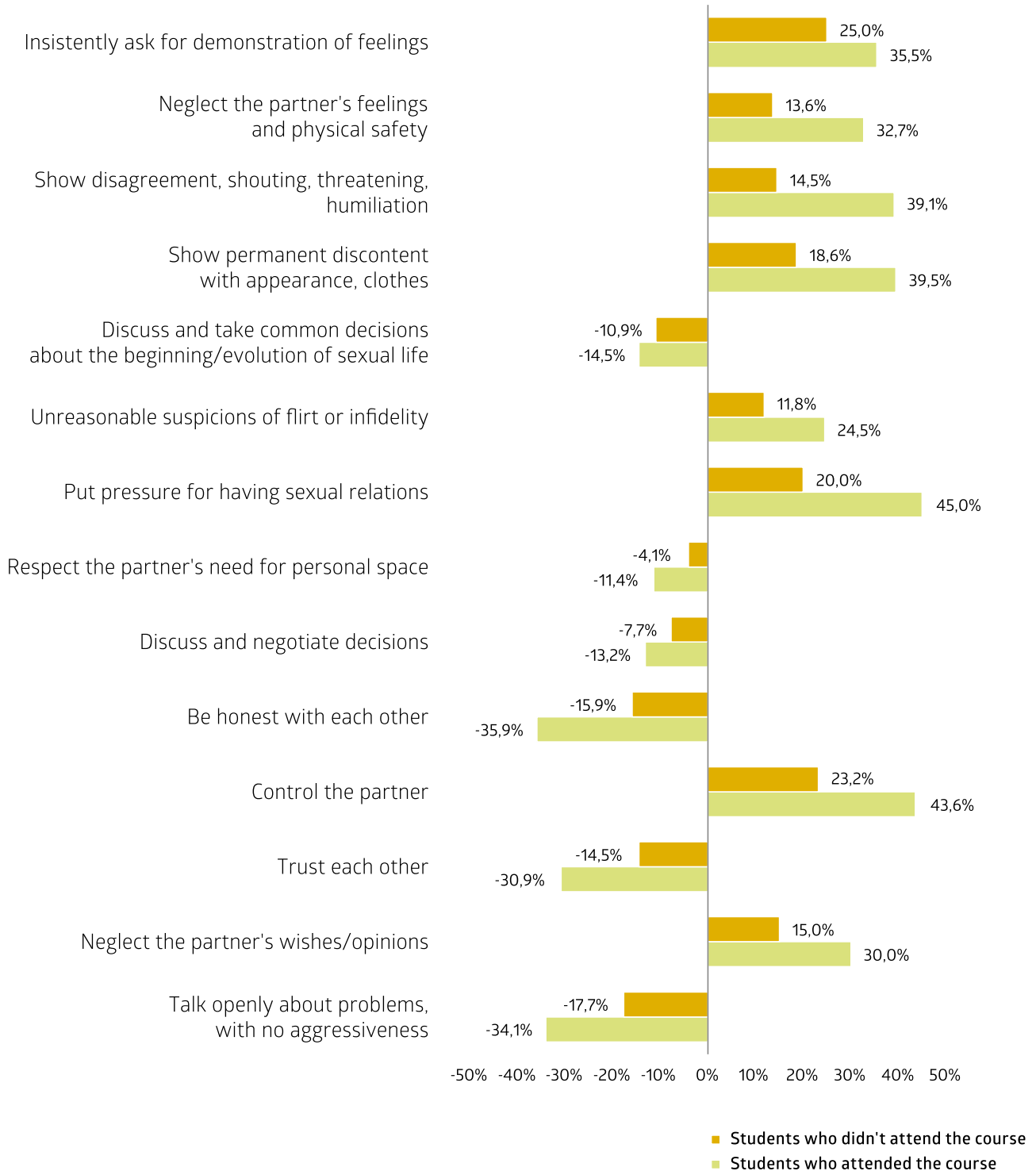
From the perspective of changes in the opinions of students who attended the optional course and those who didn’t, significant changes were found in the first group of students (see Chart 3).

The results of the Endline research also emphasize an increase in the knowledge of the teaching staff about the signs of manipulation and abuse at the initial phase of a relationship (see Chart 4). Thus, they mentioned the following signs: neglecting the partner’s feelings and safety (23 persons); neglect-

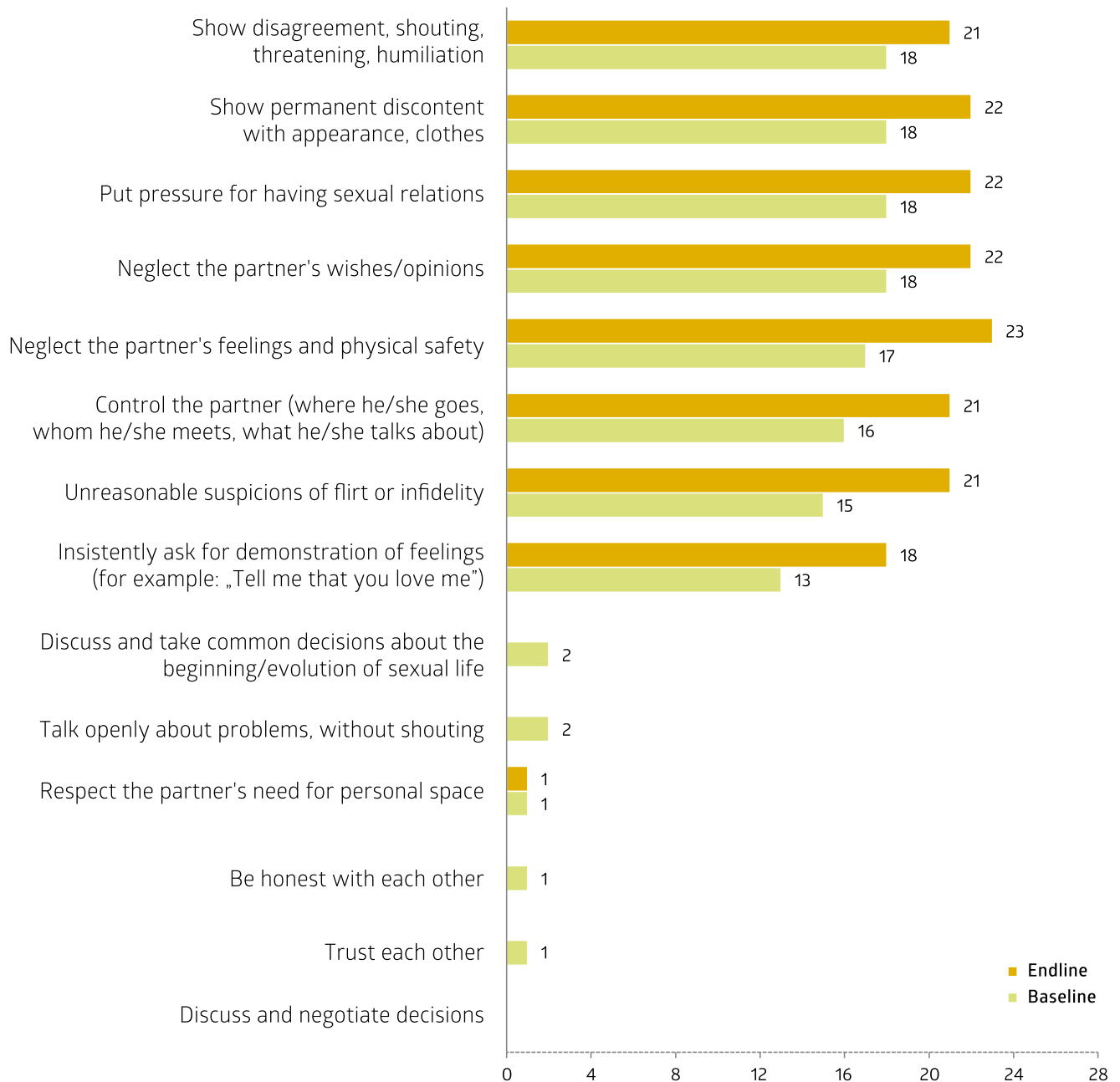
ing the partner’s wishes (22 persons); pressuring the partner for having sexual relations (22 persons); showing permanent unhappiness with their look, clothes (22 persons); controlling the partner (where he/she goes, what he/she does, with whom etc.) (21 persons); being suspicious of flirt or infidelity with no reason (21 persons); showing disagreement through yelling, threats, humiliation (21 persons); insistently ask the partner to show his/her feelings (18 persons).

During the focus group discussions at the Endline phase, teenagers mentioned that they learned some techniques of saying “no” to the abusive behavior of the partner. In such situations, assertive communication without blaming is required. Also, it is important that teenagers discuss this with adults, with friends, and in case they want to break up with such a partner, they should pay attention to preparing a speech for terminating the relationship – “we should not say we found someone better, in order not to add fuel to the fire” (FG\_1\_F\_N\_E), but also to choose the location where the decision of breaking up will be communicated. This should be a public place, so that the teenager would feel safe in case it is required. Girls also mentioned the choice of internet as a possibility for breaking up – “it is easier to communicate your position on the internet” (FG\_1\_F\_N\_E).

**Chart 3.** *The progress of answers to the question “What are the signs of manipulation and abuse at the initial phase of a relationship?” between the Baseline and the Endline studies, students who attended and those who didn’t attend the optional course, %*



**Chart 4. Signs of manipulation and abuse at the initial phase of a relationship, in the opinion of the teaching staff, persons, multiple answer**



### 1.3. Risk behaviors at the premarital phase

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The Baseline research data show that the majority of boys do not perceive and do not know the responsibilities at the premarital phase – “there are responsibilities, but I don’t know them” (FG\_1\_B\_S\_B). Speaking about responsibilities, they emphasized the mutual respect, respect for opinions, understanding and trust between partners, lack of jealousy, lack of lies or infidelity. Speaking about risks, boys also mentioned the physical “beauty” – “they take 100 of pictures and post one more beautiful than the other one, but in reality...”, communication with a raised voice – “you fight with her every day” and insistent desire of girlfriends to introduce boys to parents “she insists on introducing you to her family” (FG\_1\_B\_S\_B). Other mentioned difficult situations at the premarital phase are: alcohol and drug addiction. Only a few boys admitted the possibility of a situation when “in a relationship the boy would take advantage of the girl or the girl would take advantage of the boy” (FG\_1\_B\_S\_B).

The boys from Chisinau were more informed about these issues. They indicated the following examples of risk behaviors: (i) fear of responsibility, (ii) lack of knowledge about the contraception methods, and (iii) unexpected pregnancy.

Girls, compared to boys, were more mature in their thoughts and mentioned the need for information on the contraception methods in case of sexual relations at the premarital phase, but also taking responsibility for the consequences of sexual rela-

tions – “the responsibility not to give birth to children before marriage” or “not to make an abortion” (FG\_2\_F\_N\_B).

The Baseline research indicates that some knowledge of teenagers about the risk behaviors at the premarital phase must be improved. In this regard, the teaching staff needed guidance on efficiently informing students about risk behaviors at the premarital phase. During the focus group discussions, they mentioned concubinage as a risk situation, because at this phase teenagers do not take responsibility for: unexpected pregnancy, transmission of sexual diseases, violence.

The Endline data confirm that teenagers in modern society are not willing to take any responsibility – “nowadays young people are not responsible, they don’t take things seriously, relationships don’t last long” (FG\_2\_B\_C\_E). Girls confirmed the statement made by boys, and emphasized the fact that when there is no respect and trust between partners, things cannot last.

During the Endline research, girls also named other risks that exist at the premarital phase – “the highest risk is not to love yourself” (FG\_3\_M\_S\_E), as well as “pressure for having a sexual relation”. For boys, the highest risk is an unexpected pregnancy. Also, boys mentioned the responsibility of teenagers to be informed and control their behavior – “teenagers have a splash of hormones. They are not informed about the contraception meth-

ods, about how to keep their relationship safe, with no consequences... Many couples start their family because of a child, because the girl got pregnant" (FG\_2\_B\_C\_E). Other risks at the premarital phase are related to the lack of sexual abstinence, to alcohol consume, to abusive behavior of the partner ("calling every 5 minutes and asking where you are, with whom and what you are doing"). Based on this, the importance of respecting each partner's personal space was also mentioned.

By giving consent to a sexual intercourse, boys understand "the agreement of both partners, without forcing", "mutual understanding", and girls understand "assuming the consequences", "taking some risks", as indicated in the Baseline research. We can observe that from the gender perspective, the answers related to giving consent to a sexual intercourse and risk behaviors are perceived differently. Boys talk about the consent of partners, and the girls talk about the consequences that may appear, and that affect them directly. Boys do not think about consequences, once they have the consent of girls, this means only girls should take care of the consequences. The possibility of conceiving a child, worries boys less. For them, more important is not to get a sexually-transmitted disease, an abortion that would cause the breakup of partners, without any obligations or responsibilities.

Girls mentioned the importance of trust in the person whom they give the consent for sexual intercourse – "you should know him, and not end up alone afterwards", "it can be just a short-term relationship, and you can be used as a toy", "other people may find out, including parents, and your reputation will be spoiled" (FG\_2\_F\_N\_B).

The teaching staff indicated that, at the premarital phase, boys "blackmail" their partners for starting sexual life earlier – "girls are forced to prove their love" (FG\_P\_B). Not less important, teachers emphasized another risk among girls at this subject.

Some of them are trying to promote their opinion in their group of friends, about the fact that "it is not fashionable to be a virgin anymore" (FG\_P\_B).

In the opinion of the teaching staff, teenagers should be taught not to get blackmailed and to be ready to freely express their consent for a sexual intercourse. They need to be taught to understand the real value of things and to be aware of the consequences.

During the lessons of the optional course "Harmonious family relationships", teenagers spoke about the risk behaviors at the premarital phase, expressing consent for a sexual intercourse and the consequences of such a step, and methods to say "no" to the partner who insists on having sexual relations at the premarital phase. Thus, at the Endline phase, teenagers indicated that consent to a sexual intercourse means – "agreement that should be discussed, since it causes consequences to the future family", and girls should be careful in order not to be manipulated in such situations. Knowing that, young people should be aware of their choice, because this is a step in creating a family. It is important that they express their opinion correctly – "you explain him that you love him, but you are not ready for this" (FG\_1\_F\_N\_E).

Also, it was mentioned that teenagers should know that "nobody can force you to accept a sexual intercourse if you don't want it" (FG\_3\_M\_S\_E). The ways to say "no" to a partner who insists on sexual relations that were taught during the course are the following: (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 Baseline research discovered that over 85% of teenagers believe (totally or partially agree) that the man and the woman must decide together



which contraception method to use. The Endline research data reveal that the share of youngsters who agree (totally or partially) with this statement increased by 8,6 p.p.

Also, it was identified that in the main sample, 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.), compared to only +7,7 p.p. in the control sample (see Table 6). 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.

**Table 6. Attitudes towards reproductive health, students, %**

Students <b>disagree</b> with the following statements	Main sample			Control sample		
	Baseline	Endline	Progress (p.p.)	Baseline	Endline	Progress (p.p.)
<b>Both the man and the woman should decide which contraception methods they should use.</b>	4,1	3,2	-0,9	4,1	2,3	-1,8
<b>It is the woman's responsibility to protect herself from pregnancy.</b>	51,4	69,5	+18,1	51,8	59,5	+7,7

As for the opinions of the teaching staff about the reproductive health, it can be noticed that, at the Endline phase all teachers think that both men and women should decide together which contraception method to use (before the training for the teaching staff 1 person of 23 showed disagreement with this statement). 22 teachers do not think that it is only the responsibility of women to protect themselves from pregnancy, previously, this opinion was expressed by only 18 teachers (see Table 7). Rape is perceived by students as “unwanted sexual relationship”, “sexual relationship without consent”, “sexual abuse”, “sexual intercourse against one’s will”, “expression of feelings in a drastic way, that can lead to negative, or even fatal consequences”. The study reveals the presence of some stereotypes related to rape among teenagers, but also teachers.

During the focus group discussions held at the Baseline phase, the arguments expressed by students for not considering a rape the situation when a girl/woman didn’t shout during the forced sexual intercourse are the following:

- “if she didn’t show resistance, it means she allowed him” (FG\_2\_F\_N\_B);
- “maybe she didn’t want only from the beginning” (FG\_1\_B\_S\_B);
- “it is not rape, because at the beginning she didn’t give her consent saying she was not ready, but after several minutes she changed her mind” (FG\_1\_B\_S\_B);
- “she should at least struggle or do something” (FG\_3\_M\_C\_B).

**Table 7. Attitudes towards reproductive health, teaching staff, persons**

	Baseline		Endline	
	Totally or partially agree	Disagree	Totally or partially agree	Disagree
<b>Both the man and the woman should decide which contraception methods they should use.</b>	22	1	23	0
<b>It is the woman's responsibility to protect herself from pregnancy.</b>	5	18	1	22

The arguments presented by some teenagers who believe that even if the girl didn't shout it was still a rape, indicate a deeper understanding of rape circumstances (fear, use of drugs):

- “maybe she is very scared not to be beaten and keeps quiet” (FG\_2\_F\_N\_B);
- “she could think that if she shows resistance, it could be even worse” (FG\_3\_M\_C\_B);
- “he is aware that she is more helpless than him” (FG\_1\_B\_S\_B);
- “she gets drugs into her tea and she doesn't show resistance” (FG\_3\_M\_C\_B).

More people indicated as rape the situations when the girl consumed alcohol and could not express her disagreement to a sexual intercourse –

“the boy just took advantage of the moment, the girl might not even remember what happened” (FG\_1\_B\_S\_B). But there were also other opinions: “if both of them were drunk, it means that both of them didn't know what they were doing” (FG\_1\_B\_S\_B). In the opinion of boys, when a man is drunk and cannot say “no” to a girl, it is not rape – “it is a good thing... Rape is only if the man has a family, has children” (FG\_1\_B\_S\_B).

The Endline research indicates positive trends in changing the perceptions and some stereotypes related to rape among teenagers. Among those who attended the optional course, the number of those who disagree 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 increased from 23,2% to 35,5% (+12,3 p.p.). In the control sample, the perceptions and stereotypes of teenagers practically didn't change (-1,3 p.p.) (see Table 8).

**Table 8. Perceptions of and attitudes towards rape, students, %**

Students <b>disagree</b> 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 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%). The share of girls who disagree with this statement is higher than the share of boys – 48,7% compared to 42,9%. Changes in this regard were observed only among students who attended the optional course.

The opinions 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. From the gender perspective, we can see that the optional course caused more changes in the opinions of girls at this subject, 81,3% of girls

expressed their disagreement, compared to only 68,6% of boys.

By 21,8 p.p. increased the number of students from the main sample who disagree that a man from a financially secured family cannot be a rapist, compared to the increase by 6,8 p.p. in the control sample. In this situation, the share of girls is also higher than the share of boys – 81,3%, compared to 70%.

At the same time, it was identified that the number of students who disagree that if a girl or a woman is raped, it is also her fault did not change – 58,2% from the course attendees. The analysis of data from the gender perspective shows that the share of males who disagree with this statement is of 52,9%, compared to 60,7% of girls.

The training of the teaching staff who taught the optional course also caused changes in the teachers' opinions about rape. Nevertheless, the Endline research data show that changing stereotypes is a difficult process, and as long as teachers do not change their positions, we cannot expect these changes from students. Thus, 3 of 23 teachers still believe (totally or partially agree) that if a girl/woman is raped, it is also her fault, and 1 of 23 teachers believes that girls/women from financially secured families do not become victims of rape, or that a man from a financially secured family cannot become a rapist, or if a girl/woman didn't shout and didn't show resistance during the sexual intercourse, this cannot be considered rape (see Table 9).

The analysis of teenagers' opinions regarding the possibilities to avoid rape reveal the availability of

gender stereotypes. Thus, avoiding rape is more often considered as girls' responsibility: "avoid communication with strangers", "not accept friendships of strangers, including being walked home by strangers", "not trust every second person she sees", "be aware of how much they can drink", "not accept drinks from strangers", "not get into unknown men's cars", "wear decent clothes", "not join groups with many boys", "not walk alone at night". In the opinion of girls, cases of rape could be avoided by making boys learn about the consequences, but also understand that they will also have children once, and their daughters could become victims of rape. In the opinion of the teaching staff, besides informing teenagers about cases of rape – "sometimes girls don't even understand when it happens", girls should learn some physical defense exercises in order to fight against the actions of rapists.

**Table 9. Perceptions of and attitudes towards rape, teaching staff, persons**

	Baseline		Endline	
	Totally or partially agree	Disagree	Totally or partially agree	Disagree
<b>Girls / women from financially secured families do not become victims of rape.</b>	3	20	1	22
<b>A man from a financially secured family cannot be a rapist.</b>	2	21	1	22
<b>If a girl / a woman is raped, it is also her fault.</b>	8	14	3	20
<b>If a girl / woman is improperly dressed (short skirt, high heels, make-up etc.) she is guilty in case of rape, because she provoked the rapist with her appearance.</b>	9	14	0	23
<b>It is not considered rape if the girl/ woman didn't shout or didn't show resistance during the forced sexual intercourse.</b>	4	18	1	22

# F HARMONIOUS FAMILY

## 2.1. The values of a happy family

The research conducted shows slight improvements in the opinions of students who attended the optional course, related to harmonious family relationships and a happy family, compared to those who didn't attend the course (see Table 10).

**Thus, the share of students from the main sample, who disagree that the perfect partner should satisfy all expectations increased from 25,5% to 41,4% (+15,9 p.p.), compared to the increase from 22,7% to 26,8% (+4,1 p.p.), in the control sample.**

Positive changes were also identified in the opinions of students related to their way of perceiving a happy family. The share of students who disagree that only children make a family happy increased from 23,6% to 30,9% (+7,3 p.p.) in the main sample, compared to the control sample, where no improvements were observed at the level of perceptions. Still, there is a difference in opinions from the gender perspective – 34,0% of girls and 24,3% of boys disagree with the statement above.

The number of students who disagree that a family is happy only when it is financially secured also increased from 31,8% to 37,7% (+5,3 p.p.). At the same time, the ratio of disagreement is higher among girls – 40,7%, than among boys – 31,4%.

It was identified that the stereotypes about a successful marriage are more spread among boys rather than among girls. 91,3% of girls disagree that only a beautiful girl can have a successful marriage, compared to 87,1% of boys. Nevertheless, the optional course caused changes in the visions of 6% of teenagers on this subject, without any modifications in the control sample.

**Table 10. Perceptions of harmonious family relationships and of a happy family, students, %**

Students <b>disagree</b> with the following statements	Main sample			Control sample		
	Baseline	Endline	Progress (p.p.)	Baseline	Endline	Progress (p.p.)
The perfect partner should satisfy all your expectations.	25,5	41,4	+15,9	22,7	26,8	+4,1
Only a beautiful girl can have a successful marriage.	84,1	90	+5,9	88,6	86,8	-1,8
A family is happy only if it has children.	23,6	30,9	+7,3	26,8	22,3	-4,5
A family is happy only if it is financially secured.	31,8	37,7	+5,9	24,1	24,5	+0,4

The research conducted also reveals the difficulties in changing the stereotypes about a happy family among some of the teaching staff. Thus, of 23 teaching staff:

- 11 still believe that a family is happy only if they have children;
- 7 think that a family is happy only when it is financially secured;
- 5 said that a perfect partner should satisfy all the expectations of the other partner (see Table 11).

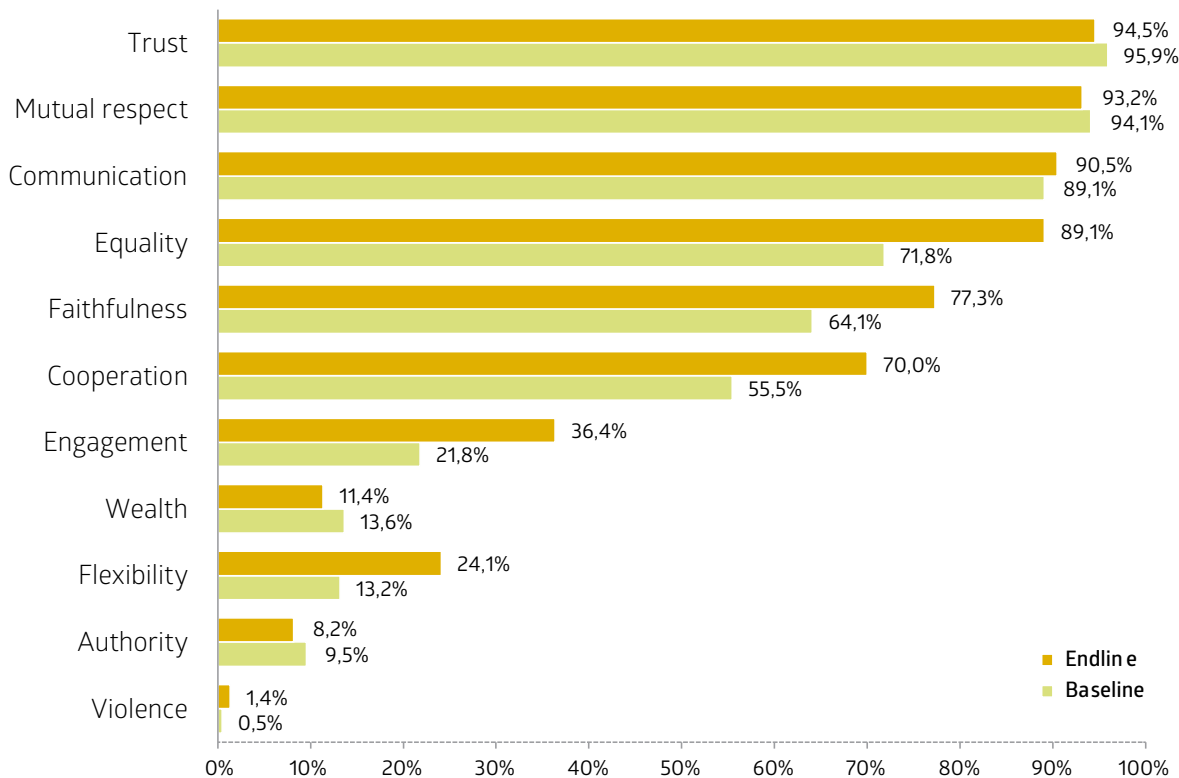
**Table 11. Perceptions of harmonious family relationships and of a happy family, teaching staff, persons**

	Baseline		Endline	
	Totally or partially agree	Disagree	Totally or partially agree	Disagree
The perfect partner should satisfy all your expectations.	9	14	5	18
Only a beautiful girl can have a successful marriage.	2	21	0	23
A family is happy only if it has children.	16	7	11	12
A family is happy only if it is financially secured.	9	14	7	16

In the opinion of teenagers before and after attending the course, there are 7 core family values: trust, mutual respect, communication, equality, faithfulness, cooperation, engagement. Still, we noticed that the importance of specific values significantly increased (see Chart 5 and Chart 6).

The importance of the following values increased: equality (+17,3 p.p.), engagement (+14,6 p.p.), cooperation (+14,5 p.p.), faithfulness (+13,2 p.p.), flexibility (+10,9 p.p.). Comparative data for students who attended and those who didn't attend the course are presented in Chart 6.

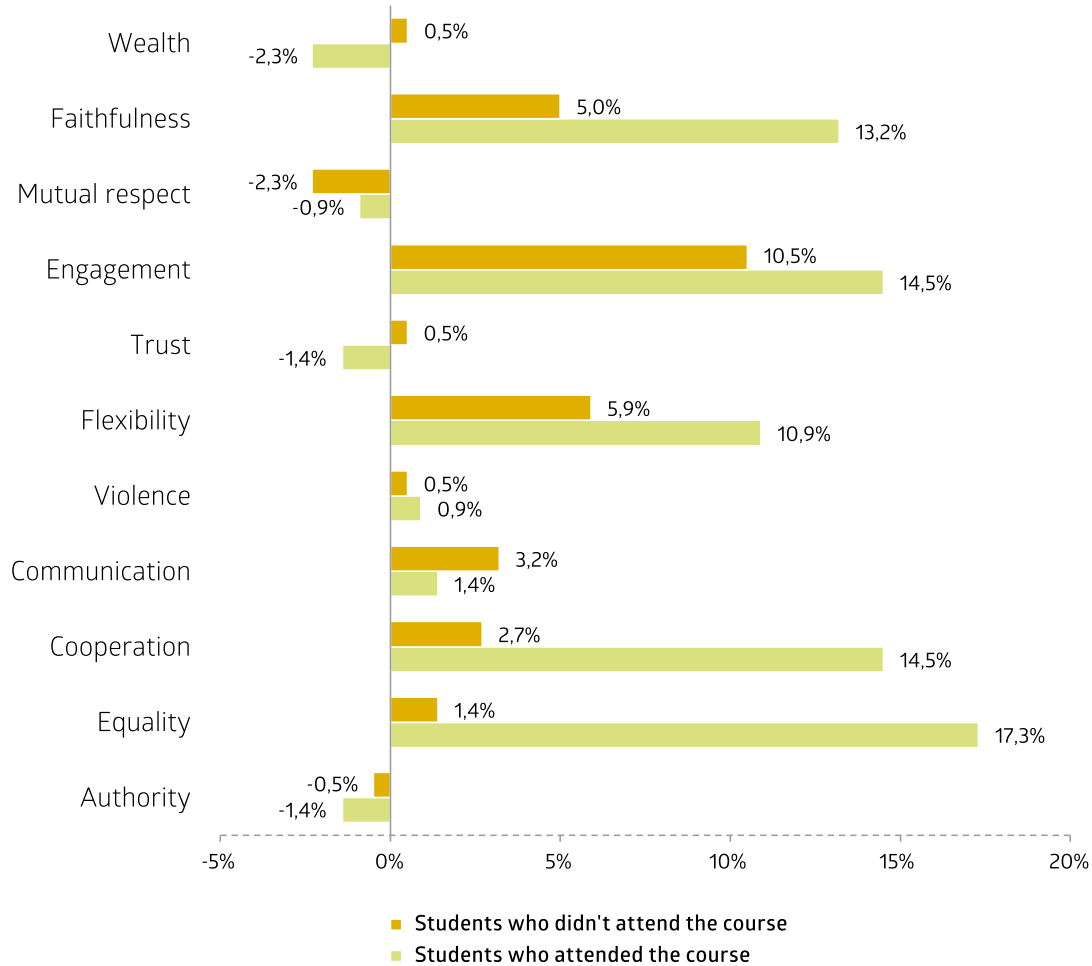
**Chart 5. Values required for a family to be happy. Multiple answer, students who attended the optional course, %**



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%), and 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%).

During the focus group discussions, the participants mentioned the importance of the peer-to-peer cooperation – “everybody is at the same level, there is nobody higher... Each opinion is listened to and discussed” (FG\_3\_M\_C\_B) and of the “flexibility” which is an important feature of harmony, because partners “should know how to give up”. In such families there is no violence in the education of children or in the relationship between partners.

**Chart 6. 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, %**

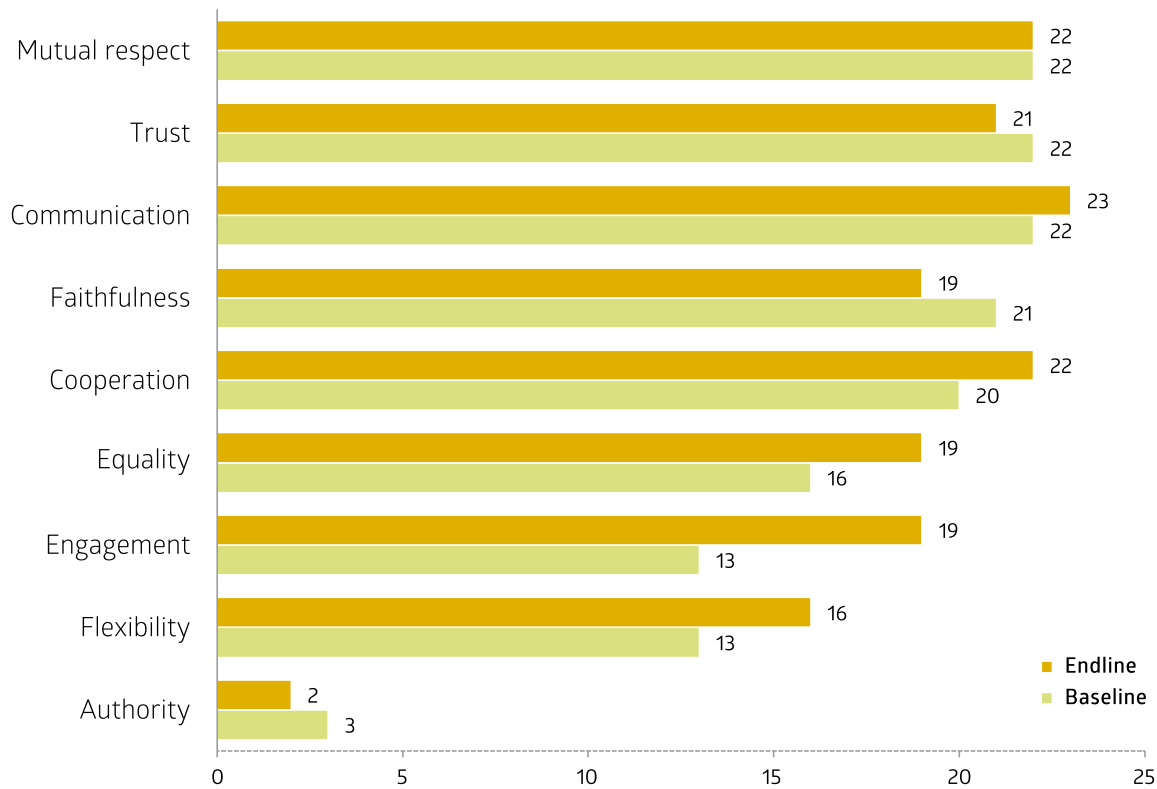




Slight modifications are also visible in the opinions of the teaching staff related to the values required for a family to be happy. At the beginning of the project, the teaching staff believed that the core values of a happy family included trust (22 persons), mutual respect (22 persons), communication (22 persons), faithfulness (21 persons), cooperation (20 persons). Values like equality, engagement or flexibility were the main

values only for approximately half of the teaching staff. The Endline data reveal that some teachers believe that the values of a happy family are: communication (23 persons), cooperation (22 persons), mutual respect (22 persons), trust (21 persons), faithfulness (19 persons), engagement (19 persons), equality (19 persons), flexibility (16 persons) (see Chart 7).

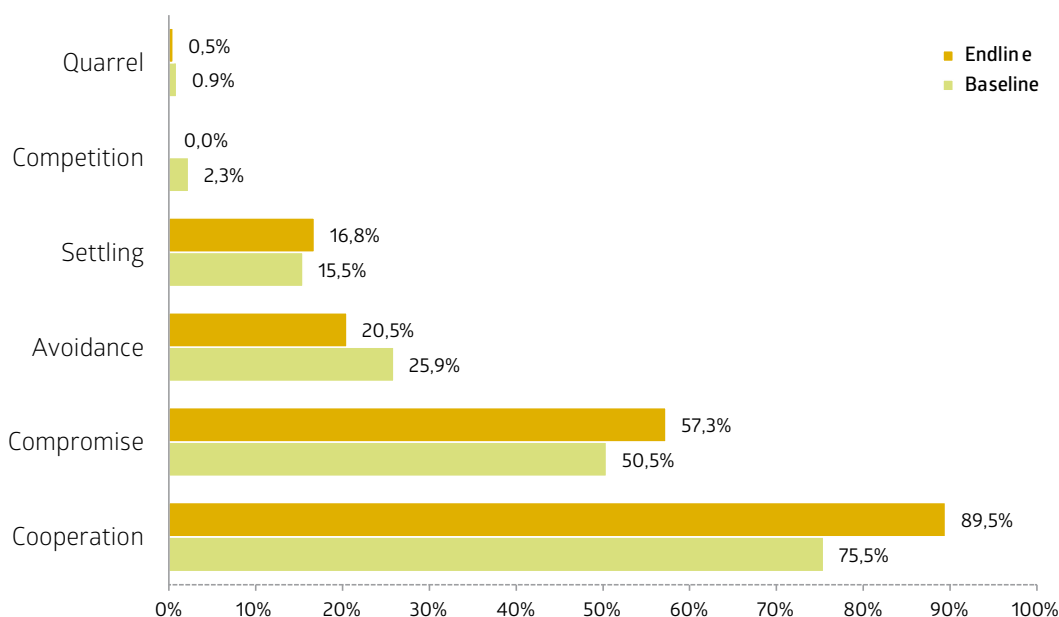
**Chart 7. Values required for a family to be happy. Multiple answer, teaching staff, persons**



Positive tendencies are observed regarding the strategies for managing family conflicts. Among the students who attended the optional course, there was an increase in the share of students

who understand that family conflicts should be managed through cooperation strategies (+14,0 p.p.) and compromise (+6,8 p.p.) (see Chart 8).

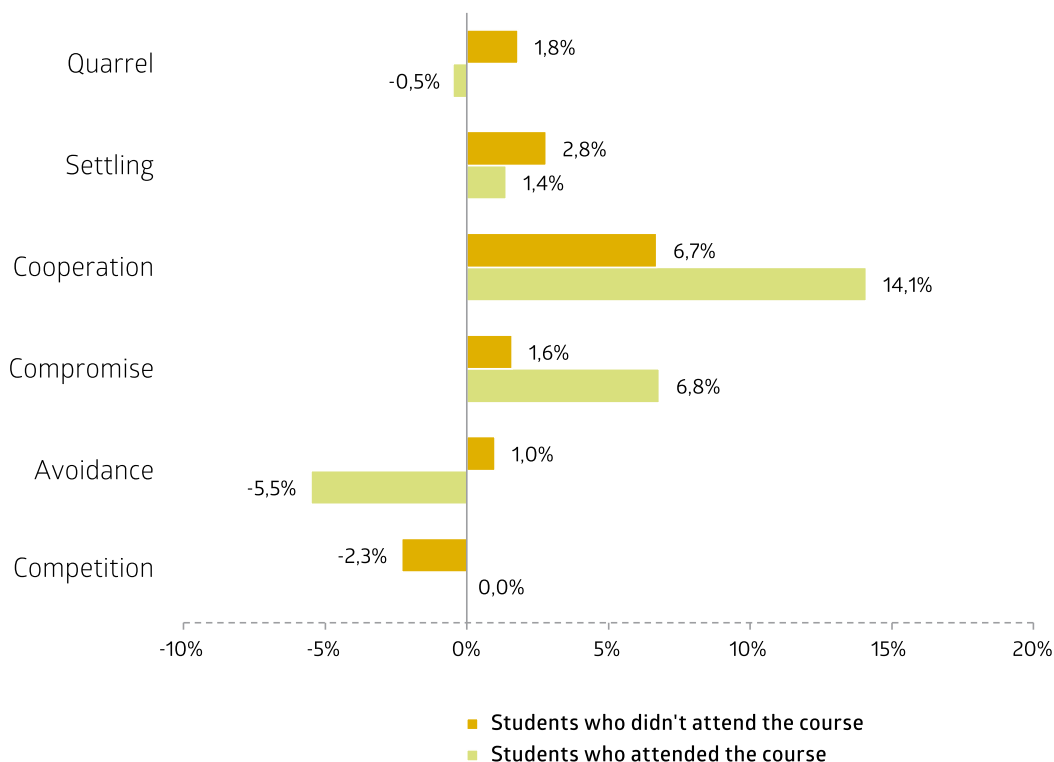
**Chart 8. Strategies for managing family conflicts. Multiple answer, students who attended the optional course, %**



The comparative analysis of answers from students who attended the optional course and those who didn't attend, reveals that the changes

in knowledge about managing family conflicts are caused by the course "Harmonious family relationships" (see Chart 9).

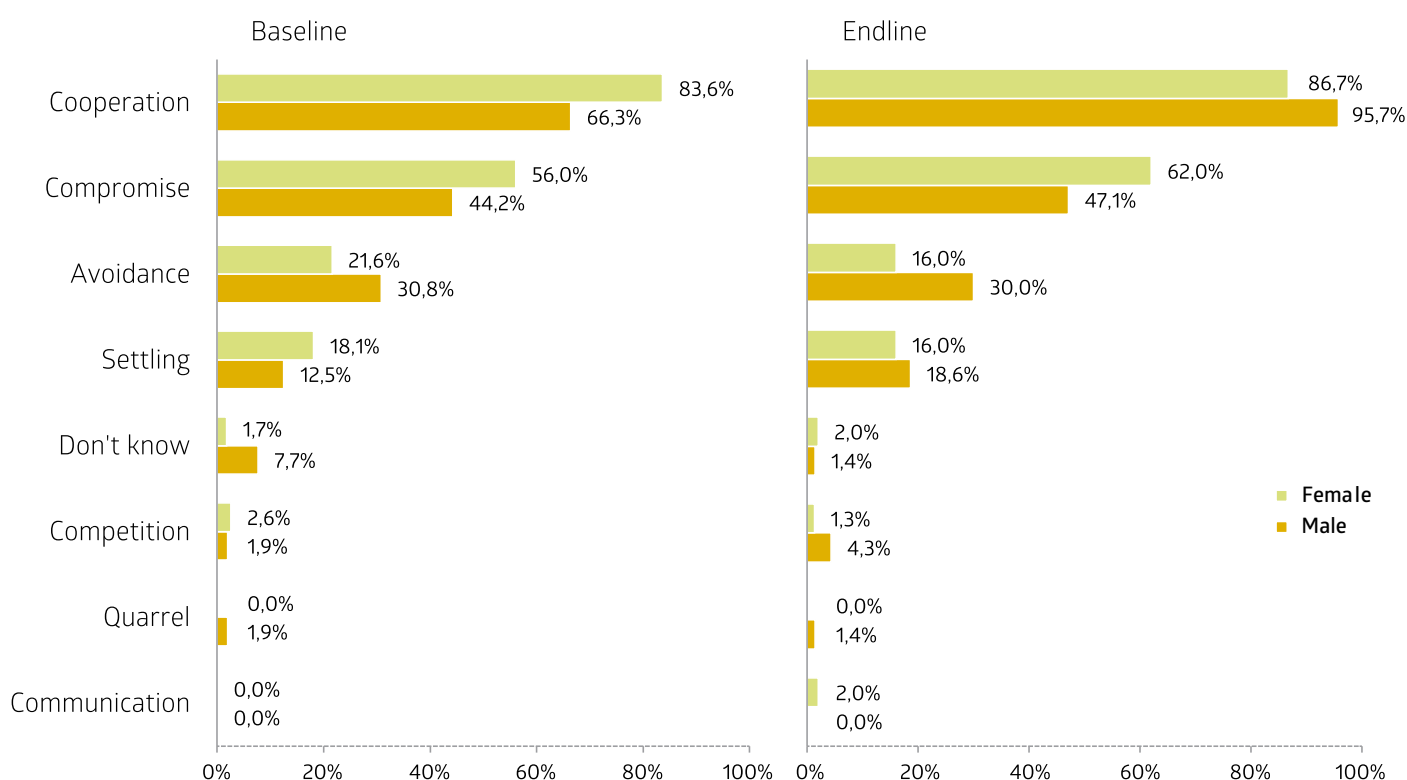
**Chart 9. The progress of answers to the question "Which strategies should be used to manage family conflicts?" between the Baseline and the Endline studies. Students who attended and those who didn't attend the optional course, comparative data, %**



At the Baseline phase, more girls and less boys stated that fights should be solved through cooperation and compromise. Approximately every third boy mentioned that avoidance is a good strategy for solving family conflicts. The number of boys who didn't know any strategy for managing family conflicts was also quite high – 7,7% compared to

1,7% of girls (see Chart 10). The Endline research indicates an increase by 29,4 p.p. among the boys, who believe that some family conflicts should be solved through cooperation, but also a decrease by 6,3 p.p. of those who don't know any strategy for managing family conflicts.

**Chart 10. Strategies for managing family conflicts by sex. Students who attended the optional course, divided by sex, %**



## 2.2. Gender stereotypes related to family life

The focus group discussions during the Baseline research, indicated that the majority of students do not know the term “stereotype”. In order to make them give examples of some stereotypes existing in the Moldovan society, the term had to be explained first. Afterwards, students mentioned the following gender stereotypes:

- “The man is the head of the family”,
- “The man brings money into the family”,
- “The woman should make less money, in order not to humiliate her husband”,
- “The woman must stay home and take care of the family and house, and of children’s education”,
- “The woman should cook food”,
- “The woman should obey her husband like a slave”,
- “The wife should always listen to her man”,
- “The father should be more severe with children, so that they are afraid of him”,

- *“The father educates sons, the mother educates daughters”,*
- *“The husband should be taller than his wife” (physical aspect).*

The baseline research showed that teaching staff also mentioned stereotypes related to gender equality in the family and in the society. Some of them stated that – “a man and a woman are very different by nature, there are biologic differences so we are not equal from the very beginning” (FG\_P\_B).

The teaching staff supplemented the list of stereotypes that should be eliminated, in order to have harmonious family relationships:

- “The man is the strong gender and the woman is the weak gender”,
- “Girls have the right to cry and boys don’t”,
- “Following father’s model when choosing the future husband”,
- “The man is the one to take decisions in the family”,
- “Problems can be solved by shouting”,
- “Division of jobs... it is not good for a girl to work in the IT industry etc.”,
- “A driving woman is a monkey”.

Other stereotypes related to harmonious family life indicated by students are as follows: “One should choose his/her partner from the same social class”, “Families which have children with disabilities cannot be happy”.

In the opinion of students, stereotypes can be eliminated through the following measures: (i) family education – “teach our children to live without stereotypes” (FG\_2\_F\_N\_B); (ii) discussions and meditations; (iii) promotion of positive examples – “by giving examples we will destroy stereotypes” (FG\_3\_M\_C\_B); (iv) life experience that will come with the age. Teaching staff mentioned the importance of information in combating stereotypes, as

well as media support in promoting an appropriate behavior, in order to help the population understand the importance of gender equality.

The Endline research shows that, within the optional course “Harmonious family relationships”, an important role in combating stereotypes had the interactive methods – role play, case study, social theater, which were used to show the diversity of behaviors, and students had the possibility to meditate about the advantages and disadvantages of each. The teachers had the role of guides – “children must have more examples, because there are different situations in life. We should simulate real cases, but they also should come with concrete situations” (FG\_P\_E), in order to reach the goal of helping teenagers to create families in which there will be gender equality and harmony between partners.

During the Endline research, 96,8% of young people indicated that gender equality means equality of rights and obligations of a man and of a woman. All 23 teachers also mentioned that they totally or partially agree with this statement (see Table 13).

The optional course caused a reduction of the stereotype stating that the man is the person who should ensure the financial stability of the family, and the wife is 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.) in the main sample, and from 31,8% to 45,5% (+13,7 p.p.) in the control sample (see Table 12). It should be mentioned that, from the gender perspective, significant changes were attested at this subject. The number of girls who disagree with this statement is of 65,3%, compared to 42,9% of boys. The number of teaching staff who disagree with this stereotype also increased from 20 to 22 people.

**Table 12. Perceptions of harmonious family relationships and of a happy family, students, %**

Students <b>disagree</b> with the following statements	Main sample			Control sample		
	Baseline	Endline	Progress (p.p.)	Baseline	Endline	Progress (p.p.)
Gender equality means that men and women are equal in rights and obligations.	4,1	2,3	-1,8	2,7	1,8	-0,9
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
The salaries/incomes of partners are common in a family.	4,1	1,4	-2,7	2,7	1,4	-1,3
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

During the Endline research 98,2% of students expressed their opinion that the salaries and the incomes of partners within a family are common. The opinions of teaching staff in this regard didn't change from the Baseline to Endline - 21 persons totally or partially agreed with this.

The optional course "Harmonious family relationships" made students overcome the following stereotypes: (i) in a family, the wife should be shorter than the husband, (ii) a man or a woman who has already been married and then divorced does not deserve to be trusted. Thus, in the case of the first

stereotype, the share of students who disagree increased from 55% to 65,5% among the students who attended the course (+10,5 p.p.), compared to the increase from 50% to 53,2% (+3,2 p.p.) among the students who didn't attend the course. In the case of the second stereotype mentioned, the share of students who disagree increased from 71,8% to 81,8% among the students who attended the course (+10 p.p.), compared to the increase from 75% to 78,6% (+3,6 p.p.) in the control group. At the Endline phase, over 73% of girls mentioned (totally or partially agreed) that if the husband

**Table 13. Perceptions of harmonious family relationships and of a happy family, teaching staff, persons**

	Baseline		Endline	
	Totally or partially agree	Disagree	Totally or partially agree	Disagree
Gender equality means that men and women are equal in rights and obligations.	22	1	23	0
If a man earns sufficient money, his wife should stay home and take care of the house and children.	3	20	1	22
The salaries/incomes of partners are common in a family.	21	2	21	2

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. Students who attended the optional course were more likely to overcome stereotypes, rather than the other students.

**Table 14. Perceptions of family relationships, students, %**

Students <b>disagree</b> with the following statement	Main sample			Control sample		
	Baseline	Endline	Progress (p.p.)	Baseline	Endline	Progress (p.p.)
Husband must always ask for permission from his wife when he wants to go out alone and meet his friends.	21,4	26,4	+5,0	27,3	21,8	-5,5
Wife must always ask for permission from her husband when she wants to go out alone and meet her friends.	18,2	20,9	+2,7	21,4	16,8	-4,6
Husband must know and have access to his wife's passwords and accounts in social media (facebook, odnoklassniki, e-mail).	34,1	57,7	+23,6	32,7	43,2	+10,5
Wife must know and have access to her husband's passwords and accounts in social media (facebook, odnoklassniki, e-mail).	29,5	54,5	+25,0	31,4	40	+8,6

Regarding the access to the partner's password, facebook account, e-mail etc., the share of teenagers who disagree that this is appropriate increased by approximately 25 p.p. in the main sample, compared to approximately 10 p.p., in the control sample (see Table 14). The number of teaching staff

who disagree that a husband/wife should know or have access to password, facebook account, odnoklassniki, e-mail of wife/husband increased during the Endline research (see Table 15).

**Table 15. Perceptions of family relationships, teaching staff, persons**

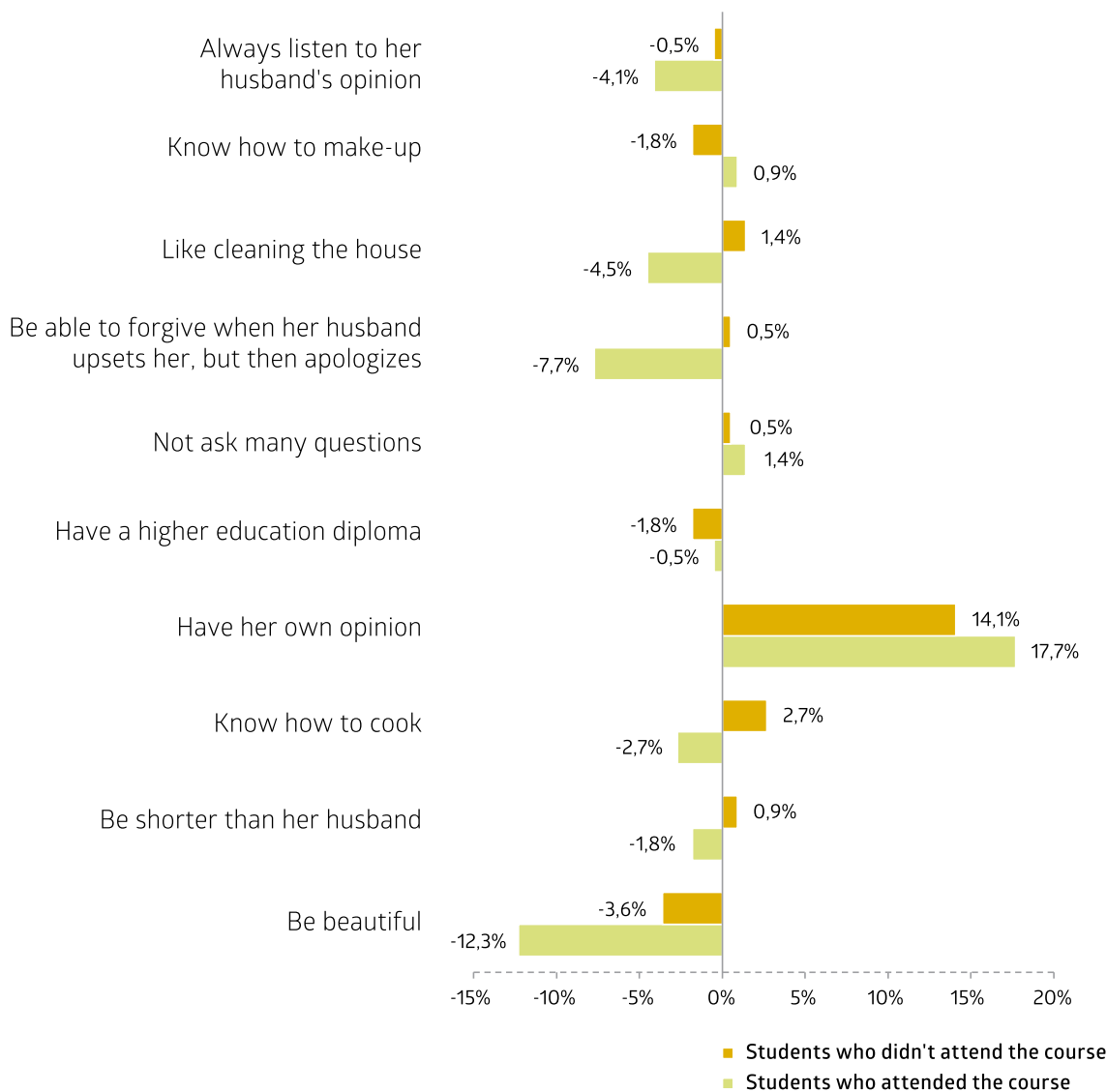
	Baseline		Endline	
	Totally or partially agree	Disagree	Totally or partially agree	Disagree
<b>Husband must always ask for permission from his wife when he wants to go out alone and meet his friends.</b>	11	12	13	10
<b>Wife must always ask for permission from her husband when she wants to go out alone and meet her friends.</b>	14	9	13	10
<b>Husband must know and have access to his wife's passwords and accounts in social media (facebook, odnoklassniki, e-mail).</b>	7	16	4	19
<b>Wife must know and have access to her husband's passwords and accounts in social media (facebook, odnoklassniki, e-mail).</b>	7	16	5	18

## 2.3. Perceptions of the woman's and man's role in the family

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 a higher education degree (22,5%). Girls were affected by such stereotypes like cooking food and cleaning the house much more than boys. Boys on the contrary, were emphasizing more the beauty of the future wives, which was confirmed during the focus group discussions.

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 (see Chart 11). Thus, the share of students who believe that it is important that "a good housewife" has her own opinion increased, and the share of students who emphasized beauty, forgiving husband when he upsets his wife, cleaning tasks and obedience to husband decreased.

**Chart 11.** 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, %

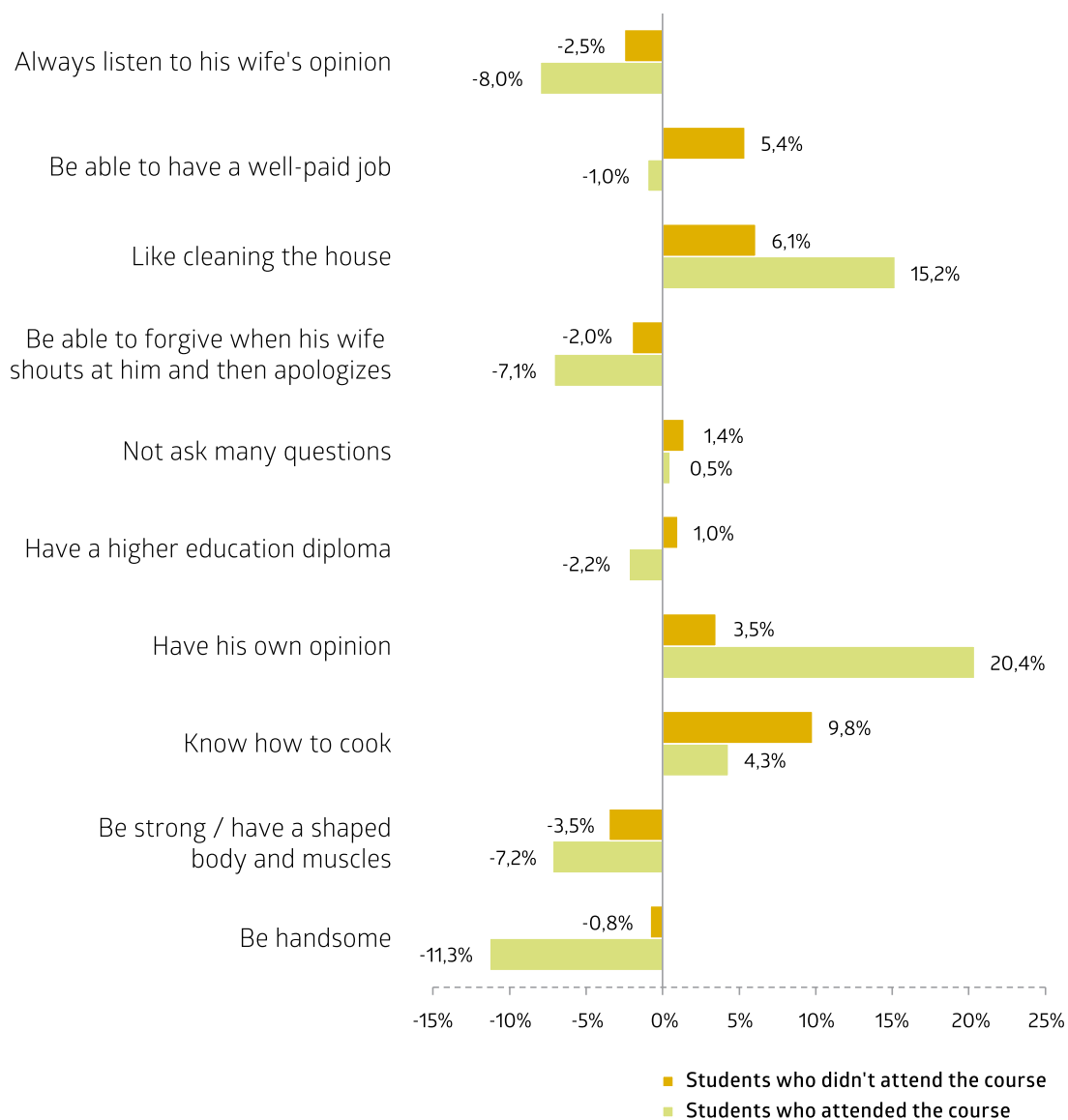


Stereotypes related to the role of the man in the family were identified. The Baseline research reveals that in the opinion of students, a good householder and husband must have a well-paid job (72,3%), have his own opinion (63,6%), always listen to his wife's opinion (57,0%), be able to forgive his 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 12).



**Chart 12.** *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, %*



## 2.4. Perceptions of and attitudes towards family responsibilities

The vision of teenagers related to family responsibilities is influenced by the education provided in the original family. Still, the research data indicate that in a short period of time (September 2016 – April 2017), the course “Harmonious family relationships” caused significant changes in the attitudes of over 20% of teenagers towards family responsibilities (see Table 16). Nevertheless, it should be mentioned that there are gender differences in perceiving family responsibilities. Although 55,5% of teenagers disagree that the most important for a woman is to take care of the house and cook, the ratio of females is of 58%, compared to 50% of males.

56,8% of teenagers do not think that changing diapers and feeding children is the woman’s responsibility, but the ratio of females who disagree is of 59,3%, compared to 51,4% of males.

The difference of gender increases when it comes to letting the man have the last word while taking decisions in the family. 70% of girls disagreed with this statement, compared to only 44,8% of boys (main sample). The gender differences are also present when speaking about the fact that the man should have the last word when spending money in the family - 86% of girls disagreed, compared to 71,6% of boys.

**Table 16. Attitudes towards family responsibilities, students, %**

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

The opinions of the teaching staff about the roles and responsibilities in a household are less stereotyped compared to the opinions of teenagers. The training organized for teachers before implementing the course in schools, reduced the existing stereotypes among them (see Table 17). Thus:

- The number of teachers who partially agree that the most important thing for a woman is to take care of the house and to cook, decreased from 6 to 4;
- The number of teachers who agree (partially and totally) that the man must have the last word when taking decisions in the family, decreased from 3 to 2;
- The number of teachers who disagree that the man must have the last word when spending money, increased from 21 to 23.

**Table 17. Attitudes towards family responsibilities, teaching staff, persons**

	Baseline		Endline	
	Totally or partially agree	Disagree	Totally or partially agree	Disagree
The most important thing for a woman is to take care of the house and to cook.	6	17	4	19
Changing diapers, bathing and feeding the children is the responsibility of mother.	6	17	2	21
The man must have the last word when taking decisions in the family.	3	20	2	21
The man must have the last word when spending money.	2	21	0	23

## 2.5. Knowledge about domestic violence and institutions that provide assistance

Teenagers know multiple statements that reflect stereotypes about domestic violence. During the focus group discussions organized at the Baseline phase, the following statements were mentioned:

- „Beating comes from heaven”,
- “If he beats me, it means he loves me”,
- “An unbeaten woman is like an unswept house”,
- “If a husband is beating his wife, it means he is educating her”,
- “If the husband beats his fist on the table, this should be the last word”,
- „If the husband speaks, his wife should be quiet”,
- “A wife should accept violence to keep her family together”,

- "If the husband wants, the wife should be ready",
- "The beaten place grows" (more in case of children),
- "Only men are violent".

In the opinion of teenagers, changing stereotypes related to domestic violence is a long and difficult process, but it could be more successful if children would be taught not to accept violence from an early age. In this regard, teenagers must develop their own rules for their future families and discuss together the problems that exist in the family.

The Baseline research showed that the process of informing teenagers about violence and aggressiveness should be improved. 88,4% of young people totally or partially agreed that an aggressive person is the one who behaves in a violent manner. Still, differences were found between the position of girls and boys regarding this statement – 91,1% of girls had this opinion, compared to only 84,5% of boys.

57,5% of teenagers mentioned that it is easy to identify an aggressor during the first date. Girls be-

lieved they were more perspicacious rather than boys (see Table 18).

The Endline research shows slight improvements in informing students about aggressiveness and violence. There is an increase by 13,2 p.p. of the share of teenagers who disagreed that the aggressor can be easily identified during the first date, compared to only 2,3 p.p. among students who didn't attend the course (see Table 18). From the gender perspective, we noticed that 48,7% of girls who attended the course disagree with this statement, compared to only 38,6% of boys from the same category.

The number of students from the main sample who disagree that a woman should tolerate violence in order to keep her family together increased by 10,4 p.p., compared to only 5,9 p.p., in the control sample. The difference of gender on this topic is lower – 88% of girls expressed their disagreement, compared to 82,1% of boys who attended the course.

**Table 18. Perception of aggressive behavior and violence, students, %**

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

The research data show no changes in the perceptions of the teaching staff regarding the aspects mentioned above (see Table 19). Based on their life experience, the share of the teaching staff who believe that it is easy to identify an aggressor during the first date is lower, compared to students (only 1/3). Also, we can observe difficulties in changing the

perceptions and attitudes of adults towards domestic violence. The training organized for the teaching staff who implemented the optional course did not change the attitude of one person towards domestic violence. One of those 23 teachers is still convinced that a woman should tolerate domestic violence and abuse, in order to keep her family together.

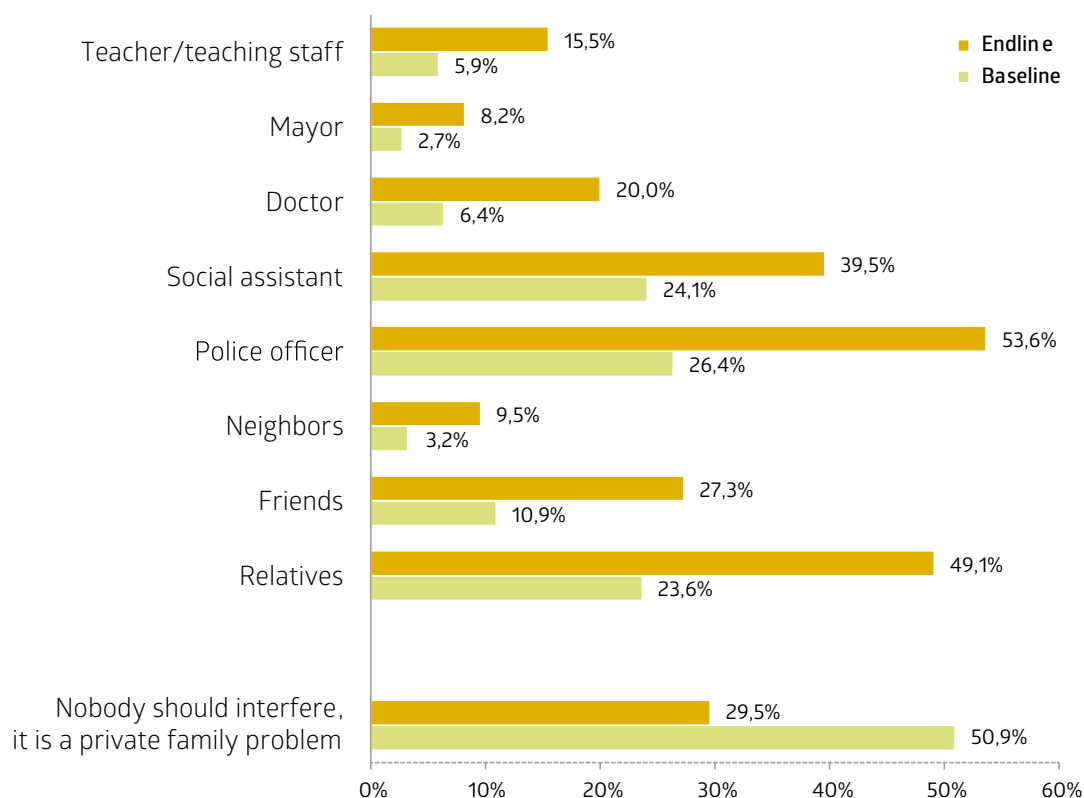
**Table 19. Perceptions of aggressive behavior and violence, teaching staff, persons**

	Baseline		Endline	
	Totally or partially agree	Disagree	Totally or partially agree	Disagree
It is easy to identify an aggressor during the first date.	8	15	8	15
A woman should tolerate violence and abuse, to keep her family together.	1	22	1	22

The optional course “Harmonious family relationships” caused important changes in informing students about the institutions they can address in cases of domestic violence (see Chart 13). Thus, among the optional course attendees, the number of those who believe that nobody should interfere in a case of domestic violence, since it is an internal family issue decreased by 21,4 p.p. At the same time, there is an increase in the number of students who know, that in case of violence a police

officer should interfere (+27,3 p.p.), relatives (+25,5 p.p.), friends (+16,4 p.p.), social worker (+15,5 p.p.), doctor (+13,6 p.p.), teaching staff (+9,5 p.p.) (see Chart 14). It should be mentioned that in cases of domestic violence, it is appropriate to inform professionals. Situations when relatives, following the existent stereotypes, will recommend keeping the violence case in secret and not inform the police should absolutely not be accepted.

**Chart 13. Who should interfere in situations of domestic violence, in the opinion of students, attendees of the optional course, %**

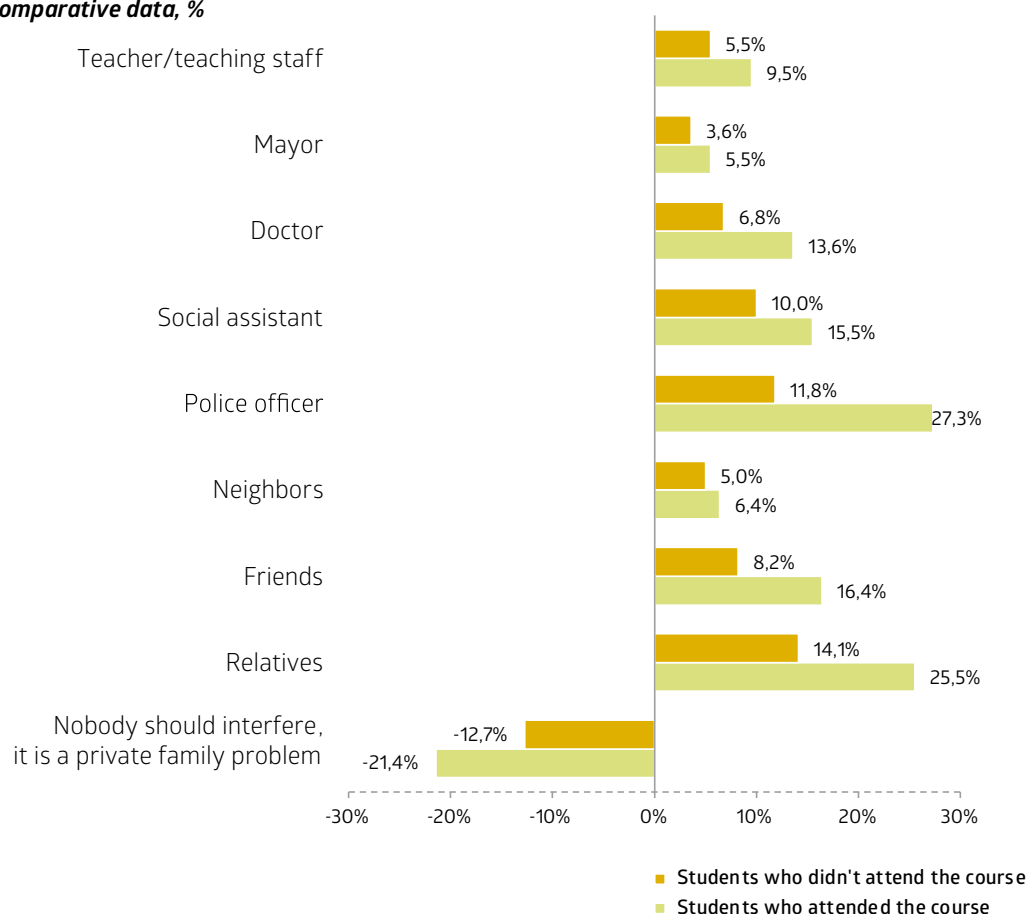


The research data reveal that in this regard, the information level also increased among the students who didn't attend the course "Harmonious family relationships", but in a lower ratio than among the attendees of this course. This can be explained by the fact that the topic of domestic violence was also discussed during the course of Civic Education.

In the opinion of the teaching staff who participated in the Baseline research, in cases of

domestic violence the following people should interfere: social worker (22 persons), police officer (19 persons), friends (17 persons), doctor (15 persons), teaching staff (15 persons), neighbors (13 persons), relatives (11 persons), mayor (10 persons). This information shows that some teachers still need to improve their knowledge about multi-disciplinary involvement in cases of violence, because they are the ones to transmit this knowledge to students.

**Chart 14. 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, %**

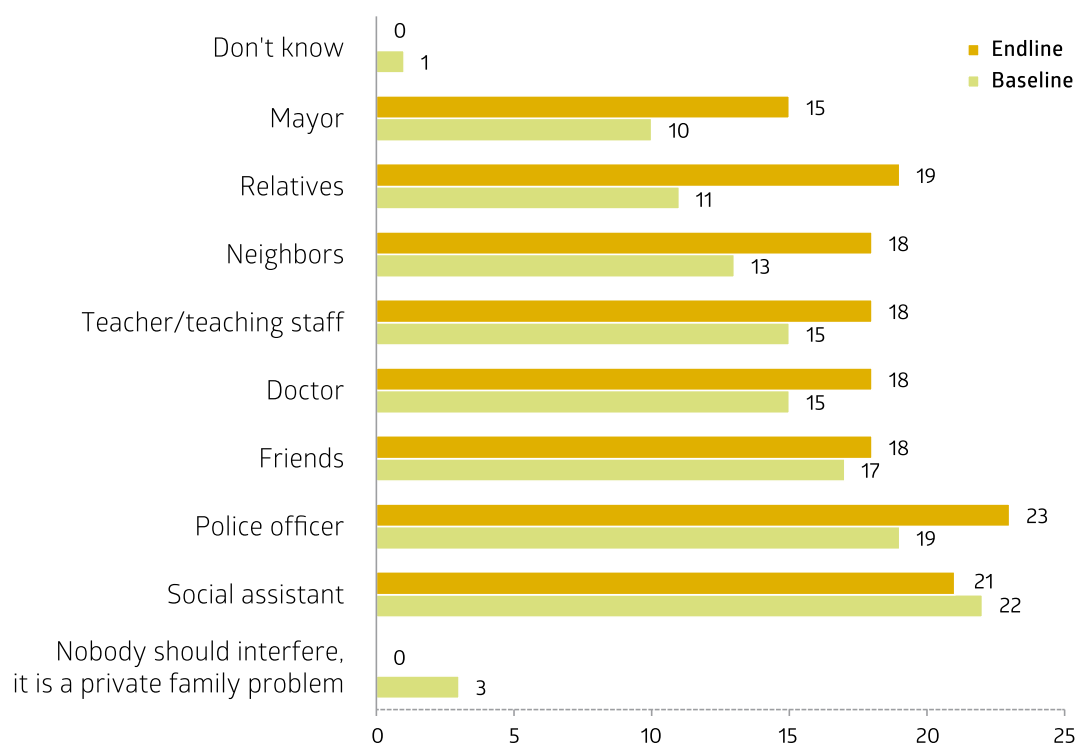


The Endline research shows slight improvements regarding the knowledge of the teaching staff about the persons who should get involved in cases of violence (see Chart 15).

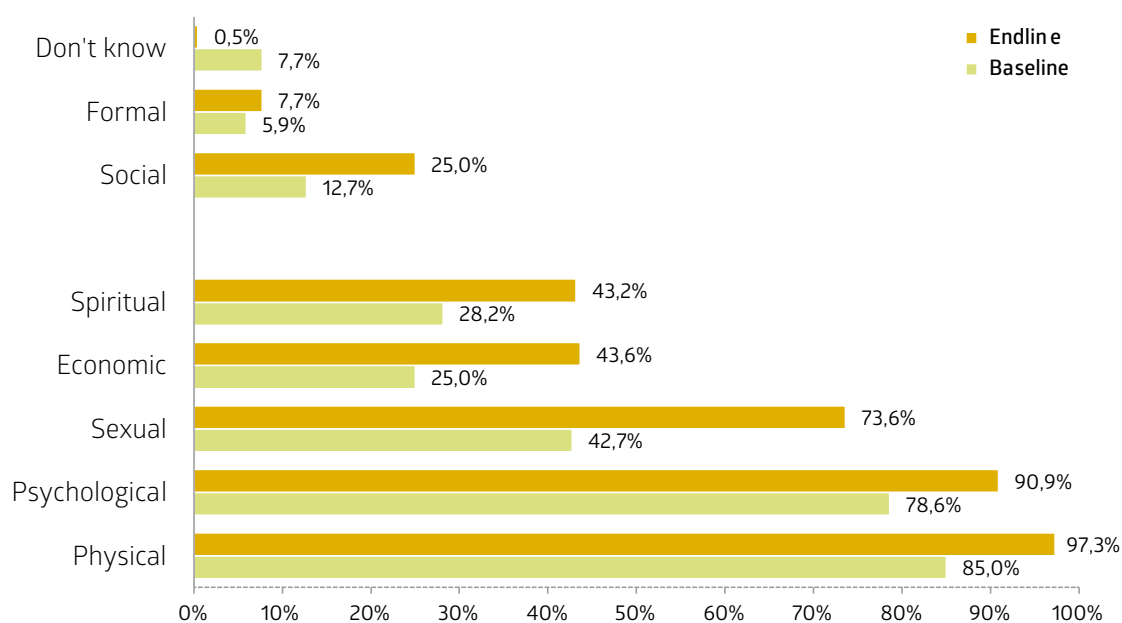
At the Baseline phase the knowledge of students about the forms of domestic violence were not

sufficient. Only 25% of students knew about economic violence, 28% knew about spiritual violence, 43% – about sexual violence, 79% – about psychological violence and 85% - knew about physical violence. At the same time, it was found that girls knew the forms of domestic violence a bit better, compared to boys.

**Chart 15. Who should interfere in situations of domestic violence, in the opinion of teaching staff, persons**



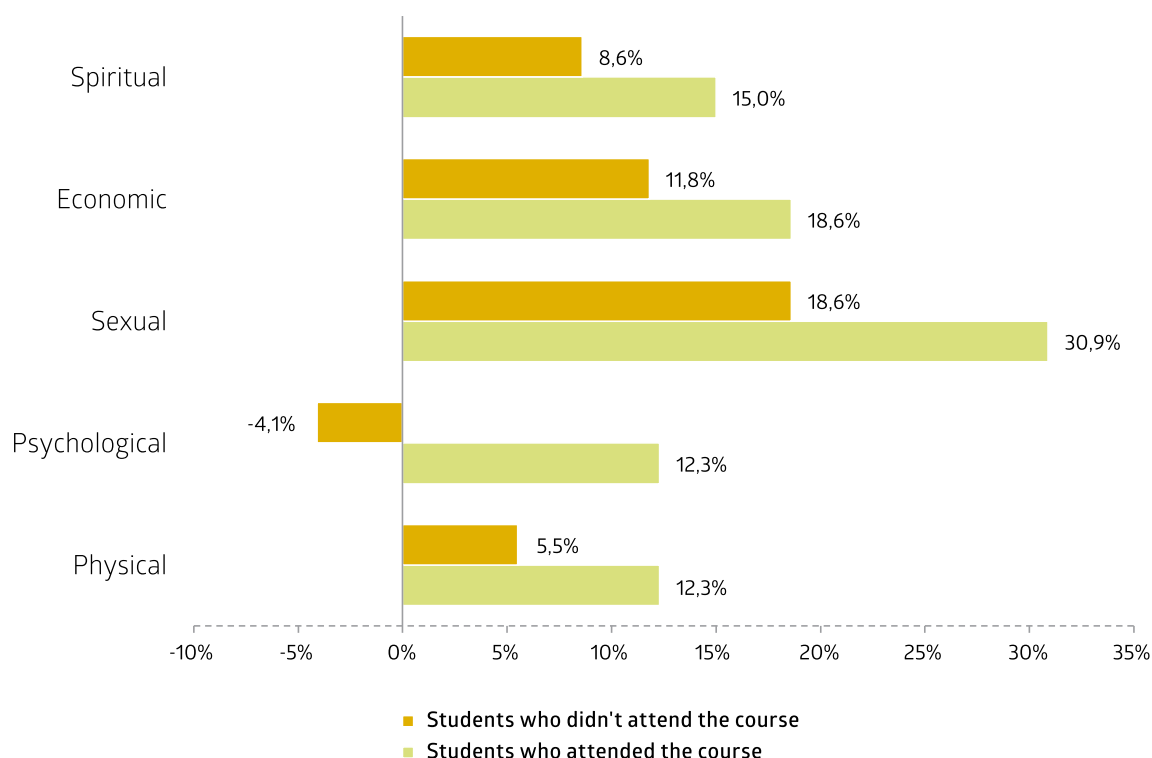
**Chart 16. Students' knowledge about the forms of domestic violence, students who attended the course, %**



During the Endline phase, an increase of the level of knowledge of forms of violence was registered as follows: 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. each among the attendees of the optional course (see Chart 16).

The comparative analysis of the increase of the level of knowledge of forms of violence indicates that the attendees of the optional course “Harmonious family relationships” almost doubled their knowledge about the forms of violence, compared to the students who didn’t attend this course (see Chart 17).

**Chart 17. The progress of answers to the question “Which are the forms of domestic violence?” between the Baseline and the Endline studies. Students who attended and those who didn’t attend the optional course, comparative data, %**



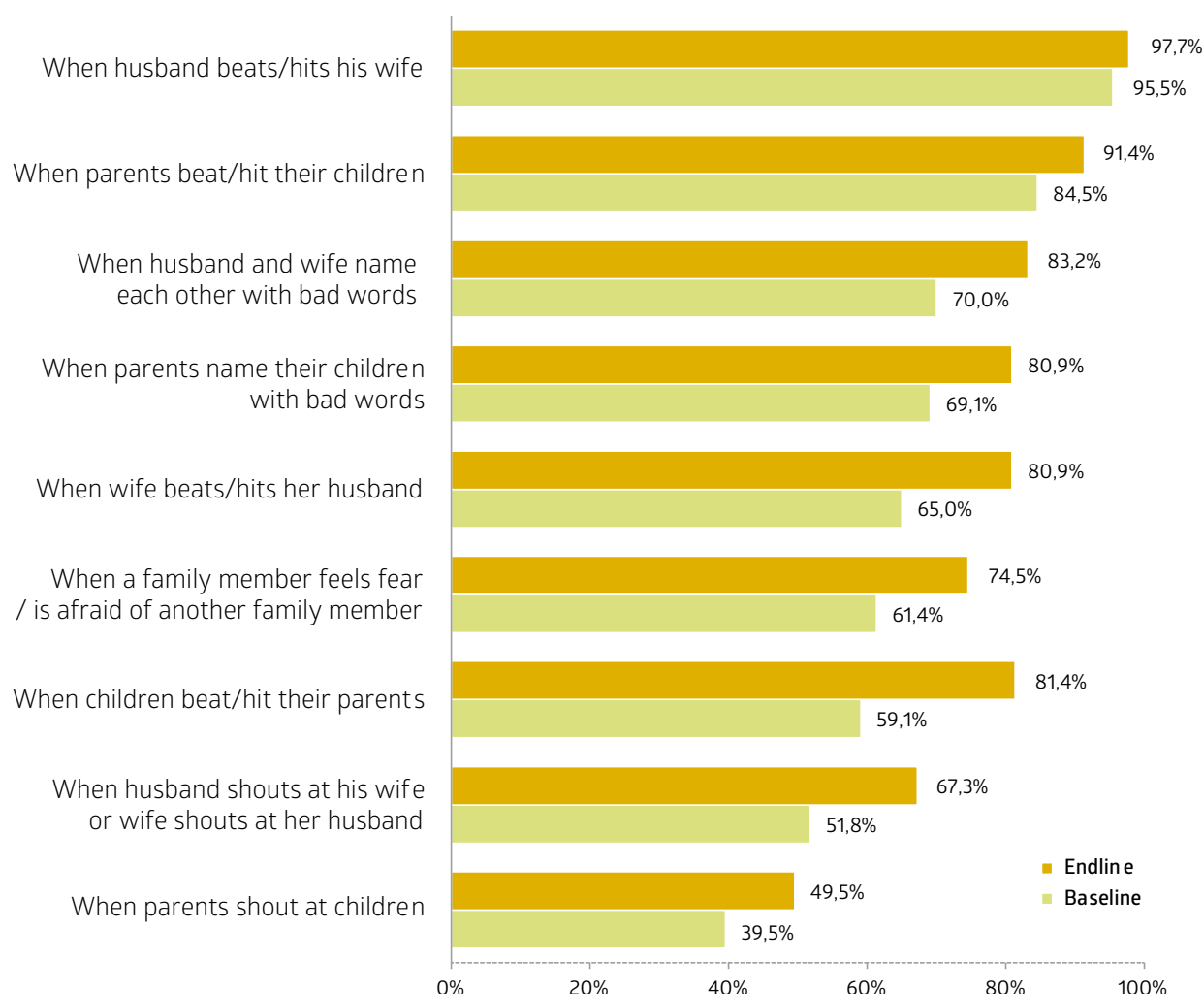
The gender differences related to the knowledge of forms of domestic violence are low, a higher share of girls know about the psychological violence (92,7%), compared to boys (87,1%) and economic violence (46%), compared to (38,6%).

During the Baseline research, all the teaching staff knew about physical and psychological violence, but less teachers knew about sexual violence (19 of 23), economic violence (18 of 23), spiritual violence (15 of 23). Therefore, in order to improve

the knowledge of students at this subject, it was required that teachers knew all the forms of domestic violence, in order to explain the specifics of each of them to students. The Endline research emphasizes the improvement of knowledge of the teaching staff about the forms of domestic violence. All the teaching staff named correctly all the forms of domestic violence.



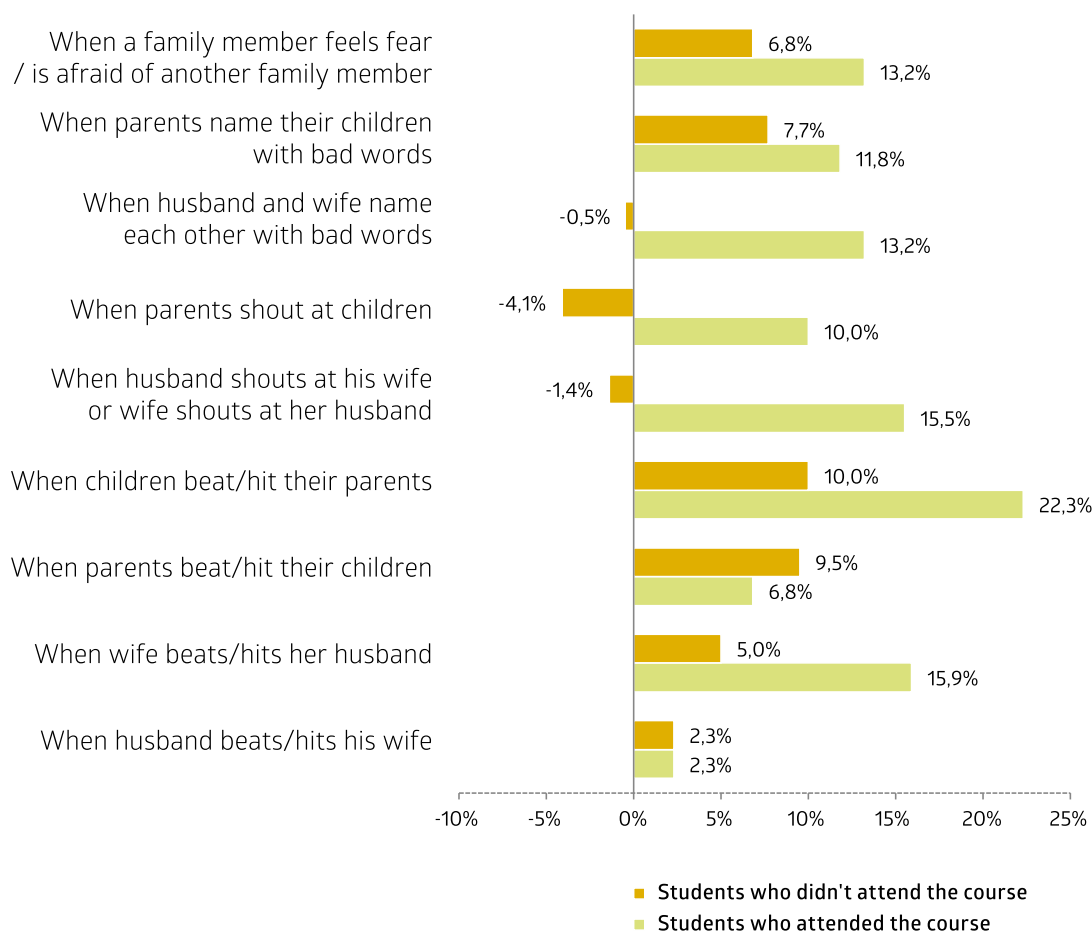
**Chart 18. Situations when we can state that there is domestic violence, in the opinion of students, %**



During the Baseline research, it was found that the students had difficulties in perceiving situations of domestic violence. Most of them associated domestic violence only with beating or hitting a family member, and rarely with the 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.) (see Chart 18). There are slight differences of gender in the perceptions of violence situations. For example, only 74,3% of boys, compared to 84,7% of girls mentioned that when children beat or hit their parents it is a case of domestic violence.

**Chart 19.** *The progress of answers to the question “Which are the situations when we can state that there is domestic violence?” between the Baseline and the Endline studies. Students who attended and those who didn’t attend the optional course, comparative data, %*



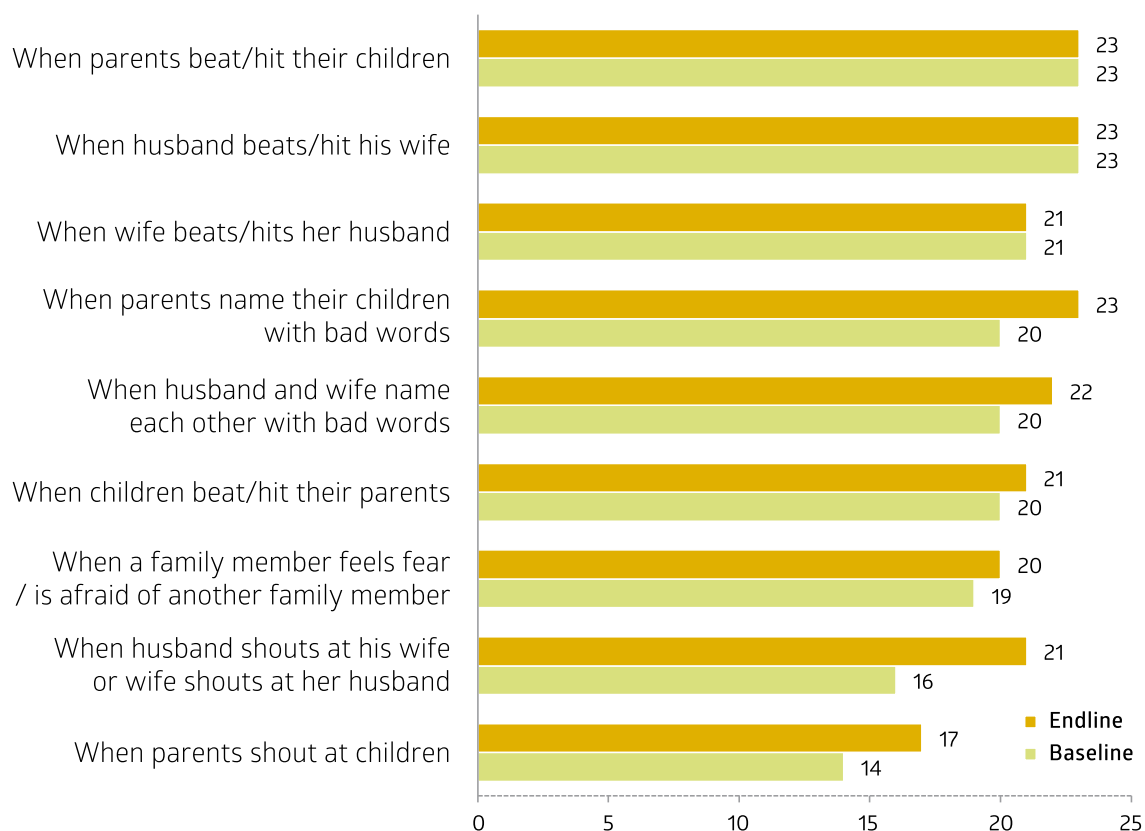
Informing about situations of violence and understanding them is an effect of the optional course. The differences in this issue are very big between the attendees and non-attendees of the optional course. Those who didn't attend the course do not think that the situations when someone raises his/her voice, or when uses negative words as being violent (see Chart 19).

At the Baseline phase, identification of situations of domestic violence was a difficult exercise also

for the teaching staff. Their opinions were caused by the traditions in the Moldovan society. Thus, 10 of 23 teachers did not believe that when parents shout at their children it is a situation of violence, 8 of 23 teachers did not think that when a husband shouts at his wife or vice versa, it is also a case of violence etc. (see Chart 20).

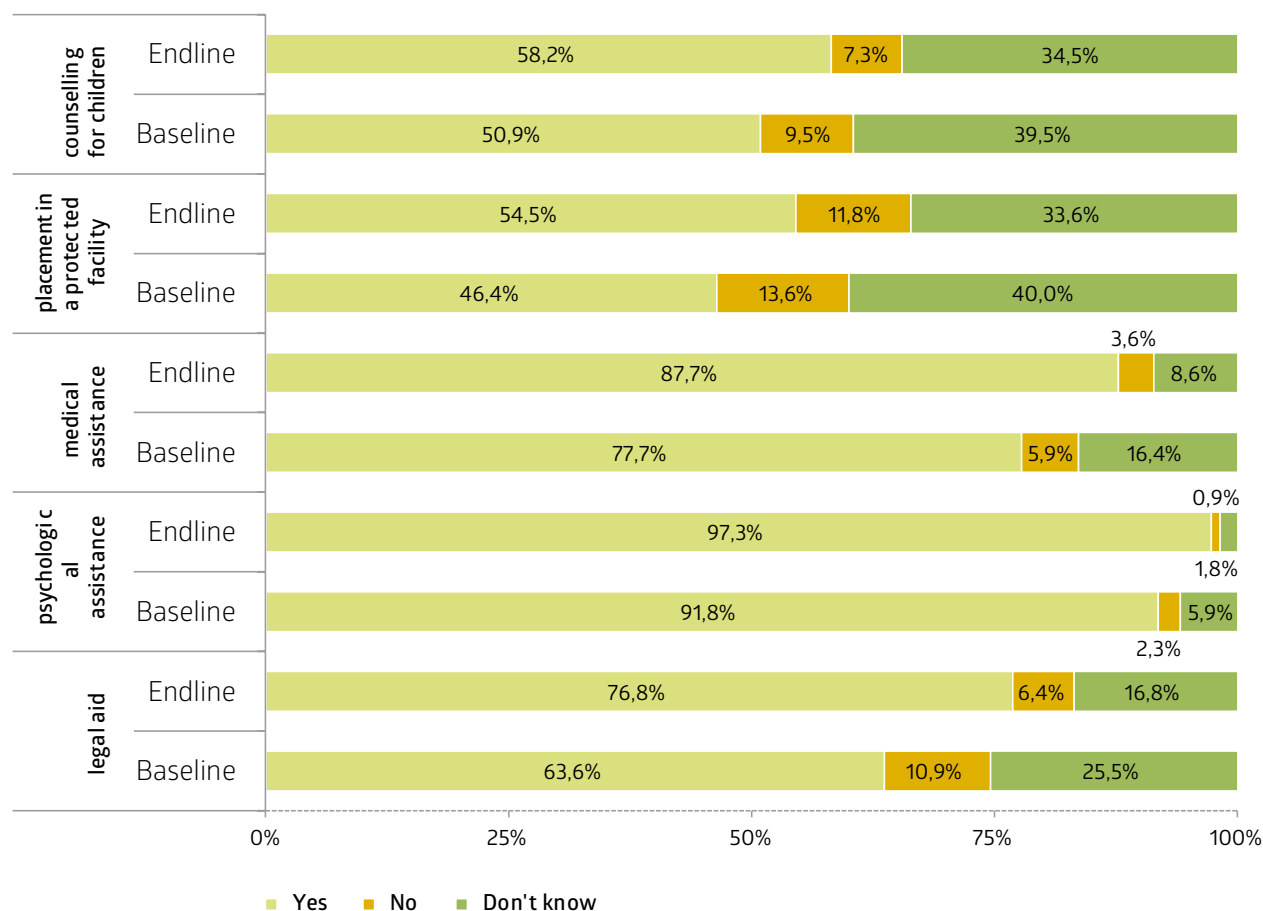
By the Endline phase, the teaching staff improved their knowledge/recognition of situations of domestic violence.

**Chart 20. Situations when we can state that there is domestic violence, in the opinion of the teaching staff, persons**



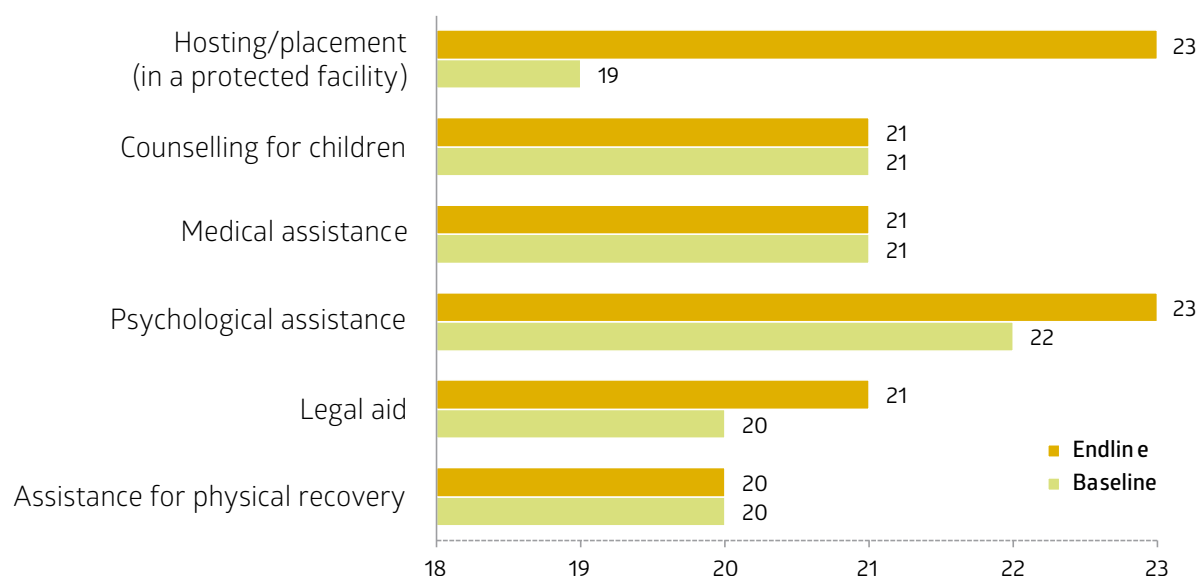
The level of knowledge of the protection measures for victims of domestic violence increased in the main sample in a bigger proportion than in the control sample. Thus, knowledge about the availability of social assistance increased from 63,6% to 76,8%, of psychological assistance from 91,8% to 97,3%, of medical assistance from 77,7% to 87,7%, of hosting or placement from 46,6% to 54,5% and of counseling for children from 50,9% to 58,2% in the main sample (see Chart 21).

**Chart 21.** Knowledge of protection measures that victims of domestic violence have the right to, students who attended the course, %



The level of knowledge of protection measures that the victims of domestic violence have the right to, increased among teachers. We can say that the great majority of the teaching staff knows the protection measures for the victims of domestic violence, but there are still gaps to be covered (Chart 22).

**Chart 22. Knowledge of protection measures that victims of domestic violence have the right to, teaching staff, persons**



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 sam-

ple due to the course of Civic Education, but in a lower proportion. After the analysis of the institutions mentioned by the students, 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 08008808 increased by 33,6 p.p. among those who attended the optional course, compared to only 5,5 p.p. in the control sample.

# THE OPTIONAL COURSE „HARMONIOUS FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS“. EXPECTATIONS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

## 3.1. Appreciation of the optional course

During the Baseline phase, students mentioned that the course should provide them with practical knowledge required in real life, related to the following:

- ways to build relationships between boys and girls;
- ways to solve problems in friendships;
- ways to create harmonious and sustainable families “healthy from the physiological and moral point of view... where members would all be happy and positive” (FG\_2\_F\_N\_B);
- relationships between husband-wife, parents-children and children-children – “let’s have some courses to learn how to behave in our future families” (FG\_1\_B\_S\_B);
- strategies for educating children with no aggressiveness and no violence – “to be able to explain normally” (FG\_1\_B\_S\_B);
- strategies to avoid conflicts that might happen in families, including domestic violence – “to step over the obstacles that appear in a family” (FG\_2\_F\_N\_B).

Students emphasized the fact that creating a family is “the most important step in the life of every person” and young people should understand that they are “the initiators of their own happiness” (FG\_2\_F\_N\_B). Thus, the optional course “Harmonious family relationships” was perceived by the majority of teenagers as something “useful” for “building” a happy family – “to build a solid base of our family” (FG\_2\_F\_N\_B). The information exists in books, on the internet, but it is more important to discuss it directly.

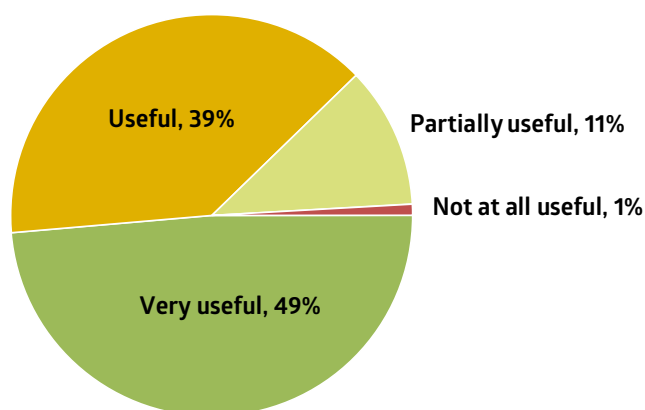
It was mentioned that the course is taught at a very appropriate age – “we are at that age when we start talking to different people, we start dating girls and boys and we should know who is the right person for us and how to behave” (FG\_2\_F\_N\_B). It was also emphasized that this course will provide useful information before starting a relationship “it is exactly for our age” (FG\_3\_M\_C\_B), “it will help us make the right choices”, “it will help us become more careful about the abuse, rape” (FG\_1\_B\_S\_B). In addition, it was observed that the knowledge from the course could prevent divorces – “so that we don’t go through this” (FG\_3\_M\_C\_B).

Some teenagers also said that the information learned will allow them to understand specific problems in their original family and maybe to contribute to the improvement of relations inside the

family – “right now, I would like to be able to make some changes in my family... I would like us to have more harmony. I hope this course helps me develop abilities to solve some problems in my family, which will also be useful in future, in the family I will create” (FG\_2\_F\_N\_B).

Within the Endline research, the teaching staff mentioned that the optional course “Harmonious family relationships” is “welcomed”, “useful”, a “spelling book of family life”, a “guide”, “nutrition” for creating harmonious families, because it brings into discussion problems that families in modern society are facing.

**Chart 23. The usefulness of the course, Endline, students, %**



Students also stated that the optional course is “useful”, “a lesson of life for the family”, “training for the future”, “it teaches us how to behave in our family, how to have a harmonious family”, “how to be equal in our rights”, “how to confront aggressive relationships... how to stop such a relationship” and “rules and help for family life”, “for harmony”. Some students mentioned that the course teaches them “how to communicate and behave” in the family, as well as in the society (see Chart 23)

### **In the opinion of students, the usefulness of the course, consists in:**

*“offering guidance, analysis of examples and problems from real life and identifying solutions”, “what should we do” (FG\_3\_M\_S\_E);*

*“not being slaves of our love feelings, being honest with our partner” (FG\_2\_B\_C\_E);*

*“it teaches us how to build a solid and sustainable relationship, and how to communicate and solve our problems, not avoid them, because avoiding them, leads to something more serious” (FG\_3\_M\_S\_E).*

Students said that the course focuses on the “future” of students, because it tries to offer knowledge, and also develop abilities for the creation of harmonious and sustainable families – “to choose correctly our life partner and to create a happy family” (FG\_3\_M\_S\_E). One of the most important aspects of the course is the communication between boys and girls – “it gives us the chance to express our opinions. It doesn’t matter if we are right or wrong, the important thing is to say what we believe and then compare our opinion with other opinions” (FG\_3\_M\_S\_E).

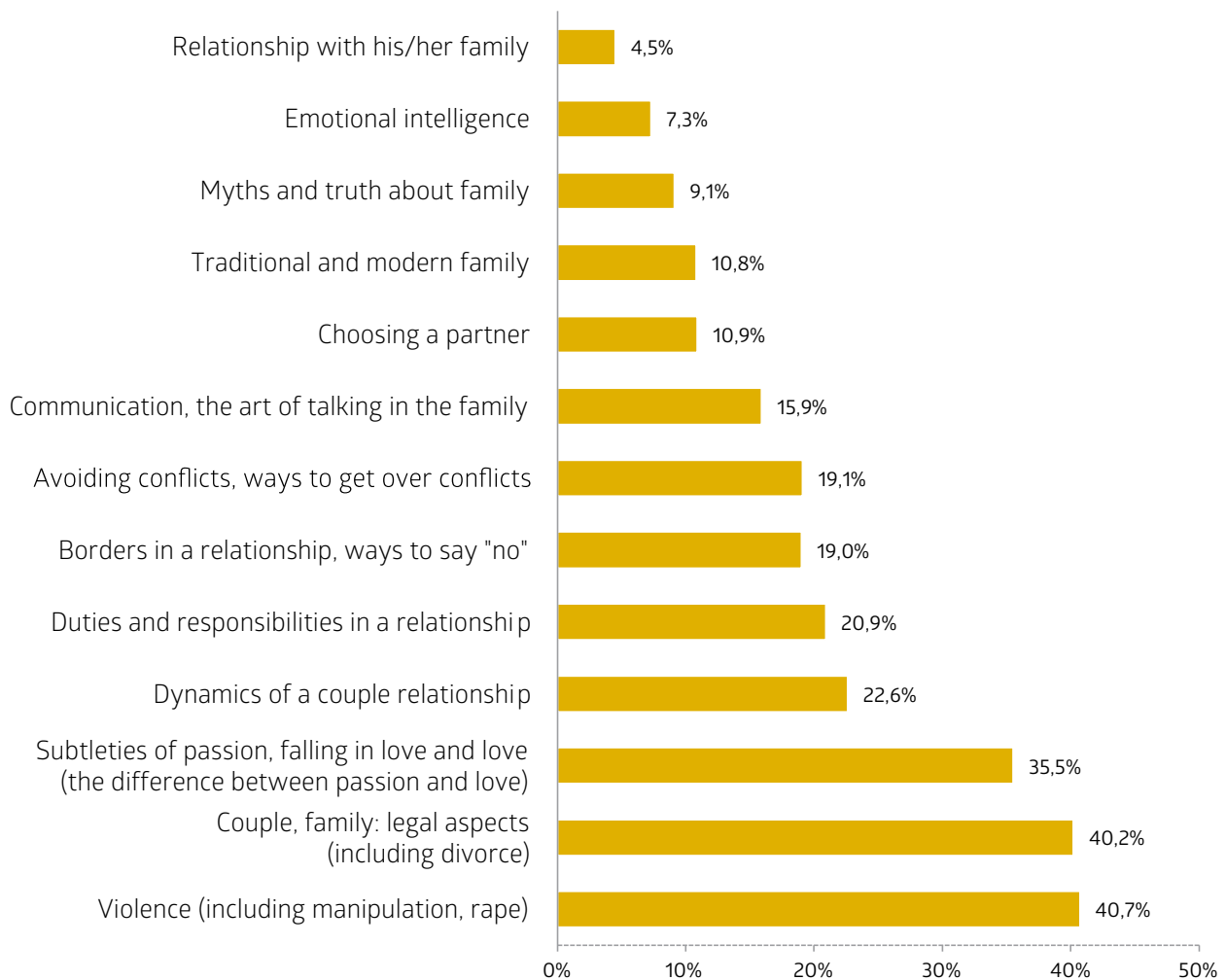
The course also helps to discover the gaps of information on relationships among youth. By attending the course, some students understand “the mistakes that had been done by their parents” and will try not to repeat them, the teachers said.

The teaching staff emphasized the absence of parents who migrated abroad for work – “32% of children in our institution have one or both parents abroad” (FG\_P\_B), therefore, the lack of education for family life and the lack of a family relations model causes the temptation to follow wrong models of friends, on the internet, in movies etc.

Discussions with students about family relations have a positive effect. The students get aware of the importance of the topics discussed, especially the importance of “developing the belief that real solutions can be found” (FG\_P\_E). It was also men-

tioned that destroying stereotypes is another useful aspect of the course – “it showed new aspects and, at the same time, allowed for elimination of some stereotypes” (FG\_P\_E).

**Chart 24. The most useful subjects, in the opinion of students, % (open question)**





Both students and teachers stated that the practical usefulness of the course for daily life is “the most precious result”. In the opinion of students, the most useful subjects discussed are indicated in Chart 24.

The teaching staff and some students mentioned that this course should become mandatory. The course is necessary not only for students from lycées, but also for those from gymnasiums, because some teenagers “have parents abroad”, and others, even though “both parents are home, do not have positive family models” (FG\_CD\_E).

There is no unique opinion on the exact grade in which the optional course should be introduced to students. Some say it should be introduced starting with the gymnasium phase (7-9 grades) – “at that moment students develop a vision of life and family relationships”, others believe it is more appropriate for the lycée phase, because in high school “we revise our way of thinking”.

The course allowed for identifying some stereotypes and prejudice among both: students and the teaching staff, “slowly, drop by drop, we tried to change specific things” (FG\_CD\_E). During focus group dis-

cussions students emphasized the divergences in opinions on different subjects of the course and the difficulties in changing specific stereotypes – “it is difficult to change the way of thinking... Many people here say that the man should make money and the woman should stay in the kitchen” (FG\_1\_F\_N\_E).

Also during the group discussions, students admitted that understanding the need and usefulness of the course happened gradually – “We had an aggressive reaction when we first heard about the optional course... Then, slowly, a window opened, then another one. Now we understand that it is useful, and many topics, although should be discussed with parents, are not being discussed. In addition, parents are not psychologists, they speak only from their own experience” (FG\_1\_F\_N\_E).

**Table 20. Strengths and weaknesses of the optional course, in the opinion of the teaching staff and students**

Strengths	Weaknesses
Teaching staff	
<p><i>"It brought children and parents closer to each other. Children started to talk more to their parents";</i></p> <p><i>"We identify students and situations that require the help of a psychologist";</i></p> <p><i>"We help children to understand themselves, to discover themselves";</i></p> <p><i>"Students become more aware, and better control their emotions and their relationship... They understand that one builds his/her own family and should face the difficulties";</i></p> <p><i>"Students have more faith in their future";</i></p> <p><i>"It also helped me in making my relationship official and stop living in concubinage".</i></p>	<p><i>"A bigger number of hours is required. 35 hours is too little";</i></p> <p><i>"It would also be useful to talk about contraception methods" (although the opinions here split, only a few teachers agreed with this idea);</i></p> <p><i>"More hours are needed for learning communication, especially assertive communication";</i></p> <p><i>"Plan less hours for the topic of violence";</i></p> <p><i>"More hours are required to learn about emotional intelligence. So many teenagers are focused on cognitive intelligence. More practical exercises are needed to develop emotional intelligence;</i></p> <p><i>"There are too many tasks in the Student's Notebook".</i></p>
Students	
<p><i>"A solid base for the daily life";</i></p> <p><i>"We discuss and this is important";</i></p> <p><i>"It teaches us assertive communication and how to control our impulsivity";</i></p> <p><i>"It helps you change a bit your vision about the family you want";</i></p> <p><i>"We have the chance to compare. The knowledge comes out when you try to compare. I have the possibility to compare and to choose what I need";</i></p> <p><i>"Every child analyzes his/her family: what is good and what is wrong";</i></p> <p><i>"We learned how to behave with people we don't like";</i></p> <p><i>"We learned not to get in conflict, but to find compromises";</i></p> <p><i>"We learn to solve problems peacefully, without causing damages to us and to those around us";</i></p> <p><i>"We learned to understand people and respect them, either we like it or not";</i></p> <p><i>"It helps in initiating a relationship";</i></p> <p><i>"It consolidates us, we communicate and get to know each other better";</i></p> <p><i>"It develops our creativity through project activities";</i></p> <p><i>"It shows us new ways of problem solving";</i></p> <p><i>"It teaches us to be equal";</i></p> <p><i>"It teaches us to develop family values and cherish the soul first and then the physical beauty";</i></p> <p><i>"We make the difference between passion and love";</i></p> <p><i>"It caused the change of some visions and I am sorry we didn't have it earlier, because we needed this knowledge already in previous grades";</i></p> <p><i>"It tries to eliminate stereotypes";</i></p> <p><i>"I felt changes in my behavior";</i></p> <p><i>"We understood how every colleague will behave in his/her family".</i></p>	<p><i>"We cannot implement in life immediately all the information received";</i></p> <p><i>"It is not so easy to change yourself";</i></p> <p><i>"Some boys don't take the course seriously";</i></p> <p><i>"This course should not have marks";</i></p> <p><i>"Evaluation should not be with points, students should just write their opinions";</i></p> <p><i>"Lack of a manual for students".</i></p>

### 3.2. The portrait of the teacher for the optional course “Harmonious family relationships”

The teacher has a special role in the students’ learning process, as a source of information, as a model of values, as a user of interactive methods, and in terms of availability for communication and interaction. The optional course “Harmonious family relationships” should not be just a source of information, but also a course for meditation and evaluation of knowledge, personal perceptions and attitudes, a laboratory for creating a solid base for a future harmonious and sustainable family. Students noted that the teacher who teaches the course should be “understanding”, “calm”, “balanced”, “to know children’s psychology”, “to respect gender equality... to avoid comparing girls and boys”, “to do his/her job with passion”, “a bit strict”, an open person who will manage to get along with every child in the class – “with an open soul for every little story told by children. He/she should personally feel each of their problems and must be a really sensitive person to be able to manage all that” (FG\_2\_F\_N\_B).

The majority of students would like their teacher to have experience in family life “one who lived a life”, “an experienced person”, in order to “give examples from his/her own experience” (FG\_1\_B\_S\_B). Others would like a young teacher with modern views.

Some students said that this teacher should be a model, including in dressing style – “a solid person, wearing more or less classical clothing style, because he/she must be an example for students” (FG\_2\_F\_N\_B), although the majority believe that “the interior aspect is more important than the physical aspect” (FG\_2\_F\_N\_B), “it is important what he/she has in the soul, what he/she can give to children and what he/she can get from them” (FG\_2\_F\_N\_B).

Accepting diversity of opinions and toleration are other necessary features – “a person who is open to listen and to explain with very big patience” (FG\_2\_F\_N\_B). The attention for not giving concrete recipes is important and cannot be neglected.

Other aspects that were indicated as mandatory in the teacher’s portfolio are as follows:

1. creating a favorable atmosphere for learning, using methods to catch attention – “to be psychologically prepared to teach in the 10th-12th grades”, “to be able to motivate students to listen”;
2. creative spirit is also a required feature, supplemented by the use of various interactive teaching methods – “not only talk and talk, but also use different games, so that we understand the essence of things and make it more interesting” (FG\_2\_F\_N\_B);
3. the importance of getting ready for every class, and finding appropriate arguments to explain concrete situations;
4. last but not least, the teaching staff should be ready to explain parents, grandparents, priests the need for the course “Harmonious family relationships”, to invite them to see which values are being transmitted during this course – “to make them understand that we do not promote lechery in our society” (FG\_P\_B).

During the Endline focus group discussions, participants also mentioned that the teacher’s background, but also his/her visions have a great impact on children – “everything depends on the teacher”.

Students made some suggestions for the teaching staff:

- “to structure the information well and to present it as clearly as possible” (FG\_2\_B\_C\_E);
- “to engage all children into discussions, including the shy ones” (FG\_1\_M\_S\_E).

The teachers who implemented the course proposed some suggestions to the management of educational institutions which want to introduce the optional course. Their representatives should choose competent staff to teach this course, the teachers' rela-

tionships with students must be positive – “teachers who are appreciated by students, not the ones who have less hours” (FG\_CD\_E). Psychologists would be the most appropriate, but there are also exceptions.

### 3.3. Challenges of the optional course

The teaching staff mentioned the following challenges they experienced while implementing the optional course:

- not enough time – “We don’t manage in time. The topics are too complex”, “a great part of topics require more teaching and assimilation time” (FG\_P\_E);
- lack of informational support for students and need for a manual;
- lack of audio-visual materials, PPT presentations, case studies;
- big number of individual tasks in the Student’s Notebook – “we didn’t really practice individual tasks in class, because students get bored” (FG\_P\_E);
- need for restructuring the content, including some topics. For example: “The topic on traditional and modern family was like salt and pepper.... Maybe they should be split and taught separately. To observe the usefulness of the first, and then of the second” (FG\_P\_E);
- difficulties for students to understand the topics – “The aspects related to gender equality are not very well understood by students. It is very easy for them to find some stereotypes related to gender in the community, but they find it difficult to analyze their own behavior from this perspective” (FG\_P\_E);
- the evaluation process at this course is difficult and very partial. In order to increase the level of impartiality, the teaching staff used different methods during the evaluation process, such as: essay, research, cause-effect exercises, commenting different sayings, ad-hoc tests, analysis of some case studies, social theater etc.;
- the fear of students to express their own opinions and beliefs, due to stereotypes;
- difficulties in communicating with some parents. Not all parents accept to discuss such subjects as domestic violence etc.

There have been some challenges also for the teaching staff who didn’t teach the course – “after the assertive communication topic, students were telling more rigid and more aggressive teachers that they should communicate assertively” (FG\_CD\_E).

While teaching the course, some teachers faced specific provocative questions asked by students. In such situations they remained calm, provided a scientific answer and, when not having an appropriate answer, postponed the discussion of the issue until the next class, in order to get informed.

There were some difficulties also in applying the methods required: "Exercise 5 from the topic "Choosing a partner and initiating a relationship" is difficult for me as a teacher, so it is even more difficult for

students. It is complicated to fill in the column 2 "Under the Edison's wand", and transform the negative reasons into positive" (FG\_CD\_E).

**Table 21. Challenges and ways to solve them, in the opinion of the teaching staff and students**

<b>1</b>	<b>Not enough time.</b>	Double the number of hours. Extend the course for 2 years, for a full elucidation of subjects and for a better engagement of students in issues related to family life.	<b>1</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Lack of any informational support for students.</b>	Develop a manual for students or include a small informational support in the Student's Notebook, before the practical tasks.	<b>2</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Lack of audio-visual materials, PPT presentations, case studies.</b>	Develop informational materials. Prepare short videos, case studies, PPT, working charts by representatives of the International Center "La Strada", following real sources.	<b>3</b>
		Provide didactic support for specific topics (for example: chapter 5, 14 etc.).	<b>4</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Too many individual tasks in the Student's Notebook.</b>	The need to reduce individual work by revising the tasks from the Student's Notebook – "to omit some of them". The need to introduce case studies. Students mentioned – "there are exercises that require expressing and explaining our opinion, and I consider them useful, but the ones that require only answering with Yes or No do not really have sense" (FG_1_F_N_E).	<b>5</b>
		Re-edit the Student's Notebook, but use a mate, less qualitative paper – "when I write with ink, it gets dirty", "they are difficult".	<b>6</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Need to restructure the content, including specific topics.</b>	Restructure the curriculum content – "If it includes 2 years, during the first year it would be better to teach the topics related to premarital relations, and in the second year, focus on family relationships".	<b>7</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Difficulties in understanding some topics by students.</b>	More efficient use of didactic methods and strategies which would allow students to get knowledge and competences in creating harmonious and sustainable families. Use of role plays or social theater, for a better understanding of prejudice and stereotypes.	<b>8</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Difficulties in the evaluation process.</b>	Propose different types of evaluation.	<b>9</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>Students' fear to express their opinions, views and beliefs.</b>	Create a trustworthy atmosphere during the class and involve all students in discussions.	<b>10</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>Difficulties in relationships with parents.</b>	Involve parents in some activities of the optional course.	<b>11</b>

The lack of time was one of the biggest challenges for the teaching staff while teaching the optional course. Therefore, we tried to identify the topics that, in the opinion of teachers, were not sufficiently discussed with students (in the order they were mentioned, from the most frequently mentioned to the least mentioned):

- Emotional intelligence – the key to success in a relationship;
- The couple and the family: legal aspects;
- Types of communication. Assertive communication. The art of speaking;
- Signs of manipulation and abuse at the premarital phase;
- Family roles and responsibilities;
- The role of borders in a relationship;
- Dissentions and conflicts in a relationship;
- Family as a social institution;
- Choosing the partner at the initial phase of a relationship;
- Creating and developing a relationship, from the gender perspective;
- Prevention of manipulation cases;
- Strategies to terminate abusive relationships;
- Mutual knowledge of partners;
- Violence and its forms.

The topics that, in the opinion of students, were insufficiently discussed are indicated in Chart 25. They slightly differ from those mentioned by the teaching staff and reflect the information needs of teenagers.

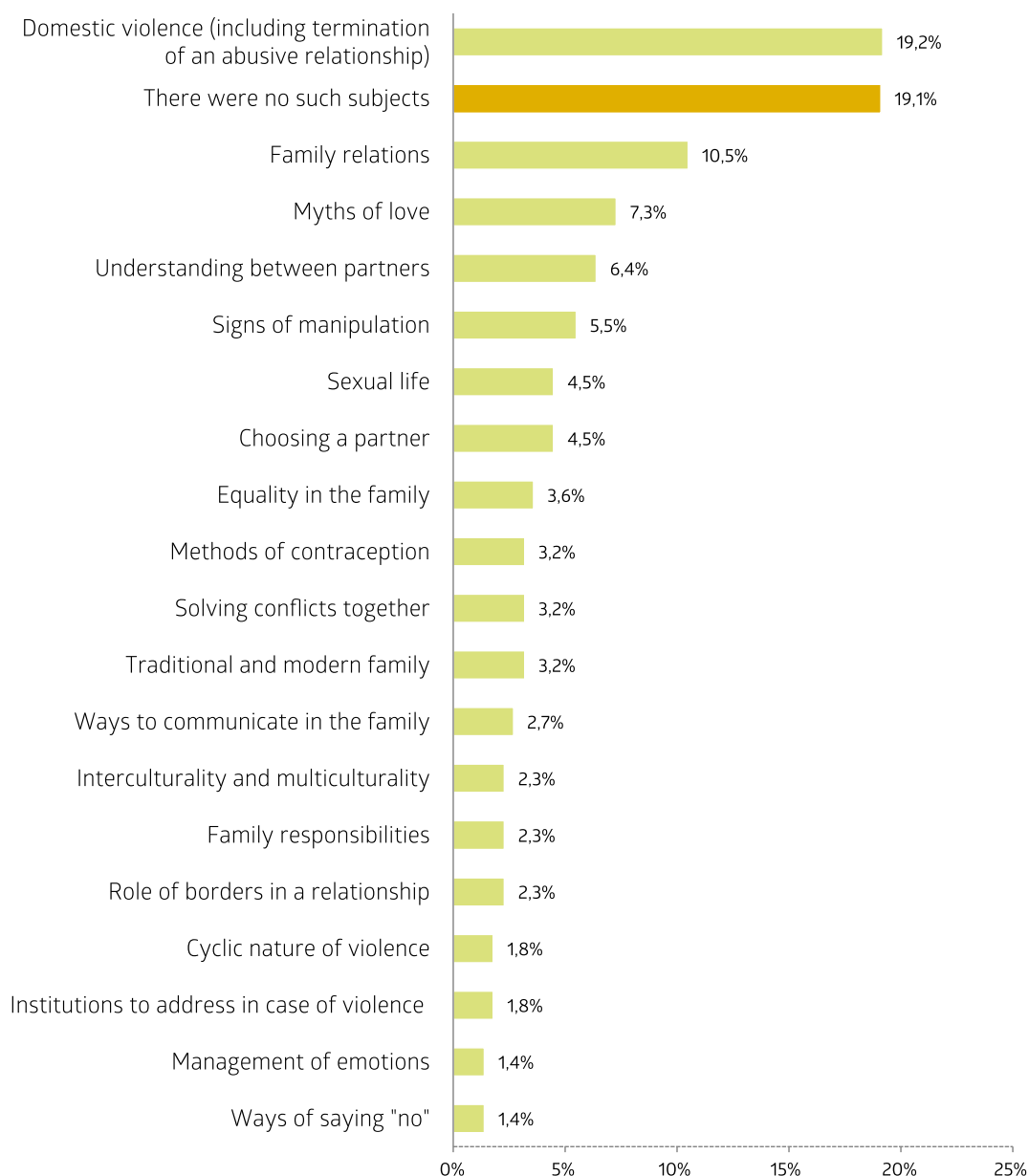
The topics/subjects of the course that caused difficulties to teaching staff are the following (the order starts from the most frequently mentioned to the least mentioned):

1. Creating and developing a relationship, from the gender perspective;
2. Interculturality and multiculturalism in the relationship;
3. Myths of love;
4. Signs of manipulation and abuse at the premarital stage “students believe that particular signs are natural in a relationship” (FG\_P\_E);
5. Traditional family vs modern family;
6. Borders in a couple relationship;
7. Emotional intelligence;
8. Obstacles in getting to know each other;
9. Strategies to stop/terminate abusive relationships;
10. Dissentions and conflicts in a relationship.

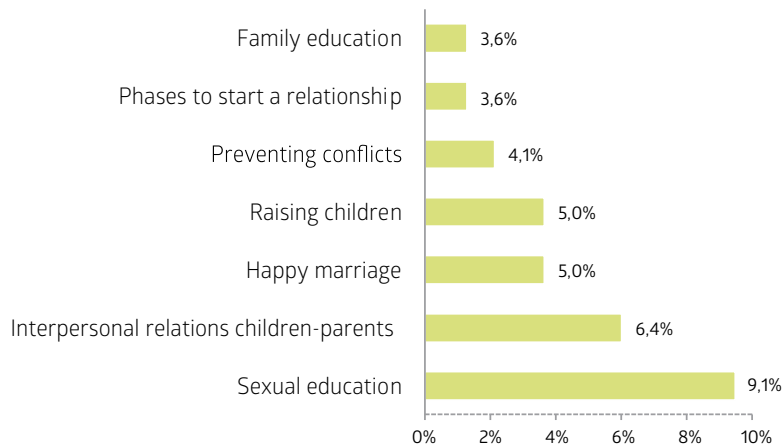
Students mentioned that the topics related to gender aspects and mono-parental families are difficult. When students referred to difficult topics, they also mentioned some tasks from the Student's Notebook – “it is difficult to write in the notebook how an abused girl or boy feels. We do not know” (FG\_3\_M\_S\_E), “it is difficult when you have to give examples of what will happen in future. It is difficult to imagine yourself as a husband/wife, because you don't have any experience” (FG\_1\_F\_N\_E).

According to students, the most complicated/hard to understand terms are: multiculturalism (10%), interculturality (5,9%), inter-knowledge (5,5%), emotional intelligence (4,1%), disagreements/conflicts in relationships (4,1%), borders in relationships (3,6%), settling (3,2%), assertive (2,1%), melancholic (2%). The teenagers emphasized the efforts of the teaching staff to explain the terms in an accessible way for students - “there have been difficult, scientific terms, but the teacher tried to explain them so that we understand” (FG\_2\_B\_C\_E).

**Chart 25. Topics/subjects that haven't been sufficiently discussed, in the opinion of students, % (open question)**



**Chart 26. Topics/subjects to be introduced in the optional course, in the opinion of students, % (open question)**



Also, students mentioned some new topics that caused their interest and should be included in the optional course “Harmonious family relationships” (Chart 26).

The teaching staff mentioned the importance of the Guidelines for teachers. In their opinion, the methods described in the Guidelines were very useful. The methods frequently used while teaching the course included: debates, case study, role play, RAI method, short lectures, T-graphic, gallery tour, didactic games, group projects, Venn diagram, group work, clustering, star explosion, guided discussion, brainstorming, panel discussion, reflection chart, poster, simulation, hierarchization, diamond, blind hand, value line, mosaic, round table, SWOT analysis, free writing, essay, live sculpture etc.

Some teaching staff also used another methods, besides those listed in the Guidelines for teachers, such as: the puzzle, the suitcase, the pantomime, the opinio pool – “if students were asking specific questions during the discussion, I was proposing them to make some research in school, in the community and later, children were analyzing the answers” (FG\_CD\_E).

The teaching staff mentioned that students assimilate information better during discussions, debates and interactive method.

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.

During the course, some teachers organized round tables with various community members (priest, doctor, parents), and presented the objectives of the course and the topics to be studied (Aparece Eugenia from the Theoretical Lyceum “Mihai Sadoveanu”, Giurgiulești village, Cahul District). Others organized debates on specific topics. “Debates about the “Colors” movie were very tensed. Students communicated passionately, but even now some boys still consider they can control the life of a girl as they want” (Spatari Tatiana, Theoretical Lyceum “Ștefan-Vodă”, Stefan-Vodă city).

### Teaching the topics

“While teaching the topic **“Subtleties of passion, falling in love and love”** I used the didactic game “The Discussion Net”, from the Teachers’ Guidelines. Students were very enthusiastic in creating the net, and in the end, I proposed them to place this net on a wall, creating the symbol of love” (Belibova Silvia, Theoretical Lyceum “Varnița”).

„For the topic **„Listen and understand the partner”**, at the evocation phase, I didn’t use the didactic game “The Howling wall”, to avoid noise. Instead, I applied the game “Active listening”. Students grouped in 3 and decided on their roles: A, B or C. Each person was explained the task, so that the other two don’t know about it. Person A was supposed to tell something interesting to the other 2 colleagues, person B was supposed to listen carefully, showing interest, and person C was supposed to capture their attention, to interrupt the speaker, to have additional disturbing occupations. Finally, students expressed their emotions and opinions” (Belibova Silvia, Theoretical Lyceum “Varnița”).

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## 3.4. Examples of best practices in teaching the course

Teachers mentioned that they were impressed by the students’ interest and activism during classes, as well as by the results of the organized activities. 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



“On the topic **“What does a happy family mean”**, at the stage of reflection, I put the children in a circle and we created a poster showing “The secrets of a happy home”. Every student was giving an example and the necessary arguments for his version. This method is efficient because it makes all students participate and express their opinions” (Știrbu Lilia, Theoretical Lyceum “Dmitrie Cantemir”, Cantemir city).

“An important topic for children is **“Types of families”**. The topic implies making children familiar with the family evolution and the changes that a family goes through in time. Various questions of children about traditional and non-traditional families generated the idea of studying the actual family of each student. Thus, students were proposed to bring dynamic and positive family photos, with their parents, from different life events, in order to emphasize the harmony of relations” (Afteni Ludmila, Theoretical Lyceum “A. Mateevici”, Causeni city).

“The topic **“Strategies to say “No” in a relationship”** was a topic during which students were invited to discuss specific case studies on abusive relationships. It was an interesting experience for them, placing them in different roles, stimulating dialogues that show an inefficient relationship. Students grouped in pairs. From white A4 paper sheets they made a mascot, and “personalized” it by drawing its face. They were putting it on their arms and from that moment were assuming the role of another person. From the perspective of 2 young people of 18-19 years old, they simulated several situations /dialogues which contained elements of abuse/control coming from one of them. The goal of the first partner was show pressure and the goal of the second was to apply strategies of saying “No” in difficult situations. The exercise culminated with a conclusion about the importance of correct attitudes towards the partner during the premartial relation, the force of the argument and the need for being consequent while showing personal position in a relationship” (Afteni Ludmila, Theoretical Lyceum “A. Mateevici”, Causeni city).

“During the topic **“Signs of manipulation in a relationship”** students were bringing into discussion situations related to their older sisters, especially boys. In this regard, I proposed them to develop guidelines for boys which would reflect behaviors showing no manipulation and no abuse... Girls had the task to develop a list of elements that would help them identify abusive behaviors and anticipate manipulation in a relationship” (Belicciu Margareta, Theoretic Lyceum “Gina Latină”, Chisinau mun.).

“While teaching the topic **“Values and mentalities in the family”** I used the method of the values tree, analyzing the opinions of students. I drew a tree on the blackboard. On the tree leaves students wrote the values of their families and their own values. We analyzed the answers and in the end, created a mini-guidelines of students’ values” (Theoretical Lyceum “Pelinia”, Pelinia village, Drochia district).

“During **module II, topic 8**, I used the Power Point contents from the first phase of the course piloting made by Mariana Copacinschi. These materials and other 7 that I prepared, made the classes more interesting, delivering clear messages to students... I can share my experience with all interested teachers” (Oglinda Olga, Theoretical Lyceum “Emil Nicula”, Mereni village, Anenii Noi district).

“We taught the optional course within a club, which allowed us to double the number of hours for every topic and discuss details of various aspects” (Tocan Lucia, Leonte Tatiana, Theoretical Lyceum “M. Eminescu”, Ghindesti village, Floresti district).

“In the Professional School no. 1 from Cahul, the optional course “Harmonious family relationships” was taught only to students from graduating grades. Some of the students in I and II years heard about the course from their older colleagues and also wanted to study it. We decided that they can attend these classes if they are available, and they were very happy” (Papana Maxim, Professional School no. 1, Cahul city).

### **Individual activities designed by students**

“While studying the topic **“Interculturality and multi-culturality in the relationship”**, students got the task to observe a multicultural couple for 2 weeks and pay attention to their values, habits and communication style in their couple. Later, students presented the results of their observations” (Lavric Galina, Theoretical Lyceum “Corjeuti”, Corjeuti village, Briceni district).

### **Evaluation**

“As a way to evaluate module I, I proposed students to develop an informational leaflet which would contain structured information related to the topics discussed. The leaflet had to have an esthetic aspect, and the information had to be presented in a clear, accessible language” (Belibova Silvia, Theoretical Lyceum “Varnița”).

“To evaluate module II, I proposed students to develop “The guidelines of a happy family”, which would contain the description of a happy family and recommendations for building harmonious relations in the family. I appreciated the esthetical aspect, the ingenuity, the way to structure the information and the way the final product was presented. Students developed speeches, PPT presentations, brochures, leaflets” (Belibova Silvia, Theoretical Lyceum “Varnița”).

“We did the summarizing evaluation of chapter I together with parents and students. It was a beautiful experience sharing between 3 generations – children, parents, grandparents” (Tocan Lucia, Leonte Tatiana, Theoretical Lyceum “M. Eminescu”, Ghindesti village, Floresti district).

### **Other activities with impact**

“After having studied the topic “The dialogue in a relationship – the art of speaking”, I proposed students to practice assertive communication during 1 month. I posted the algorithm for building an assertive message. After 1 month, students voted secret-

ly for the most assertive colleagues. Later, the best students were awarded” (Belibova Silvia, Theoretical Lyceum “Varnița”).

“As a school psychologist, I noted that students became more sensitive and more aware of the crisis situations in their families and don't hesitate to share their experience during the counselling activities, trying to solve specific problems” (Catlabuga Liubovi, Theoretical Lyceum “Hyperion”, Durllesti).

“In March, together with our students we organized the contest “7 by 7 on the 7th”, during which, in a funny way we showed the relationship between a man and a woman that is being developed in a couple” (Tocan Lucia, Leonte Tatiana, Theoretical Lyceum “M. Eminescu”, Ghindesti village, Floresti district).

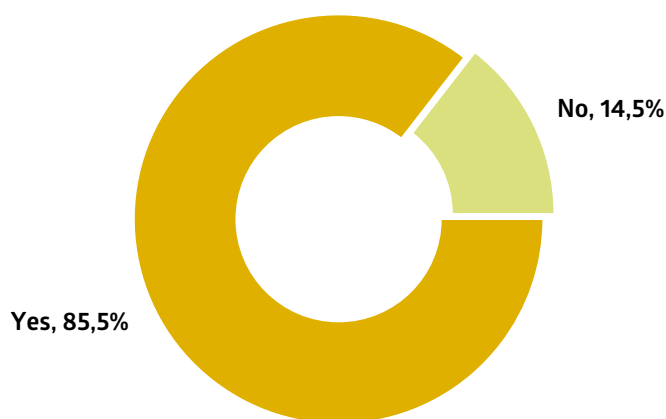
“In order to extend the topic “Getting to know the partner”, I proposed students to observe a colleague for 2 weeks: interests, abilities, attitudes, hobby, character features, dreams etc. (previously students extracted cards with the names of colleagues). After 2 weeks, each student made a presentation of his/her colleague without giving his/her name. The other students had to guess who was the person described” (Belibova Silvia, Theoretical Lyceum “Varnița”).

### 3.5. Interaction of students with their parents

The Endline data show that 85,5% of students told their parents about the optional course (see Chart 27). 1/3 of students explained the goal of the course to their parents, 1/3 of them said that they feel good during this course, and the rest told parents about the topics they discussed during the course (open question).

75,6% of parents who were told about the course, discussed several topics with their children (see Chart 28), and 67,1% of children also showed their Student's Notebook.

**Chart 27.** *The share of students who told their parents about the optional course "Harmonious family relationships"; %*



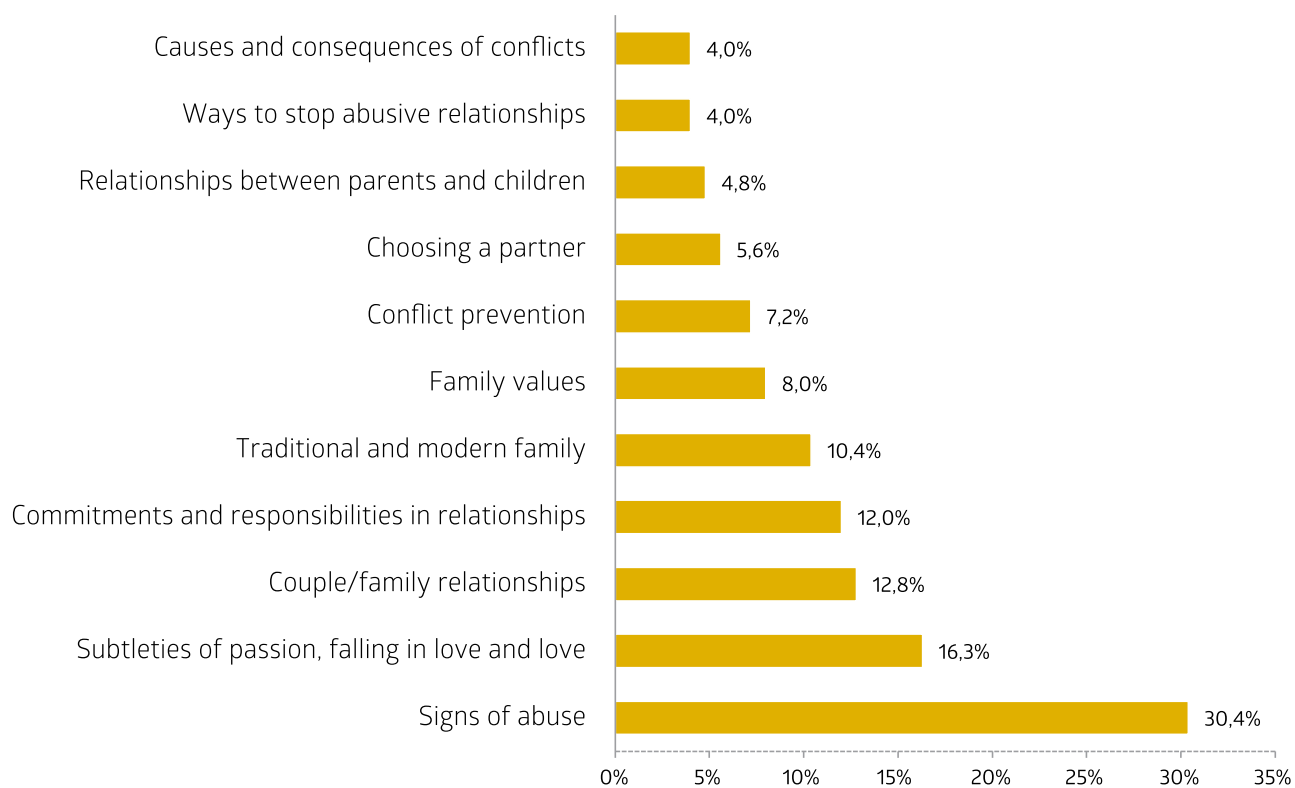
Being asked about the need for studying the optional course in school, 88,2% of parents mentioned the need to study the course, compared to 6,9%, of those who said they do not know and 4,9% of parents who stated that this course should not be studied in school because children can learn these things at home. During the group discussions students mentioned that – “from the parents’ point of view this course is a relief. My mother was happy

she doesn’t have to explain me, since competent people will do it instead. My mother could show me her point of view, her experience, but things are more complex” (FG\_3\_M\_S\_E).

Parents were asked to point out at least 2 topics that they believe should be studied during this course. Their answers reveal the following main topics: Legal aspects of a family (32,7%), Domestic violence (17,7%), Engagement and responsibilities in a relationship (11,3%), Conflict solving (11,3%), Parents-children relationships (10,9%), Sexual education (8,9%), Choosing the right partner (8,1%), Behavior in the society (4,4%), Initial stages of a relationship (4,0%), Communication (3,6%), Child education (3,2%), Borders in a relationship (3,2%) etc.

Also, parents were asked to mention 2 topics that should not be studied during this course. Their answers include the following: Cyclic nature of violence (19,6%), Myths of love (11,8%), Features of a traditional family and of a modern one (11,8%), Sexual relations (9,8%), Initial stages of a relationship (7,8%), Personal life (7,8%) etc. It was identified that the opinions of some parents are exactly opposite to the opinions of the majority. Some parents do not understand the importance of discussions about violence, sexual education etc., and believe that these topics are a taboo.

**Chart 28. Topics discussed with parents during the optional course, %**



### 3.6. Modifications proposed by teachers and students to improve the optional course

The students who attended the optional course “Harmonious family relationships” during the 2016-2017 study year, as well as the teachers were asked about the changes that are needed, related to content, teaching methods and assessment methods. Their visions are presented in the Tables 22 and 23 and should be considered.

Some teachers emphasized the need of 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, watching the movie „Colors” together with students and discuss for 10-15 minutes about the peculiarities and the importance of the option-

**Table 22. Changes required to improve the optional course, in the opinion of the teaching staff**

In content	In teaching methods	In assessment forms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Double the number of hours (70 instead of 35);</li> <li>Module III to become Module I;</li> <li>Module on Violence not to be the last;</li> <li>Start the course with watching the movie “Colors”;</li> <li>Introduction of topics:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Assertive communication,</li> <li>- Critical thinking,</li> <li>- Manipulation;</li> </ul> </li> <li>The content of the course to be divided by grades – 10th, 11th or 12th;</li> <li>More details about the subject of responsibilities inside the family;</li> <li>Extending the topic “Emotional Intelligence”;</li> <li>Specific aspects about violence that students know from the Civic Education course.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduce group projects;</li> <li>Introduce mini-research projects,</li> <li>At the first stage of the course methods should be more interactive;</li> <li>Introduce the “fishbone” method;</li> <li>Use methods with a creative content;</li> <li>Use additional methods.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organize the classes differently;</li> <li>Round tables;</li> <li>Communication;</li> <li>Polls;</li> <li>Verbal evaluation to be predominant;</li> <li>Self-assessment also to be used;</li> <li>Various types of summative assessment to be proposed within Guidelines;</li> <li>Research to be conducted by students;</li> <li>Develop specific tests.</li> </ul>

al course. This way, parents will know more about the new course. The involvement of parents is required for various discussions, especially on the following topics:

- Divorce and its impact on the family;

- Traditional family and modern family;
- Family responsibilities;
- Choosing the life partner;
- The happy family;
- Assertive communication in the family.

**Table 23.** *Changes needed to improve the optional course, in the opinion of students*

In content	In teaching methods	In assessment forms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Topics should be more interesting, with small videos, games – 12,7%;</li> <li>More practical content – 5,5%;</li> <li>More hours for discussion – 2,3%;</li> <li>Topics related to getting over a relationship;</li> <li>Structured by phases: the first year – how to start a relationship, the second year – about family life;</li> <li>“To add a topic about how to understand ourselves better, in order to learn to make self-assessment”;</li> <li>The first topics are bored, in the opinion of some students.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discussing concrete case studies – 9,5%;</li> <li>More educational aspects – 6,4%;</li> <li>Organizing more debates– 1,4%,</li> <li>Organizing debates between boys and girls, between different schools, debates ending with a compromise;</li> <li>More role-play games;</li> <li>More creative activities;</li> <li>Encourage shy students to participate in discussions;</li> <li>More self-awareness exercises.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exclude assessments – 5,5%;</li> <li>Electronic and verbal assessment – 4,1%;</li> <li>Include specific case studies in the assessment – 3,2%;</li> <li>Introduce more assessments– 2,7%;</li> <li>Use of grid tests – 2,3%;</li> <li>Introduce tests with multiple choice answers – 1,4%.</li> </ul>

# FINDINGS REGARDING THE OPTIONAL COURSE “HARMONIOUS FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS”

Following the goals set, the research data allow us to formulate the following conclusions regarding the optional course “Harmonious family relationships”, but also emphasize the short-term changes that the course had caused, at the level of knowledge, perceptions, attitudes and stereotypes of students and teachers:

## **Need for and usefulness of the optional course**

- 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 facing family conflicts, in developing sustainable relationships and harmonious future families.
- 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. Thus, 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, rape) – 40,7%, the couple, the family: legal aspects – 40,2%, the subtleties of falling in love, and of love – 35,5%.
- 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 challenges in the modern Moldovan society: 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 interac-

tive methods, as availability of communication and interaction. Students mentioned that it is very important for the teacher who teaches the course to 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.

- 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 etc.
- Students found difficult the topics related to gender aspects and mono-parental families. In their opinion, complicated / hard to understand terms are: multiculturalism (10%), interculturalism (5,9%), inter-knowledge (5,5%), emotional intelligence (4,1%), dissensions/conflicts in relationships (4,1%), borders within relationships (3,6%) etc.
- 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 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.

- 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 positive changes.
- The analysis of changes related to the aspects above also reflects positive changes. They understood that they should see things overall. Now, they are paying attention not only to the physical



aspect of the person, but also consider his/her inner side.

- The Baseline data showed that at the premarital phase young people do not perceive and do not understand the signs of manipulation and abuse. Only 1/3 of teenagers mentioned them correctly. The Endline reveals that the students' knowledge in this area increased. After attending the course, over 50% of students could name various signs of manipulation and abuse. In addition, it was determined that the knowledge of signs of the manipulation and abuse at the initial phase of relationship also increased among teachers.
- The knowledge of risk behaviors among teenagers improved. The great majority of youth understood the importance of informing, taking responsibility and controlling the behavior, in order to prevent unintended pregnancies, abuse and manipulation at the premarital phase. Thus, the share of those who expressed disagreement about the fact that a woman is the only responsible for protection against pregnancy increased from 51,4% to 69,5% (+18,1 p.p.). Although, the answers to this question differed significantly depending on gender. The number of girls who expressed their disagreement is higher than the number of boys – 72,7% and 62,9%, accordingly.
- During the optional course teenagers learned how to say “no” to a partner who insists on sexual relations: (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 reveals positive tendencies in changing some perceptions and stereotypes related to rape: the number of teenagers who disagree that girls and women from financially secured families do not become victims of rape increased (+23,7 p.p. among the attendees of the optional course, compared to and increase

by only 1,8 p.p. among the teenagers who did not attend the course). In addition, the number of those who disagree that a man from a financially secured family cannot be a rapist also increased (+ 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 of provoking the rape – from 35,5% to 46,8% (+11,3%), as well as the disagreement with the fact that if a girl or a woman didn't shout and didn't show resistance during the forced sexual intercourse, the deed cannot be considered as rape – from 23,2% to 35,5% (+12,3 p.p.). Positive changes in the perception of rape were also identified among the teachers who implemented the optional course. Although, the Endline data reveal that the change of stereotypes in this area is a difficult process, and as long as the teachers don't change their perceptions, we cannot expect these changes among students..

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

- Both research studies 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. From 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 believe 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%). 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%).
- Positive tendencies are also observed regarding the strategies for approaching 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.). 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 approaching 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.
- 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.
- During the Endline, over 73% of girls said (totally or partially agreed) that if the husband wants to meet his friends alone, he should inform his partner, a statement that is less supported by boys (65%). Comparatively, 77% of girls and 82% of boys (totally or partially agreed) believe that if the wife goes out to meet her friends alone, she should inform her partner. 13 teachers agreed (totally or partially) with the statement that the husband should ask for permission from his wife if he wants to go out with his friends or vice versa.
- The Baseline research showed the presence of stereotypes among teenagers on the image and roles of women in the household. Thus, a good housewife and wife must know how to cook (85,2%), like cleaning (70,2%), 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%), to have higher education degree (22,5%). The Endline research reveals some improvements in the perceptions of students related to the roles of women and men in the family. The changes are more signifi-

cant among students who attended the optional course, compared to those who didn't attend the course. The share of students who believe that it is important that "a good housewife" has her own opinion increased, and the share of those who mentioned beauty, "forgiving" the husband when he offends his wife, cleaning responsibilities, obeying the husband etc. decreased.

- Stereotypes were also related to the man's role in the family. The Baseline research shows that in the opinion of teenagers, 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 if his wife 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 body (25,2%), be handsome (18,6%). The Endline research indicated significant changes in the perception of the man's role in the family: on one side, there is an increase in the share of students who appreciate when a householder has his own opinion (+20,4 p.p.), and involvement in house cleaning (+15,2%), on the other side, there is a decrease in giving importance to beauty (-11,2 p.p.), shaped muscles, listening to wife's opinion (-8,0 p.p.), and "forgiving" the wife when she shouts (-7,1 p.p.).
- The teenagers' vision of family responsibilities is influenced by the education provided in their original families. The research data reveal that the course "Harmonious family relationships" managed to cause significant changes in the attitudes of more than 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. com-

paratively), 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).

### **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 students 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. Gender differences on this subject are lower: 88% of girls disagree, compared to only 82,1% of boys who attended the course.
- 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 by 21,4 p.p. 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 (+27,3 p.p.), relatives (+25,5 p.p.), friends (+16,4 p.p.), social worker (+15,5 p.p.), doctor (+13,6 p.p.), teaching staff (+9,5 p.p.). 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.
- 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.).
- 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, 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 ma-

jority of teaching staff are aware of the protection measures for victims of domestic violence, but, there is still need for improvements in this area.

- 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 institutions 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. We observe that 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 found out 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 08008808 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.

# RECOMANDATIONS

*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, the changes in the family relations, migration of parents, lack of some family models, because 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 and 10th or in the 11th and 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".
- 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;

## **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;
- Support the creation of a teachers' network connecting facilitators of the course "Harmonious family relationships".

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**For educational institutions' management:**

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- 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.

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**For the teaching staff:**

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- Revise the curriculum structure together with the representatives of the International Center "La Strada", taking into account the students' preferences;
- 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 the experience of teachers who implemented the course in other educational institutions.

# ANNEXES

# A

**Table 1.** Data on persons who participated in focus group discussions

BASELINE		
No. of group discussions	Category of participants	Number of participants
FG_P_B	Teachers	10
FG_1_B_S_B	Boys, Iargara town, South region	10
FG_2_F_N_B	Girls, Pelenia village, Drochia district, North region	9
FG_3_M_C_B	Boys and girls, Chisinau municipality, Central region	10
<b>Total 4 FG</b>	<b>10 teachers 29 students</b>	
ENDLINE		
FG_P_E	Teachers	11
FG_1_F_N_E	Girls, Sangerei town, North region	10
FG_2_B_C_E	Boys, Chisinau municipality, Central region	10
FG_3_M_S_E	Boys and girls, Stefan Voda town, South region	11
<b>Total 4 FG</b>	<b>11 teachers 31 students</b>	



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