Challenges of Ukrainian Refugees in Germany: Resources for Women's Empowerment

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Abstract

We are currently witnessing one of the biggest waves of refugee's influx to the EU (forced migrants); 90% of them are women and children. This paper deals with the gender sensitive approach to migration based on a study of the challenges and adaptation strategies of Ukrainian refugees in Germany. In June 2022, an online poll of 430 Ukrainian refugees was conducted by the author that included two open questions about the problems refugees faced since their arrival to Germany. The subsequently undertaken content-analysis on a grounded theory basis allows the author to describe the variety of topics, which occurred in the answers and group the challenges of respondents accordingly: adaptation, uncertainty future, separation, lack of social connections, complicated emotional state. The difference in social-demographic portraits of Ukrainian refuges (i.e. mostly female, mostly with children…) from the previous waves of refugees (i.e. Syria, Afghanistan) gives the opportunity to identify the specificity of female refugees' needs. The paper added to research of emotional challenges of refugees that are shaped by the experience of grief, loss, shame, guilt, fear, pain, loneliness, helplessness. Challenges are considered to be resources for women's empowerment, providing changes in power structures and social institutions.

Keywords: Ukrainian refugees; gender sensitive approach to migration; emotions; needs; adaptation

Introduction

In recent decades one of the biggest trends noted in migration studies is feminization (Piper, 2006; Hennebry & Petrozziello, 2019). We are currently witnessing the biggest feminized wave of refugees to the EU, when 90% of refugees are women and children (the main reason is - only a few categories of men have legal permission to leave Ukraine). That gives the unique opportunity to investigate the specificity of female refugees' experiences, better understanding of migration processes by adding to the existing knowledge-gap of feminized forced migration. Germany has accepted more than 1 mln Ukrainian refugees on temporary

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protection (UNHCR, 2022). The country has one of the biggest policy making experiences of refugee acceptance: in 2021 Germany reported about 1.24 million refugees and 233 000 asylum seekers, which makes it the biggest destination country for refugees in Europe before war 2022 (UNHCR, 2021).

> Who are those people fled to Germany and what does their life look like? What are the problems Ukrainian refugees face with? What are their needs and how do they change with time? In this paper main challenges of Ukrainian refugees in Germany are identified by drawing on open-ended survey questions (423 responses collected in Germany, response rate to open questions - 99%) .

The content-analysis on a grounded theory basis of collected data reveals main groups of respondent`s challenges: adaptation, uncertain future, separation, lack of social connections, complicated emotional state, lack of self-development opportunities. To fully capture the empirical and theoretical content of collected data, the findings are theorized through a gender sensitive approach to migration. Such an approach gives the opportunity not to limit the vision of the female refugee group to vulnerability, but to highlight those challenges as the resource of overcoming gender inequality, providing empowerment and changes in the social institutions such as the family, labor market. Also, such gender analysis of challenges and their dynamics could be helpful in improving migrant policies, because challenges reflect unsatisfied needs.

The following research examines the gender sensitive approach to migration. Then methodology on data collection, coding and analysis will be presented, and the findings will be presented in two following sections. First, the dynamics of needs depending on the stage of adaptation will be presented. Second, the emotional challenges of Ukrainian refugees will be delineated. Next, in the discussion section it is shown the way those challenges determine different adaptation and gender equality outcomes. Overall, three contributions to the sociology of forced migration studies are made. The variety of challenges and their dynamics based on the adaptation stages is described. The diversity of emotional states of refugees that previously appeared in scientific literature only in the context of depression, PTSD or other serious psychological disorders is revealed. Emotions are seen to be incorporated into all life aspects and could add to understanding the drivers, barriers of refugees actions, models of behavior. It is argued that those challenges of female refugees contribute to empowerment, that it is characterized by a high degree of autonomy and self-determination, which in turn causes changes in power structures and social institutions.

Gender sensitive approach to migration

During a long period of time migrant policies ignored women's specific experiences and needs (Freedman, 2017; Clarence, 2017). While it is understood that those experiences and needs have their specifics in comparison to other gender groups because of different social roles, access to resources, because of educational, pay gaps, stereotypes, discrimination experience.

N. Piper named three main reasons for the migrant policies' different impact on men and women: gender-segregated labor market (influence on migrant flow) both at home and destination country, gendered socio-economic power structures, sociocultural roles (Piper, 2006). It works for both refugees and migrants because the dynamics of their adaptation and

coping with challenges strategies depend on flexibility and resources to integrate to existing socio-economic and socio-cultural and economic structures.

Another scientist H. Lutz noted that gender differences become visible in three main areas: 1) global care chain (the term was invented by A. Hochschild to describe a pattern of women who leave their own families to care children in more developed countries (Hochschild, 2015); 2) family relations constructed both by mobile and immobile family members or defined by pregnancy and caring for children (Allison, 2023); 3) transnational families, including motherhood and other gender roles changes caused by migration processes (Lutz, 2010). What we observe with the case of Ukrainian refugees are changes in family structures (because of separation), changes in femininity and masculinity concepts (because of social roles transformation).

Important are works tried to distinguish refugee and migrant experiences. Thus D. S. FitzGerald and R. Arar named political rather than economic reasons for refugees, that allows the consideration of refugee studies as part of migration studies. They explained violence drives made refugees to search for a safe place, both inside and outside of their home country, giving preference to internal displacement (FitzGerald & Arar, 2018). In case of Ukrainian refugees we also observe huge wave of internally displaced people, but at the same time open borders with Poland, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia (even before the war Ukraine has the agreement which provides visa-free trips for Ukrainian citizens with biometric passports to the EU for up to 90 days) caused the wave of refugees to EU, that actualizes the investigations on drivers /barriers to leave/stay in Ukraine according to gender profile, as well as factors which influence the choice of the country (for example, existence of friends, relatives abroad, transport connections or own transport, geographical (the nearest safe country), pragmatic, social, infrastructural or other factors). In general, the difference between migrants and refugees lies in two main factors: ability to plan and prepare their migration, differences at the legal and institutional regimes (Castles, Korac, Vasta, Vertovec, 2002). Those differences give the explanation between migrants and refugees differences in coping strategies and adaptation dynamics that depend on existing (or prepared in case of migrants) resources (financial, emotional, language skills and others).

Another part of studies focuses on specific traits that make women migrant experience different. Thus J. L. Hennebry and A. J. Petrozziello argue that women migrants face different inequalities and discrimination that prevent their full participation in social, political and economic life. Migrant policies in that way can be gender negative (when gender norms, roles and stereotypes are used to reproduce gender inequality), gender sensitive (that make an effort to solve existing gender inequality, but leave structural inequalities unaddressed), and gender transformative (focused on structural inequalities by transformation of power relations, resources distribution, decision-making, and support for women's empowerment (Hennebry, J. L., & Petrozziello, A. J. , 2019).

In paper gender sensitive approach is used in a more broad way to describe both gender sensitive and gender transformative features, because gender transformation and mainstreaming are based on gender sensitivity - the ability to analyze the reasons and consequences of forced migration on different gender groups.

Sociological focus is on how changes in social structures and social institutions through inequality and sense of belonging are linked to different forms of people's mobility (Amelina

& Horvath, 2017). Thus, the differences in gender order of home and destination countries are the drivers and also barriers for women's migrant flows. In refugee cases when movement is not planned, such differences may influence the adaptation and integration processes: their form and content as well as speed. The Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI) describes the current state of gender (in)equality as well as dynamics by using four key indicators: economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment. The comparative analysis of Gender order in Germany and Ukraine shows similar numbers describing economic participation and opportunity (that means women both in Ukraine (0.710) and Germany (0.695) are highly included into labor market), educational attainment (that means women both in Ukraine (0,995) and Germany (0,988) have access to all types of education), health and survival (that means women both in Ukraine (0.978) and Germany (0.972) have access to all types of medical services education). At the same time there is a significant difference in political empowerment (in Ukraine (0,145) women are mostly excluded from the sphere of political decision making, while in Germany (0,550) they are not (WEF GGGR, 2022). Gender profiles of two countries seem similar, which raises the research question "is such similarity of Gender profile makes adaptation and integration easier?" On the one hand, it should be easier to adapt to a new country if it has a similar social-cultural structure, on the other hand, the decrease in social status makes it more complex and leads to social effects of rejection, prostration.

According to M. Boyd and E. Grieco, gender is seen as a key dimension of migration and related processes, it influences the adaptation to the new country, and the way of connection with the home country. The scientists distinguished three main stages where gender relations and roles impact the migration process and produce different outcomes for men and women: the stage of decision making at individual, family and societal levels, the stage of transition and the migrants' experiences in the destination country (Boyd & Grieco, 2014).

The main points for us here are: 1) migrant/refugees processes should be analyzed according to the different stages, that specify refugees experience; 2) individual, family, societal factors should be taken into account, however those factors are significant at all stages of adaptation, not only at pre-migration stage; 3) stage "the migrants' experiences in the destination country" is too long-term and diverse, that is why it is better to be divided into several stages to reflect the dynamics of adaptation process. In situation with Ukrainian refugees the sociological focus are status changes (usually people with high status in their previous life are affected the most), variety of career trajectories, phenomenon of remote work, volunteer work, transnational career opportunities and etc., variety of adaptation strategies of women (and their (non)correspondence with age, education…), family paradoxes and transformations (paradox of single parent with separated father, husband, phenomenon of social institution of family transformation into virtual one) etc.

Recent studies highlighted the necessity in research based on migrants and refugees' own concepts and understandings, as well as on non-limiting them by vulnerable position and powerlessness (Klassen, 2022; Gilodi, Albert & Nienaber, 2022; Walter, 2023). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) also underlines that migrant policy should empower migrants at national, regional, global levels, as well as reduce their insecurities on the rights-based approach (OECD, 2019).

M. Boyd and E. Grieco emphasize that migration may change gender relations and transform gender identities (Boyd & Grieco, 2014). We observe it with the case of Ukrainian refugees.

In Ukraine the majority of people employed in the education sphere are women with middle or even low average level salaries, while in Germany education is a more prestigious profession with competitive salaries. In the situation of the lack of teachers a lot of teachers-refugees received work contracts, with an additional rise of male unemployment in Ukraine, it makes those women financially independent, even the main breadwinners in the family. In addition to the economic factors, separation from a family and leaving the country also influence increasing impact on decision making, power and status, higher level of autonomy and independence.

Forced displacement for lots of Ukrainian women leads to gender roles changes, transformation of families, rising of load and responsibilities, at the same time contributing to their empowerment by establishing the sense of self-worth (they survive by themselves), by expansion of choices and decision freedom (taking control of their life). At the same time such "forced" empowerment costs are huge emotional and physical overloads. It should be also mentioned, that the forced migration influenced differently on different groups of women: for some groups of women (younger, likely to be without dependent people or with elder children) displacement activated their individual resources and became the push-factor to study, work, adapt and integrate, while for other groups (older, with minor children or other dependants) displacement leads to increase of domestic and care unpaid work level (that is one of the main barriers to integration to labor market), loss of support they normally had in home country.

Thus, to track and explain changes caused by forced migration of Ukrainians, as well as to examine needs and challenges a gender sensitive approach will be used in the following sections.

Methodology

In this paper the unique dataset of Ukrainian refugees is used. The survey was conducted (Germany, June 2022, n = 423) using the online questionnaire tool Google Forms. The invitation to participate in the survey was sent through groups of Ukrainian refugees on social networks Telegram and Facebook. Those groups were created mostly by people with migrant roots to help refugees, to give them algorithms of actions, and answer questions. Telegram and Facebook are the most popular media channels for communication in Ukraine and here in Germany they unite refugees, almost every city has its own group(s).

In the questionnaire title and link it was emphasized that the author did not collect any personal information and that participating in the survey was anonymous and voluntary. The language of the survey was Ukrainian.

Questionnaire consists of nine questions (7 -closed and 2- opened): 4 questions used to assess the components of national identity, 3 questions describes respondents profile (gender, age, location), 2 open questions were added to understand the living context of Ukrainian refugees in Germany, but collected data were so rich that allow to present separate paper on those answers.

Those open questions characterize refugees' needs and challenges: 1. What was the most difficult thing for you personally after moving abroad? 2. What problems are relevant for you now? Here the first question is the retrospective to the time of arriving, while the second is about respondent's present time (the survey took place in June 2022).

The unexpected response rate to open questions was very high - 99% of respondents texted their answers. Those answers become the basis of that paper. There are several reasons for such a high response rate: need to share own experience (to be heard and seen), researcher-refugee (it was mentioned in the invitation that the researcher is a refugee by her own, so it can be considered as an act of solidarity), novelty (it was the first or one of the earliest conducted research).

Table 1 provides the demographic details of respondents.

Table 1. Demographic description of respondents (% of Total)

Age	Gender		
	female	male	other
under 25	64 (15.1%)	16 (3.8%)	2 (0.5%)
from 26 to 45	252 (59.6%)	24 (5.7%)	1 (0.2%)
over 46	55 (13.0%)	8 (1.9%)	1 (0.2%)

The online survey is not representative, at the same time the portrait of the respondents corresponds in general with the portrait of Ukrainian refugees in Germany according to the IAB-BiB/FReDA-BAMF-SOEP Survey on Ukrainian Refugees in Germany (Brücker et al, 2023). Simultaneously in comparison to BAMF data at presented research there is low probability for people older than 60 years to be present in the sample (because of invitation shared through social media), and at the same time there is a possibility for people younger than 18 years to be present in the sample (for the same reason).

The author inductively analyzed survey's qualitative data using the MAXQDA software, manually coded the qualitative answers following a grounded-theory approach to content-analysis. The goal was to identify as many themes as possible to capture the diversity and complexity of respondents' experiences. Figure 1 shows main themes that emerged from data analysis.

Figure 1. Main themes emerged from answers to open-ended questions

Source: compiled by the author on the basis of own research compiled on the basis of the author's research

As we can see in Figure 1, the answers of respondents are connected with barriers and difficulties, which formed the core group of challenges. Respondents were focused on adapting to their new lives in Germany in terms of language skills, healthcare, childcare, the search for housing and employment.

Prevalent topic in answers is separation from relatives (partner, parents or elder children), from home, that causes daily worries for those who stay, the war as the main reason for separation, and aid to Ukraine as a coping strategy.

Quite often respondents expressed their concern about the future, its uncertainty. In the social sphere people mentioned such problems as lack of friends and communication, new environment, mentality.

Emotional challenges of refugees were very notable during the analysis process, they are interrelated with other themes, nonetheless they formed a separate group of challenges. In previous research on refugees the emotional sphere is often missed or stayed latent, appearing only in the context of serious disorders like depression or PTSD .

Theme named Self was quite rare in answers but added to understanding the diversity of refugees, those people who had high status and good jobs and now faced with complexity or inability of self-realization.

Difficulties expected during conducting research were: availability of respondents, sensitivity and trauma of respondents, open questions (usually response rate to open questions is approximately 10% or less).

The context of research is limited to exact time and place, that is why the data gathered in June 2022 reflect the concrete situation for Ukrainian refugees in Germany and may change over time.

The primary focus was on female refugees, male and other gender answers were also analyzed but primarily used to understand the peculiarity of female experience.

To present the findings, first, the dynamics of needs will be outlined, second, emotional challenges will be described.

Dynamics of needs depending on the stage of adaptation

There are several stages of refugee adaptation and respectively there are different needs at those stages. By adaptation it is understood the one-way attempt to modify certain aspects of cultural practice accordingly to the destination country's norms and values, while integration is seen as two-way process of adaptation of both new and existing members of society, leading mutual change in values, norms and behavior (Castles, Korac, Vasta, Vertovec, 2002). There is no commonly accepted classification of adaptation stages. Describing migration process stages the simplest classification is: initial stage of temporary work abroad, transnational commuting, permanent settlement (Friberg, 2012). In 2018, at the National Action Plan on Integration five phases of migration and integration were elaborated: "1) pre-immigration phase (managing expectations - providing orientation), 2) initial integration phase (facilitating arrival - communicating values), 3) integration phase (enabling participation - demanding and promoting performance); 4) phase of growing together (shaping diversity - securing unity); 5)

phase of cohesion (strengthening cohesion - shaping the future)" (European Commission, 2018).

There are several attempts to investigate the needs of refugees. Thus the project "Addressing the diversity of needs and aspirations of asylum-seekers" realized by The Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity (MPI, 2017) highlighted the diversity of institutional actors involved in asylum-seekers integration, diversity of asylum-seekers social characteristics, diversity of needs and aspirations. Gender specificity of living conditions of asylum seekers accommodated in temporary accommodation centers in Greece was analyzed by F. Marmani (Marmani, 2022).

However such research mostly present specific stage of adaptation while it is important to track the dynamics of needs, that is quite a complicated task requiring longitudinal study or other methods. Presented research is focused on the challenges Ukrainian female refugees faced (there were no direct questions about needs and challenges and it has the advantages: problems, respondents mentioned in their answers, reflect those needs that were not satisfied). The author also tried to see changes in challenges and needs, their dynamics according to different stages of the Ukrainian refugees adaptation process, which became possible due to retrospective question use. So, the difference in the presented model of adaptational stages is a combination of the European Commission model with diversity of needs on the basis of conducted research data, observation. The model has its limitations and can't describe other refugee waves, it is relevant to the Ukrainian refugees case.

Figure 2. Model of adaptation stages and needs of Ukrainian refugees

Source: compiled by the author on the basis of own research

The zero stage – the pre-adaptation - before-crossing stage is important for analyzing decision-making process about leaving/staying.

The first stage – the initial adaptation - describes transition period of crossing the board and up to first days, week. For the first stage the most important task is establishing safety, finding shelter, satisfying basic needs - sleep, food, clothes. At that stage most people are vulnerable because of disorientation, tiredness, exhaustion.

The second stage – the primary adaptation - characterizes specific needs (legal, medical, psychological, social). In case of Ukrainian refugees it usually takes up to 1-2 months to receive a temporary document - Erlaubnisfiktion (to confirm their legal status). Also during that period a lot of people applied for financial support from Sozialmt. Medical care was also possible on request to Sozialmt. It should be mentioned that during the primary adaptation period a lot of Ukrainian refugees stayed with their friends, relatives or host families. As paper work starts, the need of accompaniment arises, also informing about an easy and clear algorithm of action. In case of Ukrainian refugees one of the main agents of accompaniment became social media - telegram channels and Facebook groups for Ukrainian refugees organized by volunteers, often former migrants.

The third stage – the secondary adaptation - characterizes integration into education (start of integrational courses for adults, start of school education for children) and medical spheres (majority of Ukrainian refugees apply for medical insurance in June and it was connected to their transition from Sozialamt to JobCenter). Registration of documents and legal status for the majority of Ukrainian refugees are at the registration stage or this registration procedure has already been completed. The range of needs and challenges become more complicated: new challenges are added (for example for those who stay in host families the necessity to find apartments appeared, a lot of people started or willing to start work or integrational courses, children started or wanted to start their education).

The fourth stage – the post-adaptation - is characterized by inclusion into educational and medical systems, inclusion into the labor market as well as building networks - social connections. For the majority of Ukrainian refugees have not reached that stage yet, a lot of them are waiting for their turn to start integrational courses, the network building and communication process with host society is quite complicated.

Fifth stage - return or settlement. At that stage refugees become no more refugees because of their returning home or settlement in the destination country (receiving another legal status). During research a lot of respondents mentioned their intention to return home as well as their worries of uncertain situation (status) in Germany because of war.

It is understood that time periods of stages are conditional and different groups of Ukrainian refugees accordingly to their internal (gender, age, education, language knowledge, own transport, dependencies, communicativeness, experience of trauma) and external resources (friend or family members abroad, working network, contacts) can move faster/ slower.

Mentioned internal and external resources play the major role in the adaptation process. One characteristic, for example, gender itself, can't give the explanation of the process, only a combination of characteristics can provide it. That is why we have the situation when the differences inside the refugee-group of Ukrainian women could be more significant when comparing with other gender groups.

Emotional challenges of Ukrainian refugees

Analyzing responses to the first open question "What was the most difficult thing for you personally after moving abroad?"(the question describes the second stage of adaptation). The map of female refugees' challenges was built. All the challenges are combined into five main groups: adaptation barriers, uncertain future, separation with relatives and friends, lack of social connections, complicated emotional state. Some groups of challenges appeared both in female and male answers: adaptation group (language, education, apartment, work, apartment care, bureaucracy, childcare), uncertain future, separation (but for women it is separation from partner, for men - parents, other relatives, missing home, worries for those who stayed, help Ukraine), social connections (lack of friends, unfamiliar environment), emotional state (grief, stress).

Some challenges were presented only in the female group: self (status, lack of freedom, self-realization), social connections (hostility, lack of communication, hobby), emotional state (fear, loneliness, pain, anxiety, fault, shame, guilt), separation (returning home).

Absence of Self -group challenges in male group can be explained by a small sample, absence of such a problem, not-willing to focus on that. The reason not to mention hostility of host society can be explained by hostility of home society against men who are expected to fight, such hate is visible in social media groups of refugees. The same reason men are likely not to mention returning home.

In data set there were four people that selected the option "other" in the gender question. Their answers are very similar to answers of female refugee group, but have additional challenges - stereotypes, new laws were mentioned. It is not enough for analysis, however LQBTQ refugees have for sure specific challenges and needs.

As we can see, the major differences are in emotional state, self and social connections groups. In that paper the main focus will be on the emotional group of challenges. It should be mentioned that appearance of this group of challenges is possible due to the primary attention given to female experience and gender sensitive approach to analysis. Besides it doesn't mean men do not experience emotions presented in female group, just because of socialization they are not allowed to talk about them, verbalize them. In Ukrainian society it is still taboo for men to show fear, pain, because they do not fit traditional masculinity. The author considered it one of the main reasons why fear, pain, anxiety are not present in male answers. Other possible reason is smaller ability for self-consciousness and verbalization of emotions.

According to one of the theorists of sociology of emotions P. Thoits, emotions involve: situational stimulus or context, changes in physiological or bodily sensations, the expressive gestures, and cultural label (Thoits, 1989). It is assumed that emotions are sociocultural products, thus those emotions female refugees experienced are the result of war, forced migration.

The aim of content-analysis was not only to define the emotional state of Ukrainian refugees but to show the context in which emotions appear (situation drivers) and are experienced, and open questions give such an option to understand what was the cause of emotion.

We observe the diversity of emotions refugees experience: grief, shame, guilt, fear, pain, loneliness, helplessness. Also they have experienced stress and lack of sleep, difficulty to

accept the situation, and loss of life control that can be shortly named "not my choice" (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Mapping emotional state of Ukrainian refugees (second stage of adaptation)
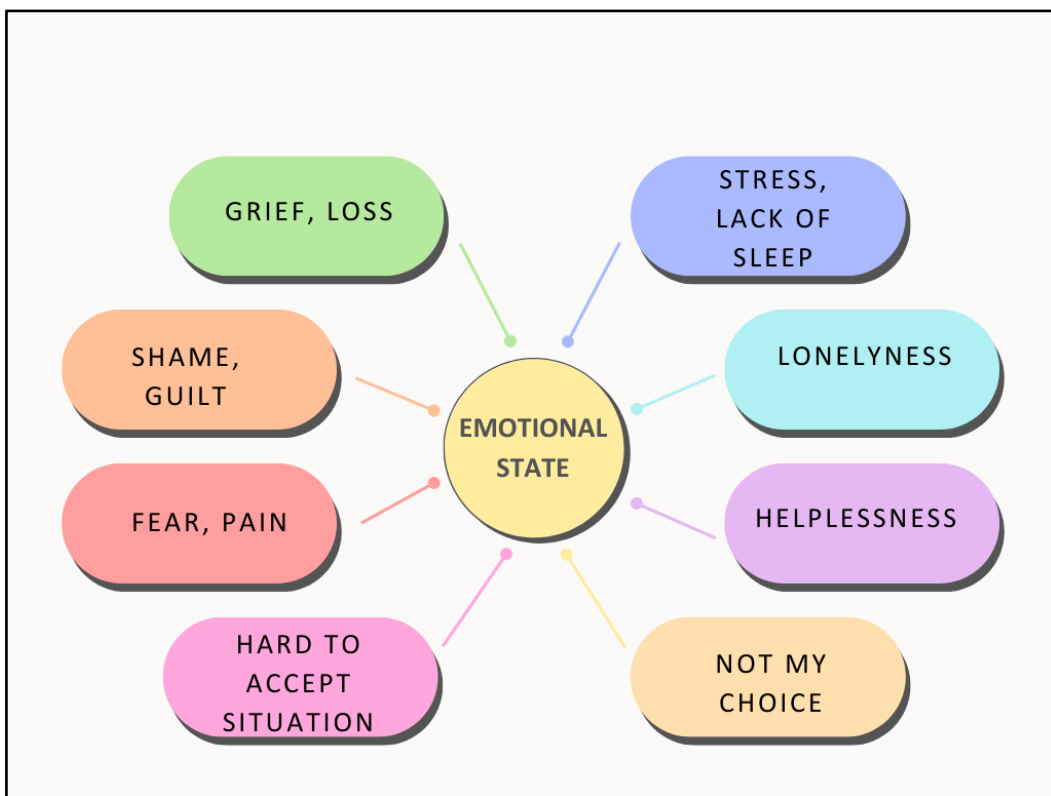
In respondent's responses grief and loss are described by missing relatives, friends, home, Ukraine, native city, and their own life*:*

"to live not in Ukraine and not to experience its grief together with our land", "grief for the home and loved ones", "I miss my homeland and my family".

Respondents were feeling shame, guilt for being safe abroad while relatives and friends are in Ukraine, when they are not able to protect the country, to forgive themself for leaving Ukraine. It is typical survivors' guilt (a particular kind of guilt that appears among people who have experienced a traumatic event and are safe when others died. Quite often such people believe they could influence the situation, help, but they didn't)*:*

"I feel guilty to the fact that my husband died at the war when I crossed the border and we were not at his funeral".

"I can't sleep peacefully, it's a shame that I'm abroad and my family and friends are in Ukraine, I feel separated from home, unable to defend my country".

"I still feel like a traitor, because it is the war in Ukraine, and I am not in Ukraine, it feels like I left it to one's fate".

"I have the feeling that it was necessary to be in territorial defense, or to volunteer, instead of being in Germany and going to language courses".

Pain is correlated in respondent's answers with experience of feeling pain for Ukraine, for people who stay in Ukraine, feel empathy for pain of other Ukrainians who lost their home, health, life*:*

"Being far from home, not having the opportunity to protect relatives and understanding that people die every day, children are left without parents, without a home, it is very painful to see and understand all this".

"It's hard to know there is no place to return, I feel pain for the people who remained".

"I feel pain for Ukraine, longing for my country, for my native city".

Fear mostly is caused by fear about relatives in Ukraine and for the country, for future and uncertainty, to stay without home and the living costs:

"I feel fear of the uncertainty, fear for the children's future, but also fear for the relatives who remain in Ukraine".

"All! Without clothes, with three children ... Where to live, what to eat and wear, what about medicine and school.... Life anew, only without knowledge of the language and laws... ".

"I do not understand how to build further life, I feel fear for the future and afraid of being left on the street".

"It is the fear for the future of Ukraine and a sense of uncertainty about how soon I will be able to return home".

"I read the news, because after leaving Ukraine I also worried about the people who remained there".

Helplessness, despair, loss of life control are about awareness that it is impossible to change anything, to help others. "Not my choice" - this feeling characterizes the specificity of refugees, who are also called forced migrants. Respondents wrote about their feeling of being abroad unwillingly, being forced to leave native country to protect children and themselves, and to understand the uncertainty of returning home*:*

"Understanding that I cannot help my Ukraine, the fact that I personally cannot change anything".

"Inability to defend the country, there is almost nothing you can do to help the Armed Forces, relatives and friends who remained there".

"The fact that my relatives, friends, colleagues are under daily attacks, and I can't help them. The feeling of "zeroing", the loss of one's own life, dreams, plans, future....".

"The thought that I will not be able to return home in the nearest future and it is not by my choice".

Loneliness was about feeling lonely, separated from relatives, understanding you are here on your own, apart from home, without support, in an unknown environment*:*

"It is difficult, because the mentality here is different, you feel like a stranger... It is very sad and painful, but you have a deep faith that you will return soon".

"Loneliness, *not having relatives around, no place to return to*".

"Being alone with two children aged 2.5 years and 8 months is not an easy task without support and help. To be without a husband who always supports, helps".

"Acceptance the situation" is connected with the classical 5 stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance, and are reflected in coded answers. Many people mentioned the unreality of the situation, how hard it is to accept the fact of war, of loss, of leaving, of being in a new country on uncertain terms, changes in life, status, career, regret of past life, plans, achievements… doubts about the choice to leave the country…feel vulnerable, be without work, find new self…break of expectations about Germany (even for those who were there it was hard to accept the previous experience much more different from the refugee experience)*:*

"To accept the situation and to believe that I am safe".

"Accepting this: the feeling that you made a mistake when you came here… It is difficult ..".

"Missing husband, rejection of reality, desire to return to normal life".

"To get out of the "saved" state, start doing something for yourself".

"To let go of the life I had before the war, awareness of reality".

"The thought that I may never return home, to adapt to the rules of another country".

"To let go of the life I have planned and which would never happen".

"To break away from material things (to leave with one backpack and a cat)".

"It hurts a lot to lose my job and not be able to earn money doing what I love, that's why I feel as vulnerable as possible… to start everything from scratch, to find myself again".

"To accept that it can be forever or for many years" .

Answers that helps to understand the psychological stress described by respondents:

"It's hard to live emotionally in two countries, I feel stressed, I have troubles with sleeping".

"I wish to return home, but I can't and I feel stressed, my life is in uncertainty mode".

"Awareness that people live like there is no war, no everyday people death".

"To drop everything and remain without support, I feel desperate".

Emotional needs of refugees are as important as other needs, and are shaped by their emotional state. It is known that refugees experienced trauma, depression, PTSD syndrome, sleep disorders, stress. Thus, the main emotional need - to have a safe space to share and express their emotions and/or unload the emotions in any legitimate activity. Thus, organizing support groups, art-therapy groups (or other mental health providing groups) for females, families, children, and multilingual refugees hotlines can be helpful.

If we compare answers in female and male groups there is a difference: the range of emotions in female answers is wider. It can be the result of both less representation of male in the sample, and emotional socialization consequences when male are less likely to express their emotions, less able to identify different emotions.

In male group such emotions are presented: loss (the difference is answers are mostly about material, not mental loss), guilt (this emotion appeared once in the answer of a young boy, whose father is in the Armed Forces), grief (it can be explained by missing their relatives, friends, home, Ukraine), stress (main reasons were mentioned: lack of finances, family stress and separation).

It is assumed that some emotions are deep and latent and not appear in male group answers. Such as the guilt of not protecting Ukraine (I faced the expression of that emotion in personal conversations and observation), but it is not mentioned in survey answers. It is interesting that this type of guilt appeared in the female group.

Analyzing responses to the second open question "What problems are relevant for you now?" the structure of emotional state at the third stage of adaptation (secondary adaptation) becomes more complicated. The dynamics is related to the fact that satisfaction of one's needs leads to occurrence of others.

Emotional state of refugees is still diverse and is characterized by a wide spectrum of emotions (Figure 4). There are a few changes, let's focus on them.

Figure 4. Mapping emotional state of Ukrainian refugees (third stage of adaptation)
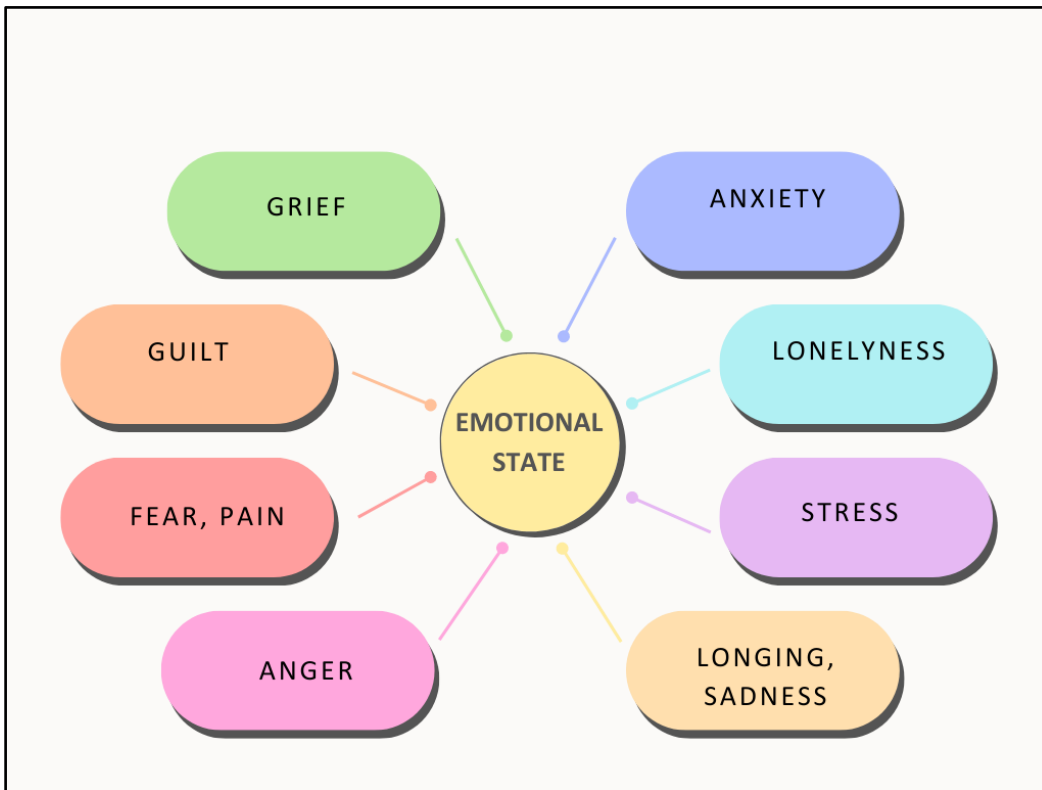
Source: compiled by the author on the basis of own research

It is observed that the practical absence of "accept the situation" challenge that was one of the dominant ones at the previous stage of adaptation. It can be explained by awareness of

the situation, the war that at first for many people was unexpected and unbelievable became more than real. According to classic five stages of grief, the next stage after denial is anger, so we observe huge anger against the aggressor country because of war, death, destruction, damage, for stealing normal life in respondents' answers*:*

"It is difficult to realize that Ukrainians, soldiers, the best of the nation are dying because of some sick narratives of a neighboring state. Understanding that our life, as it was, no longer exists and never will".

"I feel anger from the fact that my life was suddenly taken from me".

Feeling guilty because of being secure abroad is still notable, as well as pain, fear, grief, loneliness. A lot of refugees experienced permanent anxiety and stress caused by war, leaving home, and bad news*:*

"Experiencing anxiety every night, having panic attacks".

"I cannot plan my life, I am constantly waiting and worrying".

If we compare answers in female and male groups there is still the same difference in answering the question: less range of emotions in male group answers (longing, sadness and stress were mentioned).

Thus, emotional challenges of refugees, such as "survivor guilt" requires further consideration and qualitative research (in-deep interview or focus-group).

The diversity of emotions mentioned by respondents reflect a high level of such an emotional intelligence component as self- awareness, that means a deep understanding of one's emotions, strengths, weaknesses, needs, and drives. It can be considered the first step to self-regulation as well as managing relations with others. In case a person is "stuck in" or "rejecting" one's emotions it becomes the barrier to adapt, to develop, even to move.

Discussion and conclusion.

Three new empirical and theoretical themes emerge out of research findings. These include the variety of needs and challenges and their dynamics based on the adaptation stages, the variety of emotional states of refugees and transformation of mentioned challenges into resources for women's empowerment.

Concerning the first one the main stages of Ukrainian refugee adaptation based on dynamics of needs were defined: 0) pre-adaptation (decision-making), 1) initial adaptation (needs in safety, finding shelter, basic needs), 2) primary adaptation (need in legal status, finding source of finances, accompaniment, safe environment to work with own emotional state), 3) secondary adaptation (needs in adaptation to educational, medical, economic, social, cultural life, need in self-realization and self-development, need in coping with permanent stress, uncertainty and negative emotions), 4) post-adaptation (need in inclusion into educational, medical, economic, social (building social networks), cultural life), 5) return or settlement (change in legal status). The classification is given based on gathered research data, observation and has its limitation: can't describe other refugee waves.

Conducted research allows to analyze unsatisfied needs of Ukrainian refugees on primary and secondary adaptation stages (those two open-ended questions were included in the questionnaire). Other stages require further analysis.

Under war conditions Ukrainian female refugees experienced such groups of challenges: 1) adaptation (challenges of this group combine problems with language, apartments, bureaucracy, banks, finances, childcare, education, work, health system); 2) uncertainty, future; 3) separation (from partner, home, relatives, worries for those who remain in Ukraine), 4) social connections (different mentality, hostility, lack of friends, unfamiliar environment), 5) emotional state (described above), 6) self (appeared at third stage of adaptation and consists of lack of freedom, need in self-realization and self-development).

Those groups of challenges are the main barriers of the adaptation process, while coping with them gives resources for women's empowerment, changing socio-cultural roles, and power relations.

Table 2 shows what are possible transformations of challenges into resources for empowerment.

Self challenges lead to self-development and self-realization.

Table 2. Challenges Transformation into resources for empowerment

Groups of challenges	Possible resources for empowerment
Adaptation	inclusion into economic, social-cultural life
Social connections	social capital, networking
Uncertain future	flexibility
Separation	autonomy
Emotional state	emotional intelligence
Self	self-development

Coping with an adaptation group of challenges provides inclusion into economic, social-cultural life, that in turn leads to financial independency, freedom of decision-making.

Social connections group of challenges could be transferred into social capital and network building. They allow not only to support refugees, make them stronger, but also to prevent a variety of problems (violence, women's double workload, emotional work, discrimination).

Ability to live in uncertain circumstances and an unknown future gives the resource of flexibility: switch between different strategies, options according to the situation. It means continuous change, more space for development, more opportunities. Besides, taking life control in uncertain future circumstances added to self-confidence.

Separation from the partner, parents, and other relatives is hard, but at the same time leads to autonomy, that includes self-determination, freedom of will, integrity, independence. Autonomy implies following one's own desires and the ability to rely on one's own strength and resources.

Coping with an emotional state group of challenges promotes development of emotional intelligence components: self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy and relationship management (EI definition by D. Goleman). Emotional intelligence contributes to better relationships with people, achieving personal and professional goals.

Despite the fact that the refugee group of people is vulnerable (risks of violence, discrimination), especially if there are several factors causing vulnerability, proposed gender sensitive approach allows to define not only barriers but also resources for women's empowerment.

Women's empowerment is also reflected in self-organization practices: creating groups for help and communication in social media, creating non-formal education and free time activities for children or moms with small children, rallies to support Ukraine, volunteer initiative to gather money for Armed Forces, yoga and dance classes for children and adults, group therapy facilities, translation services and so on.

Coping with challenges influence power structures, gender roles, family relations , femininity and masculinity concepts.

Gender ideology defined three types of roles: traditional, transitional, and egalitarian (Somech, A., & Drach-Zahavy, A.2016). In Ukraine for the majority of women the transitional role works (such role is characterized by inclusion into the labor market but at the same time maintaining responsibility for children and home). Because of the high level of segregation of the labor market (women mostly work in less-paid sectors, for example education, culture), bad-paid maternity leave (usually maternity leave lasts 3 years and has negative outcomes for women`s career) women often find themselves in financial dependance with partners. Men are still likely to hold the role of breadwinner. Because of forced migration to Germany, separation with partners, inclusion into the labor market (or system of social care) the transfer of breadwinner role to women is observed. Such gender role is also transitional, but characterized by financial independence. And such financial independence influences other life spheres.

Concept of femininity for Ukrainian female refugees is transformed into more active one, that is noticed in decision-making, status and financial independence.

When speaking about the men who are staying in Ukraine we also can mention changes in masculine concept, because of separation with wives, they are more likely to take care of themselves and wait (passive pattern that was not typical for traditional Ukrainian masculinity).

Family as a social institution is transformed because of distance communication between wife-husband, parent-child, new life styles and environment. Such huge changes become crucial for lots of families, the level of divorces increased (in the first half of 2023, 10,139 cases of divorce were registered in Ukraine. This is a third part (+33%) more than in the corresponding period last year (7,632)(State Statistics Committee of Ukraine, 2023). At the same time we observed the prevalence of single-parent families, grandparent families, stepparent families among Ukrainian refugees in Germany.

Analyzing female refugees' challenges and needs it is important to mention they are not totally different from male group; age and location differences are not too different either. Also it can be assumed there are much more in common with other waves of refugees. Thus differences within one group (on gender, age or location basis) could be more significant in comparison to those from another group. However, what has its own specificity - ways of solving and coping with mentioned challenges, which are caused by gender segregation of the labor market, structural problems (for example, lack of places in kindergarten) and existing gender stereotypes and discrimination.

Table 3 shows the transformations of challenges and resources into possible coping strategies of female refugees.

Table 3. Coping strategies of female refugees based on challenges and resources

Challenges	Resources	Outcome: Coping strategy
+	+	empowerment
+	-	"stuck" adaptation
-	+	fast adaptation
-	-	"refuse" adaptation

As it was mentioned before, in case challenges are transferred into resources the outcome of such transformation is women's empowerment, notable in autonomy and self-determination, labor market inclusion, flexibility.

In case women experienced different challenges but which are not transformed into resources we can observe "stuck" adaptation. It is characterized by slow movement between stages of adaptation or " stuck" in the third stage of "secondary adaptation", because further movement requires much more individual resources.

Among respondents there were a few people who didn't experience any problems, so there is a statistically small group of Ukrainian refugees that had no challenges in their life. We can assume it is possible for those who had family members in Germany who provided all needed support, or those who worked in international companies and they had the opportunity to continue their work and received other needed resources. In that case, a coping strategy is "fast adaptation", even "jump" to the fifth adaptation stage because of legal status change (for example, EU Blue Card).

One more option: when a person does not experience challenges, but at the same time has no resources or wish to use existing resources for adaptation. For example, those people who want to return to Ukraine at the first opportunity and refuse to …learn German, search for work. We can observe that such a type is rare and can be connected with conscious or not conscious refusal to adapt.

Further research can study the dynamics of challenges and needs at the next adaptation stages as well as specify challenges of specific gender groups (for example, queer-refugees). The research of emotional state continuation (in-deep interviews or focus groups), will be helpful to study the gender differences in experiencing different emotions, such as survivor guilt.

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