Ethnic identity and personal helplessness in young migrants from the Central Asia

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Abstract
Growth of the external migration within the Russian Federation draws the attention of scientists to this problem. During the latest decade, the majority of foreign migrants (coming for work, study, or residence) are representatives of the Central Asian countries. The objective of this research is studying ethnic identity and personal helplessness in migrants coming from the Central Asian countries. The data obtained as a result of the conducted research allow making conclusions about orientation to interaction with other ethnic groups being stronger in migrants from the Central Asia who feature personal helplessness than in the ones characterized by independence and tending to shut themselves off communication with other ethnoses. According to the obtained data, the respondents with independence feature significantly higher indicators of ethnic nihilism, ethnic fanaticism, and ethnic isolationism than the tested ones with personal helplessness do. The found particularities of ethnic identity in migrants having different personal features allow integrating results of the research conducted into the ethnopsychological domain of knowledge. Similarly, they allow creating the theoretical basis for solving applied problems in social and psychological adaptation support rendered to migrants.

Keywords: ethnic identity, personal helplessness, adaptation, migration, migrants

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INTRODUCTION

For the contemporary society, its global existence context is currently marked by the humanitarian world getting shattered. This shattering manifests itself in mass migration of the population above all. On the one hand, migration is an important component of national policies for individual states, a part and parcel of transforming and upgrading the society, a factor of national security, demographic and economic growth. Meanwhile, it is a factor of tense economic relationships, interethnic proneness to conflict, and distorting the host community's ethnic identity, on the other hand (Fernham & Bochner, 2002; Mukomel, 2017; Mukhametshina, 2019; Tittler, Lannin & Han, 2020; Hermans, Konopka & Oosterwegel, 2017).

With regard to this, it is highly urgent to reconsider the current migration forecasts and any factors that may shape them. Ethnic identity is one of such factors (Fernham & Bochner, 2002). The ways ethnic identity gets transformed in people in the process of migration that could be traced are a relevant subject for psychological analysis. The insights it brings can contribute both to developing appropriate ways of migrants' adaptation and to resolving issues which may arise on the part of Russia's native population.

When entering a different ethnocultural and linguistic environment, one category of migrants finds their bearings in the new situation efficiently, shows independence and optimism, while the other one experiences psychological difficulties, demonstrates passivity, helplessness, and indifference (Donohue, 2020; Grigoryev, Batkhina & van de Vijver, 2020; Hiemstra, Born & Derous, 2017). The new sociocultural environment and stressful out of hand events associated with moving have an unpredictable and uncontrollable impact on migrants, causing the adaptation process difficulties. In a difficult life situation, in conditions of living abroad, the positive ethnic identity gives one a sense of psychological security and stability (Russo-Netzer et al., 2019). Though feeling helpless in circumstances which are beyond their control, individuals having the positive ethnic identity are able to perceive unity with their native ethnoses and realize their belonging to certain cultures. They orient to the ethnic communities and tend to exaggerate positive distinctions of their community from the other ones

frequently (Holtug, 2017; Jing, Ghosh & Sun, 2020; Kadykova, 2014; Morrice, 2017; Suslova, 2016).

The necessity of promoting adaptation and integration of migrants, setting up constructive interaction between them and the host community has determined the relevance of this research, as well as its social and practical importance.

The objective of this work is studying ethnic identity and personal helplessness in migrants coming from the Central Asian countries.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The issues of the search for efficient lines of optimizing adaptation processes and shaping sound behavior strategies, social, exploratory, and constructive initiative in migrants, as well as building and keeping up adaptation resources, retain their relevance. According to the authors, one of the most efficient approaches to solution of this problem is to cultivate the positive ethnic identity in migrants taking into account their personal particularities (personal helplessness / independence) (Ponomareva, Sizova & Evstafeeva, 2019).

One's ability to stand up against forces disrupting one's internal balance is a vital characteristic of one's life activity. Daily observations show a clear association between a subject's personal entities, specific organization of mental features, and the way the subject overcomes various difficulties.

The concept of personal helplessness describes helplessness as an integrated characteristic of personality, details its specific features, factors of formation, structural components, individual particularities of personal helplessness, the ways personal helplessness is manifested in a subject's activity and behavior. It also elaborates independence – a personality feature which is the opposite to personal helplessness. Acting as the theoretical and methodological basis for studying personal helplessness, the subject- and activity-based approach predetermines the content of this concept. So, personal helplessness is a characteristic of personality limiting the subject's abilities to transform the reality (Tsiring, 2010). It manifests itself in the subject's passivity, inability to cope with difficulties, dependence on other people; it also translates into hindered goal-setting due to pessimistic expectations and difficulties achieving the goals.

Just like personal helplessness, independence determines a subject's life activity particularities, with the difference being that the subject's behavior, activity, and relationships turn out to be a manifestation of the subject's high ability to transform the reality, to operate as an agent within the subject's own life stance. An independent subject does not experience any difficulties goal-setting and demonstrates high performance in achieving the set goals. The subject exhibits high flexibility, creative capacities, persistence, focus, optimism, and confidence of his or her forces. Behavior of the subject with independence is distinguished by energy; the subject builds favorable relationships with others and can play the lead in the relationships. Independence as an integrated personal characteristic conditions higher success in activity, while personal helplessness determines less successful activity (Tsiring, 2010).

Thus, personal helplessness and independence that are the integrated features of personality are considered as internal framework underlying the influence of external circumstances, e.g., particularities of adaptation to new conditions of living. In such situations, personal helplessness involves fulfillment of the low subjectness level both in activity and behavior, while independence induces a subject to be busy transforming the situation, i.e., it characterizes a high level of subjectness. People with personal helplessness allow others make decisions for them. Personal helplessness is aimed at changing the information about difficult life situations with the aim to reduce their traumatic effect on the personality.

In studying adaptation of migrants, exploring ethnic identity is an important and relevant focus area. Ethnic identity is a structural component of social identity of an individual consisting in one's recognizing one's own belonging to a certain ethnic community (Balyaev & Nikishov, 2017; Bieda et al., 2017). Two main components are singled out in the structure of ethnic identity: the cognitive and affective ones (Stefanenko, 2006). A number of authors distinguish the third component in the structure of ethnic identity – the behavioral one which is expressed in a person's observing (or failing to observe) the traditions of his or her ethnos (Balyaev & Nikishov, 2017; Bieda et al., 2017; Morzavchenkov, 2010). The cognitive component incorporates knowledge and ideas about the particularities of one's own ethnic group and, based on the ethnic differentiating attributes, recognizing oneself as a member of this group. The sense of belonging to the group and the attitude to being a member of it, appraisal of its qualitative characteristics make up the affective component of ethnic identity.

Ethnic identity can be considered with three levels borne in mind: higher level, normal identity, and lower level (Krupnov et al., 2014). G.U. Soldatova (1998, 2011) identifies five levels (types) of ethnic identity: ethnic nihilism, ethnic indifference, norm, ethnic egoism, ethnic isolationism, and ethnic fanaticism. Individuals who feature pronounced ethnic nihilism prefer departing from their own ethnic groups and looking for stable social and psychological niches according to other than the ethnic criteria. In the case of ethnic indifference, ethnic identity gets blurred, which is expressed in the indefiniteness of ethnic affiliation, irrelevance of ethnicity. The "normal" level of ethnic identity (the positive ethnic identity) involves the combination of a

Table 1. Results of studying personal helplessness and independence in young migrants from the Central Asia

	Arithmetic mean	
	migrants with personal helplessness	migrants with independence
Volitional component	15,29	4,56
Emotional component	15,16	4,88
Motivational component	15,36	6,89
Cognitive component	10,36	4,22

(Source: authors)

positive attitude to one's own people and a positive attitude to other peoples. This type of ethnic identity is inherent in the vast majority of people; it is an important condition for peaceful intercultural relationships in the poly-ethnic world. Ethnic egoism is a result of perceiving ethnocultural interactions through the lens of the "my people" and "not my people" construct; it implies tension and irritation in communication with representatives of other ethnic groups. Ethnic isolationism manifests itself in one's being convinced of the superiority of "one's own" people, recognizing the necessity of "purifying" the national culture, and taking a negative stance toward interethnic unions and interactions. Ethnic fanaticism implies the individuals' readiness for committing whatever actions in the name of ethnic interests; it consists in their prioritizing the ethnic rights of their people over the human rights, justifying any sacrifice in the fight for their own people's well-being (Soldatova, 1998, 2011).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The objective of the research – studying ethnic identity and personal helplessness in migrants coming from the Central Asian countries – has determined the logic of this work. The following tasks were singled out as the principal ones:

1) Conducting theoretical analysis of the problem of ethnic identity and personal helplessness in Russian and foreign psychology.

2) Organizing the research, in particular, selecting methods and techniques.

3) Diagnosing ethnic identity and personal helplessness in young migrants.

4) Analyzing and interpreting the obtained data.

Methodological basis of the research is the concept of personal helplessness by D.A. Tsiring (2010) and cross-cultural approach to studying the particularities of various cultures. As the research methods, the following were used: questionnaire form for collecting the data on social indicators of the respondents, the technique for studying ethnic identity types (Soldatova, 2011), the technique for studying personal helplessness (Klimova, 2017; Tsiring, 2010) adapted using the sample of migrants), and the mathematical method of Mann-Whitney (U-)test for comparing samples.

The research involved 222 migrants coming from the Central Asia to Russia with the aim of getting an education and studying at regional universities of the

Russian Federation in various focus areas of training (Chelyabinsk, Orenburg, Moscow, and Yekaterinburg). At the first stage of the research, groups of the tested ones featuring personal helplessness and independence were formed, and the authors compared the ethnic identity indicators using the case of these groups. The samples were formed according to the results of diagnosing personal helplessness in the respondents: the tested ones with low figures on the scales of the personal helplessness diagnosing technique were grouped as the "independent" ones, the young people scoring high – as the "helpless" group. Diagnosing allowed identifying the migrants for whom traits of independence (N=94) and personal helplessness (N=55) were characteristic, plus the tested ones with intermediate scores (N=73). In further work, the authors used the data on the contrast groups only: those of migrants with independence and with personal helplessness.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The situation of moving to another state and the period of adaptation to new conditions can act as a traumatic and hardly controllable event. Citizens having come to a new country face the language barrier (pronounced to some extent or another) and are very likely to have no close ones nearby who could render them assistance and support. This is why they turn out to be at the risk of helplessness emerging (Suslova, 2016). Alongside this, when preparing adaptation stage support programs for migrants, it is important to bear in mind their personal particularities. Disregarding this problem may entail difficulties in adaptation.

In this study, the authors pay attention to such personality features as personal helplessness and independence. Results of the research are given in **Table 1**.

Before going on to analyze the obtained data, it should be noted that the structure of personal helplessness and independence is represented by four components: motivational, cognitive, emotional, and volitional ones having significant relationships that are different at different stages of ontogenesis. According to the data obtained, the migrants with personal helplessness are distinguished by the motivational and cognitive components of personal helplessness expressed to a greater extent. The motivational component in the helpless tested ones is characterized by insufficiently developed motives on which the

Table 2. Comparative analysis of ethnic identity between the migrants with personal helplessness and the ones featuring independence

Types of ethnic identity	Average rank		U	p
	Migrants with personal helplessness	Migrants with independence		
Ethnic nihilism	**57,48**	**85,25**	**1621,5**	**0,000**
Ethnic indifference	78,51	72,95	2392	0,445
Positive ethnic identity	**90,63**	**65,86**	**1725**	**0,001**
Ethnic egoism	62,22	82,48	1882	0,005
Ethnic isolationism	**62,55**	**82,28**	**1900,5**	**0,006**
Ethnic fanaticism	69,72	78,09	2294,5	0,251

(Source: authors)

successfulness of their activity and further social and professional fulfillment depend. Moreover, under personal helplessness, the external locus of control, failure avoidance motivation, and a low aspirations level characterize the motivational component, too. Particularities of the cognitive constituent of personal helplessness are determined by a low divergent thinking indicator, rigidity of thinking, as well as the pessimistic attributional style. Higher anxiety, the low control of emotions and behavior, impetuous trend, emotional instability, and excessive dependence on moods represent the emotional component content of a subject's personal helplessness. The volitional component is characterized with the following particularities: indecisiveness, low assertiveness and initiative, decreased indicators of discipline, insufficient self-possession and focus.

In the migrants with independence, these components are less pronounced. In particular, the lower the score is, the more independent in this relation the subject is.

For migrants living in a foreign country, the role of ethnic particularities is important in both intergroup and interpersonal communication processes. When studying ethnic identity in the migrants from the Central Asia characterized with personal helplessness and independence, the authors have found statistically significant distinctions in the following indicators: ethnic nihilism, positive ethnic identity, ethnic egoism, and ethnic isolationism (**Table 2**).

On the ethnic nihilism scale, the respondents with independence have a validly higher indicator than those with personal helplessness. This may give evidence about the fact that dismissal of ethnicity, ethnocultural and ethnic values can be inherent in the independent migrants to a greater extent. It can also manifest itself in the form of demonstrating their independence from everything that might be associated with the ethnic phenomenon. Unlike those diagnosed with personal helplessness, the tested ones featuring independence can consider ethnic identity unimportant and deny any presence thereof in their life. The migrants with independence can fail to appreciate their own ethnic group, and they may look for other social and psychological niches to opt for, proceeding from other than the ethnic criteria.

The migrants with independence differ from the personally helpless group on the ethnic egoism scale, too. This ethnic identity type implies one's being convinced of the superiority of one's own ethnic group. The authors explain the obtained results as follows: the young people featuring independence do not experience difficulties goal setting, and they achieve the set goals quickly. This indicator may help build favorable relationships with those around them, yet meanwhile the young people can strive for ethnic dominance of their own ethnic group. Similarly, they largely tend to build relationships with representatives of their own ethnic group, because they could perceive interaction with representatives of other peoples as a source of troubles.

Significant distinctions have also been found on the ethnic isolationism scale: this type of ethnic identity is higher in the migrants with independence than in the ones characterized by personal helplessness. Given that the migrants with independence can be ill-disposed to representatives of other ethnic communities, they react adversely to interaction in international groups, which can morph into hatred for other peoples, too.

The migrants with personal helplessness are notable for the positive ethnic identity, as compared to the migrants distinguished by independence. This characterizes the migrants with personal helplessness from the standpoint of a positive attitude to not only their own people, but to other peoples as well. The migrants with personal helplessness can be characterized as timid ones, having a pessimistic worldview, tending to feel guilt, lower self-esteem and level of aspirations, so, peaceful intercultural interaction is an important condition for them. They are largely oriented to the tolerance toward both their own and other ethnic groups. Besides, this indicator can suggest faster and more successful adaptation of the migrants in conditions of the new ethnic community.

According to the findings, the indicators of ethnic nihilism, ethnic fanaticism, and ethnic isolationism are significantly higher in the respondents featuring independence than in the tested ones with personal helplessness. These types of ethnic identity imply oppositely directed actions of subjects in terms of ethnocultural interaction. The authors consider it important to find out in further studies what exactly

factors condition each type of ethnic identity in migrants distinguished by independence.

CONCLUSION

Adaptation of migrants is currently one of the essential focus areas both in science and practice. When entering an environment which is different from their native culture, migrants have to reject their habitual way of life, to learn other social norms and rules regulating behavior in the society.

The issues of the search for efficient lines of optimizing adaptation processes and shaping sound behavior strategies, social, exploratory, and constructive initiative in migrants, as well as building and keeping up adaptation resources, retain their relevance. According to the authors, one of the most efficient approaches to solution of this problem is to cultivate the positive ethnic identity in migrants taking into account their personal particularities.

Organizing the poly-ethnic space in the host community can serve as the basis for cultivating the positive ethnic identity, with the space aimed at developing the cognitive, affective, and behavioral components of ethnic identity. It can also contribute to harmonizing ethnicity, enhancing the national consciousness, the positive self-attitude, and keeping the migrants' ideas about their own culture and cultural heritage updated.

The data obtained as a result of the conducted research allow making conclusions about orientation to interaction with other ethnic groups being stronger in migrants from the Central Asia who feature personal helplessness than in the ones characterized by independence and tending to shut themselves off communication with other ethnoses.

The found particularities of ethnic identity in migrants having different personal features (personal helplessness / independence) allow integrating results of the cross-cultural research conducted into the ethnopsychological domain of knowledge. Similarly, they allow creating the theoretical basis for solving applied problems in social and psychological adaptation support rendered to migrants. As prospects for further research, the authors note the necessity of studying additional factors that condition certain ethnic identity types among migrants from the Central Asia with personal helplessness and independence.

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