



Dynamics of Youth's Attitude to Migrants in the Nizhny Novgorod Region (Russia)

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Citation: Ustinkin SV, Samoylova MP. Dynamics of Youth's Attitude to Migrants in the Nizhny Novgorod Region (Russia). *Global Media Journal*. 2016, S3: 8 .

Abstract

The problem of attitude of young generations towards migrants in the modern value paradigm has become urgent not only due to multi-ethnic character of the Russian civilization, but also due to migration processes triggered by contemporary international events. The empirical base for the long-term research into the dynamics of youth values shows a clear correlation between growing anti-immigrant sentiments and aggravation of interethnic relations inside the country. Ongoing studies determine factors contributing to optimization of state institutions, traditional religious and national non-governmental organizations focused on building and strengthening tolerance, early prevention of extremism and ethno-confessional conflicts among young people. Surveys and actual interethnic relations prove that urgency of the problem lies in the fact that deterioration of youth's attitude to migrants entails deterioration of respondents' attitude to other ethnic groups residing in Russia. Findings of the ongoing studies build a scientific base for contemporary forecasting of further interethnic communication which has a big impact on values and behavioral motivation of young people.

Keywords: Value orientation of youth; Migrants; Forecasts; National relations; Interethnic communication; Anti-immigrant sentiment; Tolerance; Interethnic conflicts

Received: May 05, 2016; **Accepted:** June 05, 2016; **Published:** June 25, 2016

Introduction

Today migration has reached an enormous scale not only to Europe but to Russia as well. Migration flows and migrants' integration into the host society not just reshape the ethno-confessional and linguistic landscape, but also transform the cultural and communicative space of host countries determined by historical and cultural traditions and social mechanisms of spiritual continuity, national and civil identity [1,2]. But a growing need for production development, labor shortage, expansion of the service sector explain why developed countries have to make use of migrant workers who later acquire the right of residence and become permanent (although not quite full) citizens of a state [3,4].

An impact that migration processes have on the modern communicative situation are relevant for coordinating educational, information and communication, as well as law enforcement activities on the one hand, and for forecasting further development of interethnic communication that shapes values and behavioral motivation of young people, on the other hand [5,6]. Communication challenges associated with migration

processes in Russia largely affect the interests of all social classes, they also have an impact on production, science, and education of young people [7,8]. Complex processes of cross-cultural interaction, especially among young people, involving migrants and locals, have highlighted a clear need for research into the nature of changes that occur in Russia in all spheres of social reality in response to migration processes. In this regard, one of the top priorities for development of a scientifically valid approach to tackling this problem both in economic and socio-cultural terms is studying the dynamics of a value-conscious attitude to migrants demonstrated by the population, primarily young people, from the host regions.

This issue is becoming particularly urgent in view of recent world events related to mass migration flows from the Middle East and North Africa to Western Europe [9,10]. Obviously it is crucial to distinguish between migrant workers and refugees pouring into the rich countries of the European Union in search of their new home. Anyway, the basic requirement for peaceful settlement in relations between migrants and locals involves due account of public opinion of both title and marginal ethnic groups. Real events in Russia and abroad prove that the current issue is most clearly manifested among young people [11,12].

Method

Scientists with the State Linguistics University of Nizhny Novgorod conducted their surveys under the project 'Dynamics of Value Orientations of the Youth' in 2006, 2011, 2014 and 2015. The empirical data they obtained from regular monitoring of value consciousness of in-school youth suggested a realistic picture reflecting changes in political, economic and ethno-confessional priorities of mass consciousness of in-school youth in the Nizhny Novgorod Region depending on international events, global and Russian economic processes, age and gender of respondents, their level of education (university, college or school) and residence (urban or rural areas), credibility of information submitted by parents, political organizations, mass media and the Internet. Surveys involved efforts to measure the dynamics of interethnic tensions among young people.

Research into the dynamics of value orientations of in-school youth (students of colleges or universities, schoolchildren) conducted in Nizhny Novgorod, the Nizhny Novgorod Region, is of particular interest for the reason that firstly, multinational Nizhny Novgorod Region is considered a modular region of Russia, therefore regional indicators of ethno-confessional sentiments and attitudes among young people can to a certain degree apply to a greater scale of Russia in general [2]; secondly, they correlate with indicators of the European Study of Value Orientations of the Youth conducted in 28 countries, including Russia in 2008 [11-13].

The object of research involved students of universities, secondary specialized colleges and vocational schools, as well as senior schoolchildren of public high schools in Nizhny Novgorod and the Nizhny Novgorod Region. The subject of research covered value orientations of the youth with regard to migrants.

The research included a questionnaire survey of 1,500 respondents in 2011, 2014 and 2015. A special questionnaire of 17 questions was designed for the purposes of the study.

Results

Russian civilization throughout its history has shown that challenges of interethnic communication and interaction of various cultures are top relevant as ever in view of the need to ensure national security across the country [14]. No wonder, that despite the Federal Target Program 'Fostering an Attitude of Tolerance and Preventing Extremism in the Russian Society' adopted in 2011, Russia has increasingly faced interethnic conflicts primarily among young people. The given context raises the question of how and in response to what factors the values and behavioral motivations of young people can change in ethno-confessional relations that emerge when interacting with representatives of another culture or religion.

The results of surveys held in 2011, 2014 and 2015, if compared, prove that deterioration of interethnic relations among young people is connected primarily to the attitude to migrant workers arriving mostly from Central Asia and Caucasus. Migration flows and related processes of marginalization not only transform the ethno-confessional and linguistic landscape of host countries, but also destroy their cultural and communicative space that

used to emerge for centuries and was determined by historical and cultural traditions, social mechanisms of spiritual continuity, national and civil identity [15].

Communication challenges associated with migration processes largely affect the interests of all social classes that are more or less connected with production, science, and education of young people. Complex processes of cross-cultural interaction especially among young people, both migrants and representatives of the so-called title nations, have highlighted a clear need for research into the changes that occur in the attitude of Russian youth to migrants in order to predict further development and changes of the current situation in view of the latest trends in ethno-confessional interaction. Research into the dynamics of value orientations of in-school youth (students of colleges or universities, schoolchildren) conducted by the scientists of the State Linguistics University of Nizhny Novgorod since 2011 suggests rather contradictory statements [16]. Judging by the dynamics of public sentiments developed by younger generations regarding this issue, Russian youth is lacking responsible attitude to such relevant needs as social and legal support for migrants, improvement of their living conditions (Table 1). Young people seem to misunderstand that everybody deserves humane treatment, and that migrant workers are temporary residents on this territory who will sooner or later return home. So, the question is what image of Russia they are bringing home, what attitude to this country they are forming among their relatives and children. In fact, the countries they return to are Russia's neighbors and partners. Thus, common sense reminds of the need to establish and maintain good relations with them for further positive development of contemporary international processes (Table 1).

Table 1 shows that understanding the need for a positive settlement of the above problem is growing worse. In 2011, the percentage of young people that admitted the need for legalization and legal security of migrants was 36.6% with 21.9% opposing that idea and 41.5% were undecided. However in 2014, these indicators changed for the worse: 29.6% supported the initiative (the figure worsened by 7%), 33.3% opposed it (the figure worsened by 11.4%), and 37.2% were undecided. There is a clear correlation between the above data and the attitude of young people to the problem of improving living conditions of migrants (Table 2). The 2014 survey shows a sharp increase in the

Table 1 Attitude of young people to migrants (%).

		2011	2014	2015
Legalize, improve legal security of migrants	Completely agreed	12.1	11.7	11.87
	Mainly agreed	24.5	17.9	11.99
	Undecided	41.5	37.2	40.58
	Mainly disagreed	14.0	17.0	15.80
	Completely disagreed	7.9	16.3	9.70

Table 2 Attitude of young people to migrants (%).

		2011	2014	2015
Improve living conditions of migrants (working conditions and wages, accommodation, health care, education)	Completely agreed	10.3	9.1	10.6
	Mainly agreed	23.2	20.4	21.5
	Undecided	38.1	31.0	36.2
	Mainly disagreed	16.3	18.7	18.4
	Completely disagreed	12.0	20.8	13.3

number of respondents that strongly disagree with the positive solution to this problem.

Data of the survey conducted in early 2014 in the Volga Federal District generally correlates with the results of the poll held by the Levada-Center in 2013. Commenting the results of the opinion poll, Lev Gudkov, head of the Analytical Center named after the first Russian professor of sociology Yuri Levada (Levada-Center) and editor-in-chief of *The Russian Public Opinion Herald*, said that xenophobia in 2013 reached its record high (70-80% of Russian population developed some xenophobic attitude). That was a record level registered for the first time in many years of research with uneven amplitude [17]. The peak came in October after Moscow elections and murder of a local man by migrants in the Moscow district of Biryulyovo. Based on research into the causes of nationality conflicts carried out between September 2013 and March 2014 by the Center for the Study of Ethnic Conflict and Federal Expert Network 'Regions Club' a rating of interethnic tensions in Russian regions was made. The Nizhny Novgorod Region used to be relatively stable in terms of interethnic conflicts. However after the conflict between locals and migrants triggered by the crimes committed by migrants in the town of Arzamas of the Nizhny Novgorod Region in December 2013 the region got into the risk zone for being qualified as a region of high tensions [18]. Tensions and xenophobic sentiments that have arisen in a short time between 2011 and 2014 are also reflected in the attitude of young people to uncontrollable flows of migrants settling in numbers on the historical territories of a multinational Russian society (Table 3). This becomes evident from the opinions of respondents regarding the need to constrain the influx of unskilled labor to Russia (Table 3).

The 2015 poll showed some increase in positive feedback, and a significant decrease in negative attitude, with the number of those who were undecided still growing. Survey data provided in Tables 1-3 prove instability of value-conscious attitude of respondents towards migrants. Firstly, the current situation requires constant monitoring of value orientations that young

Table 3 Opinions of young people regarding the need to constrain the influx of migrants to Russia (%).

		2011	2014	2015
Constrain the flow foreign unskilled labor to Russia, toughen the procedure of their entering the country and registration	Completely agreed	32.7	49.7	33.1
	Mainly agreed	29.3	25.8	28.7
	Undecided	23.6	15.9	22.4
	Mainly disagreed	10.5	5.3	9.0
	Completely disagreed	4.0	3.3	6.8

Table 4 Attitude of young people to migrants from other countries or representatives of other nationalities residing in Russia (%).

		2011	2014	2015
What is your attitude to migrants arriving to Russia from other countries?	Positive	11.5	8.3	11.12
	Neutral	69.1	60.5	68.06
	Negative	19.4	31.2	18.31
What is your attitude to representatives of other nationalities residing in Russia?	Positive	16.0	12.0	15.09
	Neutral	69.0	63.5	66.08
	Negative	15.0	24.5	15.72

people share on this problem, as well as development and implementation of programs aimed at fostering the culture of interethnic relations among young people. Secondly, it minimizes the chances to forecast interethnic communication as a key driver for the national security strategy in Russia [19]. The urgency of the problem lies in what survey results and real experience of international relations prove best-setback in the attitude to migrants causes setback in the attitude that respondents have towards other nationalities historically residing in Russia (Table 4).

When considering the dynamics of value-conscious attitude that students and schoolchildren of the Nizhny Novgorod Region have to migrants or other ethnic groups historically residing in Russia, it is worth emphasizing a couple of issues that require thorough consideration of the problem and regular monitoring of changes that may occur in mass consciousness of the youth on this range of questions.

Research data provided in Table 4 show that in 2011, 11.5% of respondents expressed positive attitude to migrant foreigners, whereas 69.1% had neutral attitude. Thus, an overall balanced attitude to migrants in the Nizhny Novgorod Region was typical of 80.6% of young respondents. Representatives of others ethnic groups inhabiting Russia earned positive attitude of 16% of respondents and neutral attitude of 69% young people. In other words, 85% of young people ensured a positive basis for interethnic relations.

During a short time since 2011 various extremist and radical groups have intensified not only in North Caucasus, but also in other regions. There have been crimes committed by migrants that caused serious damage to the local population (murders in the Moscow district of Biryulyovo and in the town of Arzamas in the Nizhny Novgorod Region). Bursts of interethnic and religious conflicts have spread to other regions of the country, including the Volga Region and Central Russia [20]. These circumstances largely prompted growing tensions among young people and caused changes in the value consciousness of respondents. The period of three years since 2011 to 2014 has seen a surge of negative attitudes to migrants and other nationalities residing in this country. The proportion of young people with negative attitude to migrants has grown to 11.8%, whereas the proportion of those with a generally balanced attitude (including those who describe their attitude as neutral) has also dropped by 11.8%. Compared to 2011, when the gap between those who treated migrants positively and negatively was 7.9% down to the negative, the gap in 2014 reached 22.9%, i.e. increased almost three and a half times [21].

A high proportion of respondents who have expressed neutral attitude to migrants and representatives of other nationalities inhabiting Russia is a worrying sign because all those undecided and hesitant people are ready at any time to turn rightwards or leftwards or in other words follow those who may have the biggest impact on their values and emotional preferences regarding the considered issue.

Data on the attitude of respondents to representatives of other nations inhabiting Russia seems rather favorable. Although the 2014 survey showed that the proportion of respondents with

positive or neutral attitude to other nationalities reduced by 9.5% as compared to 2011, the overriding priorities of 75.5% of young people in terms of value consciousness reflect positive or neutral attitude to the problem. At the same time attention must be paid to a surge of negative responses identified during the 2014 survey as compared to the data obtained over the previous three years. The number of respondents that have identified their attitude to other nationalities inhabiting Russia as negative has increased by 9.5% (from 15% to 24.5%). Over a third of respondents or 31.2% have demonstrated their negative attitude to migrants, whereas 24.5% of respondents said they had a negative attitude to representatives of other nationalities in the country [22].

These findings raise a legitimate question of whether it is safe to suggest that growing anti-migration sentiments may lead to escalation of interethnic relations, whether these processes are not linked directly, but just help to track trends in interethnic relations by form, i.e. they can be viewed only from the perspective of negative responses from locals towards the influx of migrant workers arriving in the country. To avoid such a substantial replacement the dynamics of attitudes to migrants and representatives of indigenous groups inhabiting Russia is compared. Comparative analysis to a certain degree helps to forecast possible variants of further developments in terms of ethno-confessional communication between young people using the data available [23]. The results of the survey show that although the attitude to other nations in Russia is better than to migrant workers arriving from abroad, still all the processes related to both the groups follow a similar scenario. The study has found a significant correlation between growing negative attitudes both to migrants and representatives of other nationalities inhabiting Russia. Among the young people who are positive-minded about migrants arriving from abroad there are 66.2% of those who also show a positive attitude to other nationalities residing in Russia. However, the 2014 poll proved that if respondents shared a negative attitude to foreign migrants, then in 61.3% of cases they would also have a negative attitude to representatives of other nationalities residing in Russia [19].

The survey data also suggest that negative attitudes to migrants have a stronger impact on interethnic tensions growing in the society, rather than positive attitudes to migrants that have a much weaker effect in terms of mitigating such tensions [18]. Negative attitudes to migrants appear to be a far more differentiating factor than positive attitudes. In other words, even a slight increase in the proportion of people who for some reason have changed to a negative attitude to migrants can crucially change the overall atmosphere in the society in terms of interethnic relations [24]. In other words, when predicting opportunities to lift interethnic tensions or when developing strategies to tackle migration problems, account shall be taken of interdependence of value targets that exist in mass consciousness of mostly the youth in their attitude to migrants and other nationalities historically residing in Russia.

Thus, the problem of migrant workers has started turning from an external problem to an internal one. A private issue of attitude that locals have towards migrant workers tends under certain conditions to grow into the problem of interethnic relations inside the country.

Data provided in Table 5 highlight a crucial aspect in evaluative reasoning of young people on this problem. It lies in the fact that young generations share a strongly negative attitude to extremist religious and political organizations, they speak in favor of tougher penalties for propaganda of ideas inciting inter-confessional and interethnic hatred, or advocating violence and extremism (Table 5).

High rates of strongly negative attitude to extremism and propaganda of ideas inciting inter-confessional and interethnic hatred reflect practical results of a large-scale work undertaken by governmental organizations, educational institutions, mass media, and law enforcers to fight the spread of violence and extremism with the youth. Moreover, the death of a large number of people in terrorist attacks makes even most desperate adventurers think of personal safety and fear for their life and the lives of their beloved ones [25] (Tables 6 and 7).

Data from Tables 6 and 7 highlight the fact that 20% of young people in 2011 were ready to arrange active protest actions against migrants (volunteered to take part in meetings, demonstrations, riots and other protest actions). 31% of respondents hesitated to provide a definite answer, whereas 49% refused to rate their attitude to the given group of people. 23% of respondents expressed their readiness to support parties and organizations sharing a similar position with 30.7% being undecided. 38.4% of respondents were willing to express their attitude in the Internet with 27.5% being hesitant to answer. At the same time, rather a big number of young people in the survey demonstrated a high level of legal culture, as they showed deep understanding of how to regulate communication processes in interethnic relations viewed in the context of labor migration. 62% of respondents spoke in favor of restricting the inflow of foreign unskilled labor to Russia and of toughening the procedure for their entering the country and registration.

Table 5 Attitude of young people to extremist political and religious organizations (%).

		2011	2014	2015
Introduce tougher penalties for propaganda of ideas inciting inter-confessional and interethnic hatred	Completely agreed	38.5	43.0	35.60
	Mainly agreed	25.2	26.3	27.85
	Undecided	26.7	20.6	25.20
	Mainly disagreed	5.9	5.7	6.07
	Completely disagreed	3.7	4.3	3.44

Table 6 What measures are you personally ready to take in order to express your attitude to the problem of migrants? (%).

	2011	2014	2015
Prefer to stay uninvolved	42.5	41.6	54.4
Volunteer to take part in meetings, demonstrations, riots and other protest actions	9.8	15.1	6.6
Express their opinion in the Internet, on forums, in blogs and on social networking sites	27.1	26.8	7.6
Appeal to public authorities	12.1	13.6	7.2
Support political parties and organizations that have similar views	12.9	16.4	4.8
Talk with friends and acquaintances	40.5	45.3	19.4

Table 7 What measures are you personally ready to take in order to express your attitude to other nationalities residing in Russia? (%)

	2011	2014	2015
Prefer to stay uninvolved	44.5	44.1	53.20
Volunteer to take part in meetings, demonstrations, riots and other protest actions	8.9	12.0	5.80
Express their opinion in the Internet, on forums, in blogs and on social networking sites	23.7	23.1	8.31
Appeal to public authorities	10.7	11.9	4.38
Support political parties and organizations that have similar views	13.3	15.2	5.69
Talk with friends and acquaintances	39.0	41.3	19.81

Data from Summary Table 6 forms an empirical base for a comparative analysis of the dynamics of value consciousness of young people in terms of their attitude to migrants which is variable not only in time but also in priority forms of expressing this attitude. A 4.8% increase in the number of those who prefer to discuss the problem of migrants in the informal context with their friends coupled with the fact that one third of respondents prefers to discuss this problem on the Internet forums, in web blogs, on social networking sites, and that the rate of those who advocate neutral attitude to migrants is rather high (41.6%) suggest an increased focus of young people on interethnic relations.

The survey data (including the lowest rate of 13.6% of respondents in 2014 and 7.2% of respondents in 2015 that were ready to address the public authorities on the issue of migrants) prove the need to improve the quality of work with the youth in terms of fostering political culture and interethnic tolerance among young people. A high proportion of young people preferring to

bring discussions on this problem in the field of interpersonal communication shall be regarded as a relevant component of each of the proposed options for the in-school youth to express their attitude to the problem in question. Obviously, discussions in social networks, as well as support of the parties upholding opinions shared by representatives of the youth target audience, and involvement in active protest actions suggest both preliminary and post-communicative discussion of the problem.

Conclusion

Doing research on issues that would help to identify the attitude of younger generations to other nationalities with due regard to the attitude to migrants allows to expose factors that contribute to optimization of public institutions, traditional (official) religious and ethnic public organizations engaged in building and strengthening tolerance with modern Russian youth, to ensure early prevention of ethno-confessional conflicts and extremism among young people [26,27]. The obtained data may help to correlate some trends in the youth policy and educational system over the next few years.

Acknowledgements

This publication was prepared under order of the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation, Project No. 552 'Conceptualization and Staff Support of Ethno-Conceptual Policy in the Volga Federal District'.

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