

UDC 81'42

DOI: 10.18413/2313-8912-2024-10-1-0-3

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**Framing labour migration as a social problem
on Russian Telegram**

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Received 15 January 2024; accepted 15 March 2024; published 30 March 2024

Acknowledgments. The study was financially supported by the Foundation for Advanced Scientific Research of Chelyabinsk State University, 2024.

Abstract. The paper upholds the problem of the discursive representation of the migrant workers from Central Asia and Transcaucasia on Telegram. The premise is that social problems become more ‘salient’ in discourse due to framing. The objective of the research is to identify frames interpreting labour migration, explain how telegrammers generate meanings about the outgroups and what frames contribute to the problematization of the social issue. The study focuses on the mechanisms by which the ethnic groups are presented to the subscribers. A cognitive-discursive approach is claimed central as it enables the author to concentrate on the cultural, social, cognitive and linguistic aspects of the phenomenon. The deductive approach to systematizing frames is prioritized. To gain understanding of the foci of the frames in the context of labour migration debate the discourse analysis and the frame analysis are employed. The paper presents a case study based on the relevant posts published on Telegram between 2019 and 2023. The results show that on the generic level framing of labour migration activates the *Law and Order* macro frame. On the issue-specific level the frames of a higher degree of precision problematize the social issue in the aspects of crimes and delinquencies committed by the migrant workers, and crimes committed by the locals in relation to the ongoing economic situation. In the Russian Telegram discourse, framing specifies the image of the migrants, bringing to the fore their collective criminal activity and fatal threat to the citizens. The most prominent foci of the frames are analyzed on the contextual level. Negative presentation of the migrants has been revealed as the leading discursive strategy that ‘cements’ pejorative stereotypes about the ethnic groups they belong to. The findings contribute to Discourse studies and could be used to tackle the problems of migrant adaptation.

Keywords: Frame; Media framing; Labour migration; Migrants from Central Asia; Digital communication; Russian Telegram; Law and Order

How to cite: Kushneruk, S. L. (2024). Framing labour migration as a social problem on Russian Telegram, *Research Result. Theoretical and Applied Linguistics*, 10 (1), 31-46. DOI: 10.18413/2313-8912-2024-10-1-0-3

УДК 81'42

DOI: 10.18413/2313-8912-2024-10-1-0-3

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Фреймирование трудовой миграции как социальной проблемы в российском сегменте Telegram

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*Статья поступила 15 января 2024 г.; принята 15 марта 2024 г.;
опубликована 30 марта 2024 г.*

Информация об источниках финансирования или грантах: Исследование выполнено при финансовой поддержке Фонда перспективных научных исследований ФГБОУ ВО «ЧелГУ», 2024.

Аннотация. Рассматривается проблема дискурсивной репрезентации трудовых мигрантов из Центральной Азии и Закавказья в российском сегменте Telegram. Развивается идея о том, что социальные проблемы становятся более салиентными в дискурсе благодаря фреймированию. Цель исследования — установить фреймы, интерпретирующие трудовую миграцию, объяснить, как телеграферы генерируют представления об этнических экзогруппах и какие грани социального явления за счёт этого обнаруживаются. Ведущим избран когнитивно-дискурсивный подход, поскольку он расширяет границы лингвистического исследования и позволяет учитывать культурные, социальные, когнитивные и языковые аспекты. Приоритет отдаётся дедуктивному подходу к установлению и систематизации фреймов. Методы дискурс-анализа и фреймового анализа применяются в качестве основных для изучения фокусировок фреймов в контексте обсуждения проблемы трудовой миграции в телеграм-каналах. К анализу речевых практик также применён кейс-метод. Исследование проведено на материале постов, опубликованных в Telegram в период с 2019 по 2023 год. Результаты дают основания заключить, что на высшем уровне генерализации смыслов о трудовой миграции активируется макрофрейм «Закон и порядок». На уровне частных проявлений социальной проблемы интерпретации задают фреймы более высокой степени детализации. Они специфицируют её в аспектах разновидностей преступлений и правонарушений, совершаемых трудящимися-мигрантами, а также незаконных деяний, совершаемых россиянами в текущей экономической ситуации. В российском телеграм-дискурсе фреймирование способствует тиражированию резко негативного образа трудового мигранта за счёт представлений о коллективной криминальной активности этнических групп, наносящей ущерб местным жителям, их культурной идентичности и укладу жизни. Негативная репрезентация трудовых мигрантов является ведущей дискурсивной стратегией, реализация которой ведёт к закреплению уничижительных стереотипов об этнических группах. Полученные результаты вносят вклад в дискурсологию, а также могут использоваться в социальной сфере для решения проблем адаптации мигрантов.

Ключевые слова: Фрейм; Медиафрейминг; Трудовая миграция; Мигранты из Центральной Азии; Цифровая коммуникация; Телеграм; Закон и Порядок

Информация для цитирования: Кушнерук С. Л. Фреймирование трудовой миграции как социальной проблемы в российском сегменте Telegram // Научный результат. Вопросы теоретической и прикладной лингвистики. 2024. Т. 10. № 1. С. 31-46. DOI: 10.18413/2313-8912-2024-10-1-0-3

Introduction

Since the beginning of the 21st century, migration as a social problem has brought about the surge of scholarly interest worldwide, to mention a few most recent papers (Anjos & Polli, 2019; Arcila-Calderón et al., 2021; Kostopoulos & Mylonas, 2022). In many countries the number of international migrants is constantly growing (Koser, 2007). The causes are multifarious. Voluntary migrants get on the move in search of work, career, economic opportunities. Forced migrants change the location in response to different disasters, both natural, political and social. The latest global challenges have made millions of people move to escape terrorism, persecution, conflict, abuse and human rights violations. According to World Migration Report 2022, more than 40% of international migrants were born in Asia, around 20% originate from China, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Philippines, Afghanistan. Mexico is the second largest country of origin; Russia is the third¹.

Though the report focuses on the corridors of migration from developing countries to larger economies, such as the USA, France, Russia, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, nothing is said about Russia as a hub of labour migrants from Central Asia and Transcaucasia that make financial transfers to their families in the remittance recipient countries, such as Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, Armenia. In 2022, the Russian Federation hosted more than 3 million migrant workers, mainly engaged in construction, agriculture, housing and communal services. According to the official monitoring of the economic situation, 83% of

migrant workers are citizens of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Compared to 2019, the number of migrants from these three countries has decreased by only 12%, while labor migrants from Moldova and Ukraine decreased by 5 times, from Azerbaijan — by almost 2 times, from Armenia — by 40%². On the one hand, migrants solve issues of the country's economy, on the other, the flow of labor resources to Russia reveals a lot of social problems connected with the adaptation of foreign workers in big cities. The most traumatic ones are xenophobia, radicalization, violence and crime.

Though migration is widely discussed in the Russian official media, no studies have focused on the framing of labour migration on Telegram. Admittedly, in recent years the debate on migration issues has broadened its coverage, dispersing from the official media outlets to the sphere of non-mainstream platforms (messengers) as they present alternatives to the «traditional» sources. Telegram brands itself as a «truly free messenger, with a revolutionary privacy policy» (<https://telegram.org/>), which has increased its popularity with various audiences. Telegram allows users to voice their opinions and express concerns about issues that are often ignored by the mainstream media. Moreover, people yearning for alternative viewpoints and democratic discussion try to find out information that has not been censored. Taking heed of this, the author aims to fill in this gap and investigate how labor migrants are represented in thematically related posts

¹ World Migration Report (2022). Retrieved from <https://worldmigrationreport.iom.int/wmr-2022-interactive/>

² Monitoring ekonomicheskoy situatsii v Rossii [Monitoring of the economic situation in Russia] (2022). Retrieved from <https://www.iep.ru/ru/publikacii/publication/monitoring-ekonomicheskoy-situatsii-v-rossii-7-160-iyun-2022-g.html>

published on Telegram. The major objective is to reveal discursive aspects of framing labour migration and find out the key frames interpreting the issue. The study is designed to showcase how the agents of the Telegram discourse construct digital reality about the working migrants from Asia. It will allow to get insights into the ambivalent attitudes toward a large minority group in Russia — the ‘skilled migrants’ and reveal stereotypes about them. The two-fold aim is specified by the following **research questions**: 1. How do telegrammers frame working migrants as members of outgroups? 2. What frames problematize the social issue and what they contribute to the debates on the labour migration in Russia?

Theoretical review

Representation of migration processes is traditionally the subject of social sciences, which “measure” the attitude of ingroups to outgroups. In many publications the scholars examine how professional journalists construct frames about migration in European countries, to mention Belgium (Van Gorp, 2005), Italy, Spain, Greece (Arcila-Calderón et al., 2021), Romania (Corbu, Buturoiu, Durach, 2017), Russia (Zubareva, 2018). Migration problems have engrossed discourse analysts even more since the 2015 European crisis, when many countries found themselves in the epicenter of a massive influx of refugees, resulting in the surge of nationalist sentiments, hate-filled anti-migration discourses (Colombo, 2018; Krzyżanowski, Triandafyllidou, Wodak, 2018) and hate speech (Davidson et al., 2017; Sindoni, 2018). The majority of works highlight negative representation of migrants in the Western media, and point out that such evaluation is based on prejudice (Brändle, Eisele, Trenz, 2019; Fengler et al., 2020; Greussing, Boomgaarden, 2017; Kalfeli, Frangonikolopoulos, Gardikiotis, 2020; Stavinoha, 2019).

According to the recent research, the traditional media have lost their centrality (Alonso-Muñoz et al., 2022), they have been giving way to fringe digital platforms

functioning as virtual “windows” to the real world for the ever-growing audiences of subscribers. One of them is Telegram, launched by the Durov brothers in 2013. Ten years later, in 2023, downloads of the mobile messenger kept an upward trend in many parts of the world, including Russia. Nearly one-third of the users were Moscow residents. Saint Petersburg accounted for the second-largest share of the app users in the country³. The platform has been greatly populated as a lot of Russian communities opted for choosing it in order to discuss the most topical social issues. The privacy toolkits have made it a virtual space where anyone can speak their mind and the content can be quickly shared with a large volume of the public. The digital innovation has also given rise to a new discursive reality and enabled millions of people to send and receive messages in a confidential, convenient, and time-saving way. Against this backdrop, the problem of labour migrants in Russia has been transferred and given a twist in the Telegram discourse. The term *Telegram discourse*, at large, implies that aggregates of multimodal texts united by particular themes, pragmatic and/or functional aspects of communication, have distribution on the Internet-based platform (Budaev et al., 2022). The framing of working migration is influenced by the context of the labour market in Russia. With this in mind, the author tries to find out how people’s attitudes to outgroups are cultivated in the Telegram discourse.

Frame analysis is employed as a powerful methodology for the study of social and political problems, including migration (Entman, 1993; De Vreese, 2005; Van Gorp, 2005; Van Gorp & Vyncke, 2021; Samkova, 2023). According to Van Gorp, the main purpose of a frame analysis is «to determine how framing devices co-occur in a news text and to form underlying patterns of meaning»

³ Distribution of Telegram users in Russia (2023). Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1252651/russia-telegram-users-distribution-by-region/>

(Van Gorp, 2005: 486). Framing is considered as a reasoning device, which can be explicitly or implicitly stated. Taking into account both aspects, Van Gorp considers frames as ‘meta-communicative (latent) messages’, sent by the agent of discourse (journalist) to the receiver, which represent suggestion or instruction to understand the message in accord with the idea expressed through the frame (Van Gorp, 2005: 487).

Defining *frame* poses difficulties for the researchers. No unanimity of views is due to the multiplicity of viewpoints on how to find out frames in mass communication (Ileri et al., 2019: 5). Entman’s definition is one of the most cited: «to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communication text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation» (Entman, 1993: 52). The selection of particular fragments of the world on the part of the agent of discourse, the promotion of a problem and its interpretation has proved adequate in contemporary studies. Framing can produce a potentially powerful communicative effect due to its ‘internal logic’ and the fact that frames are culturally embedded, so people can easily recognize and perceive them as natural and familiar (Van Gorp & Vyncke, 2021: 427).

In the **functional** perspective, the notion of a frame is disclosed in terms of ‘central ideas’, organizing how people discuss public events and interpret things. Frames set the parameters of communication, suggesting explanations for «what has happened in the surrounding world» (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000: 94). To gain the objective of this research, the author tries to merge insights of the functional approach with the constructionist and the strategic approaches to framing as formulated by Gamson & Modigliani, Van Gorp & Vyncke (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989: 3; Van Gorp, 2010; Van Gorp & Vyncke, 2021).

In most general terms, **constructionism** deals with «the process in which individuals

and groups actively create social reality from different information sources» (Van Gorp, 2010). The agents of discourse are engaged in world-modeling (Kushneruk, 2021), i.e. they construct versions of reality by employing frames to organize ideas about issues. The recipients conceptualize them and get the idea of what is going on in the world. Van Gorp & Vyncke justified the conclusion that communicating strategically about an issue «involves a full understanding of the frames that problematize it and frames that deproblematize it» (Van Gorp & Vyncke, 2021: 427).

Strategically, agents of discourse (journalists, politicians, bloggers, telegrammers) can foreground some features «by means of the choice of words, set phrases, repetitions, visuals, culturally marked symbols, thus, shaping the issue in a particular manner», enhancing, undermining or neutralizing a group’s version of a particular fragment of reality with the aim to modify public opinion (Godefroidt et al., 2016; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). The focus of this paper is on the frames that problematize labour migration in Russia. As frames are complex in nature, they are conceptualized on different grounds.

On the level of **abstraction**, there are issue-specific and generic types (Bashatah, 2017). Generic frames (master frames, macro frames) describe general features of news or messages. They progress beyond the thematic limitations of discourse, and can be identifiable across different themes and cultural contexts, e.g. *conflict*, *human interest*, *economic consequences*, *morality*, *responsibility* (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). Issue-specific frames are context-driven, they refer to individual issues, apply to a particular subject or a topic, and depend on multifarious aspects of communication.

On the level of **function**, frames can be diagnostic, prognostic and motivational (Benford & Snow, 2000; Godefroidt et al., 2016: 781; Kushneruk & Kurochkina, 2022). Diagnostic frames provide a «diagnosis of some event or aspect of life as troublesome

and in need of change», e.g. the diagnoses are political causes, socio-economic causes, human rights violations, religious prescriptions, particular triggers (Godefroidt et al., 2016: 782). Coming down to finding the roots of the problem, diagnostic framing presupposes the attribution of responsibility to someone or something, including blame. In most general terms, prognostic frames suggest solutions to the raised problems (military action, assistance, rejection, financial intervention, internal reforms, etc.), or suggest strategies to working out a plan (Benford & Snow, 2000; Godefroidt et al., 2016: 782-783). Motivational frames «provide a “call to arms” or rationale for engaging in collective action» (Benford & Snow, 2000: 617).

On the level of **problem-specification**, frames are problematizing and deproblematizing. Problematizing framing has to do with regarding or treating something as a problem (e.g. the poor are responsible for their social position), deproblematizing frames act as counter-frames that decrease the problematizing nature of the definition and shift attention to other factors (poverty is a school for learning). One and the same issue can be both problematized and deproblematized (Van Gorp & Vyncke, 2021: 435).

Irrespective of the typology, there exist two basic approaches to identifying frames — deductive and inductive. By using the deductive approach, researchers formulate conclusions applying the existing rules or principles, i.e. they analyse discourse with a pre-defined frames in mind (Corbu et al., 2017; De Vreese, 2005). Following the inductive approach, discourse analysts focus on what is empirically suggested by the raw data (Bashatah, 2017).

In this paper, the author identifies frames deductively and moves from a general list of ‘frame dimensions’ (Boydston et al., 2018) to a particular explanation of what is textualized in the Telegram discourse. Following this line of thought, it will be shown that Telegram discourse agents activate

different types of frames to construct a specific discourse-world (Ogneva, Stepanova, Chikovani, 2022) and represent working migration as a highly problematized social issue. Foregrounding some characteristics within the discourse-world and backgrounding others, telegrammers increase the stigma associated with the labour migrants from Asia.

Material and Methods

This research focuses on how the working migrants coming to the Russian Federation from Asian regions are framed on Telegram. The use of the platform in Russia and worldwide has visibly increased in political and social communication during and after the Covid-19 pandemic⁴.

Data. The choice of *Mnogonacional* Telegram channel as a source of research is based on its prominent popularity among the followers, which responds to several statistically relevant criteria. The first is a wide coverage. Within a period of four years (2019-2023), it has obtained more than 200 000 subscribers and the number is constantly increasing. According to the statistics⁵, there is a stable increase of subscribers, which is the evidence of the public interest to the problems of labour migration discussed by the channel. The second criterion is the growing number of forwards from the channel and mentions of the Telegram channel in other channels, which has also been on the rise in the analyzed period. The third criterion is the increasing number of views that the channel’s posts gain. There is evidence that the consumption of the migrant-related content posted on the channel is rather fast and active on the part of the audience. The fourth criterion is the popularity of the analyzed posts. It was revealed on the following characteristics: assessed by viewers, by shares

⁴ Number of monthly active Telegram users worldwide from March 2014 to July 2023 (2023). Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/234038/telegram-messenger-mau-users/>

⁵ *Mnogonatsional* [Multinational] (2023). Retrieved from <https://tgstat.ru/channel/@mnogonazi/stat>

(the total number of them, including private messages), by forwards (number of post shares to other channels and groups), by comments (the number of native Telegram comments left by readers under the post), by positive and negative reactions. The selection of posts was limited to 744, all of them were published between Jan. 1, 2019 — Dec. 31, 2023.

Procedure. A number of methods have been employed to reach the objective of the paper. The algorithm includes the methodological sequence of collecting, preparing and analyzing the material.

Firstly, the sample was made up. Applying a case study approach, the messages were downloaded from the Telegram application, without using any software. The lexeme *‘мигрант’* (*migrant*) served as a key element. Thus, the key word analysis was the first step, which allowed to focus on labor migration problem as interpreted by the telegrammers. The identification of the relevant materials started by searching for the key word, which enabled the author to retrieve appropriate posts. They were considered in the dataset only on condition they regarded the migrant workers from Central Asian countries (Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan) and Transcaucasia (Azerbaijan, Armenia), which excluded posts about migrants from other countries.

Secondly, some preparation work for measuring framing and identifying relevant frames was carried out. As this research adopted the deductive approach, the author delved into the relevant literature in order to predefine an appropriate set of frames. An extensive “Policy Frames Codebook” proposed by Boydstun and her colleagues served as a benchmark (Boydstun et al., 2018). The frames applicable to policy issues were categorized into 14 dimensions, including economic, political, constitutional, criminal, cultural and other frames. The mentioned codebook was considered a validated resource providing a well-established schema for the research of framing labour migration issues.

Thirdly, the selected posts were analyzed for frames in order to specify what interpretative schemata contribute to the discursive ‘portrayal’ of the workers from Asia. The macro frame Law and Order was established as a high-level dimension, within which specific frames were further singled out. To better understand the mechanism of framing, the contextual analysis of the key lexemes was carried out. This procedure combined a formal aspect of the syntagmatic relations analysis, and cultural and historical aspects of interpretation. The discourse analysis was used to reveal the aspects of representation of the social phenomenon taking into account the general context of life in cities, the migrants’ cultural identity, their poor cultural assimilation in Russia. Frame analysis made it possible to unravel the mechanisms of world-modelling (i.e. structuring information about the working migrants) in the Telegram discourse and demonstrate what ‘schemas of interpretation’ are enacted by moderators to diagnose the problem, identify the social actors responsible for it and characterize the victims of migrant abuse.

Results and discussion

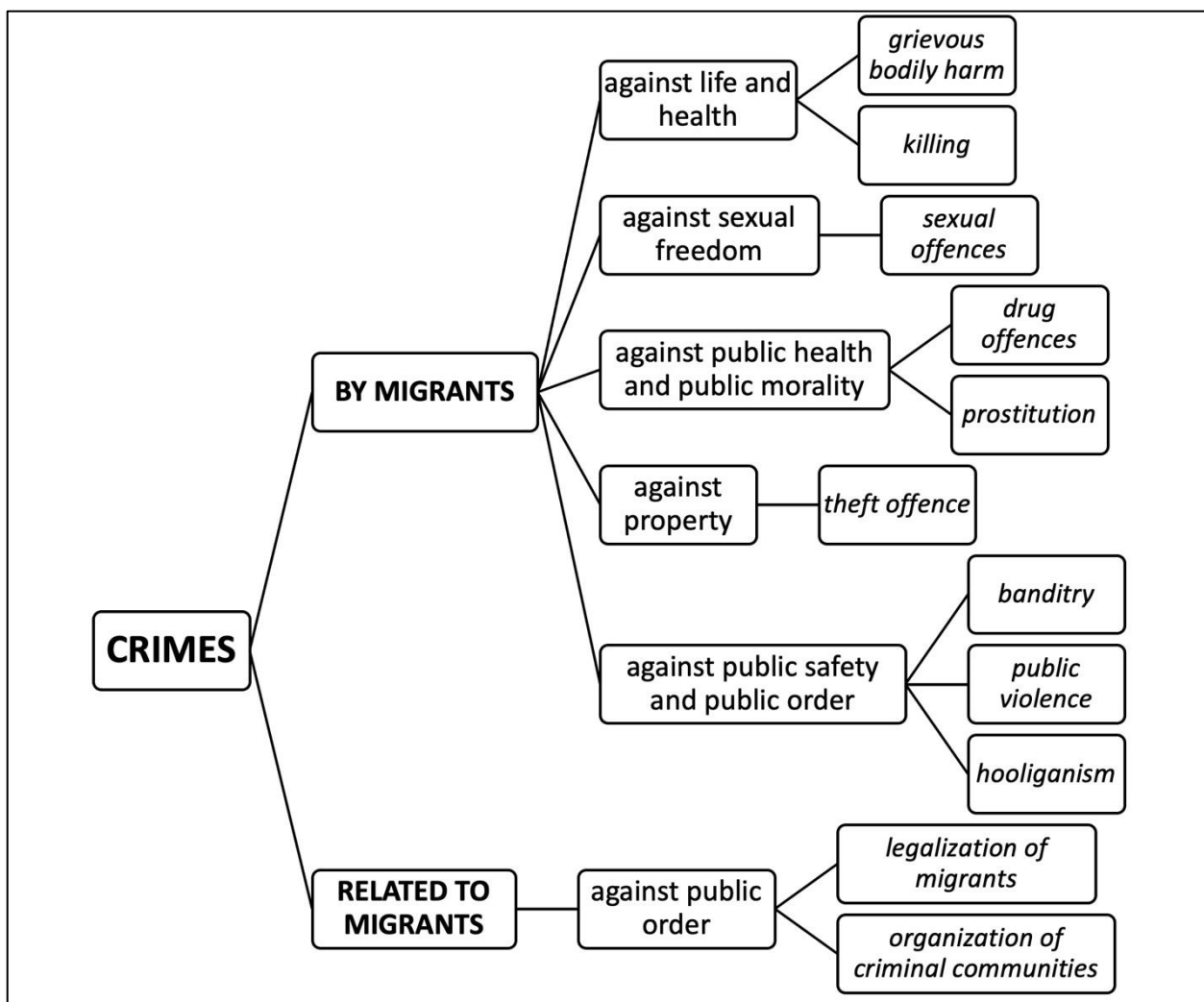
Following the categorization of frames (Boydstun et al., 2018), the LAW & ORDER macro frame was identified in the Telegram discourse about labour migrants in Russia. It encompasses crime and justice frames, such as breaking laws, loopholes and punishment. The term *macroframe* is employed to denote an overarching (all-encompassing) frame that integrates frames, subframes, and slots (Kushneruk & Kurochkina, 2022) and specifies particular aspects of the discussed social issue. They are applied in the Telegram discourse about the working migrants from the Asian countries. Frames of different conceptual precision constitute a hierarchy, within which issue-specific frames nest within a broader category.

Any society has a system of fixed rules and regulations to deal with people who deviate from the accepted behavior and commit crimes, doing actions that constitute

offences punishable by law. In the analyzed segment of discourse on labour migration, the LAW & ORDER macroframe is a broad conceptual domain, which is discursively specified and mainly represented by two frames of different salience. They are **crimes**

and **delinquencies**. In the context of labour migration in Russia, the latter relates to the wrongdoings of migrants. The former is represented by two major varieties generating meaning. They are **crimes by migrants** and **crimes related to migrants** (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Illustration of hierarchical organization of *CRIMES* frame
Рисунок 1. Иерархическая организация фрейма *CRIMES*



The results show that the CRIMES frame is of primary importance in the labour migration debate. Its primacy is explained in terms of granularity, that is the level of detail. We particularly mean that telegrammers mostly focus on crimes, committed by migrant workers, and their abuse of the locals. In what follows, we try to give a comprehensive analysis of the Telegram

representations of the crimes committed by and related to the migrant workers.

CRIMES BY MIGRANTS

There has been a surge of attention to different types of criminal activities, committed by the labour migrants in Russia. The frames, propelled on Telegram, unravel several dimensions of the social evil. Frames are assumed to be manifested in slots through lexical markers, that is why we identified

them by examining keywords that relate in meaning and are used in relevant contexts (Table 1). 24 keywords appear in the posts a

total of 2658 times. Below the subframes are presented in order of salience.

Table 1. Structure of CRIMES BY MIGRANTS frame
Таблица 1. Структура фрейма CRIMES BY MIGRANTS

subframe	slot	lexical markers / keywords	frequency	Total
Crimes against life and health	<i>killling</i>	<i>murder</i>	589	1535
		<i>shooting</i>	105	
		<i>torture</i>	45	
	<i>grievous bodily harm</i>	<i>fighting</i>	399	
		<i>beatings</i>	231	
		<i>scuffle</i>	83	
		<i>mass brawl</i>	83	
Crimes against sexual freedom	<i>sexual offences</i>	<i>rape</i>	169	374
		<i>pedophilia</i>	152	
		<i>unwanted touching</i>	53	
Crimes against public health and morality	<i>drug offences</i>	<i>drug distribution</i>	207	308
		<i>drug supply</i>	32	
		<i>drug selling</i>	10	
	<i>prostitution</i>	<i>ethnic brothels</i>	38	
		<i>transgender prostitute</i>	21	
Crimes against property	<i>theft offence</i>	<i>stealing</i>	65	229
		<i>robbery</i>	63	
		<i>extortion</i>	52	
		<i>fraud</i>	49	
Crimes against public safety and order	<i>banditry</i>	<i>plunder</i>	69	212
		<i>robbery</i>	65	
		<i>group robbery</i>	30	
	<i>public violence</i>	<i>mass riots</i>	23	
	<i>hooliganism</i>	<i>terrorize</i>	25	
Total			2658	2658

Crimes against life and health

The telegrammers focus on socially dangerous acts performed by the working migrants that infringe on the life of ordinary Russians. The intentional infliction of serious harm to health and the functions of the organs is often highlighted, which results in *grievous bodily harm*. Related keywords are *fighting*, *beatings*, *scuffle*, *mass brawl*. Fights and mass brawls, initiated by the working migrants, bring about physical abuse, injury, and overall health violations. Cf.: *трудолюбивые*

строители устроили массовую драку [hardworking builders started a mass brawl]; уроженец Азербайджана при «братской» поддержке жестоко избил местного жителя [Given “fraternal” support, a native of Azerbaijan brutally beat a local resident]. This frame problematizes the issue, displaying ‘a collective facet’ of the migrant criminal activity. Locals are represented as victims of the collective abuse of the ethnic groups.

The second conspicuous slot is **killing**. It is a cluster (or a group of words with the meaning ‘causing death’), encompassing the recurrent keywords such as *murder, shooting, torture*. Cf.: *этнические бандиты жестоко избили и расстреляли участника СВО [Ethnic bandits brutally beat and shot the participant of SMO]; десятки людей выжили на площадь после убийства местного жителя новым россиянином из Таджикистана [Dozens of people took to the square after the murder of a local resident by a new Russian from Tajikistan]*. The choice of representations contributes to a highly negative and sarcastic (*a new Russian*) evaluation of the offences committed by “a new Russian”.

Crimes against sexual freedom

The frame uncovers ideas on **sexual offences** of migrant workers. It makes salient their violent acts of a sexual nature, coercion of minors to sexual acts, sexual intercourse with the underaged, and the depraved actions. Thematically-related words constituting the slots of the frame are *rape* and *unwanted touching*. Sexual intercourse with the use of violence include rape of minors and *pedophilia*. Cf.: *мигрант из Узбекистана затаячил в кусты и попытался изнасиловать 11-летнюю девочку [A migrant from Uzbekistan dragged an 11-year-old girl into the bushes and tried to rape her]*. All these build up an extremely unfavorable image of the migrant workers.

Crimes against public health and morality

The labour migrants are represented in association with drug offences and maintenance of brothels. The established frames draw on illegal acquisition, storage, manufacture of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances, involvement and organization of prostitution. The cluster **drug offences** is modified by the word combinations *drug distribution, drug supply, drug selling*. Cf.: *полицейские поймали героинового наркобарона из Таджикистана, который зарабатывал миллиарды продавая смертельный яд молодёжи [The police*

caught a heroin drug lord from Tajikistan, who earned billions by selling deadly poison to young people].

The migrant workers are frequently framed in terms of **prostitution**. This slot heightens the negative attitudes to them, which emanates from the semantics of the word combinations such as *ethnic brothels, transgender prostitute*. People involved in this criminal activity are either ethnic businessmen who keep, manage, or assist in the management of brothels, or people who work as prostitutes. Businessmen from Central Asia tend to lure their compatriots to working in brothels under the pretext of a regular well-paid job. Cf.: *Оперативники накрыли очередной этнический бордель «низких цен» [The policemen have covered up another ethnic brothel of “low prices”]; Полиция начала активно отлавливать транс проституток из Средней Азии [The police began to actively detain trans prostitutes from Central Asia]*.

Crimes against property

The frame labels the migrants as intruders. It generates ideas of illegal entry into a dwelling committed against people living in it, and the theft of someone’s property. The cluster **theft offence** is formed by the meanings of the words *stealing, robbery, extortion, fraud*. There is an emphasis on the regular involvement of the labour migrants in different crimes related to the theft, both open and by deception. Cf.: *Задержаны лидер и семеро участников этнической ОПГ, занимавшиеся кражами и грабежами. [The leader and seven members of the ethnic organized crime group, engaged in thefts and robberies, were detained]*. The collective nature of the crimes makes evident the gross consequences for the locals.

Crimes against public safety and order

These crimes are associated with banditry and creation of criminal communities, supported by the influential diasporas, which integrate people coming from a particular nation (*the Azerbaijan diaspora, the Tajik community, the Uzbek*

diaspora, etc.) who now live in Russia. According to the semantization, three lexical groups forming the related slots, are singled out. They are **banditry**, **public violence**, **hooliganism**. **Banditry** includes keywords with the semantics of ‘attacking’: *plunder*, *robbery*, *group robbery*. Cf.: *Многонациональные банды продолжают нападать на подростков по всей России [Multinational gangs continue to attack teenagers all over Russia]*. The idea of collective ethnic violence is expressed by the word-combination ‘*multinational gangs*.’

The slot **public violence** focuses on *mass riots* as a threat to Russian people, because their organization is often accompanied by aggression, arson, destruction of property, use of weapons and great danger to the lives of people. Cf.: *Представители азербайджанской диаспоры организовали массовые беспорядки после того как их соотечественник погиб из-за несчастного случая при нападении на сотрудников ДПС [Representatives of the Azerbaijani diaspora organized mass riots after their compatriot died due to an accident when attacking traffic police officers]*.

The slot **hooliganism** accentuates insulting behavior of migrant workers and their terrorizing the locals. Crimes are committed mostly by the young often in public places against random people and strangers. Cf.: *Полиции удалось выявить и задержать группу малолетних абубандитов, которые терроризировали прохожих и выкладывали свои действия в соцсети, а сами себя называли «азербайджанской мафией» [The police managed to identify and detain a group of juvenile abu-bandits who terrorized passers-by and posted their actions on social media, and called themselves the ‘Azerbaijani mafia’]*. The lexeme *mafia* has the semantic components ‘organized group’ and ‘illegal means’, which contribute to the idea of the collective criminal threat to the locals.

CRIMES RELATED TO MIGRANTS

These frames are mainly concerned with **crimes against public order**, committed by Russian citizens. The main slots are systematized in Table 2. 6 keywords appear in the posts a total of 396 times.

Table 2. Structure of CRIMES RELATED TO MIGRANTS frame
Таблица 2. Структура фрейма CRIMES RELATED TO MIGRANTS

subframe	slot	lexical markers / keywords	frequency	Total
Crimes against public order	legalization of migrants	<i>illegal migrants</i>	254	325
		<i>fictitious papers</i>	33	
		<i>fictitious registration</i>	25	
		<i>covering up</i>	13	
	organization of criminal communities	<i>“rubber” apartments</i>	38	71
<i>illegal hostels</i>		33		
Total			396	396

Framing generates the idea that the local criminals make money on managing and building illegal hostels for migrant workers and legalization of migrants in general. The traditional explanation of the criminal businessmen is the ‘treatment’ of foreigners in domestic sanatoriums or rest houses. Due to

the framing, the following related aspects of the criminal activities become visible.

The **legalization of migrants** slot addresses the general issue of *illegal migrants*, *fictitious papers*, *fictitious registration*. Cf.: *В Петербурге накрыли преступную группу, которая за три года*

легализовала более 100 тысяч мигрантов [A criminal group has been caught in St. Petersburg, which **has legalized** more than 100,000 **migrants** in three years.]. The frame also deals with *covering up* illegal migrants. This draws attention to the criminal deeds of people working in the police. Cf.: *Задержали начальника отделения участковых полиции. Его подозревают в том, что он за деньги прикрывал нелегальных мигрантов* [The head of the district police department was detained. He is suspected of **covering up illegal migrants** for money].

The **organization of criminal communities** slot includes keywords with the semantics of ‘violation of migration legislation’: *illegal hostels*, *“rubber” apartments* (Rus. *резиновые квартиры*, a living space, in which dozens of migrants are registered but do not actually live). Cf.:

Силовики распотрошили несколько «резиновых квартир» и поймали более 200 нарушителей миграционного законодательства [The security forces raided **several “rubber apartments”** and caught more than 200 **violators of migration legislation**].

Besides the above analyzed varieties of the CRIMES frame, another important frame related to labour migrants has been revealed — **DELINQUENCIES BY MIGRANTS**. Delinquencies are minor offenses that differ from crimes punishable under the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation. They feature deviant behaviour of labour migrants characterized by the denial of social norms and values accepted in the Russian culture. The main slots are systematized in Table 3. 5 keywords appear in the posts a total of 121 times.

Table 3. Structure of DELINQUENCIES BY MIGRANTS frame
Таблица 3. Структура фрейма DELINQUENCIES BY MIGRANTS

subframe	slot	lexical markers / keywords	frequency	Total
Conflict-provoking behaviour	<i>rituals in public places</i>	<i>namaz</i>	30	59
		<i>butchering sheep</i>	29	
	<i>organization of illegal mosques</i>	<i>prayer houses</i>	19	33
		<i>illegal mosques</i>	14	
Criminal-related ideology	<i>spread of convict ideology</i>	<i>AUE</i>	29	29
Total			121	121

The frame highlights committing actions contrary to ethics and morality, demonstration of irresponsibility and disregard for the laws and rights of the country. Two aspects of this frame come to the fore. They are **conflict-provoking behaviour of migrants** and spread of **criminal-related ideology**. The conflict-provoking behaviour of migrants is antisocial in the sense that it is harmful to society as they tend to show disrespect of Russian traditions and culture. The most shocking examples for the locals are the things such as organizing mosques in residential buildings,

celebrating Eid al-Fitr (feast marking the end of Ramadan) at sports schools, reading namaz (prayer) at the workplace, slaughtering, butchering, skinning sheep in parking lots, courtyards of schools, near the playgrounds. Cf.: *В Православный храм заглянул ваххабит по имени <...> и заявил священнику, что собирается устроить намаз прямо в церкви* [A Wahhabi named <...> looked into the **Orthodox church** and told the priest that he was going to read **namaz** right in the church].

The **criminal-related ideology** is known as *AUE ideology* (convict-Urkagan

unity, banned in the Russian Federation) (Rus. *AUE* — *арестантский уклад един*). The abbreviation was invented by the thieves in law back in the Soviet times. It is an informal (mostly youth) movement, whose participants adhere to criminal concepts, support and recognize the authorities of the criminal world, forcibly impose their opinions on peers, projecting prison behavioral patterns on relationships with others. Cf.: *Малолетние проповедники ауге-идеологии из Средней Азии организовались в банду, чтобы заниматься рэккетом, грабежом и избиванием местных жителей [Juvenile preachers of AUE-ideology from Central Asia organized into a gang to engage in racketeering, robbery and beating of local residents]*. The migrant workers from Asia are framed as criminals, violating the Russian laws. Their collective image is growing stereotypical, it is enhanced by the negative representations of their illegal activity and delinquencies. Through this evaluative lens the users of Telegram perceive the ethnic minorities as threatening their identity, doing harm and interfering with their lives.

Conclusion

Frame analysis was employed to get a deeper understanding of the mechanisms of representation of labour migration on Russian Telegram, which has made it possible to draw the following conclusions. The case study has shown that the framing of the migrant workers from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, Armenia rests on the discursive co-activation of different conceptual structures. LAW & ORDER is the all-encompassing structure, or a macro frame, observable as a result of the world-modeling in the discourse. It is constituted by issue-specific frames that provide more detailed interpretations of the labour migration in the current socio-political setting.

Three frame structures have been identified in relation to the migrants, working and living in Russia. The most granular and, thus, the most dominant is the **Crimes by migrants** frame. It problematizes the social issue in several aspects with the foci on

multiple offences committed by the migrant workers. The most serious crimes are against life and health, sexual freedom, public health and morality, property, public safety and order. The **Crimes related to migrants** frame galvanizes offences such as the organization of criminal groups, and the legalization of migrants, carried out by the locals to earn money. The **Delinquencies by migrants** frame highlights their breaking the rules of behaviour, neglecting cultural norms and traditions of the locals, and imposing their own rituals to the residents. Both frames tighten the links of association between a heightened risk of deviance on the part of the ethnic groups and the victimization of ordinary Russian people.

The process of framing has strong implications in the discursive portrayal of the social actors, enhancing the stereotypes about the outgroups. The specifics of framing set up migrant workers from Asia as a mounting threat to the cultural identity and the internal security of the local people. Negative presentation of the labour migrants stands out as the leading discursive strategy. Its realization contributes to the stigmatized collective image. As the Telegram discourse is becoming more publicly influential worldwide, the research of framing labour migration on thematically related channels is relevant and necessary. Further investigation could shed light on other aspects of the social issue, find ways of their deproblematization, reduce xenophobia and ethnocentrism on-line and off-line and, in the long run, contribute to solving the problems of adaptation of migrant workers in Russia.

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Автор прочитал и одобрил окончательный вариант рукописи.

The author has read and approved the final manuscript.

Конфликты интересов: у автора нет конфликтов интересов для декларации.

Conflicts of interests: the author has no conflicts of interest to declare.

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