

MIGRATION AND CULTURAL TRANSMISSION PATTERNS: FACTOR IN THE PROCESSES OF DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSITION IN CENTRAL ASIAN COUNTRIES

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Abstract: *The demographic transition in Central Asian is contradictory and complicated because of the problems formed by the post-Soviet collapse of economic and social infrastructure, the transformation of power and cultural processes associated with the Islamic renaissance and agrarian overpopulation. These factors have a serious impact on the economic growth of the Central Asian countries, concentrating the main economic indicators around labor emigration. Since Russia is the main partner-acceptor of migrant workers from the above-mentioned countries, its culture has a significant impact on visitors from Central Asian countries. Russia is a country with a predominantly urban population and a high spread of secular values, whose cultural characteristics can influence the transformation of collective perceptions of migrants, which in turn can have a significant impact on the demographic and social behavior of returning citizens of Central Asian countries. The article presents the results of a surveys, that were conducted among non-ethnic migrants in 2017 (N=231) and in 2019 (N=222), and data on their interviewing in 2017 (N=16) were collected. As a result, signs of assimilation of urban identity were identified, as well as the integration of cultural elements defining values that can contribute to the processes of demographic transition among residents of Central Asian countries upon returning to their homeland. The concept of cultural identity, defined as a multicomponent hierarchical complex of group affiliations in the system of common social identity, is used as a central research category that allows for a more detailed examination of ongoing social changes.*

Key words: *migrants, Central Asia, demographic transition, cultural integration, cultural identity, survey, Yekaterinburg*

JEL classification: *J11*

1. INTRODUCTION

The Central Asian countries, which include Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, are an important strategic partner of the Russian Federation today, as well as a potential source of human capital not only for Russia, but also for the world community. In the context of a declining birth rate and a population aging in all developed countries of the world (World Population Prospects, 2022), the problem of replenishing residents who are ready to work is becoming increasingly urgent. The process of demographic transition in some countries inevitably entails the need to import labors from other countries, which means that it actualizes issues of its quality, volume and adaptive abilities.

The population of the Central Asian countries is quite large, also has a significant proportion of young people in its composition, and thus holds the position of the region as a donor of labor resources. However, signs of entering in period of declining fertility and mortality are also observed in Central Asian countries (Mahmudov & Galfinger, 2016), which in the long term will affect a decrease in their migration potential. Thus, according to UN forecasts, by 2025 the fertility rate in the region will be 2.81, and by 2050 it will fall to 2.24 (United Nations, the

Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2022). Since Central Asia is an important region for the geopolitical interests of Russia, and also for a number of neighboring countries (in particular China), its importance for other countries will grow in the future. So a comprehensive assessment of social characteristics trends in potential donor- regions of migrant workers acquires high practical importance.

2. DATA AND METHODS

Among the conditions of demographic transition, it is customary to identify a number of factors like different levels, such as technological development, advances in medicine and pharmacology, increasing life expectancy, reducing mortality and birth control; economic development and per capita income, industrialization, and access in education (Vishnevsky, 1982; Zvereva, 2015). But in conditions when a large number of countries have already achieved high level in these areas, it becomes relevant to talk about the impact of progress on changing the social characteristics of different less developed communities. In the context of globalization and mass international migrations, the results of cultural interventions of some societies into others, including changes in demographic trends in nation-states, are becoming more significant (Coleman & Gietel & Billari, 2015; Mehrishvili&Tkacheva&Yudashkin, 2022). The new cultural identity acquired by migrants is seen as a system that exports norms and values from one culture to another.

The close interaction of representatives of Central Asian countries and Russians in the framework of labor and educational migration have an impact on the transformation of traditional cultural practices, values and collective ideas. Due to the specifics of migrants from Central Asian countries, characterized by pendulum movements and long staying in the territory of the Russian Federation, one way or another, the cultural elements of the host country are transferred to the releasing countries.

In order to study cultural interaction and the influence of Russian culture on the identity of migrants from countries such as Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, the authors of the article conducted research for several years among residents of Yekaterinburg (Russia) and visitors of the city:

1. Standardized interview survey of migrants from Central Asian countries (N=231, 2017). Type of sampling procedure – quota sampling,

quota feature in the selection process – gender, age, country of departure, education;

2. Standardized interview survey of migrants from Central Asian countries (N=222, 2019). Type of sampling procedure – quota sampling, quota feature in the selection process – gender, age, country of departure, education;
3. In-depth interview survey of migrant workers from Central Asian countries (N=16, 2017);
4. In-depth interview survey of migrants from Central Asian countries (N=9, 2023), the selection of informants for interviews was based on the application of the following criteria: education (higher or secondary education received in Russia), job position, age.

3. THE RESULTS

Since urbanization is defined as one of the most important factors of demographic transition affecting a long-term decline in population growth (Vishnevsky, 2018), elements of urban culture acquire high importance as part of the cultural identity perceived by migrants from Central Asian countries. Russian society is characterized by a high level of urban population: 74.9% according to Rosstat figures for 2023, the countries of Central Asia lag far behind in this indicator. In 2023, the share of the urban population was 36.6% in Kyrgyzstan, 50.4% in Uzbekistan and 27.3% in Tajikistan (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2023).

Visitors from Central Asian countries primarily move from rural areas to the urban environment of Russia. In the receiving country, migrants learn the norms and values of citizens, new daily practices, perception of time and space, etc. Our research shows the assimilation of identity elements with urban culture among migrants from Central Asian countries, which are shown by the following indicators:

- Egocentric attitude in decision-making: at the first place among the answers (50.9%) is the opinion that when making a choice, respondents are guided by their personal understanding of the situation, their judgment about how a person should behave. This type of thinking and action is a counter position to the traditional type of human behavior based on collectivity and the high importance of the community opinion to which a person belongs.

- The importance of their physical condition: more than half of the migrants replied that maintaining

their health (50.5%) is the most valuable thing in their life. This answer is the second most popular after the «importance of the family» and overtakes the value of «friendly communication» and «material well-being». This order of answers puts a value attitude towards individualization, and characterizes it as a social phenomenon used to urban consciousness.

- The feeling of getting used to life in the city signals the adoption of a special form of Russian cultural identity among migrants. Urban identity is determined by a sense of comfort in an urban environment, the absence of fear of tall and monumental buildings, large busy roads and transport, the specifics of relations between citizens, the ability to use the benefits offered (goods, service, professional choice) and solve problems using tools that exist in megacities. This condition appears only over time, especially if the migrant does not come from a small town to a large one, but from a rural area to a megalopolis. A long stay in Russian cities changes the feeling like alienation of the urban lifestyle among migrants to its acceptance, which indicates the assimilation of urban identity elements among respondents from Central Asian countries. According to our data, a fairly large number of respondents replied that they were completely used to living in the city (40.3%), but a significant part of 35.9% noted that they were only partially used to it. At the same time, only 9.1% said they could not get used to it at all yet. Thus, in general, there is an obvious tendency for migrants from Central Asian countries to successfully assimilate urban identity.

- A pretty good perception the way of Yekaterinburg citizens behave: almost a third of migrants, in response to the question of “how culturally Yekaterinburg residents behave”, replied that “many behave quite culturally” (27.7%). In the first place was the answer “in different ways” (58.9%). Complete rejection the manners of Yekaterinburg residents was noted by only 6.5%, which demonstrates tolerance to the urban type of behavior of Russians. That means a potential willingness to adopt it partially or completely.

- Adapting their clothes to the norms of the host community: from all of the respondents, only 9.7% noted that they try to adhere to the national style of clothing being in Russia. Everyone else chooses style worn by Yekaterinburg residents, which means an image adopted in a secular urban environment that differs from that adopted in their native culture.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results presented above, it can be said that elements of the urban culture of the Russian host community are becoming part of the social identity of migrants from Central Asian countries, that will certainly be exported to some extent from Russian society to Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. In the long term, this circumstance will contribute to the speed with which the the demographic transition in Central Asia will be transformed.

According to UN forecasts, the urbanization of these countries will increase to 50% on average in the region by 2050. However, the formation of cultural identity with elements of urban identity among representatives of Central Asian countries who have been in Russia for a long time can lead to the emergence of a contradictory social situation when urban identity is formed before the cities themselves. Therefore, the demand from the population to accelerate urbanization (not only its volume, but also its quality (Emelyanova & Vikentjeva & Tarasov, 2022) will be felt more strongly over time, which may become a factor contributing to a faster demographic transition process than is currently predicted.

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