

HUMAN CAPITAL OF A COUNTRY AND GENDER IDENTITY OF EXTERNAL MIGRANTS

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Abstract

The quality of human capital of a region depends on many factors. Quantitative and qualitative characteristics of external migrants are also an indicator of the quality of country's human capital. Gender identity of non-ethnic migrants in a host country is being transformed under an influence of several civilizational factors. New gender identity of migrants might influence their professional and social characteristics in various spheres of life in response to expectations of a host country. The authors of this paper carried out the research in Russia, resulted in migrants from Central Asia were surveyed in 2017 (N = 231), in 2019 (N = 222). According to the results, female migrants from Central Asia in Russia as a host country demonstrate more significant changes in their gender identity in comparison with men migrants from Central Asia. The transformation of gender identity is primarily influenced by such factors as religious affiliation, marital status, educational level, age of migrants, and the desire to obtain Russian citizenship.

Key words: human capital, gender identity, migrants from Central Asian, survey

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Introduction

Quantitative and qualitative characteristics of external migrants are an indicator of the quality of human capital in a country. The Concept for the Demographic Development of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2025 proposes to ensure migration growth at the level of more than 300 thousand people annually. Hence, migrants are considered crucial labour and demographic resource. The Russian Federation is one of the world leaders in receiving foreign migrants. In 2019, almost 14 million foreign citizens were initially registered for migration in Russia, 5.5 million of whom indicated their work as the purpose of entry. In 2019, half of the visitors, who decided to move to Russia from the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, were citizens from Central Asia (49%). The

Sverdlovsk Region (Russia) is in fifth place among other regions of Russia in terms of the number of accepted migrants, most of whom come from Central Asia (over 77%). Citizens from Central Asia strive to establish themselves in Ekaterinburg (i.e., the capital of the Sverdlovsk Region), and, for this reason, they search for highly profitable jobs there.

Scholars underline miscellaneous aspects of gender characteristics of people in the context of the quality of human capital. For instance, Mussarat Khadija Khan suggests that in the analysis of the significance of human capital it is essential to take into account gender characteristics of individuals (Khan, 2016).

Investigations show a strong interconnection between migration and the transformation of gender identity of migrants. Based on research on gender relations between migrant women and their husbands who remained in Vietnam, Bernadette P. Resurrección and Ha Thi Van Khanh conclude that women's migration destabilizes traditional gender roles (2006). Another research by Lukasiewicz deals with similar findings and illustrates how female migration destabilizes conventional gender roles. It is noticed that the impacts of male migration on the participation of housebound wives in productive farming practices have significant circumstances. It is shown how the out-migration of men from rural areas of the Philippines is challenging preexisting gender ideologies of agricultural labour. In particular, the paper examines how wives "left-behind" by their migrant husbands negotiate forms of farm work and responsibility that are culturally prescribed as "masculine" (Lukasiewicz, 2011).

The specificities of gender identity of Muslim people, in particular, Muslim women are also has been given attention (Ali-Faisal, 2020). More specifically, their gender identity is associated with wearing the hijab (Joosub & Ebrahim, 2020). Furthermore, scholars make the focus on the cultural and educational experience of Muslim girls in the midst of rural to urban migration. Wang stresses gender equity and education of Muslim girls in Northwest China interpreting their gender roles and expectations in family, marriage, and career in the context of both motivations for their education and adaption to urban life. Besides, this paper discussed how stereotypes towards Muslim girls were generated and how Muslim girls negotiated their identities and navigated their cultural agencies while dealing with these stereotypes (Wang, 2020). Researchers stress the impact of the policies of host countries regarding migrants on their labour productivity. It is advisable to include gender needs in the integration policy of the state and its legislation (Tahir, 2020). In many papers, the mechanisms of determining gender identity of migrants are investigated. For instance,

Christine Moliner draws attention to actions of undocumented Sikh migrants that live in Paris and try to assert their gender identity in multiple ways, characterized by homosociality, the importance of manual labour, specific forms of male sociability marked by the cultivation of their body, while remaining firmly grounded in a Sikh/Panjabi religious universe through seva (voluntary service) and gurdwara attendance (Moliner, 2020).

Therefore, researchers from different countries and regions link the external migration of women and the transformation of their gender identity. It occurs particularly intensive among women from countries with traditional cultures.

1 Results

The findings of our research show that in 2019, among migrants from Central Asia, who moved to Ekaterinburg, there were 36.2% of women. Most of the surveyed women (62.5%) and men (76.1%) are engaged in paid work in Russia. Half of the women have only general secondary education (43.8%), 6.3% of women have lower secondary education. 23.9% of men and only 16.3% of women have higher education. Human capital of Russia is characterized by a higher level of education of individuals — more than 57% of Russians have secondary vocational education or higher education.

1.1 Methodology

Migrants in a host country find themselves in a new economic and socio-cultural reality. Gender identity of non-ethnic migrants in a host country is being transformed under an influence of some civilizational factors (urbanization, civic culture, professional standards, laws, morality and etiquette, gender norms, etc.).

In modern science, the concept of “identity” has a vague definition. Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper point out that there is a need to formulate a clearer definition of this concept (2000). Identification does not mean that an individual has “ready-made” settings. It involves the search for identity and its constant transformation (Sanina, 2014). According to the theory of social construction, gender identity is filled with both miscellaneous contents throughout life, depending on social and cultural changes, and an individual's activity. The transformation of gender identity is a part of a process of forming the social identity of migrants and residents. Furthermore, new social identity arises as a result of the interactions of these groups. Samuel Huntington noticed that identity is a process of both identifying oneself with a group and positioning oneself (2004). The new gender identity of migrants

might influence their professional and social characteristics in various spheres of life in response to expectations of a host country.

The authors of this paper carried out the research in Russia, resulted in migrants from Central Asia were surveyed in 2017 in Ekaterinburg, the Sverdlovsk Region (Russia) (N = 231), in 2019 (N = 222). The following methods were used to analyze the empirical data of this research: descriptive method, statistical and correlation analysis, method of comparing two groups. The transformation of gender identity of migrants was measured according to the following indicators: educational level, age of migrants, professional status, availability of a job in Russia, marital status, religious affiliation, adherence to religious norms, interaction with the opposite gender group, the degree of adaptation to life in Russia and the desire to obtain Russian citizenship.

1.2 Transformation of the gender identity of migrants

Moving to Russia has several specific consequences for women migrants from Central Asia. First of all, women migrants, on an equal basis with men, are forced to enter into new social interactions: professional, neighbourly, friendly, educational and others. The largest gap between men and women is observed in the intensity of interactions within professional groups. It might be explained because the initiators and main subjects of labour migration to Russia are men, i.e., heads of families.

Tab. 1: Interactions between men and women in the professional sphere

Sphere of interaction	Meaning	Difference	Men	Women	Delta
In what spheres of life do you most often communicate with residents?	In the professional field (work in an organization)	27,0	77,0	50,0	18,2

Source: author's own data.

In the countries of Central Asia, the distribution of gender roles within the Muslim culture is observed. Hence, women are significantly limited in terms of their interactions in different spheres of life. Their social interactions are controlled by men (father, husband or brother). In Russia, migrant women are forced to violate these norms to some extent. As a result, their gender identity has been gradually transformed. Half of the women that were surveyed (see Tab. 1) often communicate with Russians in the professional field. Besides, the interactions of women with residents in other spheres differ little from the interactions of male

migrants. In some spheres (e.g., education, service and medical services), women have more intense relationships with Russians than men (see Tab. 2).

Tab. 2: Spheres of interaction of men and women migrants with Russians

In what spheres of life do you most often communicate with residents?	Men	%	Women	%
Everyday relationships	52	37,4	32	40,0
Leisure and entertainment	34	24,5	19	23,7
Service sector	24	17,3	17	21,2
Education sphere	25	18,0	21	26,3
Medical services	32	23,0	26	32,5

Source: author's own data.

Notably, 77.5% of women and 77% of men emphasise that such interactions with the residents are customary to them. The increasing intensity of contacts with residents leads to the migrants assess the behaviour of locals as a positive one. Moreover, namely, migrant women demonstrate positive assessments in comparison with migrant men. Male migrants give higher ratings only to the kindness, responsiveness and willingness to help residents, as well as their manners. The difference in the other positions of these gender groups in the process of assessing the behaviour of Russians is not statistically significant (see Tab. 3).

Tab. 3: Influence of the gender of migrants on the acceptance of behavioral patterns of residents

What features in the behaviour and appearance of residents seem to you the most attractive?	Men	%	Women	%
Hospitality	45	32,4	24	30,0
Courage	21	15,1	9	11,3
Endurance	8	5,8	6	7,5
Clothes	25	18,0	13	16,3
Manners	19	13,7	7	8,7
Honestly and openness	40	28,8	24	30,0
Educational level	36	25,9	22	27,5
Kindness, responsiveness, and helpfulness	45	32,4	18	22,5
Easy communication	52	37,4	26	32,5

Source: author's own data.

Gender identity of migrants from Central Asia is closely linked to their religious identity. 82% of the respondents noticed that they profess Islam. Compared to migrant men, migrant women tend to adhere to the national style of dress (see Tab. 4), which is prescribed by Islam. They visit the mosque less often, but it is due to the norms of Islam for women. Also, 27.5% of the women surveyed condemn the overly open clothes of Russian women. A

third of women underlines that it is essential to follow the traditions of the family and the nation in the own conduct (33.8%). 50% of women were housewives. However, the share of unemployed women among migrants is not large — 15%. Notably, migrant women are less likely to communicate with Russians than men. A smaller proportion of women than men pointed out that they get news during the meeting with Russians (28.7% and 49.6%, respectively).

Tab. 4: Influence of the gender of migrants on the observance of national traditions

Compliance with national traditions	Meaning	Difference	Men	Women	Delta
What national traditions do you personally comply with?	I visit the mosque regularly	25,6	33,1	7,5	13,7
What national traditions do you personally comply with?	I try to adhere to the national style of dress	-13,9	3,6	17,5	11,6

Source: author's own data.

The results of this research show that the transformation of gender identity of women migrants from Central Asian countries in Russia occurs gradually. More than half of the women surveyed (56.3%) believe that in the conduct it is crucial to focus on personal understanding of the situation, oneself opinion, and not the opinion of others. The intensity of the transformation of gender identity is connected with the desire of women to obtain Russian citizenship, to stay in Russia (55% of respondents confirmed this). Meanwhile, the most important requirement in achieving these aims is that the head of the family (a man) also has the same plans and intentions. Thus, more than half of the women are consciously ready to change cultural and gender perspectives: 37.7% of women are ready to change partially, 11.7% of women surveyed are ready to change dramatically. In addition to traditional values (family, children, and health preservation), women noted confidence in the future (16.3%), the ability to improve their education and self-improvement (13.8%), the opportunity to travel and get new impressions (10%).

It is significant to draw attention to one more indicator that is the interaction with the opposite gender group. 61% of migrant women pointed out that it is easier for them to communicate with women in Russia, but almost a third of the respondents noticed that they can communicate normally with both women and men (27.3%). Women underlined the greatest rejection of Russian norms in the sphere of relations between men and women (47.5%). As a result, some women are ready to accept these norms, transforming their gender identity. Overall, 63.8% of the women surveyed emphasised that they do not have problems

in communication with residents. If any difficulties arise in communication with Russian people, it is connected with poor knowledge of Russian laws (61.3%), Russian language (56.3%), but also with a lack of understanding of the norms of correct behaviour in different situations (36.2%). This fact is associated with the need for gender transformation of migrants in Russia.

Conclusion

The analysis shows that the transformation of gender identity of female migrants in Russia is more intensive in comparison with male migrants. This conclusion might be drawn considering the initial level of such transformation in both groups. Following ethnic and religious norms, men from Central Asia in their homeland have much more freedom in various interactions and social practices than women. Women from this region, moving to another socio-cultural space, trying to adapt to it, are forced to interact more intensively with Russians, ultimately transforming their gender identity. The transformation of gender identity among working women is more intensive than among women who are housewives. Success in this direction allows women to become part of human capital of a host country more effectively. First of all, it is facilitated by the desire of women migrants to engage in paid work in the receiving country, cultural change, adapting to new conditions, and the motivation to obtain Russian citizenship.

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