REPORT

on the results of survey on adolescent girls’ lifestyle, well-being, and social perceptions
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on adolescent girls’ lifestyle, well-being, and social perceptions

Armenia, 2020
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Research design

The transition between the development stages is usually a difficult experience, and this is especially true for the shift from adolescence to adulthood. The adolescents undergo various difficult situations while becoming an adult. Indeed, the growing process is obviously different for girls and boys both in terms of physical and mental developments. In addition to these biological specifics, significant differences occur due to some societal and cultural characteristics. Depending on the type of patriarchal and traditional society, different levels of pressure like early marriages, body image, interrupted education, etc. is put on girls and boys. Moreover, different stereotypical expectations are also coupled with the aforementioned factors making the overall development process challenging.

To understand the specifics and peculiarities of the girls’ development in the Armenian reality, Women’s Fund Armenia initiated an online survey using the standardized questionnaire and the online survey open platform. The goal of the survey was to understand overall perceptions and feelings of the teenage girls, and how those are influenced by different external factors. The application of an accidental sampling methodology allowed a total of 121 teenage girls to complete the questionnaire.

As a follow-up, a qualitative method of in-depth interviews was applied to verify the obtained quantitative data and its results. In total, 10 girls from urban and rural communities participated in the in-depth interviews developed around questions in compliance with the standardized questionnaires and especially the most sensitive questions requiring secondary verification.
Brief on Main Findings

Personal Wellbeing

The self-perception of being lucky and happy usually serves as determinant of personal wellbeing. The evaluation of these conditions is subjective and sometimes depends on the person’s overall optimistic or pessimistic perception of life. The personal wellbeing of the sampled adolescents can be characterized as medium satisfactory, since the majority of them reported being somewhat happy and somewhat lucky. The overall wellbeing trend seemed to be more positive than negative, given that the proportion of those with full negative perception was extremely insignificant. As core components of personal wellbeing and important determinants of the person’s life quality, physical and psychological wellbeing are serving as a motivating force for everybody towards new achievements and goals. If someone’s personal and more importantly psychological wellbeing is perceived not satisfactory, they fail to concentrate on other aspects of their lives.

As the current survey showed, the overall physical wellbeing of the girls could be rated as satisfactory, since more than the half of respondents have evaluated themselves as fully or somewhat healthy. The in-depth interviewees also fell under this category of girls perceiving themselves as healthy rather than unhealthy. In fact, the proportion of girls not satisfied with their health condition was promisingly low. The most popular healthy lifestyle activities among the surveyed girls were doing active sports and eating healthy food, however, the number of girls not doing anything in particular to stay healthy was relatively high. The qualitative data once again proved that the girls in rural communities are tend to lead healthier lifestyle compared to those living in urban communities.

Compared to the physical health, the psychological state of the surveyed girls was revealed through understanding their attitude towards their own mental health. The mental health condition was assessed through self-reporting and is based fully on self-perception and subjective evaluation. No certain pattern was observed regarding
the mental state of the surveyed girls. Thus, the majority of girls reported doing their best to pay attention to their mental health and indeed the number of those not monitoring their own psychological conditions was quite small. At the same time, considering the self-reporting results, the emotional condition of the surveyed girls could be reviewed as tending to more balanced rather than unbalanced state. Moreover, the number of girls who reported the need of a psychological consultancy was significantly low; however, it is worth mentioning that girls were not avoiding this question and were considering the possibility of approaching a psychologist if need be. Similarly, the in-depth interviews proved that applying for physiological consultancy gradually becomes more and more acceptable and normal among the adolescents. Considering the quantitative survey specifics, it is, however, difficult to identify the reasons of the need of psychological consultancy. It should also be noted that the results suggest that the respondents tend to provide more socially desirable responses, considering more positive rather than negative tendency in the overall responses. These topics and questions are very sensitive and even adults find it difficult to give honest answers. Therefore, these statements fully present a subjective overview.

In general, the results of the survey and in-depth interviews suggest that the adolescent girls’ self-perception of their overall physical and mental health does not raise any worries. Moreover, the adolescents’ attitude towards their own wellbeing can be evaluated as more than satisfactory, given that they reported tending to pay attention to it and prevent any possible issues that may occur along the way.

The leisure as another external factor of the personal wellbeing tended to be more passive among the surveyed girls. Active leisure such as walking or doing sports were less popular among the teenage girls compared to the habits of watching movies or surfing the Internet, preferred by a relative majority of the surveyed girls. The interviewed girls also reported more passive leisure like reading or watching TV, but they also noted that the rural community inhabitants have less opportunities and options for active and diversified leisure compared to urban communities, therefore, they do not fall in the category of girls who spend
their spare time in cafés, restaurants or other fashionable entertainment centers.

Based on the facts mentioned above, the **personal wellbeing** of the surveyed adolescent girls was viewed as positive and sufficient based on the self-reporting characteristics. It is important to note that the cases of extreme negative perception of own personal wellbeing were very rare, which means that the girls didn’t report any signs of critical age-appropriate crisis leading to secondary negative consequences, like suicidal thoughts, low self-esteem, aggressive and deviant behavior, etc. The latter statement, however, should be reviewed very cautiously given that questions on negative consequences were not directly asked to the respondents and the derived conclusions are more of an assumption based on other questions and common perception.

**Sexual [health] education**

Sexual [health] education and development are one of the tabooed topics in the Armenian society. Many parents avoid speaking to their children about these topics. This common pattern was revealed through various surveys on topics of sexual health education conducted in the recent years. Regardless the mentioned fact, the majority of the teenage girls reported being aware of their sexual development. These differences of the adolescents’ perceptions and the real data revealed through other surveys can be explained by the fact that everybody prefers to be seen as knowledgeable rather than not, therefore, simply providing positive answers to as much questions related to their knowledge as possible. This assumption proves to be true based on the qualitative data revealed through the follow-up in-depth interviews. The interviewed girls outlined poor sexual health education system existing in the Armenian schools, as well as their own low knowledge on these topics. The girls were outlining the major problems of the students and the teachers being shy to explain these lessons and participate in the classes. The interviewees pointed the importance of the improvement of sexual [health] education in
the school education system to ensure that the adolescents become more aware of their own sexual health and could provide more adequate and appropriate response to their sexual health needs. It is worth mentioning that no special difference was observed in rural and urban communities in regard to the awareness of the sexual development, but still some of the regions (Shirak, Aragatsotn, Tavush and Lori) prevailed over the others in terms of the lack of information on sexual education.

The same tendency was observed for the awareness on sexually transmitted infections, with the vast majority being fully or partially knowledgeable on these issues. Indeed, the positive linear correlation was recorded between overall sexual education level and information on sexually transmitted infections.

Not surprisingly, the main source of information on sexual development for almost the half of the respondents and the majority of interviewees was the Internet, then followed the parents and teachers as main informants for the rest of the girls. The type of residence turned out to be determinable in terms of choosing the source of information for appropriate sexual development, varying in rural and urban communities. For instance, teachers were mentioned as main informant three times as much in rural communities compared to urban communities, whereas the Internet as main source of information was more popular in urban rather than rural communities, being mentioned twice as much.

Considering the general description of sexual education which is mainly aimed at providing adolescents with appropriate, reliable and user-friendly knowledge and skills to be healthy and avoid any unwanted sexual health problems, the Internet being the main source of information arises questions on quality of the sexual health education of the surveyed adolescents. The latter becomes more obvious when adding here the socially desirable response potential, as well as the results of other surveys on sexual health education suggesting that the parents’ involvement in sexual education of their children is mainly limited to very simplified guidance for girls on hygiene during the menstrua-

ation and a threat-vise warning on avoidance of sexual relations and especially getting pregnant, and the provision of superficial information on nocturnal emission and sex to boys. The aforementioned suggests that the sexual education is yet a sphere to be well revised and developed to ensure that the adolescents’ perceptions on sexual health fit the reality.

The Nature of Relationships

Building positive relationships with people of their surroundings is sometimes the hardest task for any adolescent. The frequent mood swings lead to non-stable relations with the people they interact in everyday life. This can cause fights and conflicts with family members, friends and others, even without any significant reason. The surveyed girls, however, happened to have very positive relationships with the family members and friends and reported rare cases of disagreements with the latter. Whereas, the interviewed adolescents were noting that in the early stages of their adolescence they were frequently conflicting with family members, especially their siblings due to the conceptual differences and misunderstandings. In fact, for those girls having views and ideas about the life that differed from the commonly accepted patterns the conflicts were frequent also at school.

Mother-daughter relationships of the sampled adolescents can be definitely described as highly positive, since mothers were referred as the main advisors, peacebuilders, as well as persons to approach in case of any problems. On the other hand, sisters and female friends also happen to be the ones with whom the surveyed adolescents tend to share their thoughts and concerns and seek any kind of help or advice. Indeed, the relationships with teachers were also reported to be good and even excellent. Even though the fathers were rarely mentioned as the first person to share with, still they were reported to be good advisors and providers of important guidance when need-

Executive summary

ed. Though the overall nature of adolescents’ relationships with their surroundings, including peers, was described as positive and fruitful, there were still, some cases of deviations from the general trend, described by tensions and misunderstandings between both sides of the relationship.

The described positive relationships can also be explained by the specifics of online survey, providing more room for socially desirable responses, given that no facial or body language can be observed while answering the questions. Therefore, the respondents would most probably tend to answer positively rather than negatively and the interpretation of the results should consider the social desirability factor. The same can be said about the nature of respondents’ relationships with their peers. Nevertheless, the respondents themselves perceived the nature of their relationships with others as constructive.

Violence

Violence in all its forms is a harmful practice for those experiencing it. The consequences of violence exposure can be double and even triple negative and hard especially for adolescents, since adolescence itself is a very difficult period with its complicated stages and processes. Worrisome statistics were revealed in the survey, showing that a significantly high proportion of adolescents has experienced at least one form of violence, prevalingly psychological abuse and restrictions mainly at home and school. The sexual harassment was also reported by a very small percent of respondents, but still the existence of even one case of sexual harassment towards a teenager is highly alarming. Nevertheless, at least one third of the surveyed adolescents reported not being subjected to any form of violence, which is a positive statistical outcome. In-depth interviewees in their turn mentioned several cases of abuse against the girls from their surroundings. The interviewees especially highlighted the lack of information and knowledge on types and prevention of violence among the adolescents, which leads to increasing statistics on violence against adolescents,
equally proportional to low level of reported cases. The adolescents, according to interviewees, do not have enough skills and knowledge on identifying the action as violence, hence, they automatically experience abuse and do not report on it. Therefore, considering the abovementioned, as well as the results of other surveys stating that online violence and bullying at school are troublesomely increasing in recent years\(^3\), there is a significant possibility that the low numbers of reported cases of violence by the surveyed girls are the result of the low level of awareness on all forms of abuse among teenage girls. Given the presented facts, one can see that the lack of information and awareness on violence among adolescents may lead to misreport and may continue the increase of the cases of violence against adolescents.

**Future Plans**

One of the stages on the way from adolescence to adulthood is defining the self and building a more or less clear picture of one’s own future. Given the specifics of this developmental period, the plans and aspirations for the future may become the driving forces and the key to the meaningful adulthood. The survey data suggest that the relative majority of the adolescents tend to have clear perceptions of their future plans and aspirations, as well as have a definite vision of their self in a five-year perspective. Indeed, the majority of the surveyed girls perceived themselves as lucky and goal-oriented in five years from now. The plans of the interviewees set for next few years were also certain and, interestingly, the girls were tending to economic independence, putting it as one of their main aspiration for future. It is very encouraging to see that the adolescents are tending to be independent and accomplished, compared to the previously existing patterns of girls obliged to being economically and socially dependent from either their parents or husbands.

The uncertainty in the future plans, however, was observed in almost every forth of the surveyed respondents, who reported changing their plans very

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quickly and unpredictably. This is, however, quite typical for this age, when the person is searching for his/her purpose in life and therefore can try different roles and choose between various possible life perspectives. At the same time, considering the general approach to parenting styles adopted by the Armenian parents, it is very common to force your child to have some socially acceptable patterns. Therefore, the described picture can be derived from these approaches as well. Nevertheless, the respondents’ overall perceptions and aspiration for their future tend to have more or less certainty and the respondents believed to have clear vision adopted for their life and future.
INTRODUCTION
Women’s Fund Armenia

Established in 2018, Women’s Fund Armenia is a local grant-making organization that supports women and girls in Armenia through capacity building, providing financial support and development of feminist movement.

The Fund’s mission is to support women’s movement building in Armenia by providing necessary resources and tools to women’s organizations, women’s initiatives, feminist activists, researchers and scholars to design and implement their ideas to advance women’s rights and feminist projects.

The Fund’s goal is to develop a sustainable feminist philanthropy to support the strengthening of feminist discourse, safe spaces and collective initiatives addressing main challenges that women and girls are facing today in Armenia.

Survey Justification

Adolescence, as defined by the World Health Organization, is a period of life with specific health and developmental needs and rights. It is also a time to develop knowledge and skills, learn to manage emotions and relationships, and acquire attributes and abilities that will be important for enjoying the adolescent years and assuming adult roles. This developmental period refers to a distinct stage of life that occurs between the onset of puberty and adulthood. It is usually associated with teenage years, even though its psychological, physical or cultural expressions may begin earlier and end later (especially true for girls, since their physical development can begin in the so-called preadolescence period). In its turn, a teenager is a person who is between ages 13 and 19.

The adolescence and teenage period is described as relatively difficult and challenging both for the adolescents themselves and their surroundings, especially family members. There are several inner and outer factors that make the teenage period problematic.

- First of all, the adolescents face the need to make independent decisions and be responsible for the consequences of their decisions and actions taken upon. Even though the process of decision making on their own is the best indicator of becoming more independent and this is indeed what the adolescents are dreaming of the most, they are usually not ready to face the consequences of their independence. When this starve for independence and inability to accept it in its all ways meet, the adolescents hit their heads to the first hard wall of the adolescence. Here, the first sings of depression may occur.

- Second, the pressure from their surroundings which increases day by day, the parents, teachers and friends all pressure adolescents to behave in particular ways, which not necessarily meets their own behavioral perceptions. The inconveniences of their own perceptions and others’ expectations leads to conflict situations and an endless fight especially between generations (adolescents - parents and adolescents - teachers). At the same time, the pressure from the peers can at first seem more easy to overcome, but in reality it turns to be even more stressful and with more negative consequences. In this period of development, a change of reference groups is well-observed. If in past children were accepting the family members and especially parents and sometimes siblings as a reference group and a standard for evaluating themselves and their own behavior, then during the adolescence period, the peers (i.e. classmates, friends) can become a primary reference group. Therefore, it is very important for the teenager to be accepted in any of their reference groups. Here is when the bullying or other types of peer-violence become more obvious and frequent, especially towards the outsiders. In the Armenian society the peer-pressure, especially bullying has become more widespread in recent years. As the recent survey shows, every third teenager at least
once has faced bullying at school\textsuperscript{6}.

- The next challenge is the search for the self. This is the period when the adolescents start thinking about their future, beginning a search for their profession and the role in the society, and the search for an overall understanding of their own self, who they are. In this difficult searching the role of the parents and teachers becomes even more important. If the support from these groups is positive and advisory, then the search becomes much easier. On the contrary, if there is a pressure in identifying the self, tending to negative outcomes (for instance, when the parents are trying to realize their own unfulfilled dreams in their children’s future, without considering the children’s own wishes), the overall period becomes more challenging. If the teenager is convenient in his/her future plans, the outer support is positive, if there is an obvious doubting in what they want to become, the outer support is negative. In the Armenian society, one can often see the situations when the parents are deciding for their children, when the children are viewed as unable to make their own decisions and therefore choose appropriate profession. Parents sometimes even tend to treat their adult children as minors.

All the above described difficulties usually multiply in case of girls. Parents’ overprotection is very obvious for their girls. Sometimes this overprotection leads to even more deviant behavior demonstrated by the girls as a rebel to the very strict rules, especially when there are male siblings in the family to compare with. As a result, the teenage girls happen to undergo double stressful period on their way to adulthood.

Given all the mentioned considerations, the Women’s Fund Armenia found it very important to understand the overall psycho-social situation of the Armenian teenage girls. For this reason, the survey among teenage girls on their developmental peculiarities was initiated and conducted by the Fund. The Survey was held in February 2020, among the teenage girls who are engaged in the Fund’s activities either actively or as an observer.

\textsuperscript{6} Young Voices Survey, Armenia 2017 -https://armenia.savethechildren.net/sites/armenia.savethechildren.net/files/library/YV_brief%20version_Final%20_eng.pdf
Due to the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic, however, the survey completion was artificially prolonged and it was reopened in June. Thus, the survey completion period should be referred to February-March and June 2020.
Introduction
METHODOLOGY
**Aim and Objectives**

The aim of the research was to understand overall perceptions and feelings of the teenage girls, and how those are influenced by different external factors.

The objectives of the research, in particular, were as follows:

- revealing the physical, psychological and mental state of the teenage girls,
- revealing the nature of their relationships with parents, relatives and friends,
- revealing their perceptions on violence,
- revealing their plans and aspirations towards their lives and future.

**Methods**

The research was conducted through combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to ensure the triangulation of the data, as well as enrich the numeric data with qualitative content. The primary data collection method was the self-administered online standardized questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed using the Google Forms application and the online link was spread via social networks.

The questionnaire consisted of a total 33 close-ended questions comprising overall seven sections. The majority of questions assumed one answer options, except for a few questions allowing multiple answer possibility. The questions were simplified from the very beginning, to make sure that no double interpretation of the questions occur.

At the end of the questionnaire, the respondents were asked to express their concerns and thoughts that were impossible to fit into the suggested set of
questions, but they would like to voice them. The analysis of the results, however, showed that only 16 respondents expressed additional concerns. The reported concerns are referred to in the respective sections.

As a follow-up, a qualitative method of in-depth interviews was applied to verify the obtained quantitative data and its results. In total, 10 girls have participated in the in-depth interviews, the questions of which were developed in compliance with the standardized questionnaires and especially around the most sensitive questions requiring secondary verification. Taking into consideration the COVID-19 restrictions, the interviews were held remotely using the ZOOM application. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and analyzed in compliance with qualitative data analysis principles.

**Sampling**

Given the specifics of the online survey, *accidental sampling* was applied for current survey. Accidental sampling is a type of nonprobability sampling which involves the sample being drawn from the part of the population close to hand. This means that the population is selected because it is readily available and convenient. In this case, the respondent availability derives from the access to internet and its free usage.

In order to make the accidental sampling more grounded, several sampling variables were identified. The main variables of the sampling methodology were the gender and the age of the participants (13-19 year old girls). The region and type of residence were set as supplementary variables for the sampling. A hundred participants were planned as a minimum number of sampling size, however, a total of 121 girls have completed the questionnaire.

The sampling for the in-depth interviews was based on purposeful sampling methodology where the girls participating in any of the Fund’s activities have been involved in the sampling ensuring equal proportion of girls from rural and urban communities.
**Actual Demographics**

As mentioned above, overall, 121 teenage girls have participated in the survey and 10 in-depth interviewees, the majority of them were between 16-18 years old. This is much predictable given that the age range of 16-19 is when the adolescents are becoming more independent, starting to engage in different groups of interests, as well as, in fact, have less control over the internet activities. Therefore, this can explain the relatively higher participation rate demonstrated by this age range.

**Table 1: Distribution of survey participants by age**

<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>121</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the general proportion of urban and rural community participations was almost equal with at most 2 percent difference, as one can see from the chart below in some age groups urban communities were prevailing over the rural ones (see Chart 1).

**Chart 1: Disaggregation of respondents by age and type of residence (n=121)**
The highest respondent enrolment rate was recorded in Yerevan, Shirak and Tavush - 31, 29 and 23 participants respectively. In Tavush, Aragatsotn and Lori the participants from rural communities were more than from urban communities, whereas in Shirak an opposite picture was observed.

Table 2: Disaggregation of survey participants by region and type of residence

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Region</th>
<th>Type of residence</th>
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<td>Ararat</td>
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<td>Gegharkunik</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kotayk</td>
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<td>Shirak</td>
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<tr>
<td>Syunik</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vayots Dzor</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tavush</td>
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<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yerevan</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>53</td>
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Data Analysis

In order to store the collected data, the online database was transferred to relevant SPSS data sets. The data was checked and cleaned, and any coding errors were amended before the data analysis began. Furtherly, data analysis was done using the techniques of univariate and bivariate analysis. The univariate
analysis assumes presentation of common trends by revealing the frequencies of all variables. Meantime the bivariate analysis allows seeing if the variables are related to one another, it is common to measure how those two variables simultaneously change. The demographic perspectives, described in the section above, were applied in further analysis.

**Limitations**

The main limitations for this survey were the general limitations of the online surveys. First, the inability to set a certain sampling target, making the proportional distribution of the participants more difficult. In addition, the availability of the required respondents is less, compared to the usual surveys. Second, online surveys can be ignored or deleted, if the respondent becomes annoyed with the list of questions. Thus, the number of incomplete questions or overall questionnaires may increase. Third, the absence of the interviewer creates a situation when there is no possibility of question probing or clarifications, and this can somehow lead to less reliable data. And the last one is the high possibility of the respondents providing fake answers just to finish the survey. Another limitation is related to the overall quantitative survey specifics, when more numerical data is obtained with little possibility for additional qualitative information. In case of the current survey, no open-ended questions were included.

Based on the data cleaning and the response rate analysis, we can state that the current survey may be undergone only the sampling limitation, since there have been zero incomplete questions, the answers do not contradict to each other, which means that they have been meaningful, not just the result of a random click. Moreover, the questions from the very beginning have been designed in a very easy and understandable manner, so that no clarification or probing was needed. Therefore, the absence of interviewer was no issue for the data reliability. The general results, however, suggest that the level of socially desirable responses prevailed in those more sensitive questions providing some deviations from the real picture. This was fully considered when reviewing the findings, and the latter were analyzed from this point of view.
MAIN RESULTS
Personal Wellbeing

Considering the difficult period of development and maturation that the adolescents go through, it is very important to understand their perceptions of their own personal wellbeing. This period is well described by frequent depressions, unpredicted changes in adolescents’ moods and plans, as well as some behavioral deviations to prove their uniqueness and independence. In late adolescent period the adolescents face the need and sometimes even the obligation to choose a future profession, to work hard in order to be accepted to universities or colleges to remain in the unbreakable education chain.

The abovementioned was affirmed, since the adolescence was not described in bright connotations by the majority of the in-depth interview participants. The girls were asked to name three words which they can relate to their own adolescent period. The primary associations with the adolescence were negative like depression, conflicts and acne, followed by more positive ones like self-discovery, dreaming, self-learning, self-development etc. The in-depth interviews also revealed that the Armenian adolescent girls face a major pressure from the society and due to the stereotypes prevailing in it. As one of the interviewees noted: “There have been many times that I gave up some action or dream because I thought that otherwise I won’t be accepted by the society”.

This is to say that all these processes may seem easy for an adult, but indeed they happen to be quite difficult and sometimes hard to overcome for the adolescents. According to the survey results, the majority of the girls reported feeling somewhat happy (60%) and somewhat lucky (63%). Whereas the percentage of those mentioning that they were very happy and very lucky was quite low, 25% and 21% respectively. The number of girls perceiving themselves as both very happy and very lucky was only 14 out of 121, at the same time those being somewhat happy and somewhat lucky computed a total of 55 girls out of 121 (see Chart 2). The qualitative data suggest that happiness is not perceived as something universally unreachable, it is some state which is perceived differently by different groups of people and can’t be reviewed as a constant variable. “Happi-
ness is not a constant, it’s one special moment when you feel exited, but it is not an everlasting condition. People should find some balance and peace in themselves to state that they are happy”, described one of the interviewees, similar to another girl’s idea that: “I think I’m not very much fixed on being happy or I’m being able to find happiness in very simple things and moments, not viewing it as a noble idea, that’s why I think I’m happy”.

The obtained data is not surprising considering the fact that “Armenia was among the top five optimistic countries with Hope Index of +67 and the 7th out of 46 countries in the Happiness Index,” according to the findings of the 2019 poll conducted by the MPG LLC, a member of GALLAP International.

If we look at the interlink between these two variables, we can see a medium positive linear correlation with the Pearson Correlation coefficient value of 0.551. This is to say that the more girls feel happy, the more they

7. GALLUP International Armenia, Happiness Index Survey, 2019 -
perceive themselves as lucky and vice versa.

As a positive result, it should be noted that the percentage of girls perceiving themselves as very sad and very unlucky was significantly low, 5% and 2% respectively. At the same time, only two girls mentioned being very sad and at the same time very unlucky.

Interestingly, the type of residence played insignificant role in being happy, as the answers were equally disseminated between rural and urban residents, but the perception of the luck was somehow determined by the type of residence, given that the girls living in rural communities mentioned they were very lucky twice more frequent than urban girls. Moreover, the girls who reported feeling very sad and very unlucky happened to be living in urban communities. As for the age or region, the perception of personal wellbeing didn’t show any significant dependence on these two variables.

**Physical and Mental Wellbeing**

Physical and mental wellbeing are the main components of personal wellbeing and one of the core driving forces for the humans to fulfill their plans and aspirations. When the wellbeing is evaluated as good or excellent, a direct correlation can be seen between the person’s high motivation and good performance. The physical and mental wellbeing, of course, should be measured at least at two levels to state its overall picture. First, it is the self-assessment (subjective evaluation) and an evaluation by a third party from outside, preferably a professional (objective evaluation).

Given the specifics of the current survey, as well as its aims, only a self-assessing evaluation of participants’ physical and mental wellbeing was performed and the results are based on subjective evaluations. While interpreting the results, the subjective aspect of the assessment should be taken into consideration.

According to the survey results, one third of participants was sure they were fully healthy and another 30% was sure they were somewhat healthy. Only one participant mentioned that
she considers herself as totally unhealthy and noted that to keep herself healthy she frequently visits doctors.

The most popular activity among the participant girls for being healthy was eating healthy food, frequently mentioned by those considering themselves fully healthy (11 participants) and somewhat healthy (14 participants). The second popular healthy lifestyle strategy was doing active sports. This habit was mentioned by 18 girls, regarding themselves fully healthy (9 out of 18), somewhat healthy (7 out of 18) and somewhat unhealthy (2 out of 18). Sleeping long, doing yoga/meditation and frequently visiting doctors were mentioned less frequently and the preference was not determined by the perception of the physical wellbeing. Not surprisingly, the majority of those considering themselves somewhat unhealthy (16 out of 24) noted that they do nothing to stay healthy. Thus, there can be seen an obvious correlation between the person’s lifestyle and perception of their health conditions.

As for the mental health, the participants were asked to agree or disagree with the statement that they are paying special at-
attention to their psychological health. Thirty-six percent of the girls somewhat agreed with the statement, 27% of participants fully agreed and another 27% somewhat disagreed with the statement, whereas the remaining 10% of the participants totally disagreeing with the statement. This is to say that the percentage of girls paying attention to their psychological state was higher than those paying no or little attention.

Interestingly, almost half of the girls (27 out of 65) who mentioned considering themselves as emotionally somewhat balanced, were those somewhat agreeing that they pay special attention to their psychological health. On the other hand, four girls not paying any special attention to their psychological health reported having correspondingly fully unbalanced emotional state.

A quick glance at the Chart 4 outlines a direct correlation between the girls’ emotional state and their attitude towards their mental health. The more attention is payed, the more stable is the emotional state, and vice versa, the girls paying less attention to their mental health turned to have a more unbalanced emotional condition. The previous statement is indeed not surprising, because these two variables are obviously interlinked and one defines the other. The ability to evaluate their own psychological and emotional state is a positive tendency, given that the adolescents in general may find it difficult to identify and accept the problems they face.

![Chart 4: Correlations between Mental Health and Emotional State (n=121)](image-url)
Encouragingly, the majority of the girls fully (36%) or somewhat (40%) agreed that they usually like their appearance. There, however, were those somewhat (17%) or fully (7%) disliking their appearance most of the time. Interestingly, the majority (7 out of 9) of those disliking their appearance also partially or fully considered themselves emotionally unbalanced. In fact, the perception of their own appearance is another painful topic for the adolescents, since the age-appropriate changes in appearance and possible unwanted consequences of the hormonal developments usually lead to depressions and negative attitude towards their own look. One of the respondents, when providing additional information, mentioned that her mother considered her very ugly which automatically lowered her self-esteem and she reported usually disliking her body image. At the same time, this respondent fully agreed that she needed psychological consultancy. Aside from this specific case, the survey data, however, states that the participant girls are not experiencing significant issues or despair in regard to their look.

This is yet another sensitive topic to which the respondents probably tended to respond more positively rather than negatively, especially considering the significantly high number of adolescent girls voicing common body image problems. Some participants of the “Girls’ Talk Initiative” have raised similar concerns related to the pressure they feel because of some social expectation towards their body image. The qualitative data also suggest that the body changes during the puberty period, such as acnes, sweating, hair hygiene, etc. play huge role, usually negative, on the attitude towards their own body image. In those cases, when body changes are highly visible and discomfort related, the attitude towards the body image are negative, and therefore negative is also the overall associations with the adolescence.

As for the psychological consultancy, the frequency of responses to the questions on need of psychological consultancy was almost equally distributed among four possible answers from high need to no need. The participants were asked to agree or disagree with the statement that they think they needed psychological consultancy. According to the data, 30% of the participants some-
what disagreed with the statement, 22% of the participants totally disagreed, whereas 29% somewhat agreed and 20% totally agreed with the statement. Even though the difference is not significant, however, the need for psychological consultancy was in fact more than could be predicted.

The qualitative data suggest that the new generation of the adolescents have already overcome the stereotypes and the shame of applying to the psychological consultancy. In fact, they think that it’s much better to talk to a professional who you do not know personally, so you can be more open and sincere with, rather than tell all your problems to your family member or other close person, who most probably may not get you correctly. All of the interviewed girls noted that they do not avoid applying to the psychologist, if the need be. The latter was perfectly described by one of the interviewees: “Couple of years ago I had serious mental health issues and I applied for the help of a psychologist, who did her job just great and helped me to overcome my depression and other derived issues, thus, I think that it is very important to get the support when you need one”. Along with the increasing popularity of psychological consultancy among the adolescents, however, the qualitative data outlines that such services and supports are mostly not affordable for the average statistical citizen of Armenia and are not available in rural communities. These are, according to the interviewees, prevailing reasons why people tend to avoid psychological consultancy, preferring self-healing therapies instead.

As it is illustrated in Table 3, there is an obvious correlation between the participant’s emotional state and their need in psychological consultancy. The higher the emotional instability, the higher the need in psychological assistance according to the participants themselves. Another interesting line can be observed, showing that both statements have received more uncertain or neutral answers rather than a certain yes or no. The concentration of the answers is in between. This is, on the one hand, a positive tendency of not having very critical cases, but, at the same time, it is hard to say the percentage of more neutral answers (some-what agree-somewhat disagree) tending to stronger yes
(totally agree) rather than no (totally disagree). The observed results, however, come to state that there is a significant number of young girls feeling free to express their need in any assistance, including psychological.

Table 3: Correlation between Emotional State and Need in Psychological Consultancy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I think that emotionally I’m...</th>
<th>n121</th>
<th>I think I need psychological consultancy</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Totally agree</td>
<td>Somewhat agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totally balanced</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat balanced</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat unbalanced</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totally unbalanced</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Leisure Preferences

Another determinant of the personal wellbeing is the way people spend their leisure time. The respondent girls were asked to mention how they organize their leisure. Not surprisingly, **watching movies** (mentioned 65 times) and **surfing the internet** (mentioned 53 times) were the most popular leisure activities. The less popular leisure was sports, mentioned only 19 times. Meeting friends and reading were reported equally, 48 times each. At the same time, a significant difference between urban and rural communities was observed only for such answers like **meeting friends** and **surfing the internet**, both mentioned more frequently by girls living in
urban communities. The qualitative data speaks for absence of many leisure options in rural communities. The interviewees from rural communities were noting that the girls in urban communities enjoy more opportunities of spending time at the café, cinema or similar places, but on contrary they are sportier, since they lead more active lifestyle compared to those living in the cities. The latter was also affirmed by the quantitative data, as none of the leisure types, except for doing sports, was prevailing in rural over urban communities.

It is worth mentioning that meeting friends and reading was more popular among 17-18 year old girls, whereas surfing the internet was more typical for 16-17 year old girls. One of the girls mentioned that her preferred leisure is isolation, and in fact she also mentioned being somewhat unhappy, somewhat unlucky and emotionally somewhat balanced. The relatively high frequency (mentioned 36 times) of attending different trainings speaks of the respondents’ interest in new knowledge and information, as well as their starve for new discoveries. At the same time, the preference was almost identical in rural and urban communities.

*Chart 5: Leisure Preference by Type of Residence (number of times mentioned)*
In fact, as the survey data shows, the adolescent girls prefer passive leisure like watching movies or surfing the internet, over active leisure like walking or doing sports. The preference of passive leisure is, indeed, an increasing tendency in recent years, given the comparisons of the data of 2013/2014 repetitive survey on Health Behavior in School-Aged Children (hereinafter referred as HBSC), conducted by Arabkir Medical Center – Institute of Child and Adolescent Health, which suggests that “significant proportion of teenagers were using screen devices more than the recommended 2 hours a day”8. The somehow troublesome increase of described tendency is well explained by the wide availability of the screen devices and the world web ensuring easy accessibility for anyone having minimal digital literacy.

**Sexual [health] education**

As recent surveys9 showed, the sexual education and simple talks on topics of sexual development are very difficult and tabooed in many, especially rural communities of Armenia. The parents prefer to leave their children’s sexual education on peers or the internet, rather than provide relevant information on their own. The same is true for the school teachers. The planned sexual development topics in specific school subjects are taught very superficially, resulting in no proper sexual education among adolescents. There is obviously no need to state the possible negative consequences of no proper sexual education on sexual development and further deviant sexual behavior of a person.

According to the current survey results, almost half of the participants are aware of their sexual development, the second largest group noted that they are somewhat aware of

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their sexual development. It is interesting to see the distribution of the results by regions. The cases of unawareness of sexual development were observed in Shirak (5 out of 29), Aragatsotn (4 out of 12), Tavush (3 out of 23), Lori (2 out of 10) regions and, surprisingly, in Yerevan (6 out of 31). It is worth mentioning that there was no significant distribution difference between urban and rural communities. The response rates among rural and urban communities were almost equal, tending to 1% difference in all four answer ranges. One of the respondents expressed her concerns on poor sexual health education in the Armenian schools, given that even younger acquaintances of hers from abroad knew more than she did in her 18. The qualitative data also suggest that the awareness on sexual health is quite low among the adolescent girls and the high awareness tendency outlined in the quantitative data is mainly the result of social desirability. This phenomenon is well described by one of the in-depth interviewee girls: “In the past it was shameful to be informed on sexual health issues, now the tendency changes and gradually unawareness on these topics becomes shameful”.

The qualitative data comes to contradict with the quantitative data since the interviewees reported not having enough knowledge on sexual health and feel the need of learning more about such topics as diseases, pains, internal genital organs, STIs, contraceptives stopping the ovulation are they dangerous or not, sexual relationships, epilation.

**Chart 6: Awareness on Sexually Transmitted Viruses**

I’m aware of possible sexually transmitted viruses (n=121)

- Totally agree: 39%
- Somewhat agree: 33%
- Somewhat disagree: 17%
- Totally disagree: 11%
As for the awareness of sexually transmitted infections, it showed almost similar share as the awareness of sexual development (see Chart 6). While checking the correlation between the awareness of sexual development and of possible sexually transmitted infections, the Pearson Correlation coefficient suggests a medium strength positive linear correlation with a 0.619 coefficient value. This is to say that the higher the awareness on sexual development, the higher the awareness on possible sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and vice versa. For more illustrative perspectives, please check Table 4.

### Table 4: Knowledge of Sexual Development and STIs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>n=121</th>
<th>I’m aware of possible STIs</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Totally agree</td>
<td>Somewhat agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totally agree</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat agree</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totally disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the same time, the type of residence had a small, but still visible influence on the level of awareness on STIs, compared to the knowledge of sexual development. Thus, the urban girls (51 out of 68) were almost as half as more aware of STIs compared to those living in rural communities (36 out of 53). Whereas, the share of girls somewhat or totally unaware of STIs was almost the same in rural (17 out of 53) and urban (17 out of 68) communities.
The gained results on awareness of STIs is quite comparable with the data obtained through a HBSC study among adolescents conducted in 2014, according to which more than half of the study participants stated that “the knowledge and information on STI is provided at school”\textsuperscript{10}.

\textbf{Chart 7: Proportion of Sexual Education Informants}

As for the source of the adolescents’ sexual education, the relative majority (38%) of the participants mentioned the internet as the main source of information (see Chart 7). The second largest group of informants were parents (26% of response rate). There were, however, some 4% of adolescents, mainly 13-14 years old, who noted that nobody serves as main informant for them, not surprisingly those participants also happened to be unaware of their sexual development and sexually transmitted viruses.

Table 5: Sexual Education Informants by Type of Residence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My main sexual education informant is</th>
<th>Type of residence</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surroundings</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trainings</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nobody</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interestingly, the number of adolescents (see Table 5) using the internet as the main information source was twice as much in urban communities, whereas the teachers were mentioned as main informants three times as much in rural communities compared to urban ones. The parents, meanwhile, were equally mentioned as main informants by rural and urban community participants. The internet was a prevailing source of information also for the in-depth interview participants; however, parents were also regarded as people who give them advices and knowledge on sexual [health] education. The teachers, meanwhile, were mentioned to be even more ashamed to teach the students sexual health topics, thus leading to being the least source of information for the in-depth interview participants. Interestingly, some of the in-depth interviewees noted that they preferred peer education and peer discussions to any other sources of information, because sharing thoughts with peers not only gave them the necessary knowledge but also created a good platform for learning through debates and discussions.

According to the qualitative data, sexual [health] education
is lame in the Armenian schools, as perfectly noted by one of the interviewees: “I want to complain here, as there is to say no sexual [health] education in schools. We were skipping these topics; the teachers were avoiding discussion of the lesson at the class and were asking us to read and learn the lesson at home. My classmates were not participating in the classes and were only laughing when one of the “bravest” students would present what they have learnt on the topic”. Sexual [health] education is presented within the following school subjects: “Healthy lifestyle” (secondary school) and Biology (high school), however, the interviewees stated that the topics are not thoroughly discussed and are mainly left on self-learning.

One of the interviewees noted: “I feel that my peers do not have enough knowledge on this topic and indeed do not want to learn about their sexual health, because these topics are tabooed in our society and even reading some information regarding it [sexual health] is shameful for them”. Unfortunately, the shame of learning topics on sexual health or, moreover, participating in the lectures was also told about the Medical University, as one of the interviewees noted the students have complained for exclusion of these topics from the general curricula just because they felt uncomfortable to participate at those classes. All of the mentioned data speak of the importance of and the need for qualified sexual [health] education at schools to ensure that the students get proper information from reliable and trustful source rather than leaving it to chance. This is to say that the general social perception of sexual health and sexual [health] education in the Armenian society is still on a very stereotypical level, regardless of the age of the person.

Comparing the survey results with the expected patterns of the sexual education stated by WHO as provision of appropriate, reliable and user-friendly knowledge and skills to adolescents for being healthy and avoiding any sexual health problems, it is obvious that the internet, as the most popular source of information, can’t suggest as qualified education as it can be done by the specialists, trained teachers and even well-informed parents. The education provided by the mentioned groups would be more reliable and age-appropriate,
compared to what is available on the internet, especially considering the not sufficient internet-literacy among adolescents. Therefore, the gained results of adolescents’ knowledgeability on sexual health issues are very subjective. This is even more obvious when compared to the results of surveys conducted specifically on this topic, suggesting that both parental and teacher skills on delivering proper sexual education lack\(^{11}\) and limit in primitive and very general information provided to girls and boys regarding the most obvious and visible changes taking place in their bodies (menstrual cycle, nocturnal emission, sexual maturation, etc.).

\section*{The Nature of Relationships}

One of the issues that the adolescents encounter during their maturation period is the relationships with their surroundings, especially family members. During this difficult development stage, the adolescents tend to isolate, frequently happen to argue with friends, family members and consider that these people do not understand and only impede them in everything.

When asked to identify those family members with whom they often and more easily share their thoughts, mothers and sisters were mentioned most frequently, respectively by 55\% and 17\% of the respondents. The obtained data somehow contradicts to the results of the “Young Voices” survey conducted in 2017 in Armenia by Save the Children, where nearly half of the respondents mentioned that they do not know where to approach, if they needed help or wanted to talk about different issues\(^{12}\). Indeed, 11\% of the current survey participants reported that they do not share their thoughts and concerns with anybody.

\begin{itemize}
  \item[12.] Young Voices Survey, Armenia 2017 - https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/12512/pdf/yv_brief_version_final_eng.pdf
\end{itemize}
### Table 6: Preference of People to Share Concerns Disaggregated by Provided Support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>With whom of mentioned family members do you usually share your thoughts</th>
<th>n=121</th>
<th>Gives me important advices</th>
<th>Helps with advices from time to time</th>
<th>Gives advices only when asked</th>
<th>Doesn’t give advice</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>67</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sister</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brother</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandmother</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pet</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female friend</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nobody</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>53</strong></td>
<td><strong>36</strong></td>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
<td><strong>121</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of the respondents (40 out of 64) sharing their thoughts with mother, reported doing this as mothers are giving important advises. On the contrary, sisters more often give sporadic rather than constant advises as per some respondents. The small response rate for fathers as the ones to approach to is very typical for the Armenian society, however, it is worth mentioning that the fathers were preferred to share with thanks to the important advices they give. Indeed, this finding is grounded with a similar finding of the HBSC survey, which states that “the number of adolescents who confide in their fathers is significantly lower than those who confide in their mothers”\(^{13}\).

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In fact, mothers were also reported to be the main person to whom they approach when they needed help, almost by half of respondents (49%). The important and great role of mothers as peacemakers in any family conflicts was also affirmed by the in-depth interviews: “My mother used to be the dove of peace in times of any conflicts that may occur between her and other familial members” – particularly noted by one of the interviewees. Interestingly, one quarter of the respondents of all ages mentioned their pets to be approached when they needed help. Indeed, 17 year old respondents have mentioned pets as safe heaven twice and three times as much as respondents of other age groups.

As for the complexities with family members, only 17% of the respondents mentioned that they are often arguing with their family members, 33% mentioned that they sometimes argue with family members. Nonetheless, the vast majority of respondents (60%) evaluated their relationships with family members as satisfactory and another 31% noted that their relationships are somewhat satisfactory. On the contrary, almost all interviewees noted that in the early stages of their adolescence (12-14 ages) they were having more conflicts with family members compared to the later period they were currently in (15-18 ages). The reasons for the conflicts voiced by the interviewees were more or less identical – misunderstandings, difficulties in inner-understanding, depression and psychological discomforts caused by the physical and hormonal changes taking place in their body. Hence, one of the interviewees of the in-depth interviews mentioned: “I used to argue with my brother all the time and my parents were not understanding my reasons for the conflicts, so they usually took his side. This in its turn led to a follow-up conflict between my parents and myself”.

In fact, the quantitative data of the on-line survey doesn’t give a full picture of the causes for the conflicts with family members or those members with whom the disputes are more frequent. The combination of different variables and data from other reports, however, allows to assume that the percentage of adolescents contradicting with their family members tends to be higher than it appears in the obtained data, given that the respondents usually prefer to pic-
ture themselves less aggressive and more cooperative than it may be in reality. This argument is also confirmed by the similar finding of the HBSC survey, saying that “the relationships of daughters with their fathers are characterized as “difficult” or “very difficult”.”

When asked with whom from their surroundings they are usually sharing their thoughts and concerns, the vast majority of the girls (75%) mentioned their female friends. Male friends, other relatives and classmates were mentioned as possible people with whom they share concerns, by respectively 9%, 6% and 5% of respondents. Other people were mentioned more rarely, by one or two respondents each (Chart 8).

**Chart 8: Distribution of People from Surroundings with Whom Respondents Share Concerns**

Encouragingly, the majority of the girls mentioned that their relationships with their surrounding people are excellent (39%).

With whom from your surroundings do you share your thoughts (n=121)

- Female friend: 75%
- Male friend: 9%
- Other relative: 6%
- Myself: 5%
- Classmate: 1%
- Neighbour: 1%
- Nobody: 1%
- Class teacher: 2%
- Mother: 1%

and good (38%). The percentage of those, however, who reported having frequent conflicts with their friends or classmates, was relatively high, computing almost one quarter of all respondents, with 22% response rate. Similar situation was also revealed from the qualitative data, one of the interviewees mentioned: “I consider myself an introvert and can’t get well with the society, therefore, I have frequent conflicts with my classmates. I think I’m quite different, my interests differ from theirs and this causes endless argue and misunderstandings”.

As for the relationships with teachers, the vast majority (71%) of the girls mentioned that their relationships were satisfactory, another 24% noted that the relationships were somewhat satisfactory. The same picture was revealed also during the in-depth interviews, where the majority of interviewees were noting that no serious conflicts ever happened between them and their teachers, except for the teachers’ standard minor reprimands regarding the school and class disciplines. These figures are encouraging, considering the fact that the teachers play a core role in the development of adolescents’ worldview. Therefore, the good relationships with teachers reported by the respondents speak about an important link between the teachers and the adolescents. Interestingly, those girls who reported unsatisfactory relationships with teachers were from rural communities and also reported being unsatisfied with their education in general.

**Violence**

It is well known that the exposure to violence can harm anyone’s emotional, psychological and physical development. People can be subjected to different forms of violence, from invincible psychological violence to physical and sexual abuse. The adolescents are more vulnerable towards violence, given their developmental specifics and the difficulties caused by the maturation period itself. The participants of the survey were asked to report on any form of violence they have at least once been subjected to.

Fortunately, one third of the respondents (38 out of 121) have
mentioned that they have not experienced any form of violence (see Chart 7). At the same time, more than half of the respondents (75 out of 121) mentioned that they have at least once experienced psychological violence and restrictions, equally at home (37 out of 75) and at school (38 out of 75). Thirty-three out of seventy-five girls mentioned that the psychological violence was perpetrated by family members, whereas 26 girls reported on classmates and 15 on teachers for subjecting them to psychological violence and restrictions. As noted by one of the in-depth interviewees: “Girls are exposed to violence more than boys, because social expectations and patterns put more pressure on girls compared to the situation with boys. I think this leads to prevalence of psychological abuse, given that girls are facing limitations in many actions and desires they may have. For example, the brothers are allowed to command on their sisters, but the opposite option is forbidden. The teachers, in their turn, can laugh at the girls’ appearance or bully them for their imperfections”. Similarly, one of the survey respondents provided additional concern that the teachers frequently psychologically violate the rights of the students, which the respondent compared to sexual violence. Boyfriends, doctors and neighbors were reported to be perpetrators by only 1% of the respondents. The in-depth interview participants expressed a thought that the awareness on violence among adolescents is very low, teenagers do not regard some abusive actions, especially taken by family members as violence. As a result, adolescents face a problem of not knowing what to do when subjected to any type of violence. As a solution to described situation, the interviewees saw raising awareness among adolescents on their rights, on violence, as well as similar sessions for the adults to ensure that they also become able to identify their own actions as violence and stop acting that way. Another issue on this regard raised by the interviewees was the fact that people who have experienced violence, especially sexual, are trying to hide the reality, do not voice the problem, feel ashamed to talk about what happened, which in the end leads to a situation when the victim is blamed for what has happened to her and the psychological and mental trauma becomes even deeper instead of being healed. “Armenians think that if the girl
is exposed to sexual violence, it is her fault and it is shameful to talk about it, even to report on the case to police – what will the relatives say”, explained one of the interviewees, expressing her disagreement with the idea.

Chart 9: Exposure to Any Type of Violence

- Physical violence
- Sexual violence or harassment
- Psychological violence and limitations
- No experience

Five girls out of 121 reported exposures to sexual harassment by classmates, friends and coaches, respectively at school, on the street and at the sport classes. Two girls out of these five experiencing sexual harassment reported also a combination of psychological abuse. Another two girls reported experiencing a combination of physical and psychological abuse from parents at home. All the other cases of violence were not combined by secondary abuse or sequences. It should, however, be noted that 16 out of 88 girls who have experienced any form of violence have mentioned that they feel themselves very sad and unhappy.

It should, however, be noted that many forms of violence are not usually viewed or perceived as abuse by adolescents and even adults. This is the reason that often the cases of abuse are not reported or are not referred to as such, when asked
about exposure to violence. Thus, usually the online sexual harassments or stalking are not regarded as abuse, correspondingly are not properly reported, whereas some researchers claim that “every tenth adolescent has once received insulting message online or on mobile from other children or adults and has been in a situation when an adult contacted them online and wanted to talk about personal issues”\textsuperscript{15}.

**Future Plans**

In order to understand the level of development among the participant girls, the survey aimed at finding out the respondents’ perceptions and aspirations towards their future. More than half (65\%) of the respondents mentioned that they knew what exactly they wanted from their lives, whereas almost one quarter of the respondents (23\%) noted that their plans change very quickly, so they don’t have exact plans. A similar picture was also observed in the Young Voices Survey, according to which the vast majority of the school-age children portrayed their future very positively, with an equal distribution among urban and rural population\textsuperscript{16}. On the contrary, the current survey suggests that around 10\% of the girls reported not having any clear plans and living for today.

As the numbers clearly say, the majority of adolescent girls have a clear understanding of their future and can perceive exact plans in this regard. Interestingly, the majority of those having clear future plans were in between 16 to 19 years old. The qualitative data suggest almost

\textsuperscript{15}. Young Voices Survey, Armenia 2017 - https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/12512/pdf/yv_brief_version_final_eng.pdf

the same, as one of the interviewees mentioned: “When I imagine my future, I see plenty of plans being replaced by new ones after their accomplishment. I don’t want to stop at anything”. As for the unclear future plans or no exact perceptions, here no age specifics were observed. In fact, the type of residence didn’t determine the perceptions regarding their future, since the answers were equally distributed and no significant dependence was observed.

Interestingly, the majority of those girls, knowing exactly what they wanted, also mentioned being fully or somewhat satisfied with their education, but, at the same time, being emotionally somewhat balanced. Similarly, the relative majority of those not having clear plans for future evaluated their education as fully or somewhat satisfactory and reported being emotionally somewhat balanced. This is to state that the future plans of the adolescent girls were quite dependent on their emotional state.

As for the interdependence of the nature of relationships with others and the ability to plan the future, the results suggest that the better the relationships of the adolescent girls with others, the clearer their plans for future. It is, however, hard to state the opposite, given the low number of respondents evaluating their relationships with others as “bad”. This is, in some way, the result of giving more socially desirable answers to this kind of questions.

As it is shown in Chart 10 above, the vast majority (61 out of 79) of those knowing exactly what they wanted from life saw themselves as lucky and goal oriented young girls in five years’ overview. Likewise, half of those having very unstable (13 out of 28) plans found it difficult to imagine themselves in five years. As for the age specifics, 16-17-year-old girls found it more difficult to perceive themselves in five years compared to other age groups. In general, the number of those girls seeing themselves as a girl fighting with difficulties of life was quite low, only 17 out of 121. Here again the type of residence played no significant role in self-perception in a 5-year perspective. Nevertheless, one third of the respondents couldn’t mention how they see themselves five years later. It could be expected that these girls would have difficulties in their academic progress, howev-
er, the hypothesis was rejected since the majority of these girls, not able to perceive themselves in a 5-year perspective (22 out of 28), evaluated their education as “satisfactory” or “somehow satisfactory”

This general tendency can be explained by the fact that the girls’ future plans are often designed by their parents, not them, and therefore, they fail to have a clear perception of their own life in a long-term perspective. The overall picture, however, is very encouraging, since the majority of the participants were more than certain in their future aspirations, and even though their plans may be a subject to changes, they still didn’t see it as a challenge.

**Chart 10: Future Plans vs. Self-Perception**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOW DO YOU SEE YOURSELF IN FIVE YEARS</th>
<th>61</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As a lucky and goal oriented young girl</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a girl fighting the difficulties of the life</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can’t see myself</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- I know what I exactly want in my life and go for it
- I don’t have clear plans, living for today
- My plans change very quickly, so I can’t have exact plans