The Needs and Feelings of Adolescents Growing Up in Families Affected by Labor Migration

Malakhat SAIPOVA
Doctor of Psychological Sciences (DSc), Professor at the University of Public Security of the Republic Uzbekistan

Abstract: The article describes why researchers from different fields have become interested in the phenomenon of migration, and also talks about the factors that cause labor migration. The article highlights the psychological characteristics of adolescents growing up in families affected by migration, and their specific needs for this period. The author presents conclusions and recommendations based on the results of his personal research.

Keywords: population, parent, child, teenager, labor, migration, emotions, need, territory, social, economic, trust, support

Introduction

The growing instability of the global situation today requires a deeper study of the phenomenon of population migration. This is because migration processes, which are difficult to regulate and manage and have already affected virtually all countries of the world, attract the attention of researchers from various fields due to:

the unprecedented expansion of the scale and geography of labor migration;

changes in the structure of labor migration flows;

the increase in the scale and widening geography of forced migration;

the growing importance of population migration in the demographic development of the modern world.

After examining different viewpoints on the classification of factors influencing migration processes, S. V. Taskaeva [7] identifies the following groups of factors:

1. Natural and climatic;
2. Demographic;
3. Ethnic;
4. Socio-economic;
5. Political, and others.

Drawing on our empirical observations and a review of the scholarly literature, we identified several principal determinants that motivate individuals to engage in labor migration.

Economic factors constitute the most prevalent motive, as the majority of migrants seek to improve the material well-being of their families.

Social factors are associated with limited access to decent employment opportunities in the place of permanent residence; consequently, individuals strive to enhance their social status through the acquisition of education, professional competencies, and new forms of experience.

Psychological factors involve the aspiration to achieve subjective well-being, often shaped by intra-family conflicts or by insecurity regarding social acceptance and personal recognition.

Irrespective of the underlying motives, migrants who have established families and are raising children do not always fully recognize the potential scope of migration consequences, particularly its long-term effects on the younger generation. This issue becomes especially salient during adolescence, a transitional and sensitive stage of development characterized by increased

emotional vulnerability, identity formation, and a heightened need for parental involvement. Living together with parents has essential developmental functions; therefore, prolonged separation inevitably exerts a measurable influence on adolescents' psychological formation.

Within this framework, we carried out a study entitled "Psychological Development Characteristics of Children Growing Up in the Families of Labor Migrants" [6]. The sample comprised 762 senior secondary school students from general education institutions in the Navoi, Samarkand, and Fergana regions of the republic.

Literature Review

Labor migration has increasingly become an object of interdisciplinary inquiry. Within psychology, existing studies address migration through multiple theoretical perspectives, including personality theory, psychological adaptation frameworks, relationship theory, life-value orientations, concepts of mental development, ethnopsychology, and developmental psychology across age periods.

Despite this diversity of approaches, considerably less scholarly attention has been devoted to the families who remain in the country of origin, particularly to the everyday lives, emotional experiences, and psychological characteristics of migrants' children. Comprehensive empirical investigations focusing on these populations remain limited.

Research conducted by Lithuanian scholars, such as I. Yu. Lyalugene and L.A. Rupshene, specifically examines the socialization of adolescents whose parents have departed for labor migration in Lithuania [4]. Their work highlights the complexity of developmental trajectories under conditions of prolonged parental absence.

It is important to note that although parental labor migration aimed at improving family welfare may generate certain economic benefits, it can simultaneously produce substantial social costs. These consequences are particularly pronounced for children growing up within such families, whose psychological well-being, stability of attachment, and developmental outcomes may be adversely affected.

A child living with only one parent or without both parents is, in many respects, deprived of the opportunity to observe, imitate, and internalize parental models of behavior. Everyday interaction between parents, joint problem solving, and patterns of communication with children, relatives, friends, and the broader social environment become substantially limited. Under such conditions, the child loses the possibility of developing a representation of the nuclear family model based on shared residence and continuous interpersonal exchange.

Geographical distance complicates the transmission and comprehension of parental values, cultural traditions, and moral norms. The family's emotional system becomes disrupted: shared experiences, collective aspirations, and joint activities are reduced. Because one or both parents remain physically absent, children frequently receive less attention and emotional support [4].

Whereas younger children tend to demonstrate negative emotions and painful переживания more openly, adolescents may experience these feelings with even greater intensity, particularly when both parents migrate for employment. Given that adolescence is marked by identity formation, heightened sensitivity to belongingness, and an increased need for guidance, prolonged parental absence may amplify psychological vulnerability.

Although remittances can improve material well-being, they are rarely capable of compensating for emotional deprivation and elevated social risks among children left without parental supervision. In many cases, young people lack sufficient skills for responsible financial behavior, effective time management, and constructive decision-making in challenging situations. They may also be uncertain about how to seek or provide help, while a range of adaptive behavioral competencies remains underdeveloped.

Children whose parents reside abroad frequently experience emotional deprivation. Empirical observations indicate that their academic achievement tends to be lower than that of peers raised in intact families, while their future life plans are often associated with migration and employment abroad.

In situations where both parents—or particularly the mother—are absent, children demonstrate an increased risk of depressive states. Changes in emotional background and behavior may be short-term or prolonged and are determined by a constellation of factors, including the duration of parental absence, the child's preparedness for independent living, the quality of relationships with guardians, and

societal attitudes toward migrants' children.

According to I. Yu. Lyalugene and L. A. Rupshene [4], separation from parents during childhood represents one of the most profound forms of adversity in personal development. Children who experience separation commonly report grief, sadness, longing, and feelings of emptiness. Similar to the psychological responses observed in cases of parental divorce or death, the departure of one or both parents for employment abroad can generate a comparable sense of loss, which inevitably affects the child's socialization trajectory.

At this point, it is essential to address the broader concept of socialization. Socialization represents a lifelong process that begins in the earliest moments of human existence and accompanies the individual throughout the life course. Since the emergence of human society, this process has undergone substantial transformation. It evolves proportionally to societal change and adapts to shifting social realities, institutions, and cultural expectations [5, p. 18].

A forced short- or long-term separation from the family breadwinner, typically the father, generates a range of difficulties that may affect a child's cognitive development. In particular, the formation of representations concerning traditional family relationships and role distribution becomes disrupted. The internalization of value orientations, social rules, and moral norms is also transformed, especially in contexts where significant adults are unable to provide consistent behavioral models [3, pp. 125–166]. Undoubtedly, these processes exert a substantial influence on the course of socialization.

Research Methodology

The study employed qualitative and quantitative approaches, including interviews, systematic observation, and an author-designed questionnaire aimed at identifying the psychological characteristics and developmental conditions of adolescents growing up in transnational families.

Analysis and Results

Adolescence represents a crucial stage in personality formation and preparation for adult life. At this period, individuals face a set of age-specific developmental tasks. Regardless of whether adolescents are consciously aware of these tasks, they attempt to resolve them with varying degrees of success.

Satisfying the salient developmental needs of adolescents is a complex process that typically requires the involvement of competent adults. Such involvement presupposes not only knowledge of age-related characteristics but also the provision of emotional warmth, patience, and consistent support.

Among the central needs that require attention from adults are the following:

The need for acceptance without accusation or excessive evaluation – adolescents require benevolent attitudes, recognition, and rational support from adults.

The need for clear (yet not excessively rigid) rules and boundaries – in the absence of understandable limits, it becomes difficult for adolescents to restrain destructive forms of behavior, develop an internal position, and achieve successful socialization.

The need for development through lived experience – adolescents must accumulate personal life experience; theoretical understanding or reliance solely on others' experiences cannot substitute for direct engagement.

The need for meaningful and engaging life events – interest serves as a primary driving force of personality development, and during adolescence it becomes particularly intense, demanding continuous fulfillment.

The need to experience enjoyment and emotional richness – adolescents explore themselves, their feelings, and sensations, striving for affective enrichment; therefore, the pursuit of pleasurable experiences becomes natural and expected.

The need for respect and recognition – when individuals receive acknowledgment, they develop a stable sense of personal value, which subsequently forms the foundation for success across life domains.

Additional essential developmental needs characteristic of adolescence include the following:

The need for close relationships with others, particularly peers. During this transitional period, individuals are no longer children but have not yet attained adult status. Consequently, the need for communication and peer acceptance becomes especially pronounced. Adolescents actively seek social experience and construct behavioral models that help them achieve self-affirmation, confidence, affection, sympathy, and recognition. They want to feel valuable to others and to know that their opinions matter. In pursuit of being accepted as members of a reference group, adolescents may even act against aspects of their personal identity.

The need to defend one's opinion confidently, which is grounded in general self-confidence. The absence of this competence may lead to numerous difficulties, including shyness, susceptibility to negative peer influence, feelings of weakness or insignificance, and even the renunciation of future professional aspirations. Adolescents themselves often report that only after events have passed do they find the appropriate words or behavioral strategies—frequently when it is already too late [1].

The need for creative self-expression and self-realization. Creative fulfillment is among the most powerful drivers of adolescent development. When opportunities for such realization are available, many other needs are simultaneously satisfied: adolescents gain practical life experience, maintain interest and engagement, foster development, build self-respect through the products of their creativity, achieve social acceptance, and function within clear and meaningful boundaries.

The need to formulate life goals. Despite the adolescent inclination to live in the present, defining future orientations introduces structure into everyday life, reduces a substantial portion of anxiety, and enables the mobilization of personal resources toward specific directions.

Taken together, these needs constitute a significant developmental reserve for personality growth. Any need produces a certain degree of internal tension; therefore, adolescents are typically highly active. The desire for satisfaction orients them toward information, experiences, and relationships that may help them achieve fulfillment. At this stage, they tend to be open, flexible, and receptive to novelty.

It is precisely during this sensitive period that the absence of a significant supportive adult may exert a lasting influence on future development. Proceeding from this assumption, we decided to investigate the emotional experiences of adolescents growing up in migrant families by employing an author-designed questionnaire.
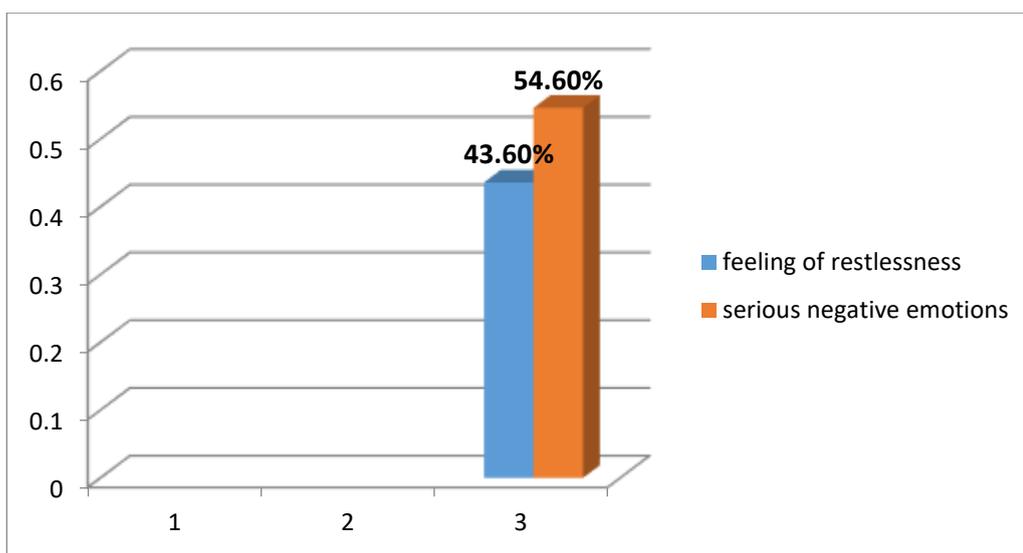

Figure 1. Emotional experiences of adolescents growing up in migrant families

The diagram demonstrates that a substantial proportion of respondents experience pronounced emotional distress.

54.60% of adolescents report living with intense negative emotions. According to the questionnaire data, this condition is associated with several interrelated perceptions: the necessity

of premature maturation, feelings of unhappiness and insecurity, and the absence of stable role models for identification and imitation.

Another **43.60%** indicate a persistent sense of anxiety. This anxiety primarily reflects worries about their own future as well as concern for the safety and fate of close relatives.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings clearly challenge the widespread assumption that, in an era of advanced technologies, children do not experience loneliness because they can maintain continuous video or audio contact with parents. The results of the present study demonstrate that virtual communication cannot substitute for physical presence, emotional involvement, and everyday participation in the child's life. This is particularly critical during adolescence, a period characterized by heightened emotional sensitivity.

Given that preventing adults from engaging in labor migration is often unrealistic, special attention should be paid to the behavior of significant adults who remain near adolescents in migrant families. Communication with them should be organized in accordance with humanistic psychological principles based on acceptance, safety, and support.

In particular, adults are encouraged to:

interact with adolescents without evaluative judgment, demonstrating understanding and emotional security;

avoid moralizing or unsolicited advice, and instead provide assistance in response to the adolescent's expressed needs, without exerting pressure;

refrain from presenting themselves as prescriptive life models, but rather function as reliable sources of support and stability.

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