

Psychological Support of the Integration Process of Ukrainian Students: European Experience

Психологічний супровід процесу інтеграції українських студентів: європейський досвід

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ABSTRACT

The war in Ukraine has caused an active migration of Ukrainians to European countries. Despite being in a safe place, people who have obtained temporary protection still remain under acute stress. The complex psycho-emotional state of refugees is caused by psychological traumas from the war experience and is

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complicated by the loss of their status in a new country, forced exit from their comfort zone, awareness of their own helplessness, insecurity and alienation. Unlike adults, children and adolescents who have suddenly become displaced, worry about separation from loved ones, loss of contact with peers, separation from the group in a new socio-cultural environment more acutely. Among the refugee children, a large part of those people who had hopes for the future of entering the chosen specialty and university, had to retreat from their dreams and quickly make decisions (not always of their own free will) about how and where to enter or continue their studies in a new country. Understanding the complexity of the psycho-emotional state of applicants and students from Ukraine, the Career Center of Masaryk University has developed a number of services aimed at psychological support of the process of Ukrainian applicants' integration into the European space.

The purpose of the research is to highlight the features of providing psychological support services, as well as the intermediate result of the study of the effectiveness of the implemented program on the development of adaptability of applicants and students from Ukraine who wanted to study at Masaryk University.

Methods of the research. To analyze the effectiveness of the developed services and to determine the needs of applicants, an online and offline survey with a semi-closed questionnaire was used. In order to analyze the level of adaptability of the applicants, the scales on the "Questionnaire of personality adaptation to a new sociocultural environment" method were used.

The results of the research. The obtained results are intermediate in determining the effectiveness of the developed services. At the same time, the results of the initial and re-diagnosis of the participants of training aimed at the development of adaptability, as a leading factor of successful integration, made it possible to record the improvement of psycho-emotional state of applicants and students from Ukraine.

Conclusions. The obtained intermediate results of the quality assessment of the developed services testify to their expediency and effectiveness, which is achieved due to the complexity, variety of forms and types of services, as well as the combination of theoretical and practical bases on the way to the formation of adaptability and optimization of the process of integration of applicants and students from Ukraine.

Key words: adaptation, integration, applicants and students, refugees, psychological support, educational services.

Introduction

Today, Europe clearly feels the negative impact of the war consequences in Ukraine. One of these problems is the large influx of refugees. Thus, as of October 22, 2022, more than 7 million of refugees from Ukraine have been registered on the territory of Europe for temporary protection or similar national programs (Operational data portal, 2022). Among all refugees, one of the most vulnerable categories of the population is children. According to research by the 4Service company, every fifth child left his/her home because of the war, and the total number of people under the age of 18 who left Ukraine is 1.4 million, including 7% of children who were forced to leave for a foreign country without relatives or friends (Українські біженці в Європі, 2022). According to the research of the company, 73% of the interviewed teenagers said that they were not consulted about the decision to go abroad (Українці біженці в Європі, 2022). Yesterday's schoolchildren and students, in addition to acute stress from the very fact of the war, found themselves torn from their usual lives, left without yesterday's dreams and hopes for the future, without the support of relatives and friends, faced with the challenges of adaptation in new educational institutions and new socio-cultural conditions. Psychological pressure from parents who, understanding the reality, often make decisions for the child, do not allow teenagers to come to their senses, force them to learn an additional language, prepare for exams, admission, etc., despite their mental state, only cause an exacerbation of the stressful state of their own children. Understanding all the difficulties and realizing the role of the university in supporting the young generation, Masaryk University (Brno, Czech Republic) has developed a number of services that provide various types of services for applicants and students from Ukraine. One such service that provides psychological and educational services is the Career Center of Masaryk University.

The Career Center of Masaryk University has developed a comprehensive program of long-term support for the process of integration of applicants and students from Ukraine in new educational conditions.

The purpose of the article is to highlight the peculiarities of the organization of psychological support of the integration process of Ukrainian students using the experience of the Career Center of Masaryk University as an example.

The objectives of the article is to reveal the content of the main services organized by the Career Center of Masaryk University aimed at improving the process of integration of students from Ukraine, to highlight the intermediate results of the study on the effectiveness of the developed program for the integration of applicants within the educational process.

Research methods and techniques. The Career Center of Masaryk University has developed a system of services and a program aimed at optimizing the process of integration of applicants and students from Ukraine in the European space. The developed system of services was built taking into account the basic needs of migrant applicants. The identification of the specified needs took place through online and offline surveys using a developed semi-closed questionnaire (the questionnaire was created with the help of the Microsoft Forms program). The questionnaire contained questions about the desired form of work (individual or group, offline or online) and relevant topics. The analysis of the obtained results and taking into account the theoretical background of the adaptation process itself made it possible to create a complex system of services, which provided for the individual consultations (on issues of integration in the new conditions of study in the new labor market; writing resumes and motivational letters; self-discovery and self-determination; finding a career path and retraining; interview preparation) and group educational services (educational courses, seminars, workshops and trainings). To analyze the quality and relevance of the conducted activities, after each event, a current anonymous survey

was conducted aimed at clarifying the opinion of the applicants regarding the quality of the event, its relevance, meaningful content and recommendations for further cooperation.

Among the group forms of work, the process of implementing the developed author's training program aimed at developing adaptability, as a necessary feature for the successful integration of applicants, became the longest. In order to analyze the effectiveness of the developed training program, in addition to surveys to find out feedback, primary and secondary diagnostics using the "Questionnaire of personality adaptation to a new socio-cultural environment" method were used.

The total number of applicants from Ukraine who used the services of the Career Center during July – September 2022 was 201 people.

Results and discussions. The theoretical component of the developed services was based on the principles and methods of humanistic psychology, transactional analysis and crisis intervention. The basic terms were interpreted as follows.

Adaptation is a two-way process based on the interaction of the personality and society, which leads to an optimal correlation of values and goals of the individual and the group (Titzmann & Lee, 2018; Vinke, Bergmann, Blocher, Upadhyay & Hoffmann, 2020). Conditional types of adaptation are: physiological, social and psychological adaptation. These types of adaptation are closely related to each other, mutually influence each other, and therefore no type can be ignored in the course of providing psychological support for the integration process of refugee applicants (Андросович, 2015; Йона & Остапова, 2021).

Physiological adaptation involves physiological adaptation of the body to new climate conditions, day and sleep regime, to physical or mental loads, nutrition, etc.

Indicators of successful physiological adaptation:

- restoration of immunity;
- absence of somatic diseases;

- good sleep;
- absence of eating disorders;
- adjusted day mode;
- feeling full of energy.

Social adaptation is the process of adapting to new social roles, adapting to new conditions and rules of living in a hostel, to a new social environment (social circle), to the regulatory and legal requirements of a new country and university, to cultural traditions.

Indicators of successful social adaptation:

- social activity (fulfillment of public assignments, participation in various activities);
- solidarity with group norms and rules (groupmates, faculty, university);
- satisfactory relations with team members (groupmates, neighbors);
- satisfactory relations with teachers;
- satisfaction with living conditions;
- balance between social and personal interests.

Psychological adaptation is the most complex type of adaptation, it consists in the ability of the human psyche to provide an adequate response to a number of stressful life changes, and it is characterized by a subjective feeling of inner harmony and satisfaction, a person's ability to maintain internal balance and equilibrium, regardless of the surrounding living conditions.

Indicators of successful psychological adaptation are:

- a state of psychological satisfaction and comfort;
- the ability to perform psychological self-regulation of behavior and activity;
- self-confidence;
- solving acute psychological problems (fear, trauma, anxiety, panic attacks, etc.);
- will and interest in life, educational activities, interpersonal communication.

The above mentioned types of adaptation and success criteria were determined based on the research of I. Titar (Tirap, 2016), F. Motti-Stefanidi, K. Salmela-Aro (Motti-Stefanidi & Salmela-Aro, 2018), P. Titzmann, R. Lee (Titzmann & Lee, 2018), P. Linda, S. Moin (Linda & Moin, 2019).

Taking into account the fact that adaptation can be both voluntary (when students independently decide on the country, university, study program) and forced (when parents decide for students), the most optimal adaptation strategy is integration, which involves the synthesis of two cultures, the harmonization of own values and values of the host society.

Integration acts as a mediator between two cultures, as well as between identity and society. That is why the Career Center chose the integration strategy.

The psychological support of the integration process should be complex and systemic and at the same time take into account the individual characteristics of refugees. The system of services developed by the Career Center is focused on the formation of skills, competencies (with the help of such group forms of work as workshops, seminars-workshops, trainings) and key knowledge (with the help of courses, seminars, consultations) necessary for the successful integration of applicants. Working in a group involves creating favorable conditions for mutual support, empathy, honing acquired skills and helps to expand the repertoire of effective cases for overcoming difficulties and adaptation barriers. At the same time, painful and even psychologically traumatic topics can be revealed during group work, which are proposed for the individual work. The availability of individual counseling services provides an opportunity to work out the personal problems of the applicants and take into account topics that are not relevant for the majority.

The topics for the forms of group work were determined by means of an anonymous online and offline survey of applicants and students from Ukraine who attended Czech language courses with the aim of further admission to Masaryk University.

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The results of the survey reflect the actual requests of respondents (n=201):

- peculiarities of studying at Masaryk University (92.5% of respondents);
- development of skills necessary for successful integration and career path optimization (84.1%);
- psychohygiene during training in new conditions (81.1%);
- prevention of emotional burnout during training (70.6%);
- development of stress resistance (91.5%);
- intercultural dialogue, non-violent communication and skills in creating a tolerant environment (56.2%);
- conflict resolution skills as a factor of rapid integration (48.2%);
- restoration of internal resources as a basic condition for rapid adaptation (50.7%);
- time management skills in adaptation conditions (93%);
- ability to present oneself (84.6%);
- retraining: how to switch to another profession correctly and painlessly (53.7%);
- adaptation to the new labor market: requirements and trends (32.3%);
- self-discovery as the start of work on one's own career (57.7%).

The identified topic became the basis for planning further activities. During July–September 2022, seminars and workshops were held on the following topics: “Successful adaptation: the first steps”, “I am a future student of Masaryk University”, “Development of stress resistance in the conditions of adaptation”, “Psychological hygiene during study in new conditions”, “Secrets of time-management”, “Information system (IS) for beginners”. For clarity, the results of feedback are shown in Fig. 1

The participants of each seminar, training, workshop were asked to fill out an anonymous feedback questionnaire. The questionnaire contained three open-ended questions (“Your comments and recommendations for improving the content of the

event", "Topics you would like to visit next time", "Your general impressions of the event") and two questions with a scale ("Estimate the quality of the organization and conducting the event and rate the content of the event on a scale from 1 to 10 (where 1 is the lowest point and 10 is the highest one). Fig. 1 shows the arithmetic mean of the total number of ratings for each event separately for each question.

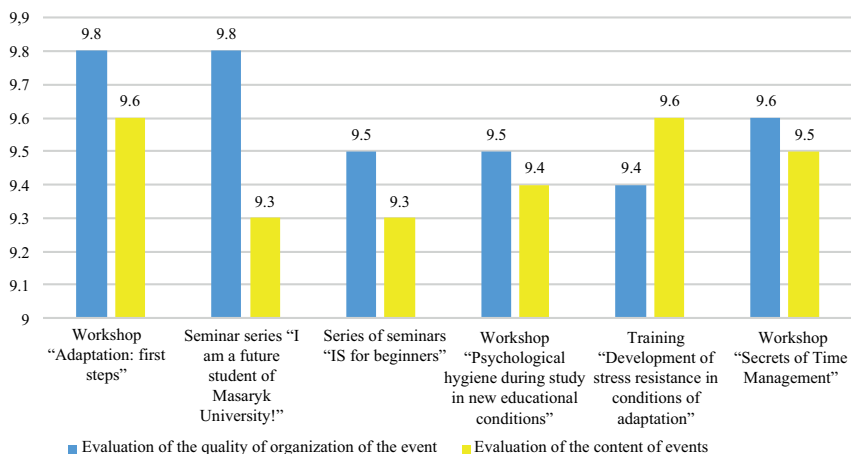


Fig. 1 "The results of feedback about the carried out activities"

Taking into account the interest of applicants and students from Ukraine in the topic of formation and development of skills for successful integration, as well as understanding the importance of this topic for successful adaptation, the Career Center developed the training program "Development of adaptability as the first step to integration". The development of adaptability was chosen as the final goal of the training program, since adaptability is a multi-component property that allows an individual to solve problem situations quickly and adequately and normalize his interaction with the environment, that is a favorable factor for the successful integration of a personality. Adaptability includes flexibility of thinking, socio-psychological tolerance to

changes, ability to make adequate decisions, social intelligence, self-consciousness, etc., which was in the basis of each training session of the program.

This training involved work with a closed group once a week during June and August (seven classes in total). At the moment, two groups have passed the training (total number of participants is 20 people).

The theoretical foundation of the training sessions was based on the research of V. Kyrychenko (Кириченко, 2014), I. Leonova (Леонова, 2015), F. Motti-Stefanidi, K. Salmela-Aro (Motti-Stefanidi & Salmela-Aro, 2018), Vinke K., Bergmann J., Blocher J., Upadhyay H., Hoffmann R. (Vinke, Bergmann, Blocher, Upadhyay & Hoffmann, 2020), M. Prokofieva (Прокофьева, 2021).

The training included the following classes:

– “Me and my identity” (1 lesson, the goal is to help applicants and students realize the balance between their own identity and the needs of society, to determine the basic values of the personality);

– “Communicative skills and non-violent communication” (2 lessons, the goal is to develop communication skills in the intercultural environment, to increase self-confidence, to form the basics of non-violent communication);

– “Stress resistance during adaptation” (1 lesson, the goal is to form the idea about stress resistance and key techniques of relaxation and stress resistance, to learn how to cope with different stressful situations in different conditions);

– “Emotional intelligence” (1 lesson, the goal is to develop emotional intelligence, to learn to differentiate one’s own emotional states, emotional states of other people, to exercise self-control and influence the emotional states of others, to develop empathy);

– “Critical thinking and creativity” (1 lesson, the goal is to form basic ideas about the techniques of developing critical thinking, to teach rational perception, to analyze information,

to make considered decisions; to expand the boundaries of thinking (go beyond stereotypes), to develop creativity);

–“Assertiveness and confident behavior” (1 lesson, the goal is to teach to defend one’s opinion correctly and tactfully, to develop confidence in one’s abilities).

The principles which are the basis for the work in training groups: respect for a personality, the principle of confidentiality, personal responsibility, prioritizing the feeling of psychological safety in a group, scientific validity, taking into account individual characteristics and group dynamics.

Each training session is preceded by a theoretical and practical composition. The theoretical component was provided in an interactive form and covered the systematization of information by topic. The theoretical component was supported by practical exercises and games. For example, the theoretical part provided the classification of types of means and exercises for the concept of psycho-emotional tension. After that, the participants were offered to perform an exercise from each type. The training, built in this way, provided the opportunity for the applicants to get acquainted with a wide variety of means for relieving tension and stress and, at the same time, choose those which are most suitable for them. Each training contained a homework task of a practical nature, which had to be performed by the participants during the week before the next meeting (for example, during the week, to record the facts that surprise, upset, accept them; fill in the Johari’s window or complete interactive tasks in the website program, etc.). The results of completed homework were always discussed in a group at the next lesson. Thus, the applicants have been immersed in work on self-consciousness and self-development for seven weeks.

The evaluation of the effectiveness of the conducted program was based on the feedback received from the participants of the trainings, as well as on the basis of the initial and repeated diagnosis using the “Questionnaire of personality adaptation to a new socio-cultural environment”. The results of

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the initial and repeated diagnosis of training participants are shown in Fig. 2

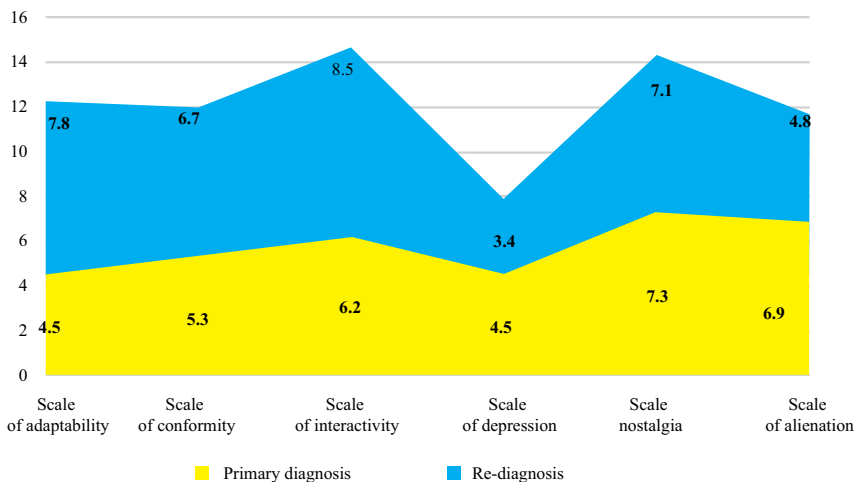


Fig. 2. Results of initial and re-diagnosis of training participants using the method of “Questionnaire of personality adaptation to a new socio-cultural environment” (n=19)

The Fig. 2 shows the results of the arithmetic mean of the points scored by the training participants during the initial and re-diagnosis on such scales as: adaptability, conformity, interactivity, depression, nostalgia and alienation. According to the received data of re-diagnosis, the adaptability, conformity and interactivity of the training participants were increased, which is manifested in an increase of personal satisfaction, a positive attitude towards others, a desire to maintain relations with other people, the emergence of confidence in their own abilities, an increased orientation towards social approval, the acceptance of values and norms of behavior of the new society, increased self-control of behavior taking into account new norms and roles. After completing the training program, the rate of depression and alienation among the participants decreased (as a result of the

feeling of belonging to a new group, the awareness of the similarity of problems of the training group participants, the presence of mutual support and empathy). It was not possible to achieve significant changes on the nostalgia scale.

The positive dynamics of changes were noticed by the participants themselves. They provided the following feedback in the feedback form. 94.7% of participants gave a positive answer to the question "Did the trainings help you better adapt to a new environment". To the question "Did the trainings help you reduce your stress level?" 89.5% of respondents gave a positive answer, 10.5% of participants chose the answer "It is difficult to determine". 100% of participants gave a positive answer to the question "Did the trainings give you confidence in yourself and your abilities?". To the question "What did attending trainings give you personally?" the participants gave detailed answers such as: "better understanding of myself", "reassurance and new experience of communication", "self-confidence", "understanding that I am not alone and can cope with all difficulties", "positive emotions and a good mood", "techniques that I can apply in everyday life to relieve stress and tension", "interest in learning", etc.

Conclusions

Mental health and psycho-emotional state significantly affect a personality's ability to learn, adapt to new life conditions, and react quickly and adequately in unusual situations. That is why it is necessary to create services that would provide psychological support for people in the process of their adaptation. One of the effective adaptation strategies is integration, which allows reaching a compromise between internal needs and the requirements of society. In order to optimize the integration process, the Career Center of Masaryk University has developed a number of services for applicants and students from Ukraine with the aim of psychological support and support for immigrant applicants at the stage of their adaptation. The intermediate stage of evaluating the effectiveness of the offered services and the results of

the implemented training program shows positive dynamics, in particular, in the psycho-emotional state of respondents, and, in general, in the process of integration.

We foresee the prospect of further investigations in a thorough study of the factors affecting the process of integration in new socio-cultural and educational conditions.

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Березка Софія. Психологічний супровід процесу інтеграції українських студентів: європейський досвід.

Війна в Україні спричинила активну міграцію українців у країни Європи. Попри знаходження у безпечному місці особи, які здобули тимчасовий захист, все одно залишаються у гострому стресі. Складний психоемоційний стан біженців обумовлюється психотравматизацією від пережитого досвіду війни та ускладняється втратою свого статусу у новій країні, вимушеним виходом із зони комфорту, усвідомленістю власної безпомічності, незахищеності та відчуженості. На відміну від дорослих, діти та підлітки, які раптово стали переселенцями, гостріше переживають розлуку з близькими, втрату контактів з однолітками, відокремленість від групи у новому соціокультурному оточенні. Серед дітей-біженців значна частина тих осіб, які мали надії на майбутнє щодо вступу на обрану спеціальність та університет, проте мусили

відступити від своїх мрій і швидко приймати рішення (не завжди з власної волі), як і де можна вступити чи продовжити навчання в новій країні. Розуміючи складність психоемоційного стану абітурієнтів та студентів з України, Кар'єрний центр Університету імені Масарика розробив низку послуг, спрямованих на психологічний супровід процесу інтеграції українських здобувачів у європейський простір.

Мета. Метою даної статті є висвітлення особливостей надання послуг психологічного супроводу, а також проміжного результату дослідження ефективності впровадженої програми з розвитку адаптивності абітурієнтів та студентів з України, які виявили бажання навчатись в Університеті імені Масарика.

Методи дослідження. Для аналізу ефективності розроблених послуг та для визначення потреб здобувачів було використано онлайн та офлайн опитування за допомогою напівзакритої анкети. Для аналізу рівня адаптивності здобувачів було застосовано шкали за методикою «Опитувальник адаптації особистості до нового соціокультурного середовища».

Результати дослідження. Отримані результати є проміжними у рамках визначення ефективності розроблених послуг. Разом з тим, результати первинної та повторної діагностики учасників тренінгу, спрямованого на розвиток адаптивності як провідного фактора успішної інтеграції, дали можливість зафіксувати покращення психоемоційного стану здобувачів та студентів з України.

Висновки. Отримані проміжні результати оцінки якості розроблених послуг свідчать про їх доцільність та ефективність, що досягається за рахунок комплексності, різноманітності форм та видів послуг, а також комбінації теоретичних і практичних основ на шляху формування адаптивності й оптимізації процесу інтеграції абітурієнтів та студентів з України.

Ключові слова: адаптація, інтеграція, абітурієнти та студенти, біженці, психологічний супровід, освітні послуги.

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