

Social Attitudes: Forecasting the Behavior of Labor Migrants

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Abstract. This paper reviews new empirical method to study the dynamic of social attitudes of an individual or a group of individuals. Being applied in research of social attitudes of labor migrants in Latvia the method that we've called the "Effect of the balance of social attitude" allowed, with a high degree of confidence, to forecast the behavior of people who got the labor migration experience in regard to socially and economically important values. The method is based on the four-component model of social attitude rather than on the classical attitude model consisting of just three components. Research (n=225) revealed that persons showing high imbalance coefficient in their social attitude to such values as employment, marriage, children in Latvia are most likely to leave the country for the sake of labor migration. At the same time persons with the well-balanced attitude are going to stay even if they feel dissatisfied with individual aspects of their life and work in the home country.

Keywords: Social Attitudes, Labour Migration, European Union.

1. Introduction

Social attitudes are significant socio-psychological characteristics of the person who expresses its readiness for certain social activities and actions in a certain sphere. Besides, these socially fixed forms of behavior, judgements and values are determined by the unconscious nature of the human psyche that makes them quite stable stereotypes of cognitive, behavioral and evaluative spheres. In 1918 Thomas and Znanetsky, the founders of attitude theory, ascertained change in relations towards the family and social values, as well as the change in relations with other people among the Polish farmers who had emigrated from Europe to America in 1918. The reason for this change was the destruction of the integrity of the relationship towards the traditional subjective and objective aspects of social life, and as a consequence, the emergence of a stronger individual identity (Thomas & Znaniecki, 1996).

Social attitude is one of the most significant social and psychological characteristics of an individual and of greatest consequence both for the state and the society. Successful economic and social development of a state is directly linked to personal and social orientation and active stand of each individual in a community (Mansoor & Quillin 2007). Modern understanding of social attitude includes certain concepts, views, judgements, and habits of individual as well as other internal mechanisms that on a subconscious level incite a person to action or inhibit such action. In other words, social attitudes are one of the elements of conation (Akopova & Ruza, 2010).

In 1947, Smith offered a division of attitudes into three components: cognitive (awareness of the social orientation of the object), emotional (emotional evaluation of the object, revealing the feelings of sympathy or antipathy towards it) and behavioral (connotative) component (consistent behavior towards the object). That is - awareness, judgement and readiness for action (Smith, 1956). Up till now the three-componential structure of attitudes was commonly recognised. However, several years ago a Russian scholar, Devjatkin, offered the fourth "ecological" component of the social attitude, which was developed on the basis of the ecological approach to Gibson's "visual perception". However, methodological tools available to researchers until present allowed for a more or less reliable empirical study of just one component of the social attitude - the emotional one.

Another problem was identified during the famous experiment conducted in 1934 by La Pierre. Before La Pierre it was an axiom that this was just a coincidence, it turned out however that it fails to reflect the actual situation. During his travels with the Chinese servant he was analysing the attitude to his servant demonstrated by members of personnel in various hotels they visited en route, and came to the conclusion that given the negative attitude (in this particular case, towards Chinese) human behaviour may look as if

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such attitude were positive (La Pierre 1934). This phenomenon was named “La Pierre’s paradox”. Based on this phenomenon M.Rockich put forward an idea, which stated that a person may have two attitudes at a time: to the object and to the circumstances (Andrejeva, 1994).

2. The Research of Dynamic of Social Attitudes

In the research that was conducted by the authors of this work in 2010 and described in the article “The impact of migratory experience on social attitudes of migrant workers: Four-component methodology” (Akopova & Ignatjeva, 2011) published in International Journal of Arts & Sciences we focused on how labour migration experience affects social attitudes of labour migrants.

We’ve focused on labour migration topic as far as it follows from the conclusions made by Thomas and Znaniecki, migration experience may influence the attitudes to the values that are important for the society. Moreover, the scientists also discovered dependence of an individual on the social organisation and dependence of the social organisation on an individual. That, in its turn, offers us all the good reasons to suggest that if the migration experience influences an individual, then a multitude of individuals possessing similar experience is going to influence the society on the whole.

We’ve studied social attitudes to fifteen socially and economically important values which were provisionally divided into five categories: social values, emotional, vital, economic and ideological values. Instead of the classical social attitude model consisting of just three components our research was based on the model where the number of components is - four. Apart from emotional, cognitive and conative components it also covers the ecological component or such factor of the environment, which provides or does not provide an individual with an opportunity to fulfil his/her social attitude. With due consideration of the so-called “La Pierre paradox, the list of studied values was supplemented by the list of socially acceptable activities (situations) related to such values. For example, if “children” were the object, the socially acceptable activity was formulated as “some time in future it is necessary to become mother or father, to continue the family line” (See Table 1).

Table 1: The list of examined attitudes and associated activities.

Values		Socially acceptable activity
Social	Work	An individual must have work for the sake of wholesome life.
	Education	An individual must strive for higher education
	Marriage	Sooner or later an individual must marry and establish a family
Emotional	Love	To be truly happy in life, one should find his second half
	Care	An individual must take moral and material care for people close to him
	Self-development	An individual must strive to develop personally, emotionally, intellectually, learn to accept responsibility for own decisions and actions
Vital	Children	At some point one should become a mother or father, continue own kin
	Health	An individual must take good care of his health
	Safety	The state must provide for physical and political safety of its residents
Material	Money	One should have good material prosperity
	Property	One should own a car, an apartment and other property
	Own country	The country must be economically and politically prosperous, have a developed legal system, social security system, etc.
Ideological	Patriotism	An individual must love his country, be ready to protect it and provide his input into its prosperity
	Tolerance	An individual must be tolerant to people of other nationalities, bearers of other languages and cultures residing in the same country
	Freedom	An individual must have possibility to enjoy basic rights and freedoms in his own country

According to the statements of Smith, Katz and other academicians, who studied social attitude, its emotional component has a direct link to the object and represents a kind of “pivot”. Cognitive and behavioural components, in their turn, are viewed as “increments” formed around the pivot or as a matrix, which such pivot stems from. In other words, if emotional evaluation refers rather to the object or phenomenon, the thoughts about such object/phenomenon and the planned behaviour refer to certain activities connected with that object/phenomenon. Proceeding from the above propositions, in our

questionnaire based on the five-score psychometric Likert scale, the emotional component was examined with direct reference to value, and cognitive, behavioural and ecological components were studied with reference to the value-related activities (See Table 2).

Table 2: Part of the questionnaire used in the research.

1. Values	2. How significant is this value for you?					3. Socially approved action	4. To what extent do you agree with this statement?					5. Are you ready to reach personally the goal specified in column 3?					6. What is your realistic chance to reach this goal in Latvia?					7. How do you estimate the possibility to reach this goal abroad?				
	1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Social	Job					An individual must have a job to live the life to the fullest	○○○○○					○○○○○					○○○○○					○○○○○				
	Education					An individual should aim to receive higher education	○○○○○					○○○○○					○○○○○					○○○○○				
	Marriage					Sooner or later an individual should get married and create a family	○○○○○					○○○○○					○○○○○					○○○○○				
Emotional	Love					It is necessary to find a soulmate in life to be happy	○○○○○					○○○○○					○○○○○					○○○○○				
	Looking after family and friends					An individual should morally support and take care of family and friends financially	○○○○○					○○○○○					○○○○○					○○○○○				
	Personal development					An individual should aim to develop personally, emotionally, intellectually, to study to incur responsibility for his or her decisions and actions	○○○○○					○○○○○					○○○○○					○○○○○				

The researched sample included information from 225 respondents who had completed the web-questionnaire, their age ranging from 16 to 74, including 116 females (52%) and 109 males (48%). Empirical data, the process, methodology and general results were described in the above mentioned article. Further we shall speak about most important findings of this empirical approach to studying social attitudes.

A highly pronounced dissonance can be observed in evaluation of attitudes. Specifically this property was adopted as a generalised evaluation of social attitude. Dissonance was assessed as a standard deviation of cognitive, emotional, behavioural and ecological component of an attitude. At the same time, both Latvia (D_LV) and foreign countries (D_EU) were treated as ecological niche. The average values of the dissonance of attitudes are provided in Table 3.

For creation of the factor structure of a phenomenon D_LV were used as indicators. Factor analysis was performed by selecting the factors by applying the method of the key components and subsequent Varimax-rotation (Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization).

Varimax: orthogonal rotation that leads to decreased quantity of variables with high factor weight. This method is quite popular and most frequently used because it makes interpretation of the facts easier. The criterion of relevancy of choosing the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy equals 0.867, which proves the expediency of application of factor analysis for analysing the structure of the test. Three-factor structure of the test is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Factor structure of the test based on dissonance of social attitudes.

	D_LV	D_EU	F1	F2	F3
Personal development	0.99	0.73	0,807		
Care of parents	0.78	0.85	0,752		
Health	0.74	0.99	0,666		
Money	0.58	0.87	0,656		
Property	0.71	0.74	0,612		
Work	0.50	0.52	0,601		
Education	0.70	0.81	0,521		
The state	0.83	0.69		0,776	
Patriotism	1.34	1.24		0,725	
Freedom	1.08	0.72		0,723	
Safety	0.99	0.83		0,697	
Tolerance	1.51	1.43		0,623	
Marriage	0.88	0.90			0,819
Love	0.83	0.72			0,777
Children	1.00	0.77			0,675
Variance after rotation			23%	21%	12%

Factor values were calculated by adding respective indicators with subsequent standardisation. The selected factor space was subject to the two-stage cluster analysis, which allowed to single out two clusters that proved to be homogeneous in the context of dissonance of social attitudes. The dissonance of social attitudes in the first cluster is above the average point, whereas in the second cluster it is below the average (See Figure 1).

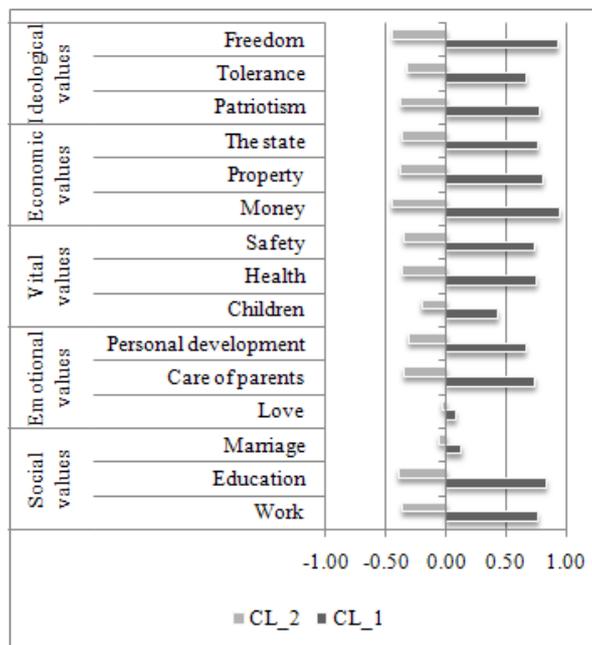


Fig. 1: The level of dissonance between social attitudes in highlighted clusters.

3. Conclusion

We've come to conclusion, that a highly pronounced dissonance can be observed between components of social attitudes related to birth of children, work (career) and other socially important values among people who tend to leave the country for labor migration. On the other hand, people who don't want to emigrate showed in their social attitudes no dissonance or much lower dissonance. In other words, research revealed that persons showing high imbalance coefficient in their social attitude to such values as employment, marriage, children in Latvia are most likely to leave the country for the sake of labour migration. At the same time persons with the well-balanced attitude are going to stay even if they feel dissatisfied with individual aspects of their life and work in the home country. Dissonance was assessed as a standard deviation of cognitive, emotional, behavioural and ecological component of an attitude.

What can we achieve by using the balance/imbalance of the components of social attitude as an indicator? By asking questions we are able to make forecasts of whether people are going to stay or emigrate. In the first place, this method of measuring attitudes is totally new, and, second, it can be applied in any sphere related to social attitudes.

The mathematical apparatus suggested by the authors differs from the previously applied empirical methods of study of social attitudes. The new method provides solution of the key problems that researchers have been facing up till now. First, the tool allows distinguishing between the attitudes to the value as such and the attitude to the value-related action. Second, with the help of this reliable method it becomes possible to measure each separate component of a social attitude whereas earlier only the emotional component was subject to measurements with a more or less high degree of confidence. Such approach, for example, was used in the well-known attitude scales invented by Thurstone and Likert. The underlying bipolar continuum (with the poles "very good" - "very bad", "fully agree" - "totally disagree", etc.) as a rules allowed researchers to find out the respondent's emotional response to a value or an object yet prevented from drawing a clear-cut demarcation line among the components.

Third, instead of using just three components the suggested method is based on a four-component structure of a social attitude. By adding the fourth - ecological - component it became possible to solve the problem associated with the impact that the environment leaves on an individual's conation, meaning that now it has become possible to determine the influence of the objective external circumstances that quite often prevent an individual from fulfilment of some particular social attitude, even in cases when the

emotional, cognitive and conative components are positively balanced against each other. This means, that the problem of discrepancy of the attitude and the actual behaviour of an individual can be solved in two dimensions at once.

And finally, the suggested tool is space-saving and user-friendly both in paper and electronic form, thus being a highly efficient instrument while dealing with large groups of people. It is quite possible that the differentiated methodological approach would help to solve the problems existing in social psychology, such as empirical study of individual components of social attitudes as well as empirical study of the dynamics of social attitudes. Undoubtedly, in order to prove that a more profound further research is required.

The ideas that are put forward in this article undoubtedly require further elaboration and more extensive studies. Nevertheless, the initial data that we already possess cause us to believe that the squared deviation method may become a significant tool in empirical studies of social motivation both for separate individuals and larger groups of people. In our research we measured attitude to the 15 values that are of social significance for labour migrants and the persons who do not wish to leave their home country for labour migration. At the same time, the newly-developed methodological tool is well applicable in the work with any other values and population groups. Those who are going to use this tool will only need to replace the questions with the ones that are relevant for a particular area.

4. References

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