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BORDERLANDS**

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**Abstract**

The article analyzes the life strategies of the Far-Eastern student youth. The presented analysis is based on the results of sociological study conducted with participation of the author among the youth living in the border territories. The results of analysis show that the factor of proximity of the Russian-Chinese border and availability of the territory of China for implementation by young people of their life strategies aggravates migration processes in the Far-Eastern region. It is determined that the border factor has a direct impact on the formation of life strategies of student youth along with others. Desire to leave their native country, temporarily (for the period of study) or for permanent residence, according to the youth is caused by insufficient opportunities for self-realization and implementation of their life plans in the Far East. An actively developing country, only a few kilometres away from the subjects of the Far East, is of great interest to the youth who are committed, active and standing in the way of building their future lives. Young people find opportunities to implement a strategy of life well-being, a strategy of life success, family self-realization outside the Russian borders. Increase in the scale of youth emigration poses a threat to the loss of the most promising population group. Existence of a request to preserve and consolidate the indigenous population in the Far East as a prerequisite for its effective development requires studying and understanding this contradiction in order to find productive solutions.

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*Keywords:* Youth, life strategies, Russian-Chinese relations, border territory, migration



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## 1. Introduction

Human life strategies are formed under the influence of many factors that can be of different meanings, be different in nature, have different nature. The choice of strategy depends on the socio-economic state and geographical location of the region in which the person lives, on the state and characteristics of social system as a whole, on the immediate environment of individual and his personal qualities and preferences. The region is the most influential sociocultural environment in which the personality, his value guidelines and attitudes, assimilation of norms and values of social life takes place. Socio-economic and sociocultural specificity of the regions determines differentiation of the territories in the Russian Federation, which is manifested in the formation of traditions, values and the way of life of its population and, accordingly, is a condition for the formation of special life strategies.

The Far East of Russia differs from the other regions and the country as a whole due to many factors and conditions that have political, economic, social, natural-climatic, geographical and other content. Firstly, it is the largest federal district of Russia (41% of the country's territory) and is of crucial geopolitical importance for the Russian Federation. Secondly, belonging to the actively developing Asia-Pacific region determines its vector of development and is a promising direction for the future of Russia. This is confirmed by the National Program for socio-economic development of the Far East adopted in September 2020 for the period until 2024 and for the future until 2035. Currently, negative processes taking place in the demographic, socio-economic, socio-cultural spheres do not allow the plans be fully implemented, but in many respects effectiveness of the planned measures depends on the active involvement and interest of the resident population in them.

The life strategy represents a dynamic system of perspective orientation of the person, aimed at a conscious change and building of future life. Fundamental life guidelines are developed more in adolescence, when a person is at the stage of determining and developing his life path. The age of study at the university (18-23 years) is characterized by the transition to independent adult life, separation from parents and the formation of ambitions and attitudes for their future life. Young people are the most adaptive, determined, risk-prone population group influenced by fashion trends and new trends.

The problem of formation and implementation of youth life strategies is of the scientific interest both for the analysis of this socio-demographic group and for understanding the future prospects for development of the whole society.

## 2. Problem Statement

Contradiction that attracts the author's attention is the building by young people of their life strategies outside the territory of the Far East. The results of study show that if there is the slightest opportunity to leave the territory, temporarily (for the period of study) or constantly most young people are ready to do this. As a result, migration processes, which already have negative indicators at present, will only worsen in the future. The outflow of young people from the region will lead to a reduction in the skilled labour resources, young families, and birth rates, which can subsequently negatively affect the development of the territory as a whole. It will be quite difficult to implement the plans and programs for development of the Far East with the remaining potential of the "aging" population (Khalikova, 2017).

Analyzing the change in the size and composition of population of the Far East, the researchers note the following trends: rapid decrease in the share of youth in the territory of the Far East of Russia (from 24.4% in 1990 to 18.6% in 2018); the process of reducing the share of youth in the population structure is more intensive than the Russian average (in the Far East, the share of youth decreased by 5.8%, while in Russia only by 4.3%) (Berezutskiy, 2019).

Thus, on the one hand, the presence of objective factors related to geographical location of the region, presence of the actively developing states bordering the Far-Eastern subjects of the Russian Federation, which are of migration interest to the young people building their life strategies outside their native region. On the other hand, existence of a request to preserve and consolidate the indigenous population in the Far East as a prerequisite for its effective development requires studying and understanding this contradiction in order to find productive solutions.

### 3. Research Questions

The concept of "life strategies" has not been unequivocally interpreted, despite the fact that they have been attracting attention of the researchers for more than a decade. One of the first theories in which understanding of the life strategies is carried out is the concept of social action by M. Veber. Any action of the actor is due to the need, conscious goal and means of achievement, orientation on the end result, and therefore, is a structural component of life strategy.

Comprehensive analysis of the life strategy of the individual was carried out by Abulkhanova-Slavskaja (1991). In her writings, she identified the factors that influence the formation of strategies and proposed their typology. The types and mechanisms of strategies were also the subject of research by Reznik and Reznik (1995) and Cutter (1995).

Domestic researchers have been considered the life strategies of youth as a separate socio-demographic group since the end of the 20th century, as a result of which a solid theoretical and empirical base was formed. In the works of many researcher strategies are investigated through a system of value orientations, the process of gaining status and professional self-determination of young people (Cherednichenko & Shubkin, 1985; Zubok, 2020; Zubok & Chuprov, 2020). In this context, the work of Osipova and Enveri (2012) is also interesting, in which the life strategy is understood as "a dynamic system of perspective orientation of a person aimed at a consciously changing and constructing his future life" (p. 111). Also interesting are the works of Tishkov et al. (2017).

Berezutskiy (2019) and Baykov and Berezutskiy (2008) are widely involved in the problems of youth of the Far East, the works of which reflect the results of numerous sociological studies on the questions of well-being, moods, value orientations, life plans and strategies of the Far-Eastern youth.

The influence of regional features on the formation of life strategies, along with the other factors, was considered by the modern researchers such as Dudnik (2002), Chebotareva (2006), Nedoseka and Sharova (2020), Simonyan and Slutskin (2020).

Border zone of the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China is of a research interest in different aspects, but the impact of the border on the life strategies of population has so far remained beyond the attention of researchers.

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this work is to analyze the influence of the border territory factor on the life strategies of student youth of the Far East using the sociological research methods.

#### **5. Research Methods**

To achieve the goal, with participation of the author, sociological study "Opinion of the student youth about modern Russia, its place in a changing world, its prospects for development, relations with neighbouring countries" was conducted. The general population is represented by senior students of universities in Khabarovsk, Vladivostok, Blagoveshchensk. The study was conducted using the method of collecting empirical information - questionnaire survey, which provided information regarding knowledge, opinions, assessments, judgments of the student youth on interaction with neighbouring countries bordering the territories of the Russian Federation in the east and west of the country. A mass survey of 962 respondents was conducted using the Google form. Sample type is quota, according to three characteristics: territorial affiliation, course of study, gender. The sampling error does not exceed  $\pm 4\%$ . The scientific adviser is Simonyan R.H., Doctor of Social Sciences, Chief Scientific Officer of the Institute of International Studies, MGIMO, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia, Moscow. The field leader is S.S. Khalikova, Candidate of Social Sciences, Associate Professor, Khabarovsk, Far Eastern Institute of Management - a branch of RANEPA.

Representativeness of the sample was ensured by: calculating the proportion of respondents by sex, age (from 18 years and older), territorial affiliation (student youth living in the territories of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation bordering China) using statistical data on a number of social groups under consideration in the region; and performing sampling repairs upon completion of the survey database.

The border zone of the Far East, where the Russian Federation and China directly touch, is the Khabarovsk territory, the Primorsk territory, the Chita region, the Amur region, and the Jewish autonomous region. The survey was conducted among senior students of higher educational institutions located in the Khabarovsk territory, the Primorsk territory, the Amur region. The choice of these subjects of the Russian Federation for the study was due to the degree of proximity of the border, presence of the largest length of the bordering territory and the largest number of students living on its territory.

The questionnaire consisted of three blocks of questions. The first block is devoted to understanding the level and significance of relations with neighbouring countries, as well as issues related to security in the border territories. The second block of the questionnaire included the questions of personal perception of the presence of border ties and relations, as well as the plans, views, values, aspirations regarding living in the border territories. Analysis of this block of issues made it possible to solve the research problems regarding the construction of life strategies for young people in conditions of the border residence. The third block presents questions related to the personal information of respondents - gender, training course, income level. This satisfied the research interest in terms of these characteristics. The resulting data were processed using SPSS software, allowing for deeper analysis, applying linear and correlation relationships, and achieving the research goal.

Secondary analysis of sociological study conducted in 2018 on the topic "Assessing the opinion of the Far East on life and development prospects in the Russian Far East" was also used, within the framework of which 21 focus groups were conducted (of which 9 are youth) in four Far-Eastern constituent entities of the Russian Federation (the Khabarovsk territory, the Primorsk territory, the Amur region, the Sakhalin region) in 9 cities with a total number of participants of 199 people: Khabarovsk, Komsomolsk-on-the-Amur, Vladivostok, Nakhodka, Ussuriysk, Blagoveshchensk, Belogorsk, Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, Kholmsk. Supervisor – Candidate of Sociology, associate professor Yu. V. Berezutskiy.

## 6. Findings

We will use one of the most common typologies of life strategies proposed by Reznik and Reznik (1995) for analysis: life well-being strategy, life success strategy, family self-realization. Based on the value orientations targeted by young people, these strategies are dominant (Berezutskiy, 2019). And the mechanisms for implementing these strategies are education, establishment of new connections and acquaintances, living in conditions conducive to the implementation of life plans, moving to the more promising regions.

We will analyze the results of study conducted in 2020 among the student youth of the Far East. According to respondents, the state creates opportunities to meet human needs, but opportunities for self-realization and meeting material needs are not enough, as 25.3% and 67.8% of respondents responded, respectively. In this regard, young people are ready to look for new places to realize their aspirations and life plans, including in the other countries. Education, according to young people, is an elevator to further life, in addition to knowledge, practical skills, forms a circle of communication and sets the direction for further self-realization. Territorial proximity of China gives the opportunity to get an education and knowledge of Chinese language, which is becoming more and more popular in the face of China's increasing influence on the global economy. Higher education in China attracts young people with more developed infrastructure and technical and technological equipment. Many students noted that education abroad is an opportunity to implement a strategy of life success and well-being. Most of the respondents (76.9%) said that if there was an opportunity to get an education abroad, they would certainly take advantage of it. And only 14.2% answered that this was unattractive for them, the rest (8.9%) found it difficult to answer this question. In most cases (89.4%), the cost of living and studying was an obstacle to education in China.

Necessarily, 77.9% of respondents would take the opportunity to work abroad, only 10% replied that this does not attract them. Moreover, at the initial stage they are ready to occupy the posts of waiters, dancers, booklet distributors and the like, which do not require professional qualified knowledge. Most see this as a start and "an opportunity to gain a foothold in the country." Some noted that education in China would add to the chances of successful employment in the country. The current favourable economic situation in China contributes to the development of business, attracting young, energetic and initiative people.

The migration mood of young people confirms the answers of students to the question of readiness to move to another country. It would be sure that 68.5% of the survey participants took this opportunity, another 18.3% did not decide and could not answer this question unequivocally, 13.2% answered that this

did not attract them. Understanding that China is a country with the other values, religion, mentality and life structure is not an obstacle to permanent residence

Moreover, creation of mixed family is also quite acceptable for both guys and girls. Belonging to different races is not an obstacle, according to respondents, to creating a strong good family. Girls noted that the gender imbalance in the Far East (the number of women prevails over men) and in China (where, on the contrary, men of childbearing age are more than women) can be solved through intermarriage. Therefore, the strategy of family self-realization of young people can be implemented outside the home country.

Among the reasons to leave the country, respondents noted, first of all, the offer of well-paid work (47%), as well as a decrease in the standard of living (18.2%), lack of decent work in the specialty (12.2%) and 9.7% marriage outside Russia. One in 10 respondents (10.9%) is not going to leave the country.

A significant part of the Russian diaspora in China, which currently numbers about 20 thousand people, is youth (Simonyan, 2017). Dynamically developing country attracts Russian youth with a favourable economic situation, opportunity to develop their business or receive research grants. In general, young people see more opportunities to implement their plans, achieve success in the territory of neighbouring state.

## 7. Conclusion

Thus, young people, being the most active part of the population of working and reproductive age, adapted to difficult climatic conditions, are ready to leave the Far East in order to implement their life strategies beyond its borders. With the insufficient opportunities for self-realization, employment, material benefits young people will seek to leave their region, and the actively developing neighbouring state will be the centre of attraction of young, purposeful, able-bodied, creative people. The task of the regional youth policy is to enable implementation of the life strategies and the most ambitious life plans of youth in the region. This will consolidate and preserve the local population and successfully implement plans for the development of the Far East.

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