

Socio-psychological Adaptation of Migrants Being in Difficult Life Situation

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Abstract

The article deals with the social and individual psychological characteristics of persons who moved either from abroad or from other regions of Russia, experiencing various hardships and are thus in a difficult situation. The study provides an analysis of the most effective social and psychological techniques to work with such a category of citizens, based on the experience of the Tula region. The study purpose is to define the social parameters and psychological characteristics of persons for over six-month period receiving the care of government services, charities and other social NGOs. As a result, the most typical characterological features of representatives of this social group are identified, such as external level of subjective control, tendency to shift the responsibility on to the government bodies, the trend towards avoidance of failure, personal satisfaction of the situation, the lack of deep depression, the presence of psychological and physical resources to overcome difficult situations. The article also describes the representatives of migrants, which are characterized by the success of social and psychological adaptation. The description is given of the socio-psychological mechanisms that enable immigrants to adapt, experiencing a variety of difficulties. The results described in this article make it possible to focus in working with such a category of citizens in the most effective options for their socio-psychological adaptation.

Keywords: socio-psychological adaptation, immigrant, migrants adaptation, difficult situations, subjective control

1. Introduction

Currently, the entire world community is faced with challenges of migration at both the national and international level. People are looking for the most favorable places of their residence, better working conditions and social services. Therefore, millions of immigrants seeking not only to move to a more comfortable accommodation, but also successfully adapt to them. The Russian society is not an exception. Numerous representatives of other regions of Russia and CIS countries tend to move into the cities, where according to their views or experience they will be able to realize themselves in the best way, to reach higher, compared with the existing, financial situation, to provide the opportunity for a happy and safe accommodation to their descendants.

However, in practice, immigrants face a number of difficulties, which is not of everyone's strength to overcome, especially in conditions of low levels of social support, psychological instability, and further complicating factors, such as the presence of young children or elderly parents (i.e. dependents), the lack of competitive education, the language difficulties at a given territory, the presence of physical disease and so on. The more components that reduce the possibility of acquiring a sustainable financial position, the more likely for the state, represented by a variety of public services, to face the necessity of socio-psychological and material support to these individuals. The most important and least adaptable are large families, single-parent families, families which the adults suffering from physical ailments and addictions. These families replenish the antisocial groups, loosely establish contacts with the social services, and being registered and provided with social and material benefits, rather negatively react to the possibility of removing them from the list of those receiving a variety of benefits or social services.

Representatives of this group are not oriented towards their own capabilities, fear manifestations of activity, fear of losing the right for social security by their families. These characteristics indicate the manifestation of learned helplessness, or on the ways of manipulating the social authorities through the exercise of such psychological states. They refer to a severe depression, manifested in a lack of desire to get a job, untidiness in the temporary housing granted, avoiding contact with others, and so on. Any psychological impact is faced with the active or passive resistance.

Active resistance is associated with verbal evidence of the impossibility of achieving the desired result. However, these representatives do not well form the desired result itself and by stating about the desire to find a good job do not attempt to implement it. Passive option is associated with a tendency to compromise, but as in the first case, there is no real action, able to change the set of circumstances. The study of 'learned helplessness' as a special state is well studied by M. Seligman (1975). He believed that learned helplessness is similar to clinical depression and, similarly, is a form of mental illness, the cause of which lies in the lack of control over the outcome of arising situations (Seligman, 1975).

Learned helplessness is formally defined as a disruption in motivation, affect and learning following exposure to no contingent (uncontrollable) outcomes. There are three crucial elements to its definition: contingency, cognition and behavior (Khan, 2011). With regard to the ideas of Seligman (1975), we can state that work with immigrants, having similar state, must take into account their cultural characteristics, as well as mechanisms affecting the ideas about quality of life, ways of adaptation to the social environment in which they move, their behavioral preferences. When a person holds these two expectations – that bad things will happen and that there is nothing one can do about it – he or she becomes hopeless, and it is this hopelessness that is the immediate cause of the depression (Bootzin et al., 1993)

In some cases, we are dealing with helplessness related to psychological attitudes, or so-called imprints when interacting with those who were maladjusted before. Often this can be a negative past experience presented at the unconscious level. Dilts and colleagues (1991, p.64) believe that "imprints established during these periods established core beliefs that shaped the personality and intelligence of the individual. The primary critical periods involved the establishment of imprints determining beliefs about biological survival, emotional attachments and well-being, intellectual dexterity, social role, aesthetic appreciation, and "meta cognition," or the awareness of one's own thought processes".

Representatives of migrants having similar characteristics will have difficulties to adapt to the realities of the new social situation. During rehabilitation activities, these people should receive special attention as of their personal development and psychological counseling. Therefore, the attention should be paid to the fact that it is necessary to distinguish between two types migrants: 1 – representatives being in the real need of socio-psychological adaptation support and assistance in successful socialization; and 2 – those creating this need artificially. A special psychological research was devoted to distinguish between these two categories.

At the same time, following the definition of socio-psychological adaptation given in the PhD thesis of Klyuchnikova (2001), we understand it as the process of integrating the individual in interaction with the social environment, involving sense of locality, awareness of the problems arising in the course of this interaction, and finding ways to resolve them, selection of the most appropriate action in given conditions in order to achieve consistency between one's self (own interests, needs, opportunities) and social environment. The most successful adaptation takes place in the case where the needs and potential of the individual are in harmony with the needs of surrounding social communities (small and large social groups), with the conditions of the surrounding world (Klyuchnikova, 2001).

Also as part of our study, we think it is appropriate to take into account the ideas proposed by Ananiev (2006), who identifies four groups of stress impacts on a person that might have a maladaptive effect. These include physical conditions of the environment, the impact made over an individual, the group impact, and the organizational impact. These factors were also examined in the context of a successful and complicated social adaptation of migrants.

2. Research Methods

Identifying the psychological characteristics of migrants for the subsequent distribution by the two types of groups mentioned above and of objectively being in a difficult situation, as well as receiving psychosocial care in institutions of social protection (a variety of NGOs and other charitable organizations) was conducted in the course of a psychological research. The study applied the following set of tests: Test "Study on the level of subjective control" (LSC) (Stolyarenko, 2003); A standardized multivariate method of personality study (Sobchik, 2000); the study of achievement motivation (Stolyarenko, 2003); The Lüscher Color Test (Dragoonskiy, 1999). This set of tests was previously used in the study of marginalized women, long time experiencing difficult life situations (Basin & Haidov, 2015).

In addition, interviews were conducted with representatives of charitable organizations, representatives of public associations, which are the national diaspora of the city and representatives of the social services to determine the types of aid and its scope. Authors further analyzed the general social burdens of such persons.

The study involved 53 respondents, migrants from Ukraine (24 persons) and other CIS countries (12 persons), migrants from other countries (Israel) and other regions of Russia, assisted with the social services and charitable organizations.

3. Psychological Characteristics of Migrants, Enabling and Preventing Social Adaptation

Study on the level of subjective control of migrants has shown that the majority of representatives (73.6%) have a high level of responsibility for the situation. The reason for the move in their opinion is the current situation, in which they could not ensure the sufficient life quality. Description of the social situation, occurred at the time of the decision about the leave, demonstrates that it is characterized by objectively difficult conditions such as concerns for the health of children and close relatives, the inability to find work and feed their families, the inability to give children a decent education. These answers characterize migrants from the territory of Donbass (Ukraine).

Migrants from other CIS countries are more interested in the possibility of a more comfortable living, receiving a decent education, and the situation of social acceptance, which did not suit the respondents in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. On a scale of 'general internality' it was 73.6% of the respondents who indicated the level of internality, close to the high rate. 18.9% of respondents indicated an average level of internality and 7.5% - a low level.

When assessing the duration of support of people with different levels of internality, it was determined that it was a person with external locus of control who require special attention. They constantly seek help from government organizations for financial assistance, are registered at the social service centers and charities. For a long time they were in a depressed mental state and viewed the situation as a purely hostile, with which they are not able to cope on their own. However, job search, securing at the labor exchange, psychological and social support did not bring the result for more than 6 months. Such persons receive benefits and not try to get a job, own a house, not do they try to keep the right to use social housing for as long as possible.

Evidence of the lack of desire to change the situation in a more positive direction is correlates with the other scales: 'internality in achievements' at the level of 5.4; 'Internality in failures' at the level of 4.8; 'Internality in family relations' – 5.4; 'Internality in the field of industrial relations' – 4.5; 'Internality in the field of interpersonal relationships' – 4.7; 'Internality in health and disease' – 5.1. Thus, these figures suggest weakness of control over any changes that occur in the lives of respondents. It should be noted that this is a fairly low percentage of the total number of migrants and has more to do with family members of migrants from the CIS countries, and migrants from other regions of the Russian Federation.

Interviews with family members, characterized by social uncertainty and external locus of control, were consistent with the presence of other family members with a high level of personal activity, having high values according to the LSC method in almost all scales. To a certain extent, it is thanks to their efforts the families and personal wealth have been taken to a new territory. Thus, socio-psychological adaptation is more successful when there is a complete family, where there are active and dedicated representatives. They are engaged in active position to find job, both for themselves and for their own relatives, establish social contacts and tend to be useful to the society in which migrated, which fully complies with the definition of socio-psychological adaptation. Thus, it can be stated that only 7.5% of migrants may impose pressure on the socio-psychological services of the state for a long time. However, about 4% of people with these characteristics are largely under the guardianship of their own relatives, who in spite of using social and material resources of the state and charities are taking active pro-social position offsetting possible negative effects of dependency and helplessness of their relatives.

It can be concluded that the majority of migrants, on their own decide to move to another country, the most actively trying to adapt to new conditions. Based on the overall demographic analysis, we can see that while respondents are characterized by higher or secondary education, have sufficient knowledge of the Russian language, have small but sufficient material means. These data are typical for 91% of migrants participating in the study. The rest are oriented either on their relatives or on social institutions designed to assist in such situations, and they are being transferred from one service to another for a long time (more than 6 months).

In addition, those migrants who are not adapted to the social space of the state for more than 6 months are characterized by intellectualization – a high values of individualistic scale of Sobchik's test. These individuals are most focused on the experience of their distress, they want to go back in time, in the well-arranged world and speak negatively about everything related to the situation that forced them to leave. Herewith, a subject to blame is both the authorities of socio-psychological adaptation and relatives who encouraged them to migrate to this country. This is stated by 95% of socio-psychologically unadapted respondents (within six months period), despite the objective understanding of the unbearable conditions at the previous place of residence. These statements are in our opinion the result of depression related to willingness to condemn, but not to take active steps to change dissatisfying external conditions of life.

Results based on 'achievement motivation' (Stolyarenko, 2003), being used to determine the individual desire to take actions as to change the current difficult situation, has also emphasized the aforesaid conclusion. It is at 7.5% of respondents, faced with the difficulties of socio-psychological adaptation, that express the desire to avoid failures – 118.6

points. In addition, a correlation revealed between this indicator with the scales of 'pessimism' and 'social introversion', with a strong tendency towards introversion pole. An inverse correlation was obtained, indicating that the elevated level of scale on 'commitment to avoiding failure' relates to a decrease in the result on the scale of 'pessimism'. Obviously, this is due to the complete and unconditional submission to fate, passing the buck to the next of kin and social services, which are in fact carrying out this role. Representatives of this group do not seek self-realization in the framework of the Russian society in any role. An important factor is the additional confirmation of the passive stance of a person – a high level of social introversion, which is inversely correlated with the scale of 'the desire of achievements'.

Results of the Lüscher Color Test (Dragoonskiy, 1999) showed that people who had difficulties with socio-psychological adaptation in the past six months expressed unproductive mental stress (at 3.7 points). The rest of the respondents – migrants have a fairly optimum state of mental stress – at 4.2 points.

The important point is to understand that migrants in Russia can apply not only to public institutions. Our survey shows that 99% of respondents turned to charitable and community organizations. One of the most important are the national diaspora, which are especially aware of the culture of migrants, being able to help them find a job, understand the characteristics of the society on the spot, to establish friendships and support in 'difficult times'. It is the diaspora that can satisfy the need to preserve cultural identity, remain active in communication, use of material and human resources to support compatriots. Current study surveyed the Ukrainian, Jewish, Dagestani Diasporas.

This conclusion is supported by a number of migration studies in the world, for example, Msengi et al. (2015) indicate that women migrants more easily enter into a new social space of the region by actively engaging in a variety of life communities and other social institutions that have established support groups. This hypothesis is also proved by Carr et al. (2003) and Williams (2011). Regardless of gender, it can be argued that non-governmental social service agencies, given the presence of trained staff and features of social interactions, as well as the content of the interaction, have a positive impact on social inclusion of migrants.

4. Conclusion

Socio-psychological adaptation of migrants is an important and integral part of any society. The most important factors in the success of socio-psychological adaptation are the presence of linguistic freedom, demanded education in the labor market, physical health and lack of dependents, which objectively complicate the possibility of self-realization.

Those settlers, not being able to adapt to the conditions of life in society for more than six months, have certain psychological characteristics. These include such important ones as extraversion on all scales of subjective control, the desire for avoidance of failures, expressed pessimism in the future, the desire to reduce future failures at by shifting responsibility to others, the reduced level of mental and psychological state.

Most migrants (92%) can be easily adapted to the social conditions of the new state, the time frame takes up to six months, which suggests they overcome a difficult situation by that time. A significant role to alleviate the socio-psychological adaptation of migrants is taken on by public associations, such as national diaspora that promotes the early penetration into society, while maintaining close cultural ties, traditions and customs.

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