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**MIGRANT WOMEN IN THE REPUBLIC OF TATARSTAN:**  
**INTEGRATION FEATURES AND HOST COMMUNITY**

Titova Tatiana Alekseevna (a), Frolova Elena Valerevna (b)\*, Gushchina Elena Gennadevna (c)  
\*Corresponding author

(a) Kazan Federal University, 18, Kremlyovskaya str., Kazan, Russia, tatiana.titova@rambler.ru

(b) Kazan Federal University, 18, Kremlyovskaya str., Kazan, Russia, elenaicup@mail.ru

(c) Kazan Federal University, 18, Kremlyovskaya str., Kazan, Russia, egguschina@mail.ru

**Abstract**

The relevance of the research problem is due to the need to study the state of interethnic relations in the regions of the Russian Federation. The Republic of Tatarstan is historically one of the multi-ethnic and multi-confessional regions of the Russian Federation. The main ethnic groups are Tatars and Russians, and the main confessional groups are Muslims and Orthodox Christians. Ethnic minority groups in the Republic contribute to ethnic diversity. In the current period, migration processes have an increasing role in the economic, social, political and cultural development of the Republic. The relevance of the adaptation features study of migrant women is determined by the demands of multi-ethnic and multi-confessional society of the Republic of Tatarstan. The purpose of the paper is to characterize the features of women migrants' adaptation to the host community of the Republic of Tatarstan. The research object is 300 representatives of the largest migrant communities in the Republic of Tatarstan – Uzbek, Tajik, and Kyrgyz women. The research was conducted in Kazan in 2018. The leading approach to the research problem is polyparadigmatic methodology. The research was held by dint of quantitative and qualitative methods. Particular attention is paid to the characteristics of the language proficiency level of the host community as an integration potential indicator. The materials of the paper can be applicable for ethnologists, social and cultural anthropologists, political scientists, as well as representatives of bodies and structures being in charge of interethnic interaction.

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*Keywords:* Adaptation, integration, polyethnicity, polyconfessionalism, women migration



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## 1. Introduction

The Republic of Tatarstan is historically one of the multi-ethnic and multi-confessional regions of the Russian Federation. In the current period, migration processes have an increasing role in the economic, social, political, and economic development of the Republic. Researchers note the feminization processes of migration flows which dictate the need to study various aspects of migrant women life in the host community. The relevance of the adaptation features study of migrant women is determined by the demands of multi-ethnic and multi-confessional society of the Republic of Tatarstan. The situation in the field of interaction between the host population and migrants affects the socio-economic development of society, everyday behavioral practices of people, and the general state of interethnic and interfaith relations.

Interethnic and interfaith relations in society are realized at two levels: institutional and intergroup. The first is mainly studied by ethnopolitologists (Rong, 2010), the second – by ethnosociologists (Caya, 2015).

The research of interethnic attitudes is characterized by a wide coverage of the studied subjects. Researchers' attention is attracted by issues of intercultural communication (Volpe et al., 2019), the effectiveness of studying interethnic relations in multi-ethnic regions of the world (Zainal et al., 2010), and the education problems among ethnic minorities (Gjicali et al., 2019).

Ethnicity is explored as a factor of discrimination (Rozmann & Walsh, 2018); historical and ethical aspects of the study of interethnic relations (Fossheim, 2019), and the ethnicity influence on economic processes are considered (Peñaloza, 2018).

The study of interethnic interactions through opinions, attitudes, orientations, and values of people in different life spheres – business, production, leisure, and family is characteristic of ethnosociological research.

## 2. Problem Statement

Studies of migration processes in the Russian Federation and in the post-Soviet space are relevant for representatives of various scientific fields. Sociologists explore ethnosocial and ethno-confessional aspects of migration in modern society (Drobizheva, 2017). Political scientists are keen on the issues of the state influence of interethnic relations on public policy (Mukharyamov, 2004) and social processes in society (Tichkov, 2016). A special place is occupied by the study of psychological aspects of interethnic interaction. Researchers are interested in the size of the intergroup distance between host population and groups of migrants, the level of xenophobia, and the peculiarities of social contacts between representatives of different nationalities (Jumageldinov, 2014). Anthropologists and ethnologists are interested in studies of daily practices of interethnic and interfaith interactions (Titova et al., 2017). In particular, the study of social intergroup distance in a multi-ethnic society is in the focus of the analysis. (Titova et al., 2016). The survey of the integration features of women migrants in the regions of the Russian Federation requires a closer study.

### **3. Research Questions**

In the research, the integration features of women migrants into the host community of the Republic of Tatarstan were studied by a team of authors (using the example of Kazan city). The research was conducted in Kazan in 2018. The research object is 300 representatives of the largest migrant communities in the Republic of Tatarstan – Uzbek, Tajik, and Kyrgyz women. The research subject is the integration strategies of women migrants.

1. Indicators of intergroup distance between classes of the host population (primarily, Tatars and Russians) and representatives of migrant communities – Uzbeks, Tajiks and Kyrgyz women are studied.
2. Linguistic orientations of women migrants and the degree of their language knowledge of the host community – Russians and Tatars – are characterized.

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

The purpose of the study is to characterize the integration strategies of women migrants in the host community of the Republic of Tatarstan (using the example of a study in Kazan city in 2018).

### **5. Research Methods**

The research is based on the methodological principles of the polyparadigm approach. Two conditions of Barth's theory are basic in the context of the research. First, the conclusion that socially defined factors are based on the phenomenon of categorical attribution and not "objectively" existing cultural differences become a determinant of group membership. Second, ethnic categories, both in the identification itself and in the process of assigning others to certain ethnic groups, take into account not just the sum of objective differences but only those of them that are perceived by individuals as significant (Barth, 1989).

The work is based on an analysis of empirical materials collected in 2018. The information gathering was carried out by methods of mass survey among representatives of migrant groups (Uzbek, Tajik and Kyrgyz women), observation, semi-structured interviews, and focus groups with representatives of migrant communities.

### **6. Findings**

Analysis of the social identity of the interviewed women shows that the confessional aspect of identity ("Muslim"), family roles ("daughter", "wife"), and gender identity ("woman") are most actualized. This position is typical for all studied groups. As for group differences, the civic aspect of identity ("country citizen of her country") refers to Kyrgyz women to a greater degree, as well as the professional aspect of identity ("representative of her profession") and gender-neutral ("person") are expressed to a somewhat greater extent. Ethnic and family-role identity is actualized more among Tajik

women than among representatives of other studied groups; and the gender aspect of identity is more pronounced among Uzbek women.

The main ethno-integrating feature is culture; the second place is taken by the language, the third – by “native land, nature.”

Such features as “historical past”, “character traits” and “appearance” are more often chosen by the interviewed Kyrgyz women.

44 % of Uzbek women, 26 % of Tajik women and 15 % of Kyrgyz women note that they have friends among the local population (more often the people who work together with the respondents).

At the same time, there are more of those among Kyrgyz women who demonstrate involvement in a wider range of social contacts with representatives of the local population (they do not just work together, but “spend their free time together”).

Qualitative research methods make it possible to state the presence of a pronounced intergroup distance between the host population (the Russians and Tatars) and migrants which, according to the interviewed women, is primarily expressed in the cultural potential difference. Uzbeks and Tajiks women talk about this more often:

*From an in-depth interview: “The difference appears in upbringing. We were brought up much stricter than the Russians: “don't do this, don't do that ...” But the Russians are allowed to do everything” (Tajik woman, 20 years old).*

*From focus group materials: “... Young people (local) disappointed me because they separate people, do not show respect for elders even in public transport. I have not seen young people that give way to adults. But foreigners do that. I was actually surprised first” (focus group, Uzbek women).*

*“The fact is that their upbringing is completely different. Different from ours. Basically, our upbringing is stricter. Girls are especially brought up but here they are allowed to do everything, everything is permissible for them” (focus group, Tajik women).*

Besides, the interviewed Tajik and Uzbek women say that they do not feel proximity to the Muslim Tatars of the Republic of Tatarstan.

*From an in-depth interview: “I: Do you feel proximity to Muslims of other nationalities?”*

*R: With the Tatars – not really. With Muslims from Central Asia – I feel. Due to the fact that it is noticeable that even Islamic words are pronounced differently among the Tatars” (Uzbek women, 20 years old).*

*From focus group materials: “This is about our Tajikistan. Not wearing a short for girls, this is also controlled by religious norms. Drinking alcohol. General concepts: smoking, staying away before the wedding, alcohol, eyebrows should not be plucked for religious reasons. We've got it in the town. In Tatarstan, I met this very rarely. The Tatars wear small shorts, pluck their eyebrows, they can date a guy before the wedding, and this is the norm for them. I think that they do not have enough of the concepts we have, without overboarding, of course” (focus group, Tajik women).*

Some of the respondents mention cases of disrespectful or negligent attitude on the part of representatives of the local population.

*From focus group materials: “There was such an incident when I was a first year student. I needed to pay for the dormitory. I went to the accounting department, and the woman there made me*

really angry. She tried to show what I belong to with all her might. When I entered, I was as polite as possible. I knocked, asked if it was possible to enter, greeted her, sat down and began to talk to her. She saw my passport and began to show the opposite with all her might. She saw a citizen of which country I was and began to say – “You have come to a foreign country, you must know your place, and you are not allowed to speak without permission.” She sent me twice for the documents which turned out to be unnecessary in the end... Then I developed such an unfriendly attitude towards the Russians.” (focus group, Tajik women).

Kyrgyz women more often say that the increase in intergroup distance may be a consequence of the migrants’ behavioral practices of the:

*From focus group materials: “To tell the truth, the citizens of the Russian Federation dislike everyone who came from the CIS to study or work. We can understand them in part because many of them behave uncivilized here. If I may say so, they behave like an animal. Let's assume a person from Uzbekistan can behave somehow in a boorish way. And people, seeing this person, think that everyone is like that in Uzbekistan. It turns out that even if they meet 100 people with good manners, who are educated and tolerant, they will only judge by one bad person.”*

*“It seems to me that perhaps it depends on the fact that many CIS citizens come to Russia to work. And they come from the countryside. They are uneducated, and cultured to some extent. The impression is spoiled by such people. How to say ... the whole nation and the whole country are judged by these people” (focus group, Kyrgyz women).*

Respondents take an unequivocal position of rejection in the issue of the possibility of concluding interethnic marriages.

*From an expert interview: “Uzbeks and Tajiks women, as a rule, are married to men of their nation. Categorically. I communicated a lot – only of their nation. Guys can still marry to girls of another nation, but girls – only of their own.”*

*From focus group materials: “My mother said to my brothers when they were leaving -“ Don't bring Tatar daughters-in-law to my house” (focus group, Tajik women).*

*“I'm strict with this. My parents tell me to marry a Kyrgyz only. But it seems to me that if I say that I love a person of another nation to my parents, they will accept it. And, of course, dad wants me to marry a man of my nation” (focus group, Kyrgyz women).*

The vast majority of respondents consider their national language to be their home language.

Kyrgyz women declare a better level of Russian language proficiency than representatives of other ethnic groups who took part in the research. Uzbek women have the worst command of Russian.

The linguistic competence level in the field of the Russian language among the majority of the respondents is low. A significant part of the respondents do not speak Tatar. *From an in-depth interview: “I understand Tatar but I don't speak. When they say something, I understand 60 to 40” (Kyrgyz woman, 20 years old).*

*«I: What languages do you speak?*

*R: Tajik, Russian, English.*

*I: Do you know Tatar?*

*R: No, just a few words.” (Tajik woman, 20 years old).*

*“R: Yes, Tatarcha suylyasham. We study Tatar at the university.*

*I: Do you understand it?*

*R: Surely, it is very similar to Uzbek, even more than Uzbek is similar to Turkish” (Uzbek woman, 20 years old).*

*«I: Did you know Russian when you arrived??*

*R: I knew, but just a little. And now I know well, I can speak.*

*I: Do you know Tatar?*

*R: A little bit. But I understand and I can explain a little” (Uzbek woman, 38 years old).*

40 % of Uzbek women and more than 20 % of Tajik and Kyrgyz women say that they would like to improve their knowledge of the Russian and Tatar languages and are willing to do everything required for this.

About half of Uzbek women, 60 % of Tajik women and 40 % of Kyrgyz women say that they would like to improve their proficiency level in Russian and Tatar languages but do not have such an opportunity.

*From an in-depth interview: “I want to study. I listen to Tatar speech on the street because Kyrgyz and Tatar are very similar, and I understand everything, and it warms my soul very much. It seems that I have teleported home for a moment. I would like to learn, yes” (Kyrgyz woman, 18 years old).*

## **7. Conclusion**

Communication with local population representatives is mainly reduced to working contacts for women migrants.

A wider sphere of interaction with representatives of the local population is typical for Kyrgyz women.

The fact that the respondents demonstrate an orientation towards mono-ethnic marriages indicates a high level of intragroup cohesion.

Therefore, the level of language proficiency of the host population among the respondents is low (at the level of “I only speak” or “I understand, but do not speak”).

The research has recorded a fairly high level of intragroup cohesion and dependence of female migrants on family and kinship ties. This position creates difficulties for the integration of women migrants into the host community combined with the recorded low level of language proficiency of the host population.

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