

Social and Psychological Factors of Migration Readiness of Ukrainian Students

Factores sociales y psicológicos para la preparación migratoria de estudiantes ucranianos

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ABSTRACT:

The paper examines the problem of social and psychological factors of labor migration of Ukrainian citizens. It was determined that the students are guided by higher salaries and wages abroad and new experience, in this situation the evaluation of occupational prestige and the possibility to increase social status are rather insignificant. That leads to the students' understanding of the Ukrainians' labor migration as a necessary measure, which is caused by the necessity to meet an individual's basic needs.

Keywords: labor migration, migration readiness, migration motivation, university students

RESUMEN:

El artículo está dedicado al problema de los factores sociales y psicológicos de la emigración laboral de los ciudadanos ucranianos. Se ha determinado que los estudiantes están orientados a más grandes ingresos al extranjero así que a nuevas experiencias, pero el prestigio del trabajo y la posibilidad de mejorar el estado social no son tan significantes. Este hecho demuestra que los estudiantes consideran la emigración de los ucranianos como una medida forzada que está determinada por la necesidad de satisfacer las necesidades humanas básicas.

Palabras clave: migración laboral, preparación migratoria, motivación migratoria, estudiantes universitarios.

1. Introduction

The citizens of Ukraine have been leaving for the near and far abroad countries in order to seek employment as a result of difficult economic conditions in Ukraine, substantial deficiency of jobs at the job market. Under these tough conditions of the transition period there is an increase in migration tendencies, in particular, among the young. Ukrainian citizens are ready to go abroad without knowing the language, their rights and qualification and even agree to illegal employment. It can be assumed that the

development of migration readiness as a possibility to achieve a desired standard of living and self-realization abroad is influenced by fuzziness and "vagueness" of social identity, inability to decide on life plans, values, guidelines and socially approved positive patterns. The possibility to seek employment abroad is a desired aim in many young people's consciousness. Studying the guidelines of today's Ukrainian youth concerning making lives for themselves abroad, we can predict the situation about labor force in the country.

The purpose of the study is to determine social and psychological factors of migration readiness of Ukrainian university students.

Labor migration as a complex social phenomenon is examined in scientific works of economic, sociological, social and psychological areas: the concept "labor migration" is analyzed in the studies (Malynovska, 2004; Nahorniak, 2016; Shulga, 2002); social and economic analysis of labor migrations is presented in the works of such scientists (Akimov, 2012; Baynova, Evstratova, Petrov, Sulyagina & Zhaoxia, 2017); motivating factors of labor migration were studied (Lobova & Kletsikova, 2018; Mizintseva, Sardarian, Petrochennko & Chavykina, 2017); the problems of psychological adaptation of migrants abroad were investigated (Blynova, 2011; Blynova, 2012; Orban-Lembryk, 2008; Sulyagina, 2014; Khrustaleva, 2014; Zemtsova & Shumakova, 2015).

Motivation for migration or motives for migration can be defined as a mental state of personality, inducing to achieve personal aims of economic, social and psychological nature by changing the place of residence. Motivation for migration behavior consists in the formation of personal internal stimulating forces to make a decision about migration and perform migration under the impact of needs, interests, wishes, aspirations, values, ideals and motives in order to achieve the expected realization of migration behavior.

To achieve the aims of our research it is important to consider migration readiness as a factor mediating selective perception of the information which is meaningful and important for a person, and causing transformation in the activity and changes in the motives. Motivation readiness is actualized when a person finds an opportunity to act here and now in a certain way, i.e. motivation readiness is a characteristic of the development of a stimulating process in self-realization.

Migration readiness is a psychological new formation, belonging to the manifestation of an individual's self-organization, which is aimed at a voluntary change of the place of employment in the content aspect. Migration readiness of an individual arises on the basis of a contradiction between their image of the world (containing the evaluations of the place of residence and the desired future), on the one hand, the way of life, on the other hand, which do not correspond to each other. The aspirations, which are the essence of migration readiness, can be conscious – they are thoughts and dreams about changing the place of residence, wishes, intentions and certain actions facilitating the realization of intentions. It can be not conscious enough and in this case it manifests itself as a coherent state of overall dissatisfaction with the place of residence which is caused by unfavorable parameters of life in a particular region or, vice versa, by attractive characteristics of other regions.

Migration readiness is a phenomenon of crisis nature emerging in the conditions which deprive individuals of their need of self-realization, and the character of obstacles can be different, i.e. migration readiness is an "external manifestation" and objectification of the fact that individuals choose the way to overcome the deprivation and to realize their need of self-realization.

Migration readiness has a systemic determination:

- Launching determination which consists in the evaluation of unfavorable conditions of an individual's life (migration readiness is caused by special sense formations which devalue previous activities and give rise to readiness for new activities);
- Casual determination of the emergence of an individual's migration readiness manifests itself in the incentives which are caused by the divergence between individuals' needs of self-realization and the awareness of limited possibilities to satisfy them where they live. Therefore external unfavorable life conditions which prevent self-

realization only launch the process of the formation of migration readiness, but the true reason for its emergence is identity crisis, an internal conflict as the awareness of contradictions between one's own needs and possibilities.

– Conditioning determination (extra-situational conditions, objective and subjective, which are necessary for the emergence of migration readiness) is determined by dispositional moments (personal attitudes, inclinations to certain general ways to react to life challenges). In other words, the ways to solve a personal internal conflict depend on individual personality traits, the system of life values and meanings (Blynova, 2011; Popovych 2014; Popovych & Blynova, 2019).

2. Methodology

In order to determine migration readiness of Ukrainian university students we developed the questionnaire "The evaluation of social and economic situation in Ukraine and the formation of students' migration readiness" and conducted a survey. The purpose was to obtain the students' evaluation of economic, political and social situation in today's Ukraine and their own prospects of self-realization, in particular, professional self-realization, in their native country or abroad. 469 full-time students of the 3rd–5th years of studies of different universities in Ukraine were questioned. When sampling, we considered the characteristics of the students' age, sex and future profession. The average age of the research participants was 21.7 years (from 20 to 24 years). On the whole we questioned 184 men (39.2% of all the persons questioned) and 285 women (60.8%).

The questions are conditionally divided into four thematic blocks:

1. The evaluation of economic, political and social situation in the country. The questions of this block concerned the students' evaluation of the present economic, social and political situation in Ukraine and the prospects of its development. The students were also offered to decide whether international labor emigration is a positive or negative phenomenon for the country on the whole.
 2. Life goals and values, social expectations. This block includes questions about the desired future in material, finance, social and spiritual aspects. The aim of this block is to find out what problems disturb the modern students in the aspect of the possibilities for professional self-realization, how they see their employment prospects, what their life goals are, what values determine the life vector of a future professional, what students expect in their country, what they can reckon on and what they seek.
 3. Possibilities for self-realization abroad. The respondents answered the questions concerning the evaluation of employment abroad, replied about the advantages and danger of working abroad, the motives for the decision to employ abroad, possible reasons for leaving or refraining from leaving, what jobs and positions they would choose, how long they would like to work abroad.
 4. Ethnic identity of students. A fragment of the method of free description was used – the students were offered to give five characteristics-associations concerning the concept "the Ukrainians", if all the five characteristics are positive, it proves positive ethnic identity, a positive ethnic auto-stereotype. The number of negative characteristics also allows quantitative evaluation. To examine the features of self-categorization (we were especially interested in the rank of ethnic belonging) a modified variant of Kuhn-McPartland test "Who am I" was used.
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3. Results

The results of the survey questions give an idea what life prospects the modern students connect with employment possibilities abroad. At first the students evaluated the current migration situation in Ukraine: "Now many Ukrainians go abroad to earn money. How do you think, for the country on the whole it is:...".

The vast majority of students (79.1%), evaluating the consequences of labor emigration of the Ukrainians abroad, admit that it is "bad because young, able-bodied and talented

people leave”, 14.1% of the respondents believe that “nothing changes for the country, everybody has the right to work where they want”, only 6.8% considered labor migration as a positive phenomenon for the country, highlighting the possibility to gain new experience. In order to determine the life values of the Ukrainian youth, the research participants were offered to decide how important certain values are in their life using the evaluation scales from 1 to 9 (1 – not important at all; 9 – very important). The list of values included those concerning socially important objective conditions for self-realization – “a strong and rich country”; strictly material values – “to earn much”; the values related to external features of social acknowledgement – “to achieve high social status”; individual values of self-realization: in a business area – “self-sufficiency and independence (for example, to start a business, be a master of one’s plans), in the area of family relations – “to have a good family”; collectivist values – “to work in a friendly cohesive team”; the values related to everyday life – “everyday comfort” (see Table 1).

Table 1
Average indexes of the values in the sample of the research participants (n=469)

The variants of responses	Arithmetic Mean (M)	Mean Square Deviation (SD)
a) To have a good family	8.81	0.19
b) To achieve high social status	7.46	1.02
c) To earn much	7.29	0.89
d) Self-sufficiency and independence (for example, to start a business, be a master of one’s plans)	7.78	0.76
e) Everyday comfort	6.62	1.07
f) A strong and rich country	7.84	0.92
g) To work in a friendly cohesive team	6.80	0.86

The data shows that any of the proposed values is not rejected by the students, all of them are considered as highly significant in the young people’s life. Objective social and economic conditions for self-realization have the highest position in the rating – the average point of the value “a strong and rich country” 7.84, i.e. the students understand well, that it is difficult to realize their future and achieve life goals under conditions of economic, social and political crisis, when there is no stability in the society. Individual values of self-realization have a high rate, firstly, “to have a good family” – 8.81 points, secondly, “self-sufficiency and independence” in one’s business – 7.78 points. The next place in the rating of in the students’ life values is taken by the desire to achieve high social status – 7.46 points and to earn much – 7.29 points. The lowest position in the rating of the students’ values is taken by “everyday comfort” – 6.62 points.

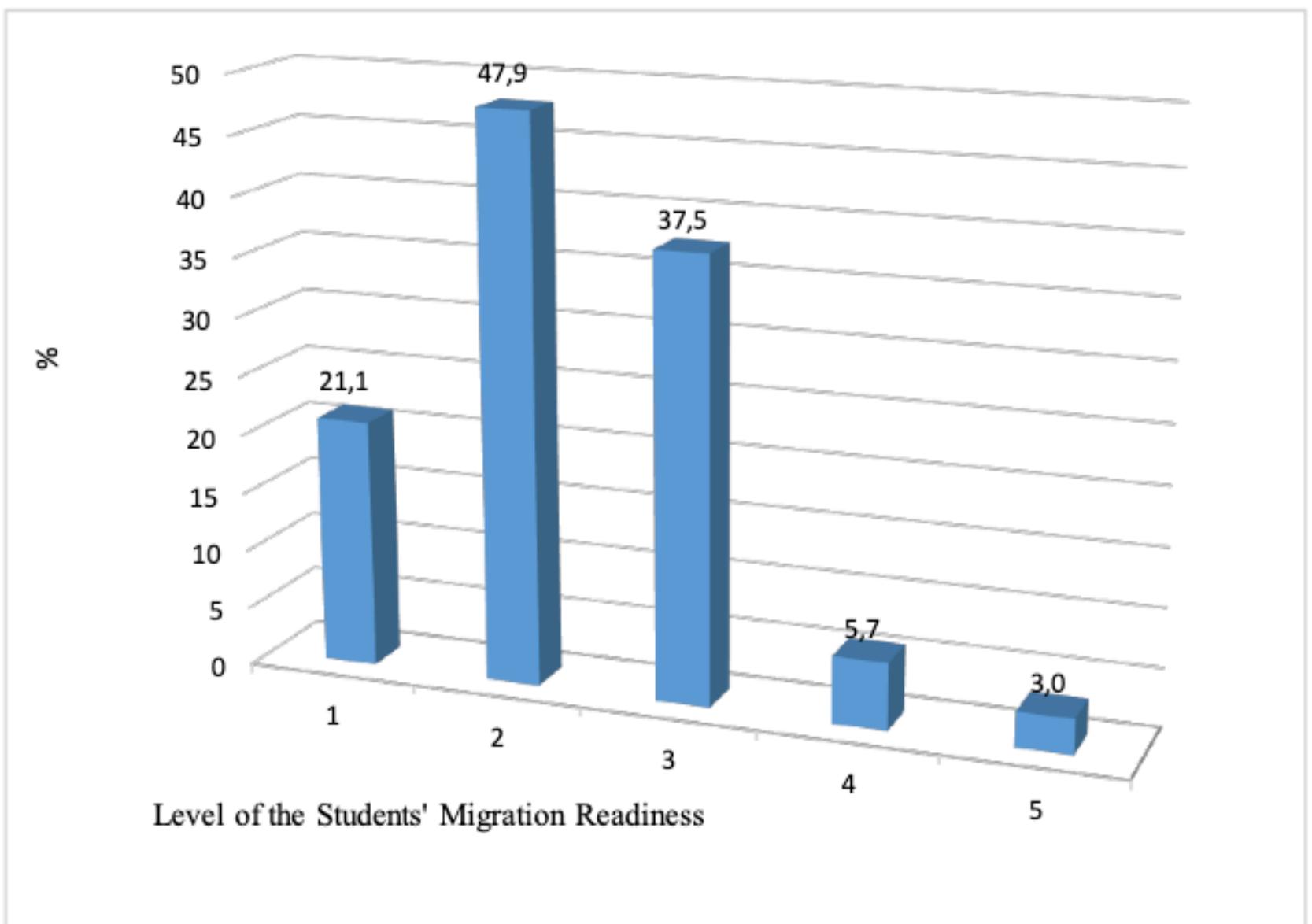
The distribution of the responses by the question “Would you say where you could realize your life goals: a) in Ukraine; b) abroad” showed that a considerable part of the students (42.6%) believe that the chances for self-realization are limited in their country and associate more successful self-realization with leaving for abroad.

In order to have a possibility to evaluate the level of the students’ migration readiness, we suggested an ordinal scale where the responses varied from “I plan to live and work only in Ukraine...” (1 point) to “I will go to work abroad under any conditions...” (5 points). The results concerning the students’ own plans of possible employment abroad are distributed in the following way:

- "I plan to live and work in Ukraine because the future of the country depends on every one of us" (1 point) – such a response was given by 21.1% of the students in the sample;
- "I want to work in Ukraine if the working conditions and salary satisfy me" (2 points) – 47.9% of the students. We can see that the students of the country at least declare (at this stage of their life) that employment in Ukraine is their desirable choice;
- "If there is a chance to be employed under profitable conditions abroad, I will probably go to work abroad" (3 points) – 37.5%;
- "I will try to obtain all the necessary information concerning jobs abroad and will go at the first opportunity" (4 points) – 5.7% of the respondents;
- "I will go to work abroad under any circumstances, even illegally, since it is better than in Ukraine at present" (5 points) – 3.0% of the respondents in the sample.

It is necessary to mention that answering this question a number of students chose 2 variants of the response and even commented on their choice at whitespace of the questionnaire, for instance, "I want to work in Ukraine, but I doubt that I will manage to find a job; perhaps, I will have to seek a job abroad", as a result the total amount proved to be more than 100.0%. Thus, more than 40.0% (more precisely 46.2%) of the future professionals with higher education do not exclude the possibility to seek employment abroad in this or that way.

Figure 1
The distribution of the results by the levels of the students' migration readiness (%)



Note:

- 1 – I plan to live and work in Ukraine;
- 2 – I want to work in Ukraine if the working conditions and salary satisfy me;
- 3 – if there is a chance to be employed under profitable conditions abroad, I will probably go to work abroad;
- 4 – I will try to obtain all the necessary information concerning jobs abroad and

will go at the first opportunity;

5 – I will go to work abroad under any circumstances

The respondents give the following arguments in favor of self-realization abroad (see Table 2):

Table 2

The distribution of the students' responses concerning the motives of self-realization abroad (n=469)

Why do you think that it is better to realize your plans in life abroad?	% (of the total number of respondents)
a) It is difficult to find a job and get a good salary in Ukraine	27.3
b) I worry about economic and political collapse in the country	29.4
c) You can find a good job only when you have powerful friends	23.0
d) It seems that things will not come to normal soon in Ukraine	20.5
e) It is very difficult to find a "soul" job in Ukraine, in general people only have to "survive"	13.4
f) It is more prestigious to work abroad than in Ukraine	4.7

It is necessary to focus on the inconsiderable part of the students' responses concerning the prestige of working abroad, such a variant is chosen only by 4.7% of the sample, that is an evidence of their understanding, awareness and some skepticism of the evaluation of a possible level of the job qualification available for the Ukrainians abroad, the social status, which can be obtained, the level of respect in society etc. Such responses convincingly prove that for the vast majority of the Ukrainians working abroad is a necessary measure caused by unemployment, the lack of possibility to buy a house, pay for education of children etc. It is important to underline that the students pay attention to external objective conditions in the country – economic and political instability, the government imperfections, an insufficient number of jobs, especially for young people, who only start their professional career, without any job experience, corruption leading to the uncertain future.

We will try to explain these results analyzing the reasons given by the future professionals in favor of self-realization in Ukraine. More than 60.0% of the students in the sample plan to seek employment and construct their future in Ukraine for different reasons (see Table 3).

Table 3

The distribution of the students' responses concerning the reasons of self-realization in Ukraine (n=469)

Why do you think that it is better to realize your plans in life in Ukraine?	% (of the total number of respondents)
a) It is necessary to reconstruct and develop the country	17.7
b) People must live in their own country	19.0
c) Things are not so bad in Ukraine as the mass media tell us	12.9
d) Those who have their hands and head, figuratively speaking, are	

able to achieve success in any country	46.2
e) I cannot leave my relatives here	15.5
f) The organization I am playing to work for has expectations of me as a professional	3.9

The obtained data show that social and public orientation towards the awareness of the importance of the country development and their own role in this process is characteristic of an inconsiderable part of the students. Only 19% state that "people must live in their own country", 17.7% believe that "it is necessary to reconstruct and develop the country". The response "those who have their hands and head, figuratively speaking, are able to achieve success in any country" was chosen by almost a half of the students (46.2%), i.e. the matter is about highlighting their own strength and abilities, their significant goal of life, persistence in achieving it, the belief that their abilities and professional training will help regulate their life properly. The motives for employment in Ukraine caused by the necessity to take care of relatives and families are not essential for the young people yet – only 15.5% of the respondents chose such a variant. Yet more insignificant factor for employment in Ukraine is orientation towards future staff (3.9%), perhaps, it is not important yet since the students have no real staff in their life. We will analyze how the students evaluate employment abroad from the point of view of professional development, increasing social status, the possibilities to gain new experience, potential danger etc (see Table 4).

Table 4
The distribution of the students' evaluations concerning employment abroad (n=469)

Employment abroad as compared to employment in Ukraine:	% (of the total number of respondents)
a) Allows earning more	77.6
b) Allows realizing professional plans	22.8
c) Allows being a respectable person	4.7
d) Allows increasing social status	18.8
e) Allows gaining new experience	49.7
f) Allows complete self-realization	17.9
g) Is dangerous	21.7
h) Humiliates national and human dignities	13.6

Therefore, the focus is mainly on the possibilities of financial enrichment (77.6% of the respondents). The students cautiously and carefully evaluate employment abroad as a possibility "to be a respectable person" (4.7%), "to increase their social status" (18.8%); "to attain complete self-realization" (17.7%), understanding that labor migration is often a necessary measure to improve well-being of their families and people go abroad to make money. We obtained the following results concerning the evaluation of negative consequences of working abroad: employment abroad is considered as dangerous by 21.7% of the entire sample, "employment abroad humiliates national and human

dignities” – this idea is supported by 13.6% of the respondents.

More often future professionals obtain information about employment abroad from different formal and informal sources and are able to form their own opinion, for example, about the existence of illegal migration, its danger and the phenomenon of human trafficking. The vast majority of students know about the phenomenon of human trafficking and think that it is necessary to have very cautious attitude towards possible, especially illegal, employment abroad and examine the reliability of information thoroughly (83.4%).

The level of the students’ aspirations concerning their own professionalism and demand (if there is a chance to work abroad) is rather high – they will agree to go to work abroad only if the job corresponds to their area of study (42.8%) or if the job is highly qualified (49.2%). Only an inconsiderable number of students (8.0%) agree to seek non-qualified jobs with low social status (unfortunately, the actual state of affairs of the Ukrainians working abroad is less optimistic). The students are oriented towards temporary jobs, training or having employment contracts, where Ukrainian professionals could have, firstly, equal rights and, secondly, a proper level of professional evaluation and respect.

Additional information is provided by the question determining what exactly attracts young Ukrainians abroad (see Table 5). At first we will analyze the general rating of the students’ expectations for being abroad: first of all, the students would go to gain new experience, new impressions and new acquaintances. Such a response is given by 64.4% of the students in the sample. More than a half of the students expect the improvement of their financial situation – 54.6%. Further students mention “independence” (49.1%), the prospects of a career path (40.5%) and the realization of their potential (41.8%).

Table 5
The distribution of the students’ evaluations concerning their expectations for being abroad (n=469)

What can young people obtain abroad, in your opinion?	% (of the total number of respondents)
a) Independence	49.1
b) Realization of their potential	41.8
c) Prospects of a career path	40.5
d) Material well-being	54.6
e) Meeting a partner in life	16.4
f) Confidence in the future	15.9
g) A possibility to see new places and people	64.4
h) Danger and humiliation	5.9

Note: * the students could choose several variants of the responses

We think that the students thoroughly differentiate between compulsory, non-qualified, low-status, often exhausting, humiliating work abroad and the possibility to be a real Ukrainian, a worthy representative of the country abroad, maintaining a high level of national and personal self-respect, therefore ethnic identity is, in our opinion, an important factor of the formation of migration readiness.

Using a modified variant of Kuhn-McPartland test "Who am I?" we identified the actuality of ethnic identity (whether the respondents have or do not have it) – 46.2% of the students in the sample under study indicate ethnicity in the list of the categories of self-determination. In order to obtain an index of the significance of ethnic identity we used a "reverse" (mirror) scale, i.e. the nearer to the beginning of the row the category designating "ethnicity" is, the higher the rank is (for example, if the respondent indicated "Ukrainian" in the first place, then such a response received 10 points, if it was in the second place – 9 points etc). The students also determined 5 characteristics-associations concerning the concept "the Ukrainians" in this block of questions by the method of free description. If all the 5 characteristics are positive, it is an evidence of a positive ethnic auto-stereotype. The availability of negative characteristics makes it possible to perform a quantitative evaluation from 0 to 5 points. From our point of view, this index reflects the valence of ethnic identity (see Table 6).

Table 6
The average rank of the students' ethnic belonging (n=469)

Parameters of comparison	Arithmetic mean (M)	Mean Square Deviation
The average rank of "ethnicity in the list of the categories of self-determination"	3.43	1.78
The number of positive characteristics of a "typical" Ukrainian	3.13	1.24

Correlation analysis was used in order to prove the impact of ethnic identity on migration readiness of Ukrainian university students. The results showed that there is a direct correlation interconnection between the indexes of positive ethnic identity and the following characteristics: the principal values "a strong and rich country" ($r = .341$; $p \leq .01$); the desire to live and work in Ukraine ($r = .407$; $p \leq .01$); the motives in favor of working in Ukraine "it is necessary to reconstruct and develop the country" ($r = .367$; $p \leq .01$); "people must live in their own country" ($r = .316$; $p \leq .01$).

4. Conclusions

Migration readiness is a complex phenomenon determined by identity crisis of personality in the basic areas of an individual's self-realization – ethno-cultural, professional and family relations. The emergence and formation of migration readiness is caused by contradictions between an individual's aspiration for self-realization, to satisfy needs of all levels (from basic natural needs to the needs of respect and self-actualization) and inability to find possibilities for self-realization in their country.

Most Ukrainian university students negatively evaluate the phenomenon of labor migration and its consequences for the country, family and individuals, directly associate labor migration of the Ukrainians abroad with difficult and unstable economic, social and political situation of the country. Almost a half of the respondents do not rule out their self-realization beyond Ukraine, being guided by higher salaries and wages and new experience, in this situation the students cautiously evaluate the prestige of working abroad and the possibility to increase social status, it proves that the students consider labor migration of the Ukrainians as a compulsory measure caused by the necessity to meet an individual's basic needs.

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