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CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RUSSIAN INTENTIONS TO EMIGRATE

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Abstract

Migration of Russians can pose a serious socio-psychological problem for both society as a whole and individuals, in particular. An understanding and analysis of migratory trends act as a key element of social policy. One out of five Russians for once in his life thinks of emigrating. The aim of the study was to design a questionnaire for assessing the level of the Russians' migratory intentions: to identify socio-psychological characteristics of Russian citizens with different levels of the intent to migrate. In the course of the study migratory intentions are treated as an individual attitude which is realized not only through actions oriented to departure from the RF but also manifests itself at cognitive and affective levels. The authorial modified Likert scale for identifying the level of migration intentions and the authorial questionnaire "Respondents Socio-demographic Characteristics" were exploited in the research. The results allowed for singling out the components of migration intentions (cognitive, behavioral, affective), and their degree of intensity contributes to differentiating the level of a person' intent to migrate (low, or high). Based on the sample's clustering (N = 200) the group with low level of migration intentions (N = 110) and the group with high level of intentions (N = 90) together with socio-psychological characteristics of each group were revealed. Each of the groups has its specific socio-psychological features which provide an insight into migratory activity of the population. The results obtained can assist in modeling more effective social policy directed towards public needs and interests.

Keywords: Migration, personality intentions, levels of the intent to emigrate, inter-ethnic interaction.

1. Introduction

Migration flows constitute an important component of contemporary globalization. Not only the number of migrants is increasing (an intensive growth) but also their structural characteristics are becoming more complicated (an extensive growth), new migration forms are emerging, in particular: marital, academic, return, labor, etc. and other forms of migration activities. "Migration is not to be compared with any other individual experience as it divides a person's life into "before" and "after". Despite status, age, gender, education he starts his life from scratch" (Dontsov & Zotova, 2013, p. 77). The outflow of young and promising citizens poses a problem for modern Russia. A major part of the present-day research on personality migration activity is of retrospective nature and analyzes the results post factum. It is therefore essential to define forecast–oriented meaningful criteria which might predict migration behavior of citizens.

Describing the present state of research on migration it is worth mentioning the efforts of the following scholars: N. M. Lebedeva, G. U. Soldatova (psychological adjustment of personality, sociology of migration); A. N. Tatarko (personality intentions and socio-psychological capital of personality); L. D. Gudkov, V. A. Iontsev (socio-cultural dynamics and transformation of a society) as well as N. P. Kosmarskaya (gender and labor migration); D. Berry, S. Bochner (the process of acculturation); G. K. Zipf, E. Lee, P. Samuelson, M. Friedman (the impact of external factors on decision making); S. Schwartz (value orientations of personality); gender aspects of female migration – H. Zlotnik, M. Morokvasic, A. V. Tolstokorova and others.

2. Problem Statement

In order to foresee individual behaviors from socio-psychological perspective it is important to develop objective criteria for assessing personality migratory preparedness. A greater part of research has so far analyzed migration either as a matter of fact, or is limited by asking general questions for example, whether a person would like to live abroad. In our view, such questions are a simplification of personality actual intentions.

3. Research Questions

The hypotheses we have put forward:

– there exist different components of migration intentions: behavioral (foreign language study, actions directed to the realization of intentions, learning ways to migrate, etc.); cognitive (reflections on migration, confidence in a positive future abroad, etc.); and emotional (positive attitude to those who have already relocated, etc.);

– depending on the degree of the intensity of cognitive, emotional and behavioral components it is possible to speak about low, or high level of migration intentions;

– groups with different levels of migration intentions will differ in their socio-psychological characteristics.

4. Purpose of the Study

We aim at identifying behavioral, emotional and cognitive features of personality migratory intentions.

5. Research Methods

The study involved 200 subjects, 105 males and 95 females aged from 19 to 56 (average age – 39), residents of the Sverdlovsk oblast (mono-ethnic region). The respondents have got diploma of higher education or are receiving tertiary education. The results were processed via SPSS Statistics 17.0 with the use of k-means clustering and frequency analysis. The study was conducted in 2018-2019 (Mostikov, n.d.).

We consider migration intentions to be personality attitudes which involve cognitive, affective and behavioral components. We designed and offered the authorial modified Likert scale to identify the level of the intent to migrate. It has 15 questions (5 questions for each component). The responses to each question included the following variants: 1 – no, never; 2 – rather, no; 3 – not sure; 4 – rather, yes; 5 – yes, certainly.

The cognitive level: 1. I have been thinking over the possibility to leave the RF for permanent residence in another country. 2. I would recommend my children, friends and relatives to leave the RF for permanent residence in another country. 3. I think that the statement "East or West, home is best" is true. 4. I believe that to realize my goals and values it is necessary for me to leave the RF for permanent residence in another country. 5. I think that permanent residence in another country will enhance my opportunities and future choices.

The affective level: 6. I would be proud of going to live in another country. 7. I like to think that one day I shall migrate to a foreign country. 8. I would be proud of children, friends and relatives if they migrated to another country. 9. I would feel more comfortable and pleasant living in a foreign country. 10. I would like to live in a foreign country.

The behavioural level: 11. I'm discussing an opportunity to migrate to another country with my friends, relatives. 12. I'm collecting information about migration opportunities. 13. I'm studying (improving) a foreign language to leave for permanent residence in a foreign country. 14. I'm collecting information about housing, jobs, study abroad and a marriage to a foreigner. 15. I'm analyzing sites, forums devoted to resettlement and life in a foreign country.

In order to reveal socio-psychological characteristics of the RF residents with different levels of migration intentions the authorial questionnaire "Respondents Socio-demographic Characteristics" was exploited: education, age, language proficiency, level of trust towards key social institutions, attitude to mass media level – in many ways these parameters are part of socio-psychological capital of personality. Tatarko (2014) defines it as a systemically organized and balanced resource of socio-psychological attitudes of personality towards his/her close circle and a society on a whole based on trust and enhancing subjective wellbeing and adaptability of personality in a society. The choice of migration scenario is always linked to socio-psychological capital of personality.

6. Findings

At the initial stage of the study a pilot testing was conducted involving the sample of 20 subjects. Thanks to the use of the modified Likert scale to assess the level of migration intentions we managed to divide a group of women, the RF permanent residents, according to their intent to migrate. This task was resolved via k-means clustering. The major feature of this method is that first reference clusters are defined and then each object is assigned to the nearest reference point (Mandel, 1988, p. 176). The objects are compared against the clusters so that the means in the cluster (for all variables) differ from each other to the maximum extent possible. The analysis resulted in two clusters: Russians with high level of migration intentions – HLMI (n = 90) and Russians with low level of migration intentions – LLMI (n = 110). The results of multiple single-factor analysis of variance are indicators of significance of the data partition into two clusters. F-criterion was statistically significant where p < 0.01 for 14 out of 15 variables involved in the analysis, which provides evidence of statistically significant differences between clusters for these variables.

The results of the comparison between groups with high level of migration intentions and low level of migration intentions concerning behavioral, cognitive and emotional components are shown in table 01.

Table 01. The results of the comparison between HLMI and LLMI groups concerning behavioral, cognitive and emotional components

Questions reflecting the components of migration intentions	Mean values,HLMI	Mean values, LLMI	T-criterion	P-level
The cognitive component				
I have been thinking over the possibility to leave the RF for permanent residence in another country.	4.5	3.0	2.21	0.017
I would recommend my children, friends and relatives to leave the RF for permanent residence in another country.	3.4	3.1	2.41	0.027
I think that the statement "East or West, home is best" is true.	4.9	3.4	3.61	0.000
I believe that to realize my goals and values it is necessary for me to leave the RF for permanent residence in another country.	4.6	3.9	4.33	0.000
I think that permanent residence in another country will enhance my opportunities and future choices.	3.8	2.7	3.94	0.000
The emotional component				
I would be proud of going to live in another country.	3.4	2.9	2.19	0.027
I like to think that one day I shall migrate to a foreign country.	4.4	3.0	3.54	0.000
I would be proud of my children, friends and relatives if they migrated to another country.	3.7	3.5	1.38	0.165
I would feel more comfortable and pleasant living in a foreign country.	4.4	3.5	7.36	0.000

I would like to live in a foreign country.	4.0	3.5	2.43	0.016
The behavioral component				
I'm discussing the opportunity to migrate to another country with my friends, relatives.	4.5	3.0	8.92	0.000
I'm collecting information about migration opportunities.	4.2	2.9	7.61	0.000
I'm studying (improving) a foreign language to leave for permanent residence in a foreign country.	4.5	2.5	3.30	0.001
I'm collecting information about housing, jobs, study abroad and a marriage to a foreigner.	3.5	2.5	3.93	0.000
I'm analyzing sites, forums devoted to resettlement and life in a foreign country.	4.0	3.0	2.63	0.009

The assumption about different levels of migration intentions which consist of cognitive, behavioral and emotional components proposed at the start of the study has been confirmed. Thanks to the partition of the respondents into the groups with regard to their levels of migration intentions we succeeded in revealing socio-demographic characteristics of the Russian citizens with high and low levels of migration intentions. The processing of the authorial questionnaire "Respondents Socio-Demographic Characteristics" was made using frequency analysis. This method allowed for fixing the incidence of each characteristic within the groups of the Russians with high and low level of migration intentions. The results obtained are given below.

The respondents with low and high level of migration intentions are mostly married – 71% and 60%; and 76% and 53% of them have children.

The subjects with high level of migration intentions gave the following answers to the question about their material situations: 40% – "spending money in abundance, but can't afford large-scale spending (car, real property)"; 28% of the respondents "can make ends meet, in principle, but for big-budget purchases or household appliances they take a bank loan or borrow money"; 19% "live in great style"; 7% "hardly make both ends meet"; 6% refused to answer this question.

The subjects with low level of migration intentions gave the following answers to the question about their material situation: 31% – "spending money in abundance, but can't afford large-scale spending (car, real property)"; 48% of the respondents "can make ends meet, in principle, but for big-budget purchases or household appliances they take a bank loan or borrow money"; 8% "hardly make both ends meet"; 10% "live high"; 3% refused to answer.

The respondents with high level of migration intentions demonstrate good language skills compared to the group with low level of migration intentions, which, in general, is expected. It can be assumed that it is an iterative process: the intent to migrate encourages foreign language learning and this learning reinforces the intent.

The following item in the questionnaire evaluated the interest in the events taking place in Russia. The data are presented in table 02.

Table 02. Responses to the question: "To what extent are interested in the events taking place in Russia?" (%)

Groups	Very much interested	Rather interested	Rather indifferent	Indifferent	Difficult to say
LLMI	8	69	21	2	0
HLMI	11	43	37	9	0

For the respondents with HLMI a shift of interest in the events in the RF towards indifference is typical. The next set of questions evaluated the level of trust towards mass media. The results are shown in table 03.

Table 03. Responses to the question "Evaluate your degree of trust towards different mass media" (%)

Groups	Trust fully	Trust partly	Do not trust much	Distrust fully
The Internet				
LLMI	1	65	26	8
HLMI	9	61	29	1
TV and the press				
LLMI	8	66	21	5
HLMI	1	28	26	45
Foreign media				
LLMI	2	20	49	29
HLMI	4	53	34	9

High trust towards online sources is characteristic of both groups. Distrust towards TV and the press is at maximum.

These data correlate with All-Russian dynamics of people's attitude to television, the Internet, and other mass media (The All-Russian Public Opinion Research Center and Public Opinion Foundation (ARPORC) provided similar results) (Federal Agency of State Statistics, 2015): people exhibit more indifference to news and tend to be guided by news feed of social networks (they have more confidence in online sources than in TV and the press).

The attitude of the respondents to major social institutions which have a serious impact on the formation of the world picture and identity together with mass media is of importance, too.

Analysing the degree of trust towards major social institutions one can note that people with low level of migration intentions express higher confidence in them than the respondents with high level of migration intentions. The latter have more criticism and are less prone to trust the government and state bodies. This mistrust hinders the process of identification with the group and, as a consequence, a search for a more attractive group, community, country starts. In other words, migration can be defined as a search for another civic identity.

The level of confidence in the close (family) circle is presented in table 04.As indicated in table 04, irrespective of the level of migration intentions people tend to have confidence in their relatives. The subjects were also asked to what extent they identify their destiny with Russia's fate. The answers were

ranged within a 100-point scale, mean scores:35 – the subjects with high level of migration intentions;65 – the subjects with low level of migration intentions.

Table 04. The respondents' confidence in relatives (%)

Groups	Trust fully	Trust partly	Do not trust much	Distrust fully
LLMI	55	35	9	1
HLMI	57	32	10	1

The responses to the question whether you have relatives abroad were distributed as follows:19% – "yes", the subjects with low level of migration intentions;31% – "yes", the subjects with high level of migration intentions.

The answers to the question: "In case of your migration whose interests will you take into account in the first place?" are given in table 05.

Table 05. Responses to the question: "In case of your migration whose interests will you take into account in the first place?" (%)

Groups	My own interest	My children interests (future children)	My he-partner/she-partner	Interests of my employer	Not sure
LLMI	10	46	34	0	10
HLMI	42	41	12	0	5

The following question of the questionnaire: "What factors can have a positive impact on your decision to migrate?"

According to the distribution of the responses the RF citizens with low level of migration intentions are more oriented to family (the percentage of married or currently having a partner people is higher in this group); the subjects with high level of migration intentions are aimed at self-development and social success.

7. Conclusion

In order to compare, we include the statistics concerning the reasons for migration provided by Levada-Center (Gudkov &Zorkaya, 2013). The key motives look like this (the respondent can choose from several answers): desire to ensure a better life for children in future – 93%; more comfortable living condition in foreign countries – 92%; desire to live in a law-based state with protection of human rights and freedoms – 86%; opportunities for self-realization, a more reliable career abroad – 80%; lack of protection against arbitrary authorities and officials in the territory of the RF – 76%; conditions for running business – 61%; crime rate, threat to life, terrorism – 54%; the Russian political system – 52%.

All these aspects are not specified in the official statistics.

An earlier Levada-Center poll did not reveal significant changes in the distribution of responses (the difference does not exceed 5%). The ARPORC (2013) polls also confirm this dynamic. The majority of those who often think of migration are women, students, people with school knowledge of foreign languages, residents of towns with population less than 100 000 people, entrepreneurs, the unemployed (the

main part of them have minimum chances to get an employment visa due to points-based assessment system). An actual socio-demographic portrait of migrants differs from that of those who "are just thinking of migration". People who leave are mostly middle-class representatives with a diploma of higher education, good language skills, residents of cities with population over 100 000 people, in a word, they have better chances to obtain visa and find a job in a new country. Among the respondents about 22% want to migrate; only 3% of them take active actions and mere 1% of the sample do migrate. The All-Russian Public Opinion Research center points out similar dynamics but with lower percentage values (Federal Agency of State Statistics, 2015). Male and females react to the deterioration of the situation in the country in a similar manner: their intent to migrate grows but most of them are not ready to go beyond the talking stage. It is beyond argument that a dream of emigration as a form of experiencing powerlessness and dissatisfaction with the situation in the country is intrinsic to some part of the Russians. As Zinchenko and Zotova (2013) state, "the problem of research on intentions as a substance-based characteristic of personality orientation and an indicator of its subjectivity remains open" (p. 18).

Gudkov offers his interpretation of this process (Gudkov & Zorkaya, 2013): for most Russians migration intentions are a particular psychological style that protects them against ordeals in reality, helps preserve a positive I-image and the illusion of being in control. And if their control of yet another crisis in the country is impossible, then let it be the illusion of being in control of their own life. In times of Z. Freud experts discussed "flight into illness", nowadays we deal with "flight into migration". A person can choose "psychological migration" as a reaction to external factors, which allows him to legitimate his social inertia, slip into soothing dreams of "how well it is to live in another country" and, at the same time, declare himself an exception. Being deprived of these impracticable plans for migrations means intrapersonal conflict and confrontation with traumatic reality. The way out is a strengthened psychological defense with the purpose of preserving subjective sensation of control and coping with unpleasant experiences.

According to Lee (1966) ("pull-push theory"), migration intentions and subsequently migration activity of population are shaped by a balance of both pull and push factors. These factors produce different effect depending on socio-demographic specific features of a person (gender, age, education, social status, etc.) The intensity of migration intentions is influenced by a number of intermediate factors such as distance, travel expenses, bureaucratic hurdles and others. Low-class representatives appear to be more sensitive to forces pushing them out of the country, and high class is more attuned to pulling from abroad. Correspondingly, representatives of different social groups have distinct psychological needs, leading motives and goals which they strive to accomplish in the course of resettlement. In his "synthetic theory of international migration", Massey (2002) argues that forces of gravity prevail in international migration (especially for longer distances), and it is caused by the effect of globalization: the more a state is open for the world system and world economy, the more difficult it is to regulate flows of migrants and refugees.

Stouffer (1940) questions the impact of the variable "distance'' on the intensity of migration. He believes, partly in line with Lee (1966) views, that "the number of persons going a given distance is directly proportional to the number of opportunities at that distance and inversely proportional to the number of intervening opportunities" (p. 846). In this case a person's subjective, psychological construal of life prospects and opportunities opening in the future assumes special importance.

The results obtained in the study facilitate a better understanding of the emergence, structure and dynamic changes in migration intentions of the Russians. Describing socio-psychological features of the Russian citizens with high level of migration intentions one should note the following specific characteristics: priority of personal growth; relatively high income and low percentage of married people (compared to the group with low level of migration intention); high level of foreign language proficiency and exemplary emigration in the close circle; low level of identification with the RF and mistrust towards key state institutions. It can be argued that citizens with high level of migration intentions have low level of social identification with the country they live in, their personal interests and motives come to the fore.

Acknowledgments

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