
ИДЕНТИЧНОСТЬ В КОЛИЧЕСТВЕННОМ ИЗМЕРЕНИИ

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Original article

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FROM COMMUNICATION TO INTEGRATION: THE ROLE OF THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE IN INTERETHNIC INTERACTIONS AND THE EDUCATIONAL FUTURE OF MIGRANT CHILDREN

This study addresses the lack of empirical data necessary for developing effective strategies to support the linguistic, educational, and cultural integration of children from migrant families. Children with migration backgrounds face a variety of challenges when adapting to a new social, legal, economic, cultural, and particularly educational environments. This process demands not only linguistic competence but also the ability to internalize new normative frameworks and educational practices. This article examines the adaptation process of migrant children by exploring three key aspects: their migration history, post-migration adaptation, and how acquired adaptation skills shape their prospects for future success in a new social environment. The analysis relies on primary sociological data, including a survey of 830 migrants from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan working in Moscow and the Moscow Oblast, along with semi-structured interviews with 213 children with a migration backgrounds aged 14–17 (interviews were conducted with parental consent in 2024–2025). The findings reveal that the adaptation of children with migration backgrounds is a prolonged and multidimensional process, within which educational adaptation operates as a key institutional mechanism for navigating and assimilating into a new social environment. Successful educational and social adaptation not only facilitates a child's personal development but also functions as critical capital for future attainment shaping professional trajectories, academic advancement, and civic participation. Additionally, the study explores the social conditions that enable or constrain successful adaptation, with particular focus on the role of family, educational institutions, and other social agents in fostering migrant children's integration into learning environments that promote development and socialization. Future studies should longitudinally track adaptation trajectories across diverse contexts, examining intersectional factors (gender, class, ethnicity) and institutional policies' long-term impacts on educational mobility and social inclusion.

Keywords: *migration, migrants, adaptation of migrants, adaptation of children, educational adaptation, language adaptation, cultural adaptation, social adaptation*

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Научная статья

© О. А. Волкова, Т. Н. Юдина, В. Ю. Леденева

ОТ КОММУНИКАЦИИ К АДАПТАЦИИ: РОЛЬ РУССКОГО ЯЗЫКА В МЕЖЭТНИЧЕСКОМ ВЗАИМОДЕЙСТВИИ, ОБУЧЕНИИ И ПОСТРОЕНИИ БУДУЩЕГО ДЕТЬМИ МИГРАНТОВ

Статья посвящена исследованию роли русского языка в межэтническом взаимодействии, обучении и построении будущего детьми мигрантов, а также анализу взаимосвязи коммуникационных и адаптационных процессов. Проблема исследования обусловлена дефицитом эмпирических данных, позволяющих на научной основе разрабатывать эффективные меры по осуществлению адаптации детей из семей мигрантов. Цель исследования: проанализировать процесс адаптации детей, включающий в себя, во-первых, миграционную историю, во-вторых, постмиграционную адаптацию, в-третьих, прогнозирование будущих успехов, базирующихся на приобретенных навыках приспособления к новой социальной среде. Эмпирическая база исследования: во-первых, анкетный опрос мигрантов из Кыргызстана, Таджикистана, Узбекистана, работающих в Москве и Московской области и имеющих детей;

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во-вторых, полуструктурированное интервью детей с миграционной историей в возрасте 14–17 лет (опрос проводился с согласия родителей). В результате исследования определено, что адаптация детей с миграционной историей представляет собой длительный, сложный многоаспектный процесс, в который в качестве ключевого механизма освоения новой социальной среды интегрирована языковая, культурная и образовательная адаптация. Выявлены социальные условия, способствующие и препятствующие успешной адаптации; особое внимание уделено роли семьи, образовательных учреждений и других институтов в содействии адаптации детей к образовательной среде, благоприятной для развития как приезжих, так и местных. Сделан вывод, что успешная образовательная и социальная адаптация не только содействует личностному росту ребёнка, но и служит ресурсом для его будущих достижений (учебных, профессиональных, гражданских) и формированию новой идентичности. Дальнейшие исследования темы связаны с изучением траектории адаптации детей из семей мигрантов, интерсекциональных адаптационных факторов (гендера, возраста, этнической принадлежности), построением долгосрочных прогнозов влияния институциональной политики на образовательную мобильность и социальную адаптацию детей.

Ключевые слова: миграция, мигранты, дети с миграционной историей, адаптация мигрантов, адаптация детей, образовательная адаптация, языковая адаптация, культурная адаптация, социальная адаптация

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Introduction

As global mobility increases, more families are migrating, bringing children into the process. As a result, the challenges of adaptation for these children are becoming increasingly relevant. Relocating to a new country or region presents obstacles such as language barriers, cultural differences, religious preferences, social exclusion, and the need to adjust to a new legal, economic, and cultural environment. This study aims to address these issues.

Adaptation to the educational process is crucial for children from migrant families, as it significantly impacts their future well-being and success, whether they settle in a new place or return to their homeland. The adaptation skills they develop will help them navigate new challenges throughout their lives. Adaptation is commonly considered a lifelong process, as society constantly evolves, requiring individuals to develop new adaptive skills (Petrovsky 1982).

The adaptation of children from migrant families was brought to the spotlight by President Vladimir Putin, who addressed it during a meeting of the Council for Interethnic Relations on March 30, 2021 (Zasedanie Soveta 2021). Since then, various measures have been proposed to tackle the challenge. In 2024, the President officially supported a draft law restricting access to public schools for children who do not speak Russian, as their inability to follow the curriculum at the required level was cited as a barrier to integration (Vladimir Putin podderzhal 2024).

This article examines the adaptation process of migrant children by exploring three key aspects: their migration history, post-migration adjustment, and the role of acquired adaptation skills in shaping their future success in a new social environment.

The research problem stems from the need to better understand the challenges children with migration backgrounds face when adapting to new social, legal, economic, cultural, and particularly educational environments. At the same time, there is a lack of evidence-based methods and practical recommendations to help these children develop the adaptation skills necessary for successfully realizing their potential in the future.

Literature Review

The analysis of scholarly literature on the adaptation of children with a migration background reveals several major aspects. Migration theories, both traditional and modern, were originally designed to study adult migrants. However, in recent years, these frameworks have expanded and become more integrated, making it possible to encompass contemporary migration processes involving children of various ages (*Galli 2024*).

According to recent studies and findings from entire research laboratories, the prevailing view among scholars and policymakers is that children from migrant families are regarded as dependents who complicate migration dynamics.

Children are often considered a major obstacle to the realization of migration plans, as they are commonly viewed by policymakers and researchers in one of three ways: as “dependents” requiring care and resources, as a kind of living “baggage” that must be taken along, transported across borders, and resettled, or as “left behind” without full parental care and upbringing (*Mazzucato, Schans 2011*).

However, some studies present a different perspective, suggesting that migrant children can, in certain cases, take an active role in response to the migration of adult family members (*Dobson 2009; Huijsmans 2011*). Research also highlights that minors can significantly influence their parents, for example, by affecting decisions on whether one or both parents — or even the entire family — should migrate (*González et al. 2016; Hernández-León et al. 2020*).

Russian sociologists, including V. Yu. Ledeneva, analyzed empirical data and outcomes of various migration policy measures, which led them to the conclusion that children from migrant families constitute a unique social and demographic group. Due to their age, social and cultural characteristics, they require targeted support to ensure their social, linguistic and cultural adaptation. Ledeneva (*Ledeneva 2021: 109*) emphasizes that “through children, their parents are more successfully integrated into the host society”.

Extensive research on this topic demonstrates that the study of children with migration backgrounds has developed into a well-established field.

Most scholarly works agree that the socio-linguistic adaptation of children from migrant families is key to their adjustment to life in new social, legal, economic, cultural, and particularly educational environments. Empirical sociological studies provide strong evidence supporting this.

T. N. Yudina and M. G. Kotovskaya (2019) focus on the socio-linguistic adaptation of children who are non-native speakers and their migrant parents. A special emphasis is made on one of the key factors in achieving a high degree of adaptation — language proficiency: “the knowledge of the Russian language among non-native schoolchildren at

the time of school enrollment, both in general and as a necessary skill for mastering other subjects” (Kotovskaya, Yudina 2019: 45).

An important direction in researching the adaptation of children with a migration background is interdisciplinary socio-pedagogical work, particularly within the context of «migration pedagogy». E. V. Bondarevskaya and O. V. Gukalenko (Bondarevskaya, Gukalenko 2000) examine the social and pedagogical challenges faced by minors with limited Russian proficiency, focusing on their adaptation to the educational system, interactions with classmates and teachers, high academic expectations, and school discipline.

T. V. Portnova (Portnova 2017) studies the adaptation of children with a migration background, highlighting how their interactions form unique interethnic school dynamics. She emphasizes the development of adaptation skills through active participation in the educational process, facilitating social and cultural adaptation.

G. E. Zborovsky and E. A. Shuklina (Zborovsky, Shuklina 2013) examine the adaptation of children with migration backgrounds in Russian schools, drawing on empirical research and case studies of their adaptation experiences.

The adaptation of children from migrant families has been a subject of interest for Russian scholars, particularly in a regional context, with a notable example being the study by Y. A. Afonykina et al. (Afonykina 2014), which explores these issues in the Russian North.

Some empirical research focuses on the adaptation to new social, legal, economic, cultural, and educational environments: for example, A. Ya. Makarov (2010) relies on the data collected in Moscow and the surrounding region. His sociological study compares primary data from two groups of students — children with migration experience and local students — enrolled in schools in the Moscow agglomeration. He shows that migrant children face challenges adapting to the new educational environment, while local students showed “anti-migrant attitudes and the unpreparedness of most participants in the educational process” to welcome migrant children (Makarov 2010).

The study of inter-institutional cooperation for the comprehensive adaptation of children with migration backgrounds remains highly relevant, particularly in examining interactions between migrant parents and school teachers (Alexandrov et al. 2012).

Researchers examine migrant parents’ hopes and aspirations for their children, including educational goals and professional growth prospects, as well as the challenges of early, often illegal, employment of minors, which can harm their future opportunities (Poletayev 2013).

Research Methods and Rationale for Their Selection

Our review of academic literature and regulatory documents underscores the need for a clear definition of social adaptation. Federal Law «On the Fundamental Guarantees of Children’s Rights in Russia» No. 124-FZ dated July 24, 1998a defines a child’s social adaptation as «an active process in which a child facing difficult life circumstances adjusts to societal norms and rules while overcoming psychological or moral trauma»¹.

To enhance clarity, we propose the following definition of adaptation specifically for children from migrant families: *social adaptation is a continuous process of actively adjusting to new environmental, linguistic, educational, cultural, social, and psychological*

¹ On the Fundamental Guarantees of Children’s Rights in Russia: Federal Law No. 124-FZ dated July 24, 1998. <https://www.consultant.ru>.

conditions. This process applies to minors born in their country of origin who have moved to the host region with migrant parents holding foreign, Russian, or dual citizenship.

To describe this group, we introduce the term “*children with a migration background*”, referring to minors who were born in their country of origin and relocated with migrant parents holding foreign, Russian, or dual citizenship. Additionally, the study employs the concept of *allophone children*, defined as “a group of students whose families have recently moved to Russia, whose parents also struggle with the Russian language, and who primarily communicate in their native language at home. For these children, Russian is not their mother tongue, making it difficult for them to understand, perceive, and use it for communication” (Ushakov 2015).

Empirically, the study relies on primary sociological data collected by the research team of the Institute for Demographic Research, Federal Scientific Research Sociological Center of the Russian Academy of Sciences. The authors of this article participated in developing the research tools, conducting the study, and processing the data. The study comprised the following:

1. Survey: A total of 830 migrants (291 from Tajikistan, 280 from Uzbekistan, and 259 from Kyrgyzstan) were surveyed to assess their perceptions of current adaptation measures and outcomes for children, identify barriers, and suggest adjustments to migration policy to improve its effectiveness on the regional level. Respondents were selected using the snowball sampling method. Selection criteria included respondents' arrival in Moscow or Moscow Oblast after 2010 and having one or more children (either born in the host country or having migrated with their parents). The study was conducted in 2024.
2. Semi-structured interviews with children: Interviews were conducted with 213 adolescents aged 14–17 to examine their social well-being, the factors aiding or hindering their adaptation (e. g., school, peer groups, family), their social position during adolescence, and their views on transitioning to early adulthood in terms of education, employment, family life, and experiences with bullying (if applicable). The study also aimed to assess the level of intercultural interaction in schools and its impact on migrant children's adaptation. Respondents were selected using the snowball sampling method. Selection criteria included parental consent for their children's participation and the children's willingness to take part in the study, in line with our approach. The study was conducted in 2025.

Materials and Methods

Difficulties in accessing and analyzing statistical data pose a significant limitation for this study, which aims to examine children's adaptation and track their life path from being born into a migrant family to future success. The gaps in available data — such as incompleteness, inconsistent collection criteria, and fragmentation — hinder efforts to assess the scale of the issue and determine the scope of necessary preventive and corrective measures.

A broad generalization suggests that child migration is an increasingly intensive process. Over the past 30 years, global migration flows of children have doubled. Today, an estimated 36 million children with a migration background live in a country different from their birthplace, representing approximately 13% of the total international migrant

population (UNICEF 2021). Moreover, the situation is exacerbated by the large number of children within refugee populations: while minors account for about 30% of the world's population, they make up a much higher share — 40% — of forcibly displaced persons (UNHCR 2022).

In Russia, as in other countries, statistics on children with a migration background are both quantitatively incomplete and qualitatively underdeveloped. Researchers primarily rely on aggregated figures reflecting the general migration situation or on citizenship-related data from sources such as Rosstat and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. However, these databases are periodically updated and technically optimized, making in-depth analysis difficult. As a result, studies must often rely on fragmented information from various empirical sources. No precise data exist on the number of children in this category residing in Russia, though some partial figures are available.

In 2020, Russia had approximately 800,000 foreign minors, of whom only 200,000 were enrolled in Russian educational institutions. An additional 180,000 foreign children visited Russia annually for tourism, typically as part of family travel. This means that around 25% of school-age children with migrant parents do not attend school (*Velyaminova* 2020). Preliminary estimates suggest that Russia has about 500,000 foreign citizens of school age, in a total school-age population of 16.5 million (*Odoevtseva* 2024).

According to research conducted in 162 schools across Moscow, Moscow Oblast, St. Petersburg, Leningrad Oblast, Tomsk, and Pskov, “ethnic Russian students account for 85–93% of students, while students from other ethnic backgrounds make up only 7–16%. The highest proportion of non-Russian students is found in the Moscow region (16.2%)” (*Aleksandrov et al.* 2012: 179).

In St. Petersburg, in the 2021/2022 academic year, one of the schools in the Kalininsky district had only one Russian-speaking student among 30 pupils aged 7–8 (*Zheleznyakova, Lysakova* 2024: 704). In the Moscow metropolitan area, for example, in the Naro-Fominsk urban district, the number of foreign students stands at 731 out of a total of 19,142 students (Система электронного мониторинга). However, according to the Institute of Education of the Higher School of Economics, as of 2018, these figures are underestimated by a factor of four. Their data suggest that migrant children make up between 7% and 16% of students in schools across Central Russia, with the highest concentration in Moscow Oblast (16.2%). The estimated distribution of migrant students per class is as follows: in high school, there are 2–4 students from CIS countries; in middle school, 5–6 students; and in primary school, 7–9 students per class (*Kozhanova* 2019).

The majority of foreign children enrolled in Russian educational institutions come from families of citizens of CIS member states, including those working under joint economic programs of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), as well as international labor migrants, primarily from neighboring countries (*Ledeneva* 2021).

According to our survey of migrants in Russia, about 40% of citizens of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan arrive in the Moscow agglomeration with their children (*Osadchaya et al.* 2024).

Results

Turning to the analysis of research findings, our questionnaire survey asked parents: ‘What aspects of adaptation in Russia were most challenging for your child?’ The results

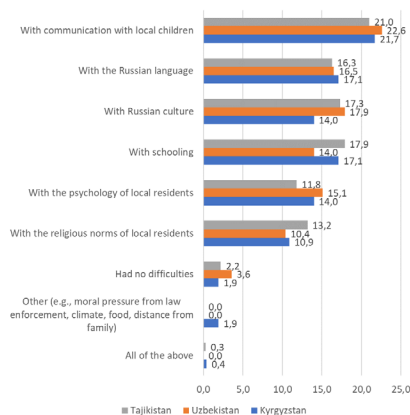


Fig. 1. Distribution of parental responses to the question: ‘What aspects of adaptation in Russia were most challenging for your child?’, %

reveal two primary pain points according to parental reports: (1) social integration with local peers and (2) Russian language proficiency. This pattern holds consistently across migrant groups from different countries of origin (see *Fig. 1*).

The comprehensive analysis of parental survey data and semi-structured interviews with children from migrant backgrounds reveals that students entering Russian preschools, primary and secondary schools frequently encounter adaptation challenges rooted in limited Russian language proficiency. This linguistic barrier significantly impedes their integration into Russian-language educational environments, primarily by restricting peer socialization with native-speaking children.

Among the children interviewed, 43,1% rated their Russian proficiency as excellent, 47,1% as good, and 9,8% as satisfactory. Overall, their self-assessment of

language skills is relatively high. However, it should be noted that these interviews reflect only the children’s subjective perception of their abilities.

Our analysis of the collected materials shows that mastering Russian is essential not only for academic success but also for integrating into the broader cultural and social environment. Language proficiency enables children to familiarize themselves with new cultural norms, values, and educational expectations, overcome psychological challenges, and develop a richer sense of identity.

One child from a migrant family emphasized the importance of psychological resilience in the adaptation process:

“For children of foreigners adapting to Russia, the most important thing is probably inner strength — to withstand all the pressure, the fact that everything has changed: the environment, the children, the culture, the location, the weather — everything changes drastically. And you have to get through it. Inner strength, yes, in order not to break down” (Informant 30, 10th-grade student).

A lack of fluency in the language of instruction creates barriers to learning, affecting not only individual academic performance but also the overall classroom experience. When students struggle with the language, it slows down the pace of instruction, ultimately lowering the quality of education for the entire class. As a result, the language barrier becomes a critical factor shaping the effectiveness of the education system in its efforts to support children from migrant families. When linguistic challenges are minimal, adaptation in other areas tends to be smoother.

One of our respondents said the following:

“I don’t really have much to say because I believe my adaptation process went really smoothly. You could say I was lucky, because not everyone who comes from Central Asian countries is able to adapt so well and so quickly. I was probably also fortunate with my surroundings, as most people face bullying, discrimination, or inequality. But I didn’t experience anything particularly severe. So I think my socialization has been more than successful” (Informant 195, college student).

High school and college students generally have a strong command of both spoken and written Russian, which means that they are able to follow the curriculum and confidently plan their future. Below are a few more excerpts from the interviews. A subset of children demonstrates realistic future orientation, expressing aspirations to obtain fulfilling professional occupations that align with both personal interests and economic security needs:

“I want to become a speech therapist and stay in Russia” (Informant 49, college student).

“I really want to develop a career in programming. I’m currently learning different coding languages so that it will be easier for me later on” (Informant 129, college student).

“I’m studying to become a pastry chef and plan to pursue this profession in the future. I have one year left in college, and I’m preparing for the Unified State Exam. After that, I’ll most likely go to university” (Informant 189, college student).

“Right now, I’m studying at a medical college. In the future, I’d like to go to university and become a cardiology specialist” (Informant 20, college student).

However, other children exhibit less realistic aspirations, envisioning careers as high-status professionals (e. g., lawyers or economists) while simultaneously anticipating substantial leisure time for travel and entrepreneurial ventures such as modeling businesses:

“I want to become a lawyer as soon as possible while also pursuing my hobbies. I’d like to join a modeling agency. At first, I’d like to work for someone else, but maybe later, I’d open something of my own” (Informant 191, college student).

“In the future, I see myself as a successful economist with a solid education, having graduated from university with excellent results and working in my field. In my free time, I plan to travel a lot” (Informant 76, college student).

Furthermore, migrant children may express entrepreneurial aspirations rather than conventional occupational preferences:

“I want to become an influential person to make sure that my family never lacks anything. I want to support my parents. I’m more interested in technical subjects, and I want to work for myself— working for someone else would mean settling for less than I aspire to” (Informant 10, 9th-grade student).

Children emphasize the significant role of familial traditions in their lives:

“I want to follow in my father’s footsteps. He has always been an auto painter, and I really like this kind of work. I want to paint cars too. [Do you want to start your own business and work for yourself?] Yes, absolutely. That’s my big dream. One day it will come true — I’ll start a small business and be my own boss” (Informant 90, 9th-grade student).

“First and foremost, I see my future with a family — my husband and children. But I also want to get an education. I want to work in design, particularly web design” (Informant 79, college student).

The majority of the interviews reflect a positive trend in the adaptation process. Other Russian sociologists have reached similar conclusions, backing them with empirical evidence, including excerpts from interviews with children. For example:

“During my first year, I didn’t talk to anyone in class at all. I mostly kept to myself. But after that, once I made friends, we started helping each other however we could” (*Demintseva et al.* 2017: 93).

Children from migrant families do not form a homogeneous social group, as they exhibit significant differences across key parameters, including the family’s socio-economic status, parental education level, professional background, and other social characteristics.

An analysis of the survey conducted among parents with a migration background revealed a direct correlation between the family’s financial situation and the child’s level of adaptation — the better the financial standing, the higher the degree of adaptation. This applies to adaptation at school, within the peer group, and in extracurricular social circles.

Furthermore, an interpretation of the survey results showed a correlation between parents’ self-assessed adaptation level and their child’s proficiency in Russian. The higher the parents’ level of adaptation, the better (in their view) their child’s command of the language of the host community.

Our analysis of semi-structured interviews with children from migrant families has shown that Russian society and the education system were largely unprepared for the massive arrival of children from abroad. These children face language difficulties and struggle to adapt to cultural differences.

While children from migrant families learn conversational Russian through interactions with Russian-speaking peers and school, they still find writing difficult. Persistent problems with spelling and punctuation negatively impact their academic performance and hinder their ability to pass exams successfully, which, in turn, limits their opportunities to enroll in vocational education programs and pursue their desired careers.

Additionally, we found that a major challenge is the significant gap between the knowledge migrant children acquired in their countries of origin and the Russian educational standards. This gap is further exacerbated by their limited proficiency in Russian, which increases migration-related stress and creates additional barriers to successful adaptation in the new sociocultural and educational environment.

Discussion

Our results align with previous research. For example, E. I. Surovtseva (2015) argues that the ethnic or national background of migrant children is not the primary trigger for bullying or other forms of peer aggression. Instead, she identifies limited proficiency in Russian — reflected in frequent grammatical errors, a restricted vocabulary, and a strong phonetic accent — as the main cause.

The situation, however, is further exacerbated by the psychological perception of social inequality, as well as cultural and social differences, which heighten the child’s sense of “otherness” in their new environment. These factors contribute to the marginalization of migrant children and their exclusion from collective interactions, creating a fertile ground for aggression and discrimination (*Surovtseva* 2015).

M. G. Kotovskaya and T. N. Yudina note that most student respondents prefer peers from migrant families, especially of the same nationality, over local students. Among those surveyed, 71% reported having close friends from migrant backgrounds (*Kotovskaya, Yudina* 2018: 120). Their study examines the socio-linguistic adaptation of migrant children, identifying factors that contribute to maladaptation and impact social and psychological well-being. This affects both internal processes and external interactions.

Adaptation occurs at multiple levels — macro, micro, and individual — shaped by the social environment, which influences children's adaptation strategies and their perception of ethnic identity (Kotovskaya, Yudina 2018: 115).

Migration often creates tensions between family values and the norms of the host society. If unresolved, these conflicts can hinder a child's adaptation as well as their psychological and social development.

A major challenge is the high mobility of migrant families, leading to frequent relocations that set them apart from the more settled local population. Additionally, these children face emotional stress when entering school, navigating an unfamiliar environment with different social and ethical norms. Separation from family members further adds to their psychological strain (Alba, Holdaway 2013).

Researchers are advancing the transnational childhood framework, highlighting how children develop within migratory social spaces as active agents of migration processes, possessing distinct perspectives and future orientations (Peshkova 2021). Research on migrant children's adaptation highlights educational and social barriers in schools (Vernez, Abrahamse 1996).

Another serious issue is the potential conflict between children from migrant families and their parents, particularly when the family adheres to traditional values that contradict the norms of the host society (Crul, Holdaway 2009). Each successive generation develops its own distinct worldview that markedly diverges from that of its parental generation (Mukomel 2022). For instance, girls from Muslim families living in European or North American countries often face pressure from their families, which further complicates their adaptation to the new cultural environment (Rumbaut 1994).

Experts note, however, that second-generation migrants may feel even more discriminated against, as they, being native-born citizens of the country, have higher expectations and aspirations (Crul et al. 2012).

Scholars examine strategies for supporting migrant children in small-town schools, focusing on socio-psychological mechanisms that protect well-being and promote positive intergroup perceptions (see, for example, Ledeneva 2021). These strategies should be grounded in research on adaptation and integration, supported by sociological and statistical data, and guided by relevant legal regulations.

Schools with a high proportion of students from migrant backgrounds tend to lose prestige among local families, leading to declining enrollment, particularly in upper-grade levels (Demintseva et al. 2017: 87). The same study cites an interview with teachers from Moscow schools:

“In fact, this is how the situation at school developed. Four or five years ago, per capita funding was introduced, and the principal openly told us that she was simply enrolling everyone who applied, even students from neighboring schools. People would say, “Go to XX, they'll take you — everyone gets in there. “ As a result, the number of children from Central Asia grew so much that Russian students gradually began leaving the school” (Demintseva et al. 2017: 86).

Recent studies indicate that the adaptation of children with a migration background is becoming a growing concern in Russia, affecting the legal, pedagogical, and psychological aspects of their integration into new social and educational environments. To tackle this challenge more effectively, it is necessary to devise evidence-based measures (Omelchenko 2020).

It is proposed to focus efforts on the key aspect of adaptation — the socio-linguistic component — by prioritizing social-pedagogical and socio-cultural initiatives. In addition to the optimization of the learning process, emphasis should be placed on developing specialized extracurricular activities (*Zheleznyakova 2023: 107*).

Some studies caution against overemphasizing support for migrant children, arguing that they should take a more active role in their own adaptation. This perspective may be suitable for schools where migrant students are a small minority. However, in the Moscow metropolitan area, where migration is more prevalent, the concept of “benevolent indifference” is less applicable (*Wolfson 1999*).

Federal and regional authorities play a key role in migrant children’s adaptation, focusing on developing and implementing social and cultural support programs.

Proposed initiatives include a clear set of mandatory measures for social, linguistic, and cultural adaptation, additional educational programs focusing on the Russian language and cultural values, and state financial mechanisms to support these efforts. Funding will also prioritize targeted allocations and teacher training.

At the initial stage, identifying children in need of extra support and establishing clear inclusion criteria is essential. Adaptation challenges affect not only foreign minors but also those born in Russia or who have acquired citizenship. The level of support required depends on age, while cultural distance — shaped by differences in language, religion, and ethnicity—can further complicate adaptation.

The social and cultural adaptation challenges faced by this group often cause deviant behavior, which is frequently rooted in ideas of national superiority. These ideas may arise from limited experience in foreign cultural environments and insufficient skills to overcome cultural barriers. Measures to address such behavior should include teaching the Russian language and providing cultural education, focusing on social norms, behavioral rules, and traditional values in Russian society. In international practice, cultural assimilators — educational tools for learning the norms and values of a new culture — are often used to tackle these issues.

When designing programs for this group, it is important to engage them in initiatives that promote national civic identity and social cohesion. This includes educational projects that provide accurate information about Russia’s history, culture, and traditions, as well as participation in national children’s and youth organizations.

Successful integration of migrant children into the educational and social environment requires an effective tracking system and open access to relevant statistical data for all stakeholders. Special attention should be given to children with limited Russian proficiency, as language barriers pose significant challenges. Currently, targeted support for these children is often insufficient, further hindering their social and educational adaptation.

As part of the urban educational infrastructure, it is advisable to create a specialized platform that would facilitate experience exchange between various organizations, including general education institutions, education committees, information and methodological centers (IMCs), and higher education institutions. Such a platform would help coordinate efforts and develop unified approaches to solving problems related to the adaptation of migrant children.

Additionally, it is necessary to develop and implement a citywide or district-wide system for teaching Russian as a foreign language. Ideally, children who speak foreign languages should undergo an intensive Russian language training during their first year, after which, based on testing results, they would gradually start learning general education disciplines.

Public organizations, especially those with educational licenses, should be involved in this process (Mozgovaya et al. 2021). This approach will help minimize language barriers and create conditions for the successful integration of children into the educational process and life of the host community.

Our analysis of data from semi-structured interviews leads us to conclude that socio-linguistic adaptation is a key stage and foundation for the successful adaptation of children from migrant families. Mastering the Russian language opens the door to fully introducing the child to new cultural norms, values, and educational expectations. It also plays an important role in overcoming psychological challenges and expanding the child's personal identity.

Conclusion

In this article, we analyzed the key issues faced by children with a migration background in the process of their adaptation. For children from migrant families, adapting to a new country is a long and challenging process that involves fitting into unfamiliar legal, economic, cultural, and educational settings. It includes the child's introduction to different cultural norms, values, educational requirements, mastering the Russian language, overcoming psychological difficulties, and enriching their own identity. Successful adaptation, particularly within the educational domain, facilitates not only the child's personal development but also shapes their life course trajectories and vocational prospects, ultimately determining long-term social integration outcomes and achieved status in the host society.

The study examines the social conditions that facilitate and hinder successful adaptation, with particular emphasis on the role of the family, educational institutions, and other social structures in creating favorable conditions for learning, communication, and psychological well-being of children.

The study's findings can be of interest to experts in law, sociology, psychology, and pedagogy, as well as to those developing social-educational programs for children from migrant families. At the federal and regional levels, authorities can use these results to inform measures promoting the socio-economic and demographic well-being of the whole country and its regions.

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