

Psychological Difficulties in Marriage Migrant Women Adaptation

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The paper is devoted to the theoretical review of psychological difficulties in the adaptation of migrant women, who moved to a new country due to family reunification. In this article, psychological difficulties are understood as any internal barriers, violations, failures, etc., that prevents optimal adaptation, in this case, of migrants. The focus of research by modern scientists is aimed at studying socially disadvantaged migrants and labor migrants. There is not enough research on women who have moved to a new country with their husbands. Four groups of psychological difficulties were identified that impede the successful adaptation of women, as well as the clinical manifestations associated with these difficulties: women's expectations regarding interaction with society do not coincide with society's expectations which contributes to the emergence of frustration and deprivation; the predominance of external motivation when moving to another country (following a husband) results in loss of work and familiar environment which often leads to depression and/or somatization; the predominance of compelled contacts in the structure of communication causes an increased irritability; self-image as a migrant before the move does not coincide with real self-image in a new country generates intrapersonal conflicts.

Keywords: female migrants, marriage migration, adaptation in a new country, psychological difficulties, clinical manifestations of adaptation.

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Психологические трудности адаптации женщин-мигрантов, заключивших брак с иностранцами

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Статья представляет собой теоретический обзор исследований, посвященных проблеме психологических трудностей в адаптации женщин-мигрантов, переехавших в новую страну в связи с воссоединением семьи. Под психологическими трудностями в данной статье понимаются любые внутренние барьеры, нарушения, сбои и пр., препятствующие оптимальной адаптации, в данном случае мигрантов. Основной фокус исследований современных ученых направлен на изучение социально неблагоприятных переселенцев и трудовых мигрантов. Исследований, посвященных женщинам, переехавшим в новую страну за мужем, недостаточно. Были выявлены четыре группы психологических трудностей, препятствующих успешной адаптации женщин, а также связанные с этими трудностями клинические проявления: ожидания женщин относительно взаимодействия с обществом не совпадают с ожиданиями общества, что способствует возникновению фрустрации, депривации; преобладание внешней мотивации при переезде в другую страну (за мужем), как следствие — потеря работы и привычного окружения часто приводит к депрессиям, соматизации; преобладание вынужденных контактов в структуре общения обуславливает повышенную раздражительность; представления о себе как о мигранте до переезда не совпадают с реальными представлениями о себе в новой стране и порождает внутриличностные конфликты.

Ключевые слова: женщины-мигранты, брачная миграция, адаптация в новой стране, психологические трудности, клинические проявления адаптации.

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Introduction

The study of migrants' adaptation takes a special place in modern science due to prevalence of this phenomenon. So, 3,6% of the world's population live outside the country of their birth, and this number is constantly growing [32]. When moving to a new country, migrants shall adapt to a new place of residence. This process is due to objectively emerging contradictions between the internalized cultural frame, habitual needs, interests, an established model of social activity and new social conditions of life activities, changed status characteristics.

A significant number of studies on migration difficulty is devoted to various aspects of adaptation of pupils, students, labour migrants, forced migrants from places of military operations. Starting from 2020 significant attention has also been paid to the influence of the pandemic to various aspects of migrants' lives.

It should be noted that there are still not enough studies for specifics of migration of women who moved to a new country due to marriage or husband's career prospects. The analysis of theoretical and empirical studies for women adaptation in a new social and cultural environment helped to discover that the following topics are mainly in the focus of scientists' attention:

- women labour migration including involvement in criminal forms of exploitation [15; 19],
- health including mental [14; 38],
- peculiarities of female migrants' reproductive choice and fertility [10; 35].

The range of these topics is interesting, but it cannot reveal in full the content of adaptation processes of women as their social status can be called well-to-do. They do not pose a threat to a society, don't need social benefits. They often do not understand themselves the reasons of worsening of their psychological state. However, they also have specific adaptation difficulties which can cause different clinical symptoms and prevent integration into the host society.

Despite the insufficiency of publications on problems of adaptation of the studied social group, there is a significant number of theoretical and empirical researches on gender differences in migrants' adaptation, clinical manifestations of migration, social and psychological difficulties impedes successful adaptation to a new country.

At the same time, it should be noted that usually in the focus of research there are either difficulties faced by people who moved to a new country or clinical aspects associated with migration. There are not enough studies that analyze and compare these aspects of migration phenomenon.

Based on the above mentioned, the purpose of the study is to identify psychological difficulties faced by the studied social group of migrants and to establish clinical consequences associated with identified difficulties. It will allow to better understand the reasons of adaptation failure among women migrants, to provide them with adequate support at diagnostics of detected clinical symptoms as well as to develop prevention programs.

Difficulty in the scientific literature is understood as “the presence of obstacles that can be compensated” [8, p. 93], “experience and, sometimes, understanding of the discrepancy between the requirements of activity and the abilities of an individual” [5, p. 302] “an obstacle that needs to be removed in order to continue the intended path and achieve the goal, and additional input is required to eliminate it” [1, p. 65], “a subjective state of tension, severity, dissatisfaction which is caused by external factors of activity and depends on the nature of factors themselves, the educational, moral and physical readiness of a person for activity and attitude to it” [4, p. 63].

Basically, the concept of the difficulty was developed in connection with the study of communication (communicative difficulties), in pedagogy (learning difficulties), labour psychology (difficulties in professional activity) etc.

In this article, psychological difficulties are understood as any internal barriers, violations, failures, etc. that prevent optimal adaptation, in this case, of migrants.

State of the Research Problem

Modern theories of migration are developed within framework of different schools, the most famous of which is a theory of assimilation (the rejection identity of the country of origin in favour of the identity of the new country) and a theory of acculturation (forming a new, mixed identity combining both identity of the country of origin and the new country). This study is based on the theory

of flexible acculturation that takes into consideration the modern challenges of transnationalism and digitalization of contacts [9; 34].

Adaptation, therefore, is a series of successive choices associated with reflection related to tradition, culture, values, and motives inherent to the home country of a migrant and the host society.

Integration, i.e., successful inclusion of a migrant into a host society, in accordance with J.W. Berry, is possible due to behavioural shifts, i.e. refusal from habitual behaviour in favour of assimilation of the norms of the host society, and difficulties are associated with cultural stress (changes in social status, reduced self — esteem, general dissatisfaction) [12].

In the opinion of Y.Y. Kim, three important elements associated with the migrant's inclusion in the host society shall be considered: communicative activity of the individual in the host environment, interpersonal communication with the members of the host society and mass media, communication with compatriots and experiencing of the native culture [27].

A significant number of researches is devoted to the factors of successful adaptation. Modern scientists believe that in terms of increasingly diverse societies new research shall not be based on geographical or ethnic background of participants but rather should try to “unpack” culture, for example, by examining interconnections between certain values or orientations and various manifestations of psychological stress of acculturation. Social support, psychological assistance and good quality of life in the host country affect successful adaptation [13].

The most studied clinical outcomes associated to the migration process are depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder. It is noted that the level of depression, anxiety, stress, a feeling of disengagement and insomnia in the studied groups of migrants are higher than in the control groups of local residents [42]. In particular, tension, stress and culture shock experiencing are observed during adaptation.

At present time there are no accurate statistics regarding these clinical signs among migrants. However, it is being concluded, that depressive symptoms may occur in at least 15% of migrants [18].

There are also specific psychological difficulties faced by female migrants. S. Mahler points out that only recently the difficulty of gender in research of migrants' adaptation has been considered as a key aspect of adaptation and not one of equal factors affected adaptation [31]. It means that it is impossible to make conclusions regarding adaptation of women based on research where gender discrepancies are not considered, or majority of sample is male.

Many modern scientists are of the opinion that discrepancies in the adaption of men and women primarily depend on the characteristics of gender socialization i.e. formed at the level of a large group attitudes that are not subject to reflection and often not realized at all but significantly affect forming of self-concept [44].

Finding herself in another culture, a woman may face a number of difficulties which, on one hand, she cannot identify, and on the other hand which are not customary to discuss in the host society especially if members of the host culture consider themselves as tolerant to migrants. Among the difficulties the researchers note labour and sexual discrimination, exploitation in domestic work as well as the attitude towards women from different cultures as having a “wrong” or “immature” gender identity.

Analysing the sources, it is possible to identify aspects associated to women migration and distinguishing it from male and child migration:

- gender socialization in different countries is more diverse than that of men;

- a female migrant is in a more vulnerable position in the labour market, it is especially noticeable at the level of low skilled professions, for a woman it is more difficult to seek a job, a woman is more vulnerable to economical and sexual abuse;
- women with a high level of education when moving are much more likely to find themselves in a situation of downshifting;
- in comparison with a man, a woman of reproductive age faces a number of challenges related to childbearing: if there are children, a woman spends more energy on their adaptation; if there are no children, a woman has to either give up childbearing in favour of adaptation or to be realized in parenthood but “pause” processes associated with integration to society.

Taking into consideration the above specific related to women migrants’ adaptation into the host society, we will consider in more detail the available studies that help to identify psychological difficulties after moving into a new country and clinical manifestations associated with them.

Psychological difficulties of women migrants’ adaptation

Despite a lack of studies devoted to the studied group, based on related researches it is possible to identify the following psychological difficulties which affect women adaptation in the host society:

1. woman’s expectations regarding interaction with a society do not match with society’s expectations;
2. predominance of external motivation when moving to a new country (following a husband), as a consequence — loss of job and familiar social environment;
3. predominance of compelled contacts in the communication structure;
4. self-image as a migrant before the move does not coincide with real self-image in a new country.

We will consider in more detail these difficulties and those clinical outcomes resulting from inability to resolve them.

Woman’s expectations regarding interaction with a society do not coincide with society’s expectations

It is generally accepted in modern psychology that any migrant regardless of reasons for moving faces difficulties related to a mismatch of cultures, traditions, roles, expectations in a native and the host society.

Migrants experiencing social and psychological difficulties in the process of adaptation may experience “culture shock”, feel “different” surrounded by people even of their own nationality, “culture shock” is a shock from something new; a situation when the experience of a new culture is unreceptive or even shocking as it can lead to negative reappraisal of values of the country of origin.

K. Oberg [36] identified the following characteristics of “culture shock”:

- efforts to achieve necessary psychological adaptivity bring to tension;
- feeling of loss, deprivation of a circle of friends and relatives, social status and property;
- failure in values and self-identification;
- unexpected anxiety from awareness of cultural differences;
- inability to “cope with” a new social environment is accompanied by feelings of inferiority, helplessness.

“Culture shock” experienced by a refugee or a migrant is characterised by a high level of stressfulness and may cause different somatic physiological and mental dysfunctions.

The concept of culture shock has had a huge impact on research of processes of migrants’ adaptation. Given the ambivalence of processes occurring as a result of adaptation, since the 1970s the

term “stress of acculturation” has been used in social and psychological science which takes into account both negative and positive changes and analyzes intercultural interaction.

The positive side of the acculturation stress can be attributed to the fact that the discord of social demands and actual opportunities of migrants who find themselves in a “alien” socio-cultural environment, naturally causes their active desire to overcome arisen problems, achieve comfort existence and self-realization in new conditions that motivates migrants to start adaptation.

The phenomenon of acculturation stress is considered as ambivalent. But, of course, not always a migrant can discover positive aspects of this process. J.W. Berry [11] noted that success of migrants adaptation is connected both to the strategy of migrants behaviour and expectations of the host society.

In the opinion of V.S. Vitkovskaya lack of constructive communications and interaction with local residents bring to maladaptive feelings to forced migrants — alienation, isolation, uselessness and futility [2]. And even in certain times when the main domestic difficulties are more or less resolved, migrants experience “feelings of loneliness”, “lack of friendly relations”, feelings like “strangers, superfluous, unwanted guests” that result in “social vacuum” around migrants.

According to G.U. Soldatova the degree of individual’s experience of her social deprivation and isolation depends on the social parameters of the host society and also migration policy of the host country in general [7]. As behaviour of local residents may seem unpredictable, all migrants face difficulties in interacting. Customs of the host country often seem mysterious and people strange [28].

The typical psychological consequences of the studied difficulty, which negatively affect adaptation are the following:

5. lack of contacts with social environment negatively affects the mental state of an individual and the mechanisms of social adaptation that later can lead to a feeling of loneliness, social deprivation [37, 40];
6. discrepancies between expectations and real state of the situation that leads to frustration [20, 41].

Social recognition and acceptance are the most important factors influencing the subjective well-being of people. In a situation of migration, the satisfaction of these needs is considerably complicated. The attention of modern scientists is directed to resolving the difficulties that affect the ability of a migrant to gain recognition in a new society and relate to certain groups in the host society. Unlike labour and educational migrants, marriage female migrants can experience difficulties in principle in organizing communication with representatives of the host society.

The conducted analysis shows that at least three reasons can be identified that act as a determinant of this psychological difficulty:

- acculturation stress is complicated by gender specificity of migration;
- social deprivation on of marriage migrants can be more pronounced in comparison to labour and educational migrants as well as those migrants who take decision on moving based on diaspora support in the host society;
- dissatisfaction with the conditions of activity, communication and relationships, especially among women with education and high status in their homeland.

Thus, *frustrations and deprivations* are associated with contradictions regarding the social needs of the migrant and the position in society which are intensified due to the fact that the migrant cannot fully realize the level of claims.

In addition, frustration may be connected with the fact that a woman finds herself in a situation of inability to express her feelings because of their real or imagined inconsistency with the norms of society.

According to S. Hofball, it is important not only to see both external and internal resources for overcoming difficult life situations or improving one's life but also to perceive them as available. If it is successful, the so-called "upward spiral of resources" occurs, i.e. accumulation of resources and development. Otherwise, a person finds himself in "descending funnel of losses", feels himself in deficit. Moreover, a person tends to overestimate losses and underestimate gains [23].

Special importance in how successfully a person can recover in a stress situation is the social resource. Due to the experience of frustration, a person cannot fully use even the social resources she has, accumulates their deficit due to which the feeling of loneliness can intensify.

Predominance of external motivation when moving into a new country (following a husband), as a consequence — loss of job and usual social environment

Motivation for moving is one of the leading factors the scientists associate with the adaptation success. At the same time researchers focus on migrants whose moving was associated with traumatic events or economic prerequisites [47].

Meanwhile, if a woman's move is associated with marriage, then even before the move she is in the situation of a difficult choice: maintaining important relations or maintaining social capital (social environment, work, colleagues' respect). Women after moving may find themselves in the situation of disqualification and de-emancipation, their dependence on their husbands increases, there are difficulties in seeking a new job that matches their skill level and salary expectations [19].

After moving, a woman finds herself in a situation where her ambitions are significantly frustrated, and the system of motivational factors needs to be rethought. It is especially difficult for those migrants whose leading coping strategy is the search for social support and like-minded people.

In addition, if in a native country for women it was possible to simultaneously relate herself to different social categories the content of which slightly intersected with each other, then in a new country she mainly experiences herself like a wife of her husband as well as a migrant from a native country.

As it is noted in research, migrants whose move is not associated with satisfaction of career ambitions, experience insecurity, their self-esteem decreases, they cease to satisfy their needs by taking care of the family. Many of the woman's needs which could be satisfied in a native country turn to be frustrated. In addition, the social identity of a woman needs to be rethought. As a result, women have an increased risk of *depression* [24; 45].

This clinical condition is associated with the need to obtain qualified support from a psychiatrist and clinical psychologist. However, migrants, even if they are actually eligible for health care, may face difficulties due to communication barriers that complicate the diagnostic process. Doctors and psychologists cannot always correctly assess the status of migrants due to cultural differences. Finally, it can be difficult for migrants to understand how the medical care works in a new country and they may avoid interacting with it [22].

Since migration in the study group is associated with complicated acculturation stress due to real loss of social, job, friends, usual lifestyle and difficulty of using habitual coping strategies, pain from this loss can be isolated due to which a female migrant can *somatise* the emerging symptoms [17].

The migrants with somatisation demonstrate higher psychological stress, have an increased perceived need for medical services and report more post — migration life difficulties and/or post-traumatic stress disorder than migrants without somatisation [29].

Domination of compelled contacts in the communication structure

Moving to a new country associate with changes in the structure of migrant contacts. The social context impacts successful adaptation of migrants in the host society. It is noted that integration is facilitated by such factors as contact between cultural groups of migrants and locals, communicative competency, communication, knowledge of the local language and social norms [13; 27; 46].

Communicating with representatives of state structures, attending language courses, or choosing available work, a woman faces with compelled contacts. On one hand, a female migrant understands the significance of these contacts for her well-being and potential integration but on the other hand she experiences negative feelings as she is surrounded by negatively significant others. Due to differences in cultural norms, there might be communicative barriers, complicated by the fact that women can experience difficulties in communication due to lack of knowledge of the language [6].

Difficulties associated with communicative barriers can lead to the fact that people around the female migrant are not perceived by her as authorities. At the same time a woman can experience rejection and resistance to communication and associated with it activities necessary for integration that, in turn, leads to the necessity to follow role-playing behavior.

In addition, the behaviour of a migrant herself and her attempts to handle difficulties associated with the situation of the compelled contacts can be regarded as inadequate, incomprehensible, and unpredictable.

There are four strategies of interaction with negatively significant others: conflict (readiness to completely interrupt or worsen communication), agreement (maintaining relationships at the same level), disengagement (readiness to temporarily interrupt relationships through procrastination or avoidance), rapprochement (readiness to positive dynamics) [6]. In dependence on the situation and personal characteristics and cultural attitudes a woman can use one of the mentioned strategies.

Rapprochement with negatively significant other can occur through two strategies corresponding to a humanistic and manipulative way of interaction [6]. In the first case there is an acceptance of negatively significant other, desire to build trusting relations with him. But accumulating complexities and lack of resources helping to cope with communicative barriers based on cultural differences, rapprochement can be manipulative. Such communication is built not on real desire of intimacy but on imitation in order to regain a sense feeling of control over the situation and negatively significant others [33]. In addition, a distinctive characteristic of compelled contacts is disadaptation as previous models and ways of behavior do not work.

It is known that in the situation of coercion and communication that does not meet the expectations *soreness* can occur [16]. Trying to cope with this condition, a woman can restrain it, suppress it, or react that makes her communication more difficult and complicate building new contacts.

Attempt of suppression can lead to that in communication a woman can choose the strategy of disengagement or manipulative rapprochement and the attempt of reacting can lead to conflict.

At this moment there are no researches that can reveal the characteristics of migrants' behaviour in a situation of compelled contacts. There is data showing that migrants, including marriage migrants, demonstrate concerns when approaching and strive for controlling others while they have a negative attitude when they are controlled by others [33], that can be connected with the prevailing strategies of disengagement and manipulation in a situation of compelled contact.

Self-image as a migrant before the move does not coincide with real self-image in a new country

When preparing to move to a new place of residence, migrants think about what their life will look like in the host society. As a rule, many of them are aware of difficulties and try to be prepared to moving in advance, study information about a new country, learn the language. However, everyday life, immersion in daily routine, emotional reply to frustrating events turn out to be a challenge for migrants and their ideas about themselves and their way of life formed before moving do not coincide with the way a woman will behave after moving [39].

The presuppositions for emergence of this psychological difficulty are partially described in theories of the dynamics of socio - cultural adaptation. Thus, in the theory of U-curve by S. Lysgaard [30], and W-curve by J.E. and J.T. Gullahorn [21], and the modified W-curve by S. Reinsmith [43] it is shown that after moving a migrant experiences a “honey moon” stage; move finally happened, the migrant focuses on the advantages of the new country, she is positively disposed towards gradual studying and acceptance of new social — cultural rules, laws, signs and codes through rapprochement with representatives of different culture.

At the same time there is a process of accumulation of contradictions associated with the fact that in the new country there are negative differences from the native country, and often in the usual things that have always been taken for granted. In studies this stage is most often connected with external contradictions and that fact that it is impossible to prepare for all the difficulties, with the loss of control in small things, loss of familiar resources.

However, the important reason for disappointment which the migrant experience after the move is confrontation of the migrant with how her idea of “Ideal Self” differs from “Real Self”. This contradiction has become especially obvious as before the move to a new country the migrant, first of all, might not realize how much cultural characteristics and traditions can affect her motives, values and activity and, secondly, the new environment allows to illuminate some unconscious conflicts and complexes which become noticeable due to triggers accompanying life of the migrant during his adaptation [26].

This discrepancy between “Ideal Self” and “Real Self” can be so great that it can cause dependency, confusion, a feeling of loneliness. A woman can lose confidence in her strengths and abilities, a negative perception of future is formed, an imbalance of the time perspective and effect of “self-fulfilling prophecy”.

As a result of the gap between “Ideal Self” and “Real Self”, a woman finds herself in the situation of *interpersonal conflict* [3; 38]. What happens to her can be described metaphorically: the main loss she experiences in the process of adaptation is the loss of herself. This is without any doubt one of the most difficult losses that can happen in an individual’s life. Migration can become that turning point for a person, that crisis and that challenge that will either let a person meet the “Real Self” in its entity or fails to cope with frustration and form a false identity [25].

To handle these difficult experiences, a woman can choose several behavioural strategies. First, she can start defensive fantasizing about the possibility to build an “Ideal Self” postponing her life for later. Secondly, there is the possibility of getting stuck in the daily routine due to a fear of thinking of future. Both scenarios imply rejection from active subjective position.

Conclusions

Recent studies devoted to socio-psychological adaptation of migrants shows that different types of migrants have their own specific factors contributing to successful integration into the host society. It should be noted that the bulk of the research is devoted to the problems of difficulties associ-

ated with relations between society and migrants to create conditions for financial independence for those who moved. Less attention is paid to interpersonal and family conflicts of migrants and the problems of “socially prosperous” groups of migrants, i.e., those who do not need help from the state, are not practically developed.

As for women adaptation whose motive to move is related to marriage, there is still no understanding of competent ways to provide support to the representatives of this social group. As a result, responsibility for adaptation is on the woman’s shoulders herself and in the science, there is no understanding of specific difficulties a migrant woman experience.

As shown by the theoretical review, four groups of psychological difficulties can be distinguished that impedes successful adaptation of women as well as clinical manifestations associated with these difficulties: women’s expectations regarding interaction with society don’t coincide with expectations of society — frustration, deprivation; predominance of external motivation when moving to a different country (following a husband) as a result — loss of job and familiar environment — depression, somatisation; prevailing of compelled contacts in the structure of communication — soreness; Self-image as a migrant before the move does not coincide with real self-image in a new country — intrapersonal conflicts.

It should be noted that these clinical symptoms can present both in a situation of normal resolving of difficulties associated with forming a new identity and rethinking of the self-concept and in the pathological course of adaptation process characterized by integration impossibility. Differences can be in duration of the mentioned symptoms and the reaction of migrant women to them. The symptoms themselves, apparently, act as markers of the mentioned psychological difficulties and should be considered as an invitation to action directed to working through and elimination of these difficulties.

The identified psychological difficulties and the clinical manifestations associated with them are obtained as a result of the theoretical review and are given in general form. Further research prospects are an empirical study of the problem that can expand understanding and clarify the content of these difficulties.

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