

Socio-psychological problems of children in migrant families and their solutions

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Abstract. The article is devoted to socio-psychological characteristics of children in migrant families, and reveals their problems. It presents the research results of foreign and Uzbek scientists who conducted research on migrant families and their children. The article proves that growing up without a father or mother has a negative effect on the child's psychology, and that family problems arise as a result of the increase in the number of migrants in the world, as a result of which family members do not see each other for a long time. The conflict in personal and family values, its impact on the upbringing system of Uzbek families, as well as methods of bringing up and educating the children of migrant families and providing psychological services to them in educational institutions are shown. Psychological recommendations are given to parents who have left their children in their homeland and become migrant workers in other countries.

1 Introduction

In modern multinational society, the process of migration is becoming more and more intense. The process of migration has become an integral part of the modern global structure of the world. According to the experts of the United Nations, more than 200 million people are international migrants, and about one billion people are domestic migrants. According to statistical data of the European Union, the scale of migration has increased by 2.5 times in the last 50 years [1], which prompted scientists to study migration as a social, economic, pedagogical and psychological problem.

Globalization leads to a sharp increase in the number of relations in all social spheres and among representatives of different cultures which, in turn, creates new forms of culture and a new way of life. Such cases cause changes in people's psychology, and at the same time, make it necessary to create a new mechanism for raising children and strengthening the family institution [2].

The increase in the number of migrants has complicated their migration characteristics resulting in the emergence of such new forms of migration as educational migration, marriage migration, periodic and incomplete migrations [6].

Values that are unique in the multinational Uzbek society are experiencing a period of deep study due to the influence of various factors. New transnational features are emerging.

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One of the reasons for it is the increased migration of millions of people. In the last decade, the process of migration has affected economic, political, cultural and various social phenomena in our country. Unfortunately, in many cases, labour migration has become a problem of survival for man, forcing him to mobilize all his resources. A person's mood and psychological state influence on his adaptation to a new environment. Therefore, the problem of migrant workers' psychological health is assuming great importance [3].

The main criteria for psychological health are explained by: psychological well-being, the absence of psychological stress, the ability to properly and adequately approach various social events, age-appropriate development of emotional-volitional and cognitive aspects of the individual, the ability to adapt to microsocial relationships, the ability to control one's own behaviour and set vital goals, and the ability to choose the right way to achieve them [2-4].

The psychological health disorder in a person has a negative effect on his behaviour resulting in the damage of the system of healthy family relationships and the decrease in the possibility of proper upbringing of children.

2 Analysis and results

E.A.Klimova selected Armenian, Uzbek, Tajik and Kazakh families living in Russia to study the socio-psychological characteristics of the relationship between parents and children in migrant families. During the research, she studied the relationship between children and mothers, and the level of their adaptation to the new social environment. E.A.Klimova conducted research with the educators of the kindergarten where the children of migrant families were taken care of. According to her, 57% of the educators explain that the mood prevailing in the period of adaptation of children of migrant families has a negative background. 43% of educators indicated that unstable emotions prevail in children. During the conversation with kindergarten educators, it was found that children's negative emotions are manifested in the form of crying, whims and verbal complaints [10].

Emotional instability of preschool children is characterized by depression, passivity and isolation. It is emphasized that stabilization of the emotional state of the children of migrant families should be done by involving them more in children's groups [12].

In order to determine how difficulties are manifested in the process of adaptation of children of migrant families to a new socio-ethnic environment, E.A.Klimova asked the respondents the question "What are the specific features of the problems that arise in the process of adapting migrant children to the group?" According to her, 74% of kindergarten children **"had negative emotional states"**, 1% **"had partial or complete refusal to eat"**, 12% **"refused to take a nap or could not sleep"**, 29% **"disobeyed order and discipline"**, 79% **"were not able to communicate with peers"**, 21% manifested the state of **"being wrapped up in their shells"** [5-10].

F.Usman, M.Abdikerim, V.Georgina, Axinn W.G and A.Sarkadi conducted research on how children in migrant families can adapt to a new social space, preserve feelings about their nationality, and establish constructive relations with representatives of the new society. According to their conclusions, the formation of the ability to preserve own ethnic identity and establish constructive relations allows them to optimize their flexibility resources [7,8,9].

The children in migrant families always have fear, anxiety and depression. Being in such a state for a long time leads to the appearance of negative elements in their behaviour, as a result the indicators of their stress tolerance become weak. If the child is not provided with psychological support, aggression, anger, and fear may appear regularly, which leads to disorder in their cognitive-affective sphere [5].

Research on the socio-psychological characteristics of children in migrant families was conducted at the Scientific Research Institute “Family and Women” under the State Committee for Family and Women of the Republic of Uzbekistan. During the research, the children, whose father or mother is a migrant worker, were asked to complete a socio-psychological questionnaire.

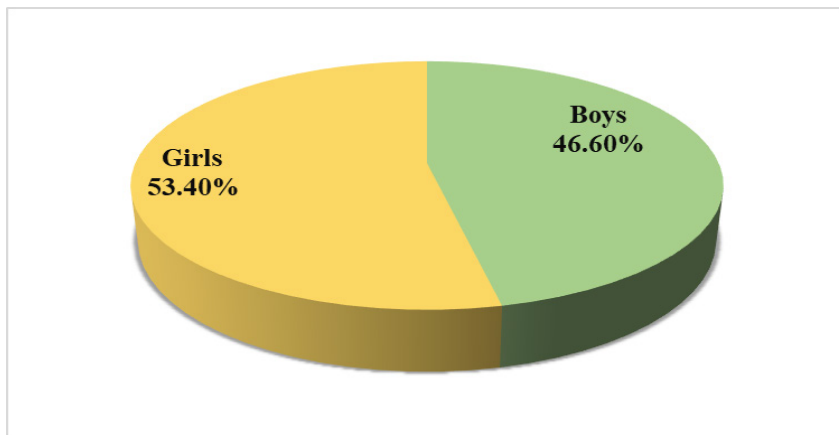


Fig. 1. Sex differences in research subjects

53.4% of the respondents were girls, and 46.6% were boys (Figure 1). The research showed that socio-psychological characteristics of the children in migrant families were different from those in non-migrant families.

During the research, in order to find out the main helper when children in migrant families fall into a difficult situation, they were asked the question “Who would you like to get more help from in difficult times?” The following answers were received to the questions (Figure 2).

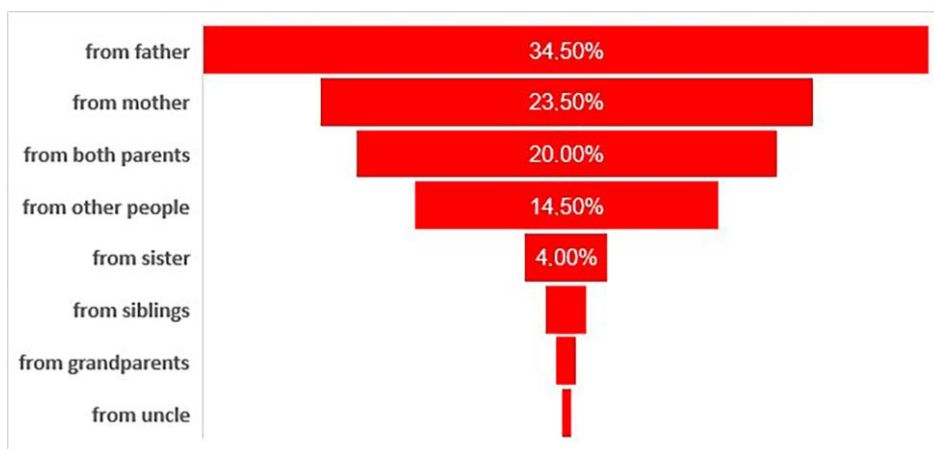


Fig. 2. Help that children expect in difficult situations

According to the results, parents proved to be the main support people for the children in any case. The main problem was that the people whom the children could rely on after them were strangers (14.5%). The motive to receive help from strangers was characterized

by its increasing frequency. Not living with children for a long time leads them to be brought up by strangers. The main reason for why children do not get help from their brothers and sisters was that they had the feeling that **“they were in difficulty like them”**.

Some children admitted that they took their studies more seriously and did less housework only after their parents returned from labour migration. Parental migration has a negative impact on children’s emotional well-being. Immediately after the departure of their parents, mood deterioration, loneliness and isolation are observed in most of the children (Figure 3).

When parents were abroad as labour migrants, the emotional state of children turned to be as follows.

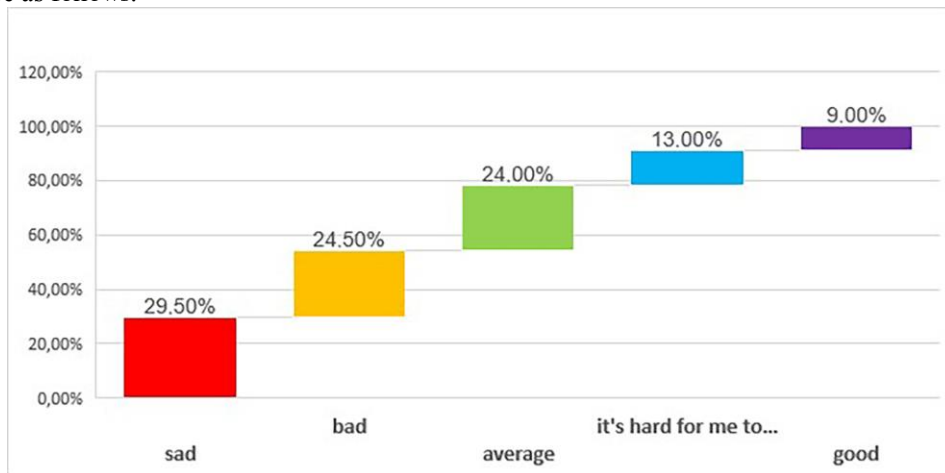


Fig. 3. The emotional state of children

According to the results of the research, to the question “What is your mood when your close relatives are abroad?” 29.50% of the respondents chose the answer “sad”, 24.50% – “bad”, 24% – “average”, 13.90% – “difficult to answer”, and 9% – “good”. It can be seen that parents’ distant stay from their children has a negative impact not only on their mental state, but also on their studies, lifestyles, and physical conditions.

Nowadays, people’s motivation to live has become inextricably linked with material needs. A house, a car, money and similar material supplies have become the essence of life. In order to achieve these, fathers or mothers leave their children to relatives using the right of guardianship and work abroad as labour migrants.

David Blankenhorn, the founder of the Institute for American Values, writes in his book “Fatherless America” that “In the US society, children are growing up without fathers. A few generations ago, it was common for children to grow up with their fathers. Today, such a value is being reversed. The concept that it is possible to grow up without a father is accepted as correct and normal. In the family, as men distance themselves from the duties of husband and father, they are deprived of the ability to perform duties such as mentoring and guiding their children...” (Source: https://canadiancrc.com/Fatherlessness/Fatherless_America_Book.aspx).

At the same time, we asked the question “Do you want to go and work abroad in the future?” from the children whose fathers or mothers are migrant workers. **78.5%** of the respondents chose the answer “no”, while **24.5%** answered “yes”. The results showed that the children of migrant families did not have the desire to work abroad like their parents. The psychological traumas they experienced when their parents were abroad for a long time were the outcome of the “memories” imprinted in their minds as a result of the lack of “love and attention”.

3 Conclusion/Recommendations

In the research conducted at the Scientific Research Institute “Family and Women”, special attention was paid to how migration influences family relations. According to it;

- disorders in the system of family relations: interruption of live communication between the older and younger generations, functional disorders in husband-wife relations, mistrust, divorces and betrayal;

- problems in parent-child relations. This, in turn, causes problems in the personality, emotional and volitional sphere and interpersonal relationships of the child, as well as in parental reputation, etc.;

- various changes occur in the personality of the children left without the control of parents or a parent. Such problems have been identified as realization of own field of affiliation, disorders in the formation of emotional bonds with relatives, changes in the agenda and obligations of children with the transfer of parental functions to the eldest child in the family, and fading of educational interests. Based on the findings of the research, children’s problems can be divided into the following two groups:

Influence on the psychological state of children. Regardless of the situation in the family, most children miss their parents during migration. The results of the research show that the migration of parents has the greatest impact on the emotional state of children, and the migration of fathers leads to a decrease in the level of emotional well-being of children: when children live without a father, most of them note a worsening of mood and sadness. Emotional well-being also worsens in families with long parental absence and low income. When children miss their parents, their stress level increases, their mood and behaviour change, which, in turn, negatively affect other aspects of the children’s psychological state.

Influence on the protection and well-being of children. When parents move and leave their children behind, their well-being and protection is seriously compromised. The analysis shows that guardians usually use different methods of raising and controlling children. About 7% of children are physically punished, and 3% of children are abused at home, while 6% of children – at school. A third of children take on additional responsibilities after their parents move away including household chores, babysitting and looking after siblings. Children themselves do not see extra work as a problem that interferes with school or other aspects of life. However, analyses show that the increase in housework has a negative effect on children’s mood.

Parental migration does not ensure the realization of children’s rights to social protection, quality education, parental education and participation in social life. Acknowledging the social consequences of migration is an important step towards adopting evidence-based policies and programs to mitigate the negative impact of parental migration on dependent children. In this sense, migration cannot guarantee children’s rights to protection, education, participation in social life and independent decision-making as stipulated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Psychologists working in schools should get additional training in working with specific target groups such as children of migrant families. A psychological hotline can be useful for both caregivers and children of migrant families. Comprehensive programs and strategies are needed to combat bullying and ensure safe learning environments in schools.

Regardless of the nature of educational institutions, it is important to have programs aimed at building tolerance. Accordingly:

- **the first component** should be directed at the students themselves, including: a) studying the level of formation of tolerance in students, b) teaching them the system of knowledge about the rights and freedoms of man and peoples, international relations, race and religious confessions, c) conducting practical and psychological-pedagogical trainings aimed at correcting their behaviour;

- **the second component** should be directed at students' parents including the following directions: a) determining the problems in child upbringing, family relations and their level of tolerance, b) organizing meetings for parents on issues of international tolerance, c) teaching parents tolerant communication skills;

- **the third component** should be directed at practicing psychologists working in educational institutions, including: a) determining the level of formation of tolerance in teachers, b) practical trainings aimed at correcting teachers' behaviour.

Before people decide to move to another country for work, they need to be informed about job opportunities in their own country/region. Although the number of local factories, farming and non-governmental agricultural enterprises, as well as the demand for labour within the country is increasing, people are not always aware of the opportunities. Therefore, information about available positions should be better presented and the organization of vocational training for people considering migration, especially for women, needs to be further improved.

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