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Migration Strategies of Ukrainian Youth in the Context of Russian Armed Aggression

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The purpose of the article is to study the migration strategies of Ukrainian youth in the context of Russian armed aggression. The article analyses the problem of young Ukrainians actively going abroad and the formation of the preconditions for a large-scale demographic crisis provoked by military actions. Particular attention is paid to a number of empirical studies by the Chicago School of Sociology, which framed the scientific paradigm of migration within the framework of the theory of assimilation. The authors made an attempt to analyse in detail the possible threats and risks that the loss of labour and intellectual capital due to the outflow of young people outside the country will cause, resulting in a slowdown in economic development and intensification of the nation's ageing processes, which is extremely important in the context of armed conflict.

The authors also describe the key results of a sociological survey that identified the main criteria that attract young people and make them migrate to the EU. The authors make a comparative analysis of the respondents' aspirations to go abroad and the real opportunities and actions aimed at implementing the emigration strategy.

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Key words: migration, migration strategies, youth, social inter-action, assimilation.

Доля Ірина, Клименко Олена. Міграційні стратегії української молоді в умовах російської збройної агресії. Метою статті є вивчення міграційних стратегій української молоді в умовах російської збройної агресії. У статті аналізується проблема активного виїзду молодих українців за кордон та формування передумов масштабної демографічної кризи, спровокованої військовими діями. Окрема увага була приділена низці емпіричних досліджень чиказької школи соціології, які оформили наукову парадигму міграції в рамках теорії асиміляції. Авторами зроблено спробу детального аналізу можливих загроз та ризиків, до яких призведе втрата трудового та інтелектуального капіталу за рахунок відтоку молодих людей за межі країни, результатом чого стало гальмування економічного розвитку й інтенсифікація процесів старіння нації, що надзвичайно актуально в умовах збройного конфлікту.

Також описано результати соціологічного дослідження, за якими встановлено основні критерії, котрі приваблюють молодих людей та змушують мігрувати до країн ЄС. Аналізуючи відповіді респондентів, автори виявили ключові мотиваційні фактори виїзду за кордон молоді, які домінують серед українського студентства: пошук кращої якості життя (29 %), накопичення капіталу (27 %), життя в сприятливому соціокультурному просторі (16 %) та отримання соціальних гарантій (11 %). Водночас з'ясовано, що українці, котрі виїхали за кордон, шукаючи прихисток від війни, демонструють критичне ставлення до системи соціальних відносин у ЄС та зазначають низьку якість освіти, несприятливий для розвитку соціокультурний простір і невисокий рівень життя.

Ключові слова: міграція, міграційні стратегії, молодь, соціальна взаємодія, асиміляція.

INTRODUCTION

The active digitalisation of the information society of the XXI century has created many prerequisites for the intensification of migration processes around the world. European countries, including Ukraine, have faced crises of uncontrolled migration of children and young people, which has exacerbated the problem of the influx of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in the economically developed countries of the European Union. With the outbreak of Russian armed aggression on 24 February 2022, the problem of forced emigration became even acute, as 7,9 million Ukrainians left our country during the year of war, which is actually 20 % of the total population (compared to 1 million 830 thousand who moved to the EU in 2021), and 4,9 million citizens became internally displaced persons (Libanova, 2023). At the same time, according to the UN Refugee Agency, the number of Ukrainians officially registered in Europe for «asylum status» is 7,75 million (Lubinets, 2022).

At the same time, it is undeniable that Western European countries have experienced a sharp demographic decline over the past 20 years, driven by the aging of the nation due to a decline in birth rates and an increase in mortality, which makes European governments interested in increasing the number of migrants from post-Soviet countries as cheap labour to work in unskilled jobs and serve the needs of local ethnic communities. These social phenomena force world leaders to look for ways to solve social problems related to migration processes, as large-scale migration affects not only the formation of the world order, but also the development of all countries without exception and determines the specifics of international politics.

1. ANALYSIS OF THE MAIN STUDIES

Studies of the social phenomenon of migration and the social problems of migrants originated in the early XX century in the America after the «great migration» that took place in the 1910s and 1920s, which in many ways coincided with the birth of American sociological science in general. The first scientists to work in this area were R. Park and other representatives of the Chicago School of Sociology. They started regular publication in the American Sociological Journal of articles on the peculiarities of adaptation and social interaction of certain ethnic groups of immigrants in the United States, the situation of African Americans, discrimination, interethnic marriages, etc. The first scientific work that analysed in detail the peculiarities of integration of European migrants – «The Polish Peasant in Europe and America» was published in 1918 and is now considered a classic of sociological knowledge on the problems of social interaction of migrants with the local communities. Its authors come to the conclusion that Polish people have no difficulties assimilating, want to adopt the American way of life, but remain «Americans of Polish origin» (Thomas, Zaretsky, & Znaniecki, 1996).

Robert Park's many years of research resulted in his theory of migrant assimilation, which has had a significant impact on the further development of sociological knowledge. According to his concept, known as the race relations cycle, there are 4 stages on the path of assimilation that migrants go through. The first stage is contact or acquaintance. The second stage is conflict or rivalry, and the third stage is an attempt at accommodation. After this last attempt fails, a person has no choice, but to assimilate and merge with the society that has accepted him or her – this is the fourth stage (Park, 1928).

In studying ethnic communities in Chicago, P. Park and E. Burgess turned the city into a sociological laboratory that did not distinguish ethnic minorities by origin - migrants from Europe or migrants from Latin America, but methodologically considered them as groups that were similar in their stages of adaptation. In their opinion, Polish, Latin American and African villagers moved from agricultural areas to urban ghettos, they were displaced from one traditional lifestyle to the other, which allowed them to be subjected to the same research framework with the same criteria (see in (Lal, 2007)).

Another of the classic works of assimilation was Lloyd Warner's book of the mid-1940s, «The Social Systems of American Ethnic Groups». It put forward the thesis that ethnic groups in the United States are a temporary phenomenon, and they will inevitably assimilate with Americans due to laws and a system of social mobility that are equal for all. At the same time, the authors considered that migrants should «set aside their values and perceptions in order to fully assimilate the new culture» (Warner, 1945). In this book,

the authors linked the speed of assimilation to race and religious preferences, believing that representatives of Anglo-Saxon culture assimilated the fastest, while «Africans and mulattoes» assimilated more slowly.

Park's theory was the basis for Milton Gordon's book «Assimilation in American Life», written in the early 1960s. In this work, M. Gordon formulates 7 types of assimilation: acculturation (acceptance of the norms, values and lifestyle of the new society), structural assimilation (inclusion in the institutions of society), marital assimilation and identification assimilation (when there is a sense of unity with the host rather than with one's home country). Therefore, the researcher was able to distinguish behavioural, value and civic assimilation, which occurs at the stage when a migrant no longer feels a conflict between internal perceptions and values of the host culture. It is important to note here that in those years assimilation was presented as the only natural and inevitable way to include representatives of other cultures in one society. For a long time, sociologists considered the Anglo-Saxon culture to be the dominant and main one, and migrants had to find a way to integrate into it as quickly as possible, regardless of their original identity. The theories were described above to be combined into a single concept – absorption (Gordon, 1964).

As A. Portes, Jr. McLeod, and R. Parker (1978) write in his article «Immigrant Aspirations», by the end of the 1960s, the theory of assimilation was replaced by a new approach that emphasised the study of ethnicity and ethnic groups. Such radical changes in the scientific methodology were primarily due to the fact that American society faced new challenges in the struggle for the rights of representatives of different ethnic communities and races. While in the 1920s and 1930s immigrants arriving in the United States were perceived as a threat, a social challenge, or at least a new phenomenon that needed to be studied, in the 1960s these issues faded into the background. In addition, the generation of the «great migration» had already integrated in one way or another, and their children became an economically active part of society.

The concept of «absorption» has been increasingly criticised. The most famous work in this area is the book «Beyond the Melting Pot» by M. Glazer and D. Moynihan (1970). The authors of the book declared that ethnic differences continue to play an important role in the emergence of conflicts, which discredits the theory of «absorption». The social changes of the 1970s in America sparked a great deal of interest in the study of ethnic minorities and their contribution to American culture. Conformity to the mainstream was no longer perceived as a path that all migrants had to follow (see in (Alba, 2019) too).

In addition, at the same time, the so-called fourth wave of migration was taking place, when mainly representatives of Asian and Latin American countries arrived in the United States (Reimers, 1985). As opposed to the three previous waves, these people were entering a post-industrial society, which changed their behaviour patterns and ways of adaptation, requiring a new level of sociological analysis.

For many years, the theory of assimilation has not been used in sociological science due to its ethnocentrism, conflictogenicity and ideological load. It was replaced by other concepts such as integration, multiculturalism, transnationalism, and cross-culturalism. However, the definition has not completely disappeared from American sociology, and in the late 1990s, new studies of migration and the social interaction of migrants with local communities emerged.

Firstly, it is the theory of segmental assimilation developed by A. Portes, M. Zhou, R. Rumbaut and other scientists. In study «Legacies: The story of the Immigrant Second Generation» by A. Portes and R. Rumbaut (2001), the researchers conclude that, of all the criteria for analysis, nationality or ethnicity emerges as a strong predictor of successful adaptation.

Secondly, the studies of R. Alba and V. Nee (2003) and a group of their colleagues, in which assimilation is reinterpreted and reused as a theoretical framework for the development of the theory of multiculturalism. These scientists made an attempt to rehabilitate M. Gordon's theory, arguing that, despite the identified shortcomings, it can be used to analyse modern migration, albeit with significant additions. They considered that representatives of ethnic groups influence the cultural development of the host society, resulting in the convergence of cultures. According to Alba and Nee, assimilation theory is quite applicable and has the right to remain part of the sociological apparatus, especially when research concerns new waves of migration. The continuation of the tradition of studying migration within this theory allows for comparative studies of the «old» and «new» migration waves, which can provide useful material.

In the opinion of E. Moravska (1994) the study of assimilation within the framework of the theory of modernisation provides the most effective tools for the sociological study of ethnic groups and problems of interethnic interaction. She interprets the theory of assimilation more broadly than earlier works on this

topic, since she does not consider the process of assimilation to be the only and inevitable way to integrate an emigrant into society. Assimilation theory provides a more convenient framework for studying the ways and levels of incorporation of ethnic groups into the host society than cultural pluralism.

It should be noted that the ethnicity factor in studies of this level has no discriminatory impact. The level of success of the integration of representatives of different ethnic groups is in no way related to innate, intellectual or physical abilities. The point is that the different social structure of migrant groups and the ways in which they integrate into society ensure equal success of first- and second-generation representatives in terms of education and career. That said, each ethnic group chooses its own unique way of adapting, and models of successful interaction may differ. All the above does not refute the fact that some individuals are highly successful, even if they belong to an ethnic group whose adaptation is generally not very successful.

A particularly close attention to the problems of population migration is paid by Ukrainian scholars, who in the early 20s of the twenty-first century drew attention to the fact that the average age of Ukrainian migrants over the past 20 years has significantly decreased to 30–44 years, and their qualitative composition has changed – more than a third had higher education, but often had to accept low-skilled jobs, thus reducing their social status. In the article «Ukrainian Educational Student Migration in the Context of Globalisation Challenges», researchers Y. Yemelianova and A. Tereshchenko (2020) conclude that uncontrolled educational migration is transforming under modern conditions and becoming the first stage of labour migration, resulting in an imbalance in the functioning of Ukrainian society due to the outflow of working capital.

The regional aspect of the dynamics of Ukraine's population ageing in conjunction with the outflow of young people abroad was highlighted by S. Salnikova and O. Khanin (2021) in their article «Sustainable development of the border city in the context of European integration processes and decentralisation in Ukraine (on the example of Lutsk, 2008–2020)». Scientists have actualised the issue of human resources quality and the problem of preserving labour capital (Salnikova, & Khanin, 2021) or the renewal of the human capital (Nagornyak, Pachos, & Bezuglyi, 2020).

In particular, V. Sereda's monograph «Displacement in War-Torn Ukraine» highlights the controversial issues of migration management technologies. The author brings to the attention of the general public the fact that since 2016, the largest number of internally displaced persons in Europe has been from Ukraine, and our country ranked fifth in the world by number of migrants, but the European media did not take Ukraine into account when covering the so-called «migrant threat», and Ukrainians were not considered by European scholars as an ethnic community capable of introducing manipulative technologies and artificially provoking a migration crisis (Sereda, 2023).

The same tendency was noted by O. Klymenko in her work «The Problem of Migration of Unaccompanied Children», which concludes that the involvement of minors in migration, both internal and external, exposes them to serious danger due to violations of their rights and freedoms, of which they are not always informed. Migrant children are more likely than adults to be deprived of their liberty and imprisoned in closed institutions, to experience acts of violence, and to be enslaved. In addition, according to the author, the active participation of children in fueling the migration crisis significantly increases the burden on the economies and policies of EU countries, which suggests that migrants may be used as an instrument of pressure on Western countries. Particular attention in the article is paid to the analysis of a serious problem – underestimation by the Western European community of the possibilities of cultural intervention of minors from Ukraine in the culture of Western civilisations (Klymenko, 2021).

An analysis of the scientific contribution to the problems of migration and migrants allows us to state that migration is currently a relevant area of sociological research, not only in Ukraine, but also in the Western European countries, where asylum seekers – people from countries with low economic development and large-scale problems in the economy and politics – and numerous refugees, including Ukrainians, who flee the armed conflict and its consequences to save their children and their own lives, are travelling. However, despite the substantial scientific body of work, there are a number of issues that have been neglected by scientists and require more in-depth study.

2. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The methodological base of the article includes an analysis of quantitative sociological research, in particular:

1. Sociological research: «Transformation of National Identity and Consciousness of the Student Youth of Ukraine under the Influence of Russian Military Aggression», conducted by researchers of the Social Expertise Department of the Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine in September-October 2022 among the student youth of Ukraine (except for the territories of Kharkiv, Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions occupied at that time) (n = 2000). The questionnaire was created in a Google form, which participants could fill out at any convenient time from any electronic device with Internet access. A total of 2,000 respondents aged 17–25 (49 % men and 51 % women) were interviewed. The number of respondents was spontaneous; at the last stage, a quota selection was made based on the main socio-demographic characteristics of the Ukrainian population (gender, age, type of settlement, bachelor's/master's degree).

2. Sociological research: «The peculiarities of the life of Ukrainian refugees in Germany» was conducted by researchers of the Branch of the Research Institute of Ukrainian Studies in Germany, Chemnitz, using a formalised questionnaire implemented on the Google online platform from 16 February to 25 March 2023. 1852 questionnaires were collected, of which 1500 were found to be valid (n = 1500). The survey was attended by 87 % of women and 13 % of men, who were conditionally divided into two age groups: 18–35 years and 36–50 years, of whom 48 % have one child, 36 % have two children, and 16 % are single. Thus, the findings of the survey can only be interpreted as a separate opinion of the most active Chilean Ukrainian women who have officially received the status of «asylum seekers» and have 1–2 children to support.

In addition to the findings of sociological research, statistical materials from open sources of information presented by the Director of the Institute of Demography of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine and the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights, which are freely available on the Internet, were used.

The purpose of the article is to study the migration strategies of Ukrainian youth in the context of Russian armed aggression.

3. THE RESEARCH RESULTS

3.1. The Motivational Factor for Ukrainian Youth to go Abroad

The migration processes affect the standard of living of society in general and lead to significant changes in the forms of social interaction, which is facilitated by the processes of socio-economic adaptation of migrants in the host country, as a result, they integrate into the local society and erase cultural boundaries. Thus, external migration is an important factor driving the transformation of social processes and an effective source of economic development through the inflow of cheap labour to more developed Western countries from the Third World. In particular, the income of student migrants eventually catches up and surpasses that of labour migrants (Weber, & Saarela, 2023).

In the case of Ukrainians, the situation is somewhat different from the standard migration processes associated with the global migration crisis, as most of them were forced to flee armed aggression and take their children to dangerous places, fleeing the realities of the armed conflict. This fact is highlighted by M. Sydorov and O. Kovalska in their article «Status characteristics and peculiarities of accommodation of Ukrainian military refugees in Germany (Constance)», which describes in detail the main problems faced by Ukrainian refugees in Germany. The researchers focus on the high proportion of educated, highly skilled individuals and those with completed higher education who are capable of intellectual work among Ukrainian migrants. Almost half of the respondents said they plan to stay in Germany permanently, while the other half wants to return to Ukraine as soon as possible (Sydorov, & Kovalska, 2022). It is worth noting that there are not so many studies of high-skilled migrations (Becker, & Teney, 2020).

According to a sociological survey was conducted by the branch of the Research Institute of Ukrainian Studies in Germany, among Ukrainians who have been granted the status of «asylum seeker», 24,3 % consider their future in Ukraine, a certain part has great doubts – 21,7 % answered the question «difficult to answer», 29,5 % would like to change their country of residence but would remain in the EU, and 24,5 %

would like to remain in Germany. So, it can be assumed that the total number of respondents (54 %) considers their future abroad (Fig. 1). This is a rather negative trend for Ukraine, which has suffered large demographic losses due to the war.

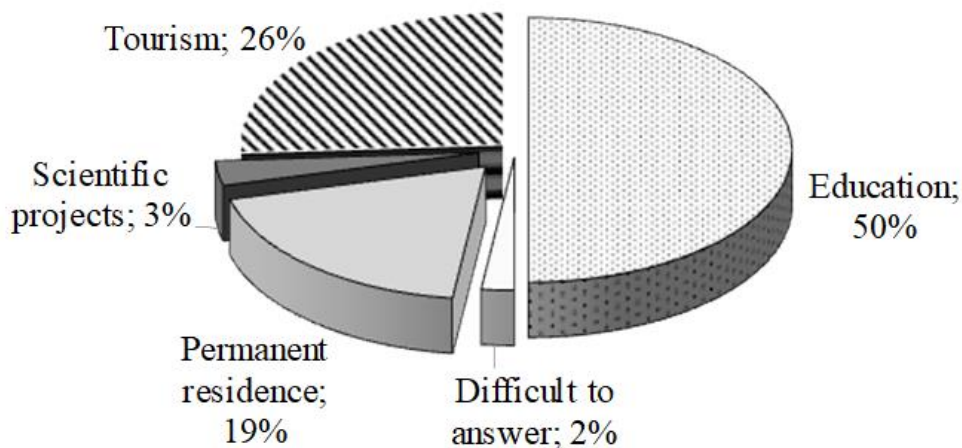


Fig. 1. Indicators of the Distribution of Respondents' Answers to the Question «Where Do You See Your Future?» (%)

In combination with the trend of young people's desire to go abroad to study, the process of youth outflow abroad will lead to the destruction of the state's economy and the aging of the nation.

Our assumption is confirmed by the results of a sociological survey was conducted among student youth in Ukraine by the Department of Social Expertise of the Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. A high percentage (the 50 %) of respondents to the question: «What would you like to go abroad for?», said that the goal of their travel abroad could be to study, and 3 % – to conduct research projects.

Going abroad is considered as a source of tourism by 26 % of young people surveyed, and 19 % generally consider Western European countries as a place for permanent residence. Taking into account that 1/2 of the respondents consider it appropriate to study abroad, and 19 % would seriously like to live there legally, we get 2/3 of the young people who potentially want to leave Ukraine for the EU, and thus will be excluded from active participation in the economic, political and social processes of our country (Fig. 2).

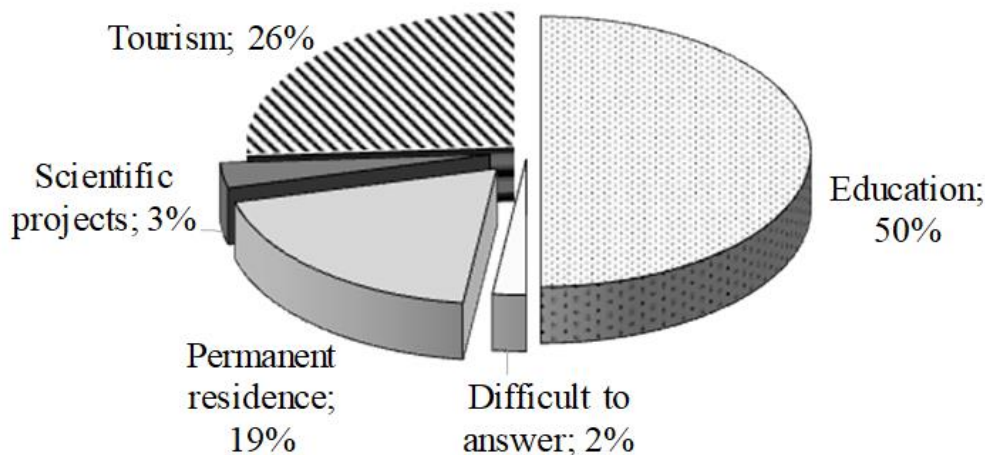


Fig. 2. Indicators of the Distribution of Respondents' Answers to the Question «Why Would You Like to Go Abroad?» (%)

According to the survey results, a high number of respondents (59 %) confirmed that they had been abroad at least once in their lives, which indicates a high level of awareness of the specifics of social interaction in other countries. However, 41 % of respondents said they had no experience of living outside Ukraine, and 10 % had only heard about life in the EU from their friends and family, but nevertheless, they were confident that they would be able to find a job there. Thus, the high rates of young people's aspirations to move abroad are shaped not only by personal experience, but also by stories and information available on social media.

The answers of young people to the question about the attractiveness of life abroad give us an understanding of some of the reasons why they are so eager to leave Ukraine. The most important reasons are decent salaries in the EU (27 %) and unsatisfactory living standards in our country (29 %), while 16 % said that migration would help them in their further development (cultural and professional), and 11 % are confident that they will receive social guarantees.

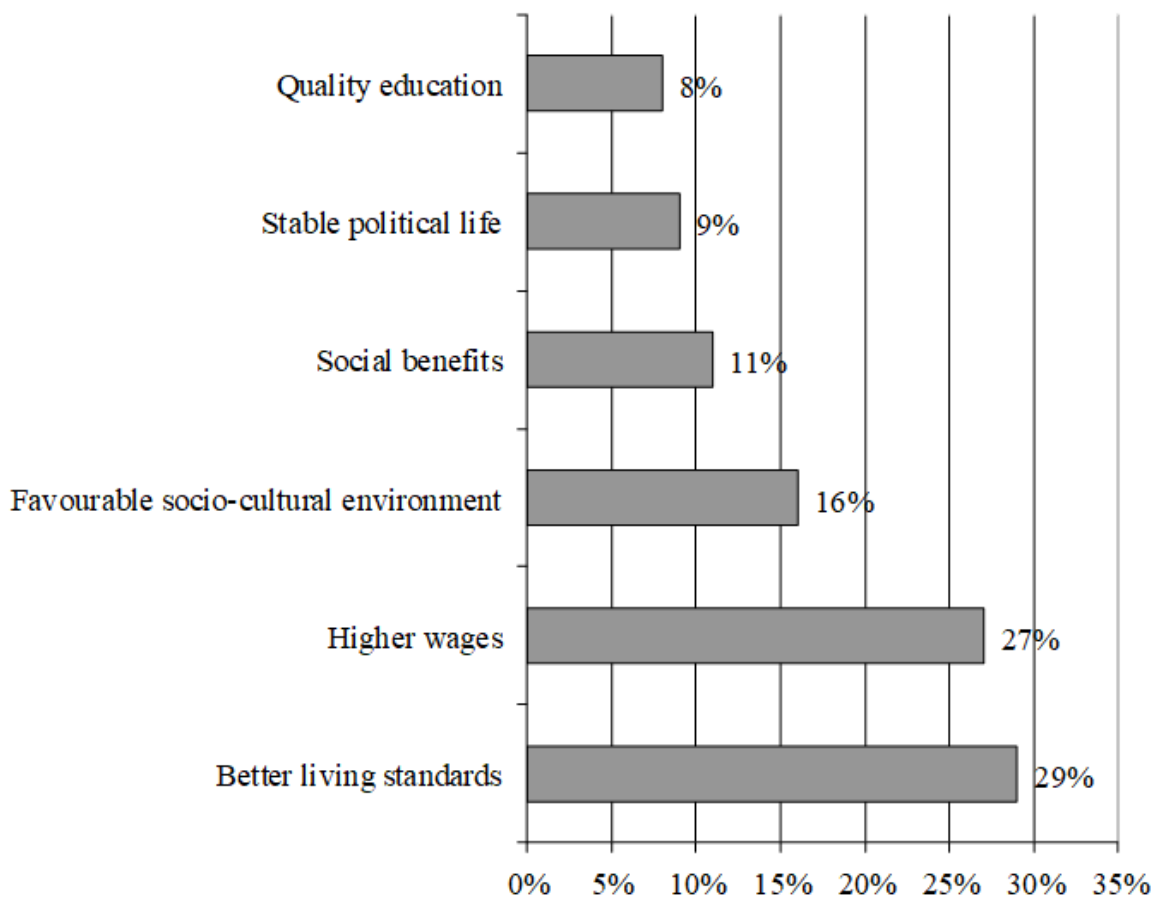


Fig. 3. Indicators of the Distribution of Respondents' Answers to the Question «What is Attractive to You about Living Abroad – in the EU Countries?» (%).

Thus, the majority of young people are dissatisfied with the level of social life and wages in Ukraine and therefore wish to find more favourable living conditions abroad, as well as a new, higher quality socio-cultural space. An analysis of the survey results revealed an interesting trend – economic motives are important for only 27 % of respondents. A significant majority of young people said that they would like to emigrate in order to find a better and more comfortable standard of living, as illustrated by the distribution of answers to the question «What is attractive to you about living abroad – in the EU?» (Fig. 3).

If we compare the answers to the same question of Ukrainians who have been living in Germany for a year, we can conclude that the expectations of students about life in the European Community are significantly overstated and in some cases unreasonable.

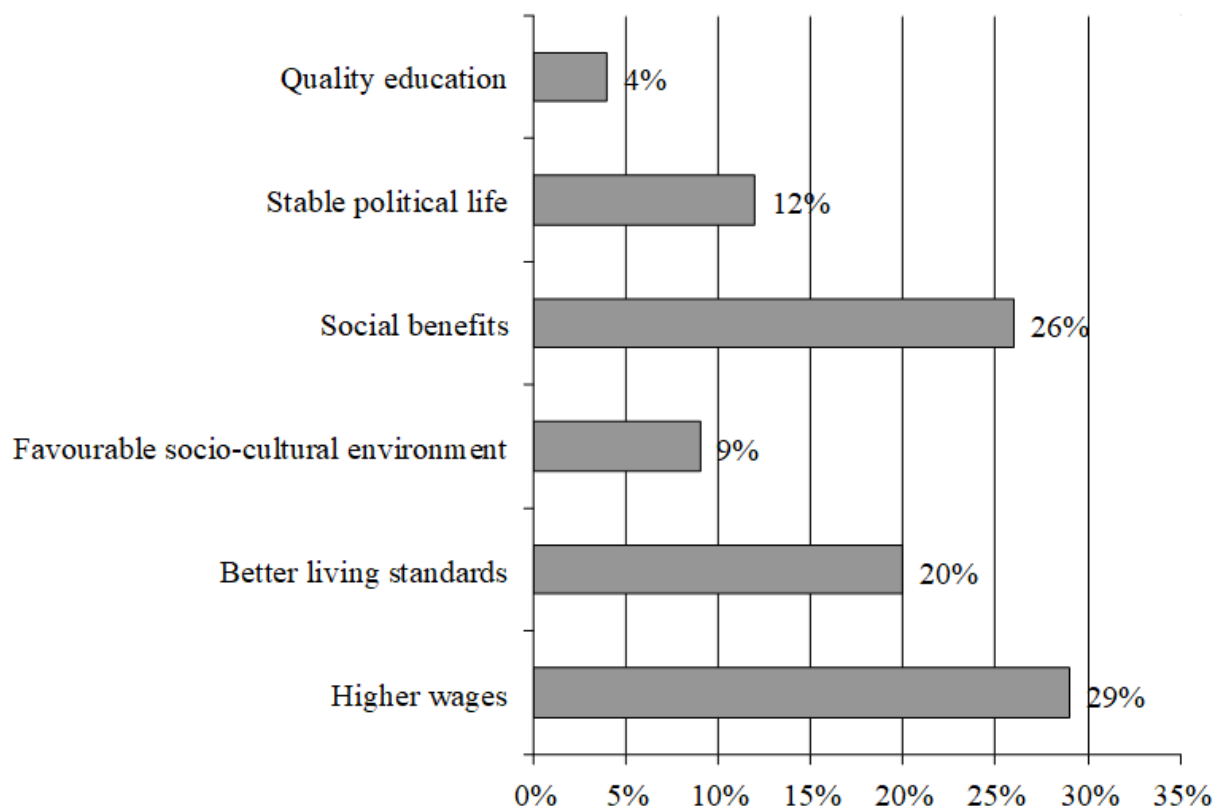


Fig. 4. Indicators of the Distribution of Answers of Respondents Living in Germany to the Question «What is Attractive to You about Living Abroad in the EU?» (%).

The findings of the sociological study suggest that the problem of active emigration of young people from Ukraine is extremely relevant today. The main reasons for the intensification of migration tendencies in Ukrainian society are military events and political instability, with the secondary reasons being low living standards and the quality of education. However, a comparative analysis revealed overestimated expectations for life in the European community. At the same time, more than half of Ukrainian asylum seekers expressed their desire to stay permanently in an EU country.

In summary, the main prerequisites for labour migration of young people from Ukraine to the EU countries are the desire to improve living standards and economic well-being. As the majority of students consider life in Ukraine to be unpromising due to a number of social circumstances and unfavourable socio-cultural environment, they seek to settle in countries with more favourable conditions for their future life and that of their descendants, significantly overestimating the quality of foreign education. At the same time, Ukrainians who were forced to come to Germany and received the official status of «asylum seeker» acknowledge the high level of social guarantees and salaries, but testify to the lack of a favourable socio-cultural space and note a low standard of living.

CONCLUSIONS AND PERSPECTIVES OF RESEARCH

Nowadays, it is definitely obvious that the migration crisis that arose in the early XXI century, under the influence of Russia's disruptive aggression against Ukrainian statehood, has grown into a more serious social phenomenon, which has raised the issue of finding fundamentally new scientific approaches that would consider the phenomenon of migration not in the context of assimilation policy, not through the prism of establishing cultural interaction, but as a process of cultural exchange. Unfortunately, the European community was not ready for the socio-cultural perception of Ukrainians and the active implementation of multiculturalism, and therefore began to use the methodology of transnationalism, despite its serious

criticism by scholars. At the same time, it is interesting to note that there are not many studies of the problem of social adaptation of Ukrainian migrants in the European scientific environment, and those that do exist demonstrate a fundamentally different approach to social interaction within the framework of a foreign cultural identity and public perception of «asylum seekers» from Ukraine. This leaves a considerable room for further empirical research, as well as the development of a more adequate theoretical framework and methodological basis for sociological studies of migrant issues in the EU.

Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, young women with children who were forced to flee the fighting abroad have become the main core of forced migration of Ukrainians. As migration processes directly affect the standard of living of citizens and lead to significant changes in living conditions and their socio-economic adaptation, integration into local society, and the erasure of cultural characteristics of the home country, the host European communities have accepted this process as an important factor in the development of the intensification of local social processes and an effective source of economic development through the inflow of cheap labour. However, it was not taken into account that the majority of this migrant population consists of highly skilled workers with higher education – representatives of the middle strata of society, capable of critical thinking, objective self-esteem and active social engagement.

Therefore, analysing the answers of respondents, we have identified certain reasons for young people to go abroad that dominate among Ukrainian students: search for a better quality of life (29 %), capital accumulation (27 %), living in a favourable socio-cultural space (16 %) and receiving social guarantees (11 %). At the same time, Ukrainians who moved to other countries to seek refuge from the war are critical of the system of social relations in the EU and report low quality education, a less favourable socio-cultural environment and low living standards.

According to the findings, today there is a serious problem of distortion in the perception of Ukrainian migrants by the Western European community. The entire system of EU migration policy is designed for an uneducated, low-skilled labour force of people from third world countries, and therefore is unable to adequately respond to the problems of social adaptation of Ukrainians, and has no effective mechanisms for migrants to interact with new realities. Thus, there is a demand for scientific research into these problems and the development of integrative technologies of a higher level and of a fundamentally new quality.

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