Advances in Science and Humanities



Advances in Science and Humanities, 2026, 59–62

doi: 10.70728/human.v02.i07.015
Volume 02, Issue 07
ISSN: 3060-5393
Paper

PAPER

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS IN ETHNIC RELATIONS (A CASE STUDY OF THE FERGANA VALLEY IN THE 1980S)

O.O. Bazarov[1,*]

[1]Kokand State University

* bazarov974@gmail.com

Abstract

This article analyzes ethnic relations in the Fergana Valley during the 1980s from the perspective of social psychology. The study reveals that, alongside economic and political determinants, factors such as mass psychology, group identification, stereotypes, and the information environment played a significant role in the emergence and escalation of ethnic conflicts. Furthermore, the article develops practical recommendations aimed at preventing ethnic conflicts by addressing underlying social psychological mechanisms.

Key words: Ethnic relations, social psychology, Fergana events, mass psychology, group identification, stereotypes, ethnic conflicts, information environment, social justice, tolerance.

Introduction

In the context of global globalization and the intensification of religious and ethno-political processes, the analysis of interethnic relations and ethnic conflicts has become increasingly relevant. Following the independence of Uzbekistan, interethnic harmony and tolerance have been established as key priorities of state policy. At the same time, the tragic events that occurred in the Fergana Valley in 1989 have emerged as one of the most significant research topics for historians and social scientists in the contemporary period [1].

The primary objective of studying this historical period is to identify the conditions that led to the emergence of ethnic conflicts through an analysis of social psychological factors, and to draw conclusions aimed at preventing similar conflicts in the future. In addition to socio-economic determinants, elements inherent to social psychology—such as mass psychology, group identity, stereotypes, and rumor dynamics—constitute an essential component of the ethnic environment. This article focuses on analyzing the

Compiled on: April 15, 2026.
Copyright:©2026 by the authors. Submitted to Advances in Science and Humanities for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) 4.0 license.

events of the 1980s in the Fergana Valley from the perspective of the psychology of ethnic relations [2].

Literature Review and Methods

The study of the social psychology of interethnic relations is grounded in the principles of historicity, objectivity, and systematic analysis, which serve as fundamental methodological guidelines. This research draws upon a diverse range of sources, including archival documents, official resolutions, mass media materials, eyewitness accounts, and sociological surveys. The works of scholars such as R. Nazarov, R. Murtazayeva, X. Yunusova, and Z. Haydarov provide the theoretical foundation for the ethnopsychological approach employed in this study. The dynamics of ethnic conflict are analyzed within the frameworks of ethnic identity theory, intergroup relations psychology, social identity theory, and information–rumor theories [2].

In addition, statistical data and demographic indicators were examined using a comparative analytical approach. Content analysis methods were applied to better understand the ideological and cultural environment shaped by Soviet national policy. These methodological approaches made it possible to explore the interconnections between economic factors, political decisions, social stereotypes, and mass psychological processes [1].

Results and Discussion

By the 1980s, the Fergana Valley had become one of the most densely populated and economically active regions of Uzbekistan. However, the dominance of the cotton monoculture policy, demographic pressure, unemployment, food supply shortages, and structural imbalances in industrial sectors led to a decline in the living standards of the local population. Evidence from dissertation materials indicates that a significant portion of the working-age population migrated to other regions of the country or abroad in search of employment, while those who remained faced limited opportunities in the domestic labor market. Under such conditions, collective perceptions of social injustice intensified, giving rise to growing waves of public discontent [1].

At the same time, socio-economic decline alone cannot fully explain the emergence of ethnic conflicts. As highlighted in previous research, despite the forced resettlement of Meskhetian Turks to the Fergana Valley in 1944–1945, the Uzbek population demonstrated a high level of tolerance, allowing for decades of relatively peaceful coexistence. This suggests that poverty, unemployment, and other economic hardships do not automatically lead to ethnic tensions; rather, factors such as mass psychology, intergroup stereotypes, and the information environment play a decisive role in shaping conflict dynamics [1].

A key concept in the social psychology of ethnic relations is the distinction between "in-group" and "out-group" categories. The identification of individuals with a particular ethnic group significantly influences their behavior and perceptions. During the Fergana events, the local population primarily identified themselves as belonging to the Uzbek ethnic group. However, due to Soviet national policy, while formal equality among ethnic groups was proclaimed, in practice administrative governance was often carried out by officials unfamiliar with the local language and cultural context. This contributed to growing distrust toward what was perceived as an "alien" authority and reinforced the belief that local interests were not adequately represented [11].

Moreover, stereotypes and rumor dynamics exerted a significant influence on interethnic relations. In the period leading up to the 1989 Fergana tragedy, Meskhetian Turks were frequently discussed in public gatherings, often in connection with sensitive issues such as housing and land distribution. False information and rumors circulated widely. The lack of transparency in information flows, combined with political restrictions on freedom of expression, prevented the dissemination of accurate information about social problems. As a result, rumors persisted within the collective consciousness, gradually intensifying social tensions [6].

Errors in personnel policy also had a negative impact on ethnic relations. Leaders who lacked knowledge of the local language and culture often failed to consider the needs and sensitivities of

the population in their decision-making processes. This led to increased distrust and contributed to the emergence of a "we versus they" dichotomy. In this context, it is essential to recognize that mass psychological factors played a critical mediating role in linking socio-economic decline with interethnic tensions [1].

Another important factor influencing intergroup relations was the emotional instability characteristic of mass psychology. During the escalation of the Fergana events, official authorities responded slowly and ineffectively in fulfilling their responsibilities. In the absence of timely and transparent communication, crowd psychology intensified, and collective emotions began to dominate over individual rationality, leading to irrational actions. The spread of misinformation, competitive tensions, rumor amplification, and the lack of empathy significantly aggravated the situation [10].

At the same time, it is important to emphasize the positive role of social psychological factors. Archival records and eyewitness accounts indicate that many Uzbek families protected Meskhetian Turks during the violence, providing them with shelter and food. These examples demonstrate that traditions of tolerance, solidarity, and humanitarian values were deeply rooted in the social psychological environment. Thus, social psychological factors can function in both destructive and constructive ways, depending on the broader socio-political context [1].

Conclusion

The analysis demonstrates that social psychological factors played a decisive role in the history of ethnic relations in the Fergana Valley, interacting closely with economic and political conditions. While socio-economic decline, shortcomings in personnel policy, and the lack of political transparency created the structural preconditions for conflict, mechanisms such as mass psychology, stereotypes, and group identification largely determined the trajectory and intensity of ethnic tensions [1].

First, economic crisis intensifies feelings of relative deprivation and social injustice among group members. In such contexts, individuals tend to seek those responsible for the deterioration of their living conditions. When information transparency is low and reliable sources are scarce, rumors and misinformation often lead to the stigmatization of particular ethnic groups as perceived sources of the problem [11].

Second, communication and information flows play a critical role in the emergence and escalation of ethnic conflicts. Under Soviet ideological conditions, mass media functioned primarily as instruments of state propaganda, limiting the formation of independent public opinion. This created fertile ground for misinformation, rumors, and provocation. Empirical research suggests that when diverse perspectives are openly communicated, intergroup trust increases and stereotypes weaken [2].

Third, group-based identification processes significantly influence collective behavior during mass mobilization. During the Fergana events, collective emotions prevailed over individual reasoning, fostering irrational actions and violent outcomes. Such phenomena are commonly conceptualized in the literature as "crowd psychology." Therefore, during periods of social tension, timely and transparent communication by state institutions, as well as the facilitation of dialogue between stakeholders, is of critical importance [11].

Fourth, it is essential to acknowledge the constructive potential of positive social psychological factors. Evidence indicates that during the Fergana tragedy, many individuals not only protected their own families but also assisted Meskhetian Turks by providing shelter and resources. These examples highlight the enduring presence of tolerance, solidarity, and humanitarian values within society. Historical experience demonstrates that intercultural dialogue, neighborly relations, and trust-building initiatives can significantly contribute to conflict prevention [1].

Overall, this study has examined the role of social psychological factors in ethnic relations through the case of the Fergana events in late 20th-century Uzbekistan. The findings suggest that although economic decline, political deficiencies, and weaknesses in personnel policy create the conditions for conflict, a deeper understanding of

conflict dynamics requires close attention to social psychological mechanisms. Elements such as group identification, stereotypes, rumor dissemination, information deficits, and emotionally driven mass behavior collectively shape the development of ethnic conflicts [1].

The identification and analysis of social psychological factors in interethnic relations carry important practical implications for policymakers, sociologists, and educational institutions. Based on the findings, the following recommendations can be proposed: (1) ensuring socio-economic justice and equality through targeted programs addressing unemployment and demographic pressures; (2) enhancing information transparency and promoting media pluralism; (3) reforming personnel policies to prioritize local language proficiency, cultural competence, and effective communication skills; (4) integrating education on tolerance, multiculturalism, and the history of interethnic relations into curricula; and (5) expanding cultural and educational initiatives aimed at fostering mutual respect among ethnic groups [1].

In conclusion, social psychological factors in ethnic relations operate in close interaction with broader structural conditions. The historical lessons of the Fergana events remain highly relevant today, emphasizing the importance of proactive strategies to ensure social cohesion, stability, and interethnic harmony [1].

References

1. Bozorov O. O. XX asrning 80-yillarida O‘zbekistondagi millatlararo munosabatlar tarixi (Farg‘ona fojiasi misolida). – Toshkent: 2019.
2. Nazarov R. Millatlararo munosabatlar tarixi va etnopsixologik jarayonlar. – Toshkent: Fan, 2018.
3. Yunusova X. Mazkur mustaqillik davrida etnik munosabatlarning o‘zaro ta’siri. – Samarqand: 2017.
4. Murtazayeva R. Farg‘ona vodiysi ijtimoiy-iqtisodiy taraqqiyoti: tarix va tajriba. – Toshkent: 2015.
5. Haydarov Z. Etnik konfliktologiya: nazariya va amaliyot. – Toshkent: Universitet, 2016.
6. Kenjabek M. Farg‘ona fojiasi sabablari va ijtimoiy muhiti. – Toshkent: 1993.
7. Sagitov R. Sovet milliy siyosati va O‘zbekistondagi etnik jarayonlar. – Toshkent: 2010.
8. Abdullayev Sh. Uzbekistonda etnik munosabatlar tarixi va qadriyatlari. – Toshkent: 2014.
9. Musayev O. Etnopolitik jarayonlar va etnik diasporalar. – Toshkent: 2012.
10. Le Bon G. The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind. – London: 1895.
11. Tajfel H., Turner J. An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict // The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations. – Monterey: 1979.