
КРАТКИЕ СООБЩЕНИЯ И ПЕРВЫЙ ИССЛЕДОВАТЕЛЬСКИЙ ОПЫТ

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Consequences of Migration in the Kyrgyz Republic

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Abstract. The article is devoted to the problem of internal and external migration in the Kyrgyz Republic. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Kyrgyz Republic had experienced mass out-migration of the population. The people were forced to migrate during the period chaos to improve their quality of life. Basically, in the early 1990s, the Slavic people from Kyrgyzstan left for Russia and Kazakhstan. Strong internal migration began in 1994, when rural Kyrgyz arrived from regions to Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyz Republic. Migration outside the former Soviet Union began in 2000. The vast majority of Kyrgyz went to Turkey, Germany or the USA. Thus, the problem of migration in the Kyrgyz Republic is not new. This article analyses the results of a 2019 focus group study. Field research was necessary to assess the effects of population migration and 14 focus groups were conducted in rural areas in the north of Kyrgyzstan. The results of the research revealed the positive and negative consequences of the migration process, reflecting the

current migration situation in the north of Kyrgyzstan. In general, the growth of migration has led to new problems in society: families suffer, children are left without parental care and there is a drain (brain drain) of the working age population.

Keywords: migration, migrant, quality, and standard of living, society, process, respondent, focus group

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Последствия миграции в Кыргызской Республике

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Аннотация. Статья посвящена проблемам внутренней и внешней миграции в Кыргызской Республике. После развала Советского Союза в Кыргызстане началась массовая миграция населения — народ был вынужден в период хаоса мигрировать в целях повышения качества жизни. В начале 1990-х гг. большая часть славянских народов уехали из Кыргызстана в Россию и Казахстан. Внутренняя миграция началась в 1994 г., когда в столицу — Бишкек из регионов стали массово переезжать сельские кыргызы. С 2000 г. началась миграция за пределы бывшего СССР. Подавляющее большинство кыргызов отправились в Турцию, Германию или США. Таким образом, проблема миграции в Кыргызской Республике не является новой. В данной статье анализируются результаты исследования фокус-группы 2019 г. Для оценивания последствий миграции населения необходимо было провести исследования на местах, и в сельской местности на севере Кыргызстана было проведено 14 фокус-групп. Результаты исследования раскрыли позитивные и негативные последствия процесса миграции, отражена современная миграционная ситуация на севере Кыргызстана. В целом рост миграции привел к появлению новых проблем в обществе: семьи страдают, дети остались без попечения родителей, происходит утечка (мозгов) населения трудоспособного возраста.

Ключевые слова: миграция, мигрант, уровень и качество жизни, общество, процесс, респондент, фокус-группа

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Introduction

In the Kyrgyz Republic, the modern migration process is accompanied by an outflow of the population and an increase in external labor migration. As a result of population migration, Kyrgyzstan suffers irreparable losses, the country loses its human potential. Migration is naturally determined by several economic factors such as a decline in living standards, a tense situation in the labor market, and a growing lag in terms of socio-economic development from other CIS countries. External labor migration of Kyrgyzstan has become significant. Based on this, we conducted sociological research to identify the positive and negative potentials of the migration process in Kyrgyzstan.

A concept of the functions and causes of rural migration was developed. According to the developed concept, population has accelerating, redistributive and selective functions.

In the Russian sociological science many socio-demographic, socio-economic, social, and labor studies are devoted to the problems of migration. The school of T. I. Zaslavskaya (2004) had pioneered in studying migration processes from the standpoint of migration behavior. Certain aspects of the migration processes, in particular the migration mobility of the population and the study of migration in the context of urbanization were developed by B. S. Khorev (1978) and presented in the works of adepts of his school. The theoretical works by L. L. Rybakovsky (2019) describe the three-stage migration process, which is a sequential chain of events. In Kyrgyzstan, migration issues were also touched upon by research scientists dealing with the problems of internal and external labor migration. Among them are the works of A. Sh. Abzhamilova (2005), A. A. Akaev (2017), M. A. Mamyrganov (2012), R. B. Salmorbekova (2015) and others.

Methodology

This article uses qualitative methodology realized in focus groups with key informants. The study was carried out in 2018-2019 in rural areas; the field study covered 14 villages throughout the republic. The research idea was proposed by graduate students to write a dissertation on the problems of the level and quality of life in rural areas. First, in October-November 2019 with the help of independent sociologists, a focus group was held with the participation of 168 respondents to identify the set task in 14 villages in the north of the Kyrgyz Republic. The focus group was mainly attended by men and women from a migrant family over 18 years of age.

Purpose

The main purpose of the research was to identify the positive and negative consequences of the migration process by means of focus group discussions (FGDs). A focus group is a small group of people, all of similar background, who are brought together to discuss their thoughts and feelings about a particular topic. Focus group discussions (FGDs) work better when the group is homogenous, that is, when people have a lot in common and where there are no big differences in status and power.

We should make strong efforts to limit group discussion participants to eight people, with a minimum of five to carry out the discussion.

FGDs can easily turn into a discussion between the most vocal and confident members of the group. Therefore, the facilitator must do his or her best to encourage everyone to speak, without pressuring anyone. Eye contact with all participants and making all participants feel part of the conversation is important. Gentle but direct questions to a quiet person may be appropriate, but more general comments which can work, are:

- „Some people have been quiet, but may have views to share. Would you like to speak now?“
- „Some people have been speaking much more than others. Would anyone who has not spoken like to contribute his or her views?“

The facilitator should encourage people to sit in a circle, so that all members of the group can see each other, including the facilitator. The note-taker should sit somewhere nearby and should also be able to see all of the participants.

Research results

Migration in Kyrgyz Republic has started soon after the country gained its independence. As FGD participant said: „*First, Russians and other nations who lived in village left, and then the number of people who went for migration increased*“. Another FGD participant comments that internal migration started in 1994 and external migration has started in 1995-1996. Those migrants left for Russia and Kazakhstan. She also added that from 2000 migration started beyond the boundaries of former USSR. Most of them went to Turkey, Germany or USA.

The villagers resort to migration because of lack of jobs, or if anyone has got a job then salary is very low, thus the life conditions are quite difficult and they cannot feed their families properly. One FGD participant described: „*we had a teacher of Physics, and he went to work in shaar (city, reference here to Bishkek) because of his low salary. But there he could not earn more either and could not feed his children. Now, he is in Russia and working by offering private tuition, and he is earning good money*“. Another FGD participant commented: „*My sister went to Turkey, and now she is working there, and her life conditions improved*“.

The migrants are away for a long period of time as a rule. One FGD participant said: „*My sister left abroad ten years ago. Some migrants are getting citizenship there and working in good jobs*“.

Both men and women go for migration from Kyrgyz Republic. Women are also going abroad for the same reasons as the men do: lack of jobs, low salary, and poor living conditions. A FGD participant gave explanation as to why the number of women migrants has increased: „*More women are now going for migration, because the migrant women are not harassed by the locals there, for example by the nationalists / skinheads (in Russia). The men are often beaten up*“. Another FGD participant mentioned about the atrocities against the migrants: „*My neighbor went to Russia with his newly married wife and they worked there for 12 years and then they wanted to return to Kyrgyzstan with all the money they had earned. But unfortunately, some crook people had been following them and they knew that this family had a lot of money, they broke into their apartment and killed both husband and wife in front of their 3-year old son. Other 12 Kyrgyz migrants*

who knew the family well, collected money to send the child and dead couple to Kyrgyzstan. They arrived after eight days“.

Regarding the ages of the migrants, a FGD participant said: „The migrants ages range from 20 to 45, thus they are capable of doing hard manual jobs“.

It is difficult to find money to become migrant. Some FGD witnesses: „My sister borrowed money from different people when she was leaving“, „My brother also borrowed money and migrated, but he returned the money quite soon“.

Many migrants cannot find jobs according to their specialties. Most of them work in construction and services: „My brother worked as a police officer here, but in Russia he is now working as a butcher“, „My sister was a teacher of mathematics, but she is working as a baby-sitter in Russia“. But there are some migrants who can find jobs according to their specialties: „My sister worked as a medical doctor here, and now she is working as medical personnel in USA too“, „My younger brother is a teacher by profession and he is now working as a teacher in Russia. He said that they have shortage of teachers in rural Russia“, „My sister is a nurse by profession and she is working according to her profession in Russia“.

Some migrants also take their children with them. As FGD participant explains: „The migrants take their children with them. I have kuda (son-in-law) in Tomsk. They have small child who now goes to kindergarten there. They say that their life is good and there are many Kyrgyz families there. They had some difficulty with the Russian language initially“.

Migrants face many difficulties abroad. They are hired by someone to work and everything which surrounds them is different. They also miss their relatives whom they leave behind. The villagers are getting used to the migrant family members staying away for a long period of time. Migrants miss their children who are left behind. But they stay there because they want to earn money and improve their life quality. As FGD participant said: „My brother-in-law stayed behind and he is looking after their children now“. Poor migrants are having a lot of difficulties there, but they always tell that everything is okay with them. We know their difficulties and how everything is affecting their health. We always worry about them.

The migrants come back to visit their families whenever they can. A FGD participant said: „My sister-in-law left to Germany and she visits us once a year“. Another opinion: „My younger sister left four years ago and she hasn't come back yet. Every family has got a migrant family member now“.

The villagers communicate with their migrant relatives by phone. A FGD participant explained: „It has become easy to contact them. We speak with them almost every day. They normally call us“. Another FGD participant said: „We also communicate with SMS. They can also send their photos to us via mobile phones“.

The migrants send remittance to their relatives through banks. One FGD participant said: „They send money whenever we need it“, and another FGD participant added: „Our relative sends money every month. So, we know which day he will send us and how the money will be used. They also tell us to use the money for which needs“. The villagers are also purchasing land or house for the money sent to them. According to a FGD history:

„My brother-in-law sends money to his family during holidays such as Nooruz, New Year and others“.

The villagers do not have any problems with accessing the banks and getting the remittances. One FGD participant said: *„There are no problems with sending money to us, and we go there and get money at the bank“.* One more FGD participant observed: *„It has become so easy for us. We just get money from the bank, instead of worrying about what happened to the money which is sent by someone, is the money going to reach me safely?“*

The remittances are used for various purposes. One FGD participant reported: *„When they are sending money, they instruct us how to use it. For example, they tell us that we should buy a sheep or cow“.* Another FGD participant added: *„Now they send money and tell us that we should pay credit back“.* They also send money for organizing feasts or weddings, according to another respondent. Migrants also send money for their children's needs, for example, for their food, clothes and education.

There is a general belief that migration is affecting the villagers' lives positively. A FGD participant said: *„My sister went to Russia and from there to Israel and she now got married there and she is living well. The Kyrgyz always want to improve their life and she is trying to further improve“.* Thus, migration is improving the life conditions of the migrants and their relatives.

The migrants are also affecting the youth in the village. The young people also want to go abroad to work. Some people who already left are inviting the villagers who are here. There is increase of number of migrants during last five years. As participant of FGD expressed on migration: *„They hear news from each other, and hear that some people have improved their lives because of migration and thus they also join them. More young people want to go for migration“.*

The young FGD participants of both sexes also responded to the questions on migration. Opinions were not the same. A young girl said: *„Young girls are going to migration to earn money“.* Another young girl mentioned: *„I don't want to leave abroad. Many young people with diplomas do not have jobs, to find a job one needs to pay bribe at least one thousand dollars. Therefore, young people are going for migration“.* A young boy however stated: *„I haven't heard of anyone who made a fortune by being a migrant. I also spent one year in Kazakhstan where I paid for an apartment and then to police officers and came back without money“.*

Thus, as shown by the results of the study, the destruction of the family and family relations of labor migrants became a negative factor. There is a violation of the social integrity of the family and family relations, deformation of family values and traditions, an increase in the number of street children, and juvenile delinquency. The local community and the remaining families are faced with the situation of an incomplete family, which leads to a change in the functional system, the role, and mechanism of upbringing and education of children, the younger generation is formed in isolation from parental education. These and other difficulties, however, do not stop migrants from looking for work. Working abroad allowed most of them to improve the financial situation of their families, and for the republic itself, among the main economic effects was a reduction in the deficit of balances of payments due to the receipt of remittances.

Conclusion

The results of the work are that migration has a positive effect on the life of the villagers. Thus, migration improves the living conditions of migrants and their relatives. The migration process affects young people. Young people also want to go abroad to work and learn about the world. Over the past five years, there has been an increase in the number of migrants. Many with higher education diplomas go abroad due to unemployment. As the results of the study have shown, there are positive and negative consequences of migration. The research results can be used in the field of the socio-political, economic, and psychological study of the problem of migration.

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