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Anastasiia GOLODRYZHUK

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Forming Psychology Student's Readiness to Assist Transnational Families

Anastasiia GOLODRYZHUK¹

Abstract

The problem of migration for employment is one of the most important problems of Ukrainian society, mainly because it leads to the appearance of transnational families. The peculiarities of formation, functioning and relation-building in transnational families are reviewed in the article. Main contemporary approaches to studies of the personality's psychological readiness to performing professional activities are analyzed also. The necessity of forming psychological readiness with psychology students to assist such families is stressed due to the fact that a lot of work migrants and their family members request psychological assistance. Main directions of theoretical and applied training with psychology students, to advance their skills and form their psychological readiness to assist transnational families, are defined in the paper.

Keywords: psychological readiness, transnational families, psychological traumas, psychological assistance.

Introduction

The studies of family was and still is actual in theoretical and applied researches in the field of psychology and psychotherapy. Formation, functioning, overcoming crisis periods and peculiarities of psychological assistance to family are reviewed by many prominent foreign scientists: S. Freud, A. Freud, K. Jung, E. Berne, C. Whitaker, V. Satir, A. Adler. Among others, following ukrainian researchers: O. I. Bondarchuk, T. M. Tytarenko, N. V. Chepelyeva, V. M. Radchuk, A. B. Kovalenko, G. S. Kostyuk, D. I. Isayev studied the family problem as well.

But despite the competent elaboration in the field of psychological assistance to the families, the branch of psychological assistance to transnational families is less worked out. Due to unstable economical situation the amount of transnational families is constantly enlarging, thus rendering demand in qualified psychological assistance.

Though there's no official statistics on the amount of Ukrainian work migrants, in some recent scientific sources we come by the data, that

¹ Chernivtsy National University, Ukraine, nastiay@mail.ru.

there are 7 million ukrainians, who migrated in pursue of employment, and only 6 % percent of them are childless. Major part of the work migrants have two or three children. Work migrants' children, are usually left under the guardianship of relatives: either one of the parents – mother (44%) or father (26%), grandmother (35%), sister (14%), brother (12%). This problem is most acute in western regions of Ukraine, especially Ternopil, Ivano-Frankivsk, Chernivtsi regions. For example, there are villages and towns in Bukovyna where almost all the employable female population migrated in pursue of employment (Rayevska, <http://vuzlib.com/content/view/964/>).

Nowadays we can witness polemics held in mass media and among scientists on positive and negative results of work migration. Major part of the phenomenon research are concentrated on its demographic (which are mostly negative) and economical (mostly positive) outcomes, or in other words, external side of the problem. In the same time, internal side of the phenomenon, or the way work migration influences functioning of the family institutions, family members, who were left behind, especially children; and the development of helping strategies to family members of transnational families came into the focus of ukrainian researchers and practitioners only recently (Gordienko, 2011, p. 64-65).

Transnational families are potentially problematic and insecure, their interfamilial bonds, family structure and function are broken. And one of the most acute problems is the welfare of the children in transnational families, who are often deprived of the proper care and nurturance. The child in transnational family constantly or periodically lives in terms of incomplete or even blocked familial communication.

Transnational family is characterized by structural changes in its' constituents. Thus marriage, parenthood, raising children and keeping household become independent. Transnational family is defined by marriage without a family-life, that's why it is just a nominal family, due to the fact that spouses live separately, which can provoke adultery and divorces. Out of 32% of transnational families, 11% fell apart in last two years time, according to the study conducted by State institute for problems of family and youth. Though even transnational families can be stable sometimes. Spouses in transnational family lack positive feelings' demonstration, low level of tenderness, love and warmth demonstration. Spouses get estranged due to the loss of persistent contacts with each other. Thus their relations get formalized, and the priority lays in the sphere of economical relations. Lack of face-to-face communication and talk influence emotional state of spouses, traditional family roles get changed, while internet or skype takes the place of close marital relations (Wenger, 2013).

Children in transnational families live in a complex situation of their social development, because they experience psychologically traumatic influences. These psychological traumas arise because main social needs of those children are not satisfied. For example, the need in stableness and being secure can not be satisfied, because the most important for a child persons – parents don't live with a child. And the fact that parents visit their child only occasionally produce the feelings of unstableness. Thus parental visits can't compensate their presence in child's everyday life. Child's need in close emotional relations is often unsatisfied also, because none of the other relatives or other closer adults can substitute relation with child's mother and father. One of the most negative outcomes in a transnational family is that child's need in unconditional love, or in other words, child's understanding of one's value to child's parents is unsatisfied also, because the fact that a child is left behind undermines the assurance in child's being valuable to parents (Levchenko, Trubavina, & Tsushko, 2007, p.56).

Psychological traumas experienced by children in lasting separation with parents, and the split familial bonds produced by it, lead to negative estimation of reality and social environment, search for resort in youth criminal groups. A lot of children in transnational families become so called “street kids”.

After one of the parents goes abroad as a work migrant, children usually become deeply depressed, unwilling to communicate with friends and relatives (especially with parent, who left). Besides child becomes irritable, anxious, aggressive, child can think about suicide; child doesn't trust anyone and gets estranged from the world. This state can be aggravated by permanent feeling of guilt, because child's parents keep reminding that they had to leave country and family to provide better future welfare of their children.

We can't avoid mentioning the formation of a peculiar and numerous caste of dependants – young and employable people, who consider it better for themselves to make their living on the money, their parents send them. This caste witness to their contemporaries that money can be earned abroad only. In other words next generation of work migrants is formed. We should mention that migration of a whole family or its' reunion in the country of employment are the rare cases in course of migration processes, and this exception justifies the common tendency. Outcomes of sociological and psychological research in influence of parents' migration on the young generation's formation in terms of incomplete family or even it's absence unequivocally demonstrate the aggravation of family institution's crisis in Ukraine (Kurchiv, 2004, p.1).

The research show that psychological outcomes of lasting separation with parents are mostly severe and strongly depend on child's age at the moment of separation. Preschool aged children, especially those from rural area, become timid and easily scared, they can have nightmares and can experience difficulties while sleeping. Children aged ten-years-old and elder (especially from urban areas) demonstrate anxious behavior manifested by physical and verbal aggression, alcohol abusing, smoking, trauancies and low achievements in school. Parents, who work abroad supply their children with large amounts of pocket-money, thus propelling them to join child groups with behavioral problems or even making them underage offenders.

The research of child's experiencing separation with parents mostly consider children up to adolescents. As for now, there's almost no studies of the peculiarities of separation with parents for respondents of students' age. But college and university students facing the need to form their own value orientation and choose their own life-style, experience the "temporary loss of parents" in a very acute way. Especially it's true for freshmen, who are going through a difficult period of adaptation to higher education institutions' terms of learning and need all the support they can get from their close relatives.

Obviously student needs close emotional bond with parents, and it's absence in transnational families originates the unsatisfied vitally important need in love, which is manifested in student's aggressive, irritable and anxious behavior, symptoms of anxiety and cowardice. It happens that student might be not able to realize one's own intellectual potential, which might be more effective in normal conditions. Long-lasting separation from parents can make students mature sooner and interact large amount of people, they never met before. Students from transnational families are used to orientate themselves on others' opinions, strive to affiliate with some group, and thus demonstrate higher level of conformity, are afraid to be socially unaccepted and cast-off. These results are caused by the fact that student lives in incomplete family, where feelings of loneliness are spread on other relations with social environment, limitations in motivation, its' monotony and attachment to particular life-situation leads to formation of value orientations connected with satisfaction of immediate hodiernal or closest future needs(Kulesha, 2014, p. 84-85).

Training of psychology practitioners includes learning the peculiarities of assisting family and children, different family types and different kinds of children. But though we can supply high level of theoretical training, psychology students don't get enough practical training to assist transnational families and their children. To understand this problem more profoundly we have to consider the contents of psychological

readiness to professional activity, so that we can analyze the blank points and perspectives of advancing the process of training highly qualified practitioners.

Considering the diversity of theoretical approaches in interpreting the contents, structure and demonstrations of the readiness to professional activities, we can define its' main features, such as: professional motivation, attitudes, value orientations, high level of emotional-volitional sphere's development, professionally important intellectual features, formation of professional knowledge, skills and habitudes.

Different researchers ascribe to psychological readiness to professional activity such constituents as: motivational, orientational, operational, volitional, estimating, cognitive, personal, psychological, professional, etc.

As V. A. Semychenko points it, readiness to professional activity – is a mental state including: a) operational readiness, which demands emergent activation of a person, getting ready to some activity; b) functional readiness – personal realization of one's purposes, evaluation of the existing postulates, definition of the most presumable methods of action; c) personal readiness, which is prolonged high activity while taking part in industrial process, prolonged necessity and division in motivational, volitional and intellectual efforts, estimation of the probability in achievement life success in professional activity (Karamushka, & Moskalev 2011).

Formation of psychological readiness is made on the basis of including all the components, with domination of one of them, according to personal features and habitudes. It can be realized on the basis of practical skills and realization of effectiveness of their usage also.

By the purposes, we can define following directions in social-psychological assistance to work migrants' families: assisting children of work migrants; assisting parents and guardians, who take care of children, during parents' absence; assisting social environment of work migrants' children; assisting work migrants' parents (after they return home); assisting parents and children together (aimed on renewing mutual trust and familial bonds) (Lialchuk, 2015, p. 84).

Providing psychological assistance to children from transnational families it is needed to focus on following issues: forming positive thinking, prevention of mistakes in familial upbringing and familial conflicts, informing clients on family and children rights, correction of familial relation and family members with microenvironment, helping family members to adapt to partings and meetings; helping to provide distant communication between family members; organizing groups of mutual-support; assisting

children to get involved into cultural-leisure activities, etc (Levchenko, Trubavina, & Tsushko, 2007, p.113).

In forming readiness to work with following categories we can use lectures, disputes, publishing leaflets, brain-storming, to enhance students' readiness to conduct educational work with work migrants' families. Selection and usage of psychodiagnostical techniques to be used in further psychodiagnostics. Role games and working out situations in psychological counselling can help students to train their counseling skills. Developing projects in supervising support, taking part in Balint's groups can prevent counselors' emotional burnout in their work with transnational families.

Methodology

Theoretical analysis of the problem made on the basis of reference sources, induction, abstracting, generalization, systematization and modeling methods were used to study conceptual basis of the problem of forming psychology students' readiness to assist transnational families.

Conclusions

Despite the enhanced attention of researchers to the problem of forming readiness of future practitioners to their professional activity, there are many aspects not studied yet. One of them considers the peculiarities of professional training with future psychologists in assisting a peculiar category of families, which is quite new social phenomenon in Ukraine – transnational families of work migrants. Considering the fact that every transnational family member (work migrants themselves; children they left behind; guardians or caretakers) experiences psychological traumas, psychological assistance to such families demands special theoretical and practical training. Thus our further research will consider empirical studies of the peculiarities of relation in transnational families and developing programs for individual and group assistance to transnational families.

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