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EDITORIAL

Neglected Displacement Crises: Call for Submissions[1]

Ralf Roßkopf[2]

Every June, the fate of displaced persons is brought to the attention of the global public – and 2025 is no exception: The month sees the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR) annual Global Trends Report on forced displacement published. In 2025, yet another estimated record high of 123.2 forcibly displaced worldwide is reported (UNHCR 2025a: 4). This year's annual World Refugee Day on June 20, 2025, will be held under the motto "Solidarity with Refugees" and calls for action. The message is "We see you. You are not forgotten. You are not alone." (UNHCR, 2025b).

However, just a few days earlier the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) presented its yearly Neglected Displacement Crisis Report. It is based on the three key characteristics of funding coverage, media attention and political will, and meant to raise awareness and advocate with key policy and decision makers (NRC 2025a: 1-2). In the order of the extend of neglect, the listed countries are the following:

1. Cameroon
2. Ethiopia
3. Mozambique
4. Burkina Faso
5. Mali
6. Uganda
7. Iran
8. Democratic Republic of Congo
9. Honduras
10. Somalia

It is striking that eight out of ten of these countries are located in Africa. The NRC calls among others upon the editors "to invest in journalism from underreported displacement crises" and to "commit to informing audiences about topics and contexts that are often off the media radar" (NRC, 2025b).

Reflecting our own editorial work for the *Quarterly on Refugee Problems – AWR Bulletin (QRP)*, we admit having been unable to publish any but one article (Adem et al., 2023) on the above mentioned crises since we relaunched the journal in 2022. This has not been done out of malice. Definitely, we should further increase our efforts and proactively reach out to potential authors with expertise in these regions. But in the end, as editors, we depend on receiving relevant submissions passing peer review.

Thus, we expressly call upon and encourage scientists (including young scientists) and practitioners to send submissions covering the displacement crises in the related and other countries at the periphery of media, scientific and political attention. *QRP* offers you a platform for presenting your findings – quality assured, open access, and free of

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publication fees. *QRP* aims at visibility and dissemination without excluding those who do not have the financial background to cover high publication fees typically required elsewhere. Without compromising scientific standards, our policy is meant to break down western-centric discourses and to open them for contributions and perspectives from the global south.

Take this opportunity to make visible the fate of the neglected displaced. Let us jointly make a difference in line with this year's World Refugee Day's message:

"We see you. You are not forgotten. You are not alone."

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RESEARCH ARTICLES

Declining Humanitarian Funding: Impacts on Economic and Food Security Among Rohingya Refugees and Host Communities in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh[1]

Moammad Shajan Siraj[2]

Abstract

The ongoing Rohingya refugee crisis in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, has intensified due to declining humanitarian funding, affecting both refugees and host communities. Despite continued international support, severe economic and food insecurity challenges threaten social cohesion and regional stability. This study examines the impact of reduced humanitarian aid on the economic and food security of Rohingya refugees and host communities. It also explores aid dependency, labor market shifts, and coping strategies. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining 106 surveys, five focus group discussions, and ten key informant interviews in Ukhiya and Teknaf Upazilas. The analysis was guided by a human security framework informed by Sen's Capability Approach, Relative Deprivation Theory, and Burden-Sharing Theory. Reductions in humanitarian aid profoundly impacted economic security, resulting in wage declines from Bangladeshi Taka (BDT) 550 to BDT 300–350 and a contraction in employment opportunities. Host communities have faced intensified competition, and aid dependency has grown among refugees. Simultaneously, food security deteriorated due to cuts in monthly food rations in 2023, before being restored in 2024. These reductions constrained access to adequate food and reduced dietary diversity, with 72% of Rohingya households falling below the minimum food expenditure level, contributing to a Global Acute Malnutrition rate of 15.1%, the highest since 2017. Both communities resorted to harmful coping mechanisms, such as borrowing and reducing meals. Additionally, psychological stress among refugees, linked to loss of dignity, has been reported despite ongoing aid. These findings underscore the urgent need for sustained humanitarian funding, inclusive livelihood programs, and policy adaptation to promote resilience and equity. This study

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provides insights into dual vulnerability patterns and the psychosocial toll of protracted crises, offering guidance for more sustainable and inclusive humanitarian responses.

Key Words:

Rohingya refugees, host communities, economic security, food insecurity, humanitarian aid, Cox's Bazar

1 Introduction

The global increase in forced displacement, which has roots in historical and colonial impacts, has worsened because of conflicts and human rights violations (Seppälä et al., 2020). The Rohingya, a Sunni Muslim population of approximately 3.5 million worldwide, experience continual displacement from Myanmar's Rakhine State, with the most substantial exodus occurring in August 2017, when a significant number sought refuge in Cox's Bazar[3], resulting in 960,128 individuals staying in Cox's Bazar and Bhasan Char,[4] Bangladesh (Albert & Maizland, 2020; Rohingya Refugee Response, 2024). The Rohingya crisis involved forced migration, identity issues, and a history of exclusion, highlighting its complexity beyond Bangladesh and Myanmar's foreign policies (Islam & Rahman, 2018). Described by refugees as 'a life of football', the situation reflects their vulnerability and constant displacement between the two countries, with no resolution in sight (Uddin, 2018).

The influx of refugees has exacerbated the existing issues in Cox's Bazar, including poverty, infrastructure limitations, and resource scarcity, thereby intensifying economic tensions with host communities (Talukder, 2022; Ahmad & Naeem, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, the Ukraine conflict, and reduced funding have further strained resources, leading to worsening food insecurity, declining health outcomes, and increasing instability (UN OCHA, 2023; WFP, 2023; Anwar et al., 2023; Tasci & Ahmed, 2022).

Table 1: Funds managed under JRP (2017-2024) (Inter Sector Coordination Group, 2024)

JRP (year)	Total appeal ($M)	Fund Received ($M)	Gap($M)	% (GAP)
2017	434.1	314.6	119.5	28%
2018	950.8	688.1	262.7	28%
2019	920.5	692	228.5	25%
2020	1058.1	629.5	428.6	41%
2021	943.2	689.7	253.5	27%
2022	880.7	619.7	261.0	30%
2023	875.9	620	255.9	29%
2024 as of 9/2024	852.4	455.7	396.7	47%

[3] Cox's Bazar is a coastal district in southeastern Bangladesh near the Myanmar border. It hosts the world's largest refugee settlement, with over 900,000 Rohingya refugees residing in camps, particularly in the Ukhiya and Teknaf sub-districts.
[4] Bhasan Char is a remote island in the Bay of Bengal developed by the Government of Bangladesh to accommodate part of the Rohingya refugee population. The island has been equipped with housing, embankments, and basic infrastructure.

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Table 1 illustrates that from 2017 to 2024, the Joint Response Plan (JRP) for the Rohingya issue has faced financing deficiencies, with the gaps becoming more pronounced in recent years. Initial appeals from 2017 to 2019 experienced funding gaps of approximately 25–28%; however, this gap widened to 41% in 2020, likely attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic and shifting global priorities. Although there has been a slight improvement from 2021 to 2023, the gaps remain substantial, ranging from 27% to 30%. By September 2024, the funding gap had reached 47%, with less than half of the requested funds received. This trend suggests increasing donor fatigue, competing global crises, and a diminishing international focus. The repercussions are severe: Essential services for both Rohingya refugees and host communities are underfunded, leading to deteriorating living conditions and heightened economic vulnerability. Immediate international re-engagement, diversified donor support, and enhanced advocacy are crucial for sustaining humanitarian efforts and preventing further destabilization (Inter Sector Coordination Group [ISCG], 2024). For example, food aid was reduced from $12.50 to $8 per person per month in 2023, increased to $10 in January 2024, and eventually restored to $12.50 by September 2024. Despite this recovery, the initial reduction forced many refugees to adopt extreme coping mechanisms (UN OCHA, 2023; WFP, 2023). Funding cuts have largely left unmet global humanitarian needs, with the UN's 2023 appeal meeting only 50% of the required funding, highlighting a significant gap between needs and available resources (Oxfam, 2023).

Bangladesh faces substantial financial and logistical burdens in supporting Rohingya refugees, as it balances humanitarian obligations with economic strain (Faye, 2021). Infrastructure costs, including camp fencing and Bhasan Char development, exceed $100 million, and annual support costs reach $1.21 billion, adding pressure to the economy amid global challenges such as the Russia-Ukraine conflict and rising fuel prices (Korobi, 2023; Palma, 2021; Rahman, 2023).

Although some international responses advocate for durable solutions such as formal labor markets or resettlement sponsorships, legal migration pathways have been implemented only in limited instances (Ferris & Kerwin, 2023). The Rohingya crisis faced challenges in achieving sustainable solutions, such as resettlement or integration. Long-term solutions include restoring civil and political rights, burden-sharing by wealthy nations, and capacity building among refugees, but they require sustained funding (Rashid, 2020).

Funding cuts significantly affected local livelihoods, decreasing employment opportunities and, as a result, leading to an 11% drop in average income from 2015 to 2020, despite a 5% annual increase. In 2021, Cox's Bazar's employment rate was 20 percentage points lower than the national average (Jahan, 2023). The presence of the Rohingya also affected daily wages in Teknaf, with average wages dropping from 550 BDT in 2017 to 300-350 BDT in 2019 and a similar decrease in Ukhiya (Ansar & Khaled, 2021). This crisis had a severe impact on household income and asset ownership, with annual income and land ownership declining by 24% and 39% between 2016 and 2020, respectively (Ullah et al., 2021).

Funding cuts have also impacted the local economy, with one-third of camp businesses operated by Bangladeshis, which reflects local engagement in camp economies (Filipski et al., 2021). The local government's prioritization of the Rohingya people often leads to resource disputes and marginalization, highlighting the need for policies addressing these

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issues (Islam et al., 2022). Frequent access to natural resources by Rohingya refugees has exacerbated socioeconomic tensions, resulting in an increasing generalization of their role in socio-environmental crises. (Sadat al Sajib et al., 2022).

The decrease in humanitarian aid has severely impacted food security, with studies indicating that only 21.6% of Rohingya households report acceptable food security levels, with better outcomes observed among those with additional income sources (Anwar et al., 2023). Reduced aid worsens nutritional well-being among displaced individuals and host communities (Abdullah et al., 2018; As & Handana, 2022), underscoring the need for sustainable solutions to improve food security.

Globally, funding cuts to humanitarian efforts negatively impact human security, and the compounding effects of overpopulation and resource scarcity exacerbate these challenges, as observed in refugee-hosting nations such as Jordan and Lebanon (Schiffbauer et al., 2015). Globally, many refugees are housed in camps without permanent solutions, leading to health issues, limited labor market skills, and developmental challenges, which disincentivize states from providing local resettlement (Pressé, D., & Thomson, J., 2008). Despite being perceived as a burden, refugees are also recognized as making significant contributions to the economies of host countries, particularly through higher rates of entrepreneurship (Newman et al., 2024). Understanding the potential harm of refugee aid to poorer host communities can help agencies respond appropriately and develop effective policies (Khaled, 2021).

This study, therefore, investigated the implications of reduced humanitarian funding on the human security of Rohingya refugees and host communities in Cox's Bazar.

Human security prioritizes the protection of individuals from threats such as poverty, hunger, and violence, thereby shifting the focus from state-centric security to the well-being of individuals. This concept, introduced by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 1994, encompasses economic, food, health, and personal security. In humanitarian contexts, such as the Rohingya crisis, human security offers a comprehensive framework for assessing immediate survival needs (e.g., food) and broader issues, including dignity, agency, and resilience. This study focuses on economic vulnerability, food insecurity, and the shifting dynamics of livelihoods. Specifically, it focuses on how funding cuts affect local labor markets, food supply chains, and household resilience in Ukhiya and Teknaf Upazilas[5], including key refugee camps in Palongkhali and Rajapalong unions. The research also explores the socioeconomic impact of non-governmental organization (NGO) interventions and their subsequent withdrawal due to funding shortages.

This study is grounded in three pivotal social science theories that inform the analysis of economic and food insecurity in humanitarian contexts: Amartya Sen's Capability Approach, Relative Deprivation Theory, and Burden Sharing Theory.

First, According to Wells (2011) Sen's Capability Approach is a human-centered framework that assesses well-being based on individuals' capabilities, genuine freedoms, or opportunities to achieve valued ways of living. Unlike economic measures, which focus

[5] Ukhiya and Teknaf Upazilas are sub-districts of Cox's Bazar District in southeastern Bangladesh, where the majority of Rohingya refugee camps are located.

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solely on income, this theory emphasizes what people can do (function) and be (capability). This highlights the importance of removing barriers such as poverty, discrimination, and social exclusion, enabling individuals to lead lives they value. In humanitarian settings, this framework shifts the focus from basic service provision to enhancing agency, autonomy, and empowerment of displaced individuals and vulnerable communities (Robeyns, 2005). Capabilities include accessing nutritious food, finding meaningful work, and engaging in community life with dignity.

Second, as developed by Runciman (1966), the Relative Deprivation Theory explains the discontent that arises when individuals or groups perceive themselves as disadvantaged compared to others. This perception may not stem from absolute poverty, but from inequality in access to resources or recognition. In refugee-hosting contexts, this theory highlights the emotional and socioeconomic strain experienced by host populations, who perceive refugees as receiving disproportionate aid, even if both groups face hardships. Perceived inequality can lead to resentment, social friction, and a decline in solidarity.

Third, the Burden-Sharing Theory, rooted in international relations and refugee studies, posits that the support for refugees should be distributed equally across the global community (Betts, 2009). When one nation or region bears a disproportionate share, often at the expense of lower-income host countries like Bangladesh, it creates structural imbalances and long-term instability. This theory emphasizes the moral and practical necessity for wealthier states and international institutions to make significant contributions to funding, resettlement, and capacity-building support.

The primary focus of this study was to examine the impact of declining humanitarian funding on the economic and food security of Rohingya refugees and host communities in Cox's Bazar. The central hypothesis is that reductions in humanitarian aid exacerbate economic and food insecurities, leading to increased competition for resources, diminished livelihoods, and heightened tensions between refugees and host communities.

Ultimately, this study specifically examines how declining humanitarian funding affects labor markets, food access, and the socioeconomic dynamics between refugees and host communities. Specific subthemes include (i) economic insecurity characterized by employment loss and wage decline, and (ii) food insecurity, including ration cuts, reduced dietary diversity, and nutritional decline.

This investigation aligns with several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). This study highlights the urgent need for resilience-building strategies in humanitarian contexts.

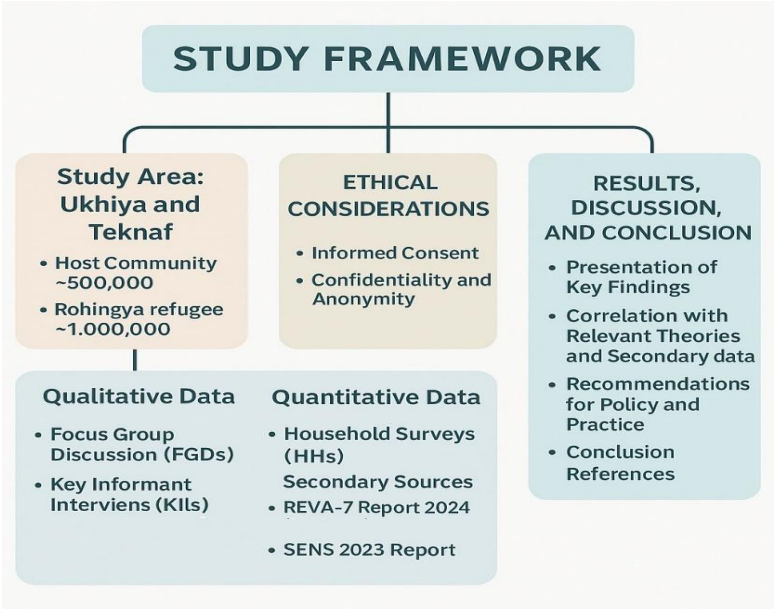
This research is significant for decision-makers and humanitarian players, providing critical insights into the consequences of funding cuts on vulnerable populations. These findings underscore the need for sustainable funding mechanisms and policies that address both immediate needs and long-term structural challenges.

2 Methodology

A mixed-methods approach was adopted, integrating quantitative and qualitative techniques to assess the impact of declining humanitarian funding on the economic and

food security of Rohingya refugees and host communities in Ukhiya and Teknaf Upazilas, as well as Cox's Bazar. Primary data were collected from November 2023 to March 2024. In contrast, secondary data were examined until September 2024. Primarily, the Joint Response Plan from the ISCG, the Refugee Influx Emergency Vulnerability Assessment (REVA-7), and the UNHCR Standardized Expanded Nutrition Survey (SENS) report for 2023.

Figure 1: Study Framework



2.1 Geographical Focus

The study was conducted in key refugee and host community areas: the Palongkhali Union (Ukhiya), Rajapalong Union (Ukhiya), and Hnila and Whykong Unions (Teknaf). These areas were selected because they are demographically significant, host a substantial portion of the Rohingya population, and are the sites of major humanitarian operations.

2.2 Quantitative Study Population and Sampling

This study targeted adults aged 18 years. A total of 106 respondents were selected using purposive sampling. Among them, 58% were Rohingya refugees residing in camps, and 42% were members of the host community. The respondents were drawn proportionally from each location based on population density and accessibility. The sample size was calculated at a 95% confidence level, with a 10% margin of error. A buffer was included to account for potential non-responses. Purposive sampling ensured the participants had relevant experience with humanitarian assistance and its reduction.

Sample Size Calculation for the Survey:

$$\text{Sample Size, } n = \frac{p \times (1-p)}{\frac{e^2}{t^2} + \frac{p \times (1-p)}{N}}$$

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Table 2: Sample Size Calculation with Details

Size of population (N)	138,046
Degree of variability (p)	0.5
Precision of the results (e)	0.1
Confidence level (t)	1.96
n =	96
Real size of the sample (add 10% due to false answer)	106

The statistical approach in social science research ensures the validity and reliability of the findings through purposive sampling, a non-random technique that selects participants who meet specific criteria and provides valuable insights into the impact of humanitarian responses on human security in the target area.

2.3 Qualitative Method

The study involved five focus group discussions with 40 participants and ten key interviews in Palongkhali, Rajapalong, and Hnila. It prioritized ethical considerations, obtained informed consent, explained the purpose, procedures, and risks, and ensured data anonymization for confidentiality.

Table 3: Sample Size Finalization for the Study

Study method	Sample size	Host participants	Camp (Rohingya) participants	Total participants
Survey	106	45	61	106
Key informant interview (KII)	10	6	4	10
Focus Group Discussion (FGD)	05	24	16	40

2.4 Data Collection and Analysis

Qualitative data obtained from Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were transcribed, coded, and subjected to thematic analysis to discern key patterns and sector-specific challenges. Quantitative survey data were analyzed using KoBo Toolbox and Microsoft Excel to produce descriptive statistics and explore the relationships between aid reduction, employment, and food security. Secondary data from pertinent sectors facilitated the triangulation. The analysis was based on Sen's Capability Approach as discussed by Wells (2011), Relative Deprivation Theory, and Burden-Sharing Theory to interpret the economic and food security dynamics.

2.5 Ethics

Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the study. The participants were thoroughly informed about the study's objectives, methodologies, and potential risks associated with their involvement. Informed consent was obtained from all the participants. Anonymity and confidentiality were rigorously upheld to ensure a safe

environment for the participants to share their experiences. All data were anonymized to protect their identities during analysis and reporting.

3 Study Results

This study investigates the economic, food, and health security dimensions of the Rohingya population and the host communities, emphasizing the effects of humanitarian activities, including job competition, wage pressure, disruptions to local businesses, marginalization, aid dependence, food insecurity, and malnutrition.

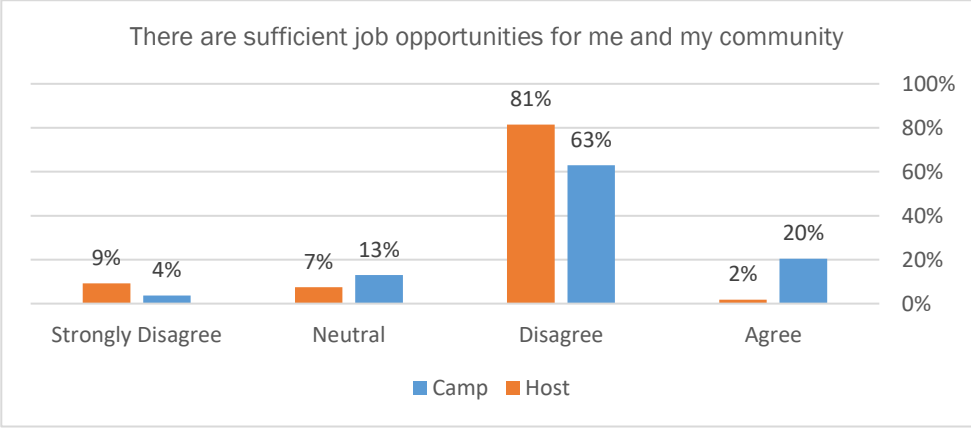
Understanding the demographic composition of the study participants is essential before exploring the economic and food security outcomes.

- *Location*: 31% of the respondents were from the Palongkhali Union, a central site for Rohingya refugee settlements.
- *Gender*: The sample had a gender imbalance of 72% males and 28% females, primarily due to cultural and religious constraints limiting female participation.
- *Education*: Education levels vary widely. Among Rohingya respondents, 78% had no formal education. In contrast, 17% of the host community respondents were graduates (passed the courses), and 20% had completed secondary education.
- *Occupation*: Employment types reflect broader economic disparities. While 52% of the Rohingya respondents engaged in manual labor, the host community showed more diversity while working in the private sector or self-employed.

3.1 Economic Security

This study highlights the complex condition of economic security in humanitarian crises. It investigated community perceptions of income-generating opportunities and collected feedback on employment accessibility. The quantitative data are visualized in Figure 2. 81% of host community members disagreed, and 9% strongly disagreed with the statement that sufficient work opportunities exist. Among the Rohingya refugees, 63% expressed concern about limited job availability, although 20% agreed that they had some opportunities, mainly within camp-based NGO roles.

Figure 2: Perception of Job Opportunities as an Individual and for the Community



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The gap between the two communities is attributable to the adverse effects of the influx of the Rohingya on vulnerable local populations.

The study noted that only 2% of the host community agreed that there were enough job opportunities compared to 20% of the Rohingya population. Although the agreement rate was higher among the Rohingya refugees, it remained low. This discrepancy is attributed to providing aid within camps, which offers limited employment opportunities for NGOs and service providers.

Figure 3: Community Perception of Economic Security

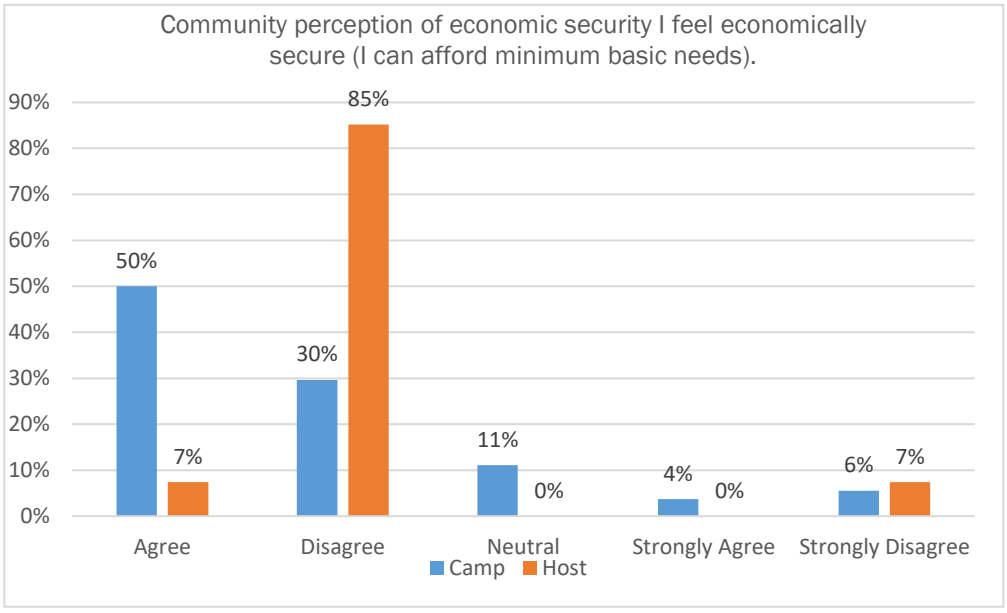

Figure 3 highlights a significant difference in how the Rohingya refugee camp community perceives economic security compared with the host community. Half the camp residents felt economically secure, whereas only 7% of the host community shared this view. On the other hand, 85% of the host community members disagreed with feeling secure, in contrast to 30% of the camp residents. Despite having access to national systems, host communities feel more economically vulnerable than refugees, who depend mainly on humanitarian aid. This difference could be attributed to several factors. Refugees in camps often receive regular assistance such as food, shelter, and healthcare, which can provide a basic level of security. By contrast, host communities deal with rising inflation, limited job opportunities, and increased competition for resources without similar support. The data also show that only 4% of camp residents strongly agreed with feeling secure, whereas 6% strongly disagreed, reflecting a mixed and fragile sense of stability. Although capturing actual economic security is challenging owing to factors such as understanding, willingness to express the real situation, sampling methods, and limited sample size, this perceived security gap highlights growing resentment or a sense of neglect among host communities dependent on assistance. To address this imbalance, development actors should enhance support for host populations by focusing on income generation, infrastructure, and service access to foster social cohesion and ensure shared resilience.

The qualitative study reported that host community members could fulfill basic needs through gardening on the hillside land, daily casual labor, fishing, and salt production before the crisis. However, the Rohingya influx disrupted these activities, causing many locals to lose their income sources and fail to find viable alternatives. The study reveals that competition in the labor market intensified as Rohingya workers accepted lower wages, leading to further marginalization of the host population.

3.2 Impact on Local Labor and Economic Marginalization

The arrival of Rohingya refugees has significantly impacted the local labor market. Rohingya workers, often willing to accept lower wages, exert downward pressure on earnings. Several key informants have highlighted that daily wage rates have decreased to between BDT 250 and 300, disproportionately affecting the host community. A local female leader from Whykong noted that this wage disparity exacerbated economic tensions and marginalized the host community, depriving them of access to the local labor market.

Qualitative analysis revealed a local perspective, particularly through a statement by a female leader in Whykong who observed that

> "It was a frequent occurrence in my village (near my house) to see two Rohingya laborers consistently present, patiently awaiting any available employment opportunities each day. However, throughout the previous two months, there was a change in this situation. Currently, more than eight of them share the same hope. This alteration is like a heavy cloud over our community."

Her sentiments capture rising tensions as local laborers struggle to compete with cheaper Rohingya labor, contributing to declining wages and economic instability. She further stated,

> "Nowadays, the challenge goes beyond seeking employment. Our community is struggling with the anxiety and hidden difficulties of witnessing the increasing difficulty in sustaining a livelihood due to declining work opportunities and wages."

A KII respondent from Rajapalong Union noted that many local youths suspended their education to work with NGOs at the height of the humanitarian response. According to his comments,

> "After the arrival of Rohingya refugees, a large number of young people, particularly college and university students, took on front-line roles in the Rohingya response, motivated by their high incomes. Sadly, a large number of them stopped or postponed their schooling in order to do this. They have not finished their higher education; thus, they are unemployed because of funding reductions and cannot find new opportunities. They are becoming more vulnerable because of this, as social and familial pressures may cause them to engage in criminal activity."

Aid reductions have led to job losses, and many are now unemployed, creating new risks of criminal involvement and social unrest. Rajapalong's study data indicates positive changes, such as infrastructure improvements and new local markets following this influx. As NGOs arrived to support the Rohingya population, they created opportunities for the host community to rent land for NGO offices and warehouses. However, many locals, who have come to rely on this source of income, are now struggling with funding cuts and NGOs' departure. One participant shared,

> "We used to grow food on our government-leased property, but we had to give it up to build a

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> camp. We found a solution. I work for an NGO, and my father has rented part of our land for their offices and warehouses. Everything was fine until last year, when the NGO left, and I lost my job and extra income. We have not regained ownership of our land, which was vital to our income."

3.3 Decline in Local Businesses and Aid Dependency

This research critically analyzes the economic disruptions resulting from the decline in regional humanitarian aid, emphasizing the diminished informal business interactions between the host community and the Rohingya population. Previously, some Rohingya refugees engaged in barter trade, selling goods, such as oil and rice, to local businesses in exchange for essential items, including nutritious food. However, these transactions have significantly declined because of reduced aid allocations, constraining the economic flexibility of both communities.

Host community businesses, especially small-scale suppliers of bamboo, latrine slabs, and other non-food items (NFIs), have experienced a corresponding downturn as construction activities in camps have diminished. The decrease in funding has also adversely affected food supply chains, significantly reducing the availability of fresh vegetables in camps. While 50% of Rohingya refugees had previously accessed fresh products from local markets, this figure has now decreased to 25%, driven by escalating prices and a diminished aid-based purchasing capacity.

The findings underscore the compounded economic strain on local businesses, particularly those in food and construction supply chains. This research highlights that reductions in aid diminish the purchasing power of vulnerable populations and impede local economic ecosystems, necessitating immediate strategic interventions to mitigate long-term socioeconomic instability in the region.

3.4 Migration, Illegal Activities, and Aid Dependency

In response to economic hardship, research indicates that both the Rohingya and the host communities engage in illicit activities as a means of survival. Numerous Rohingya refugees are planning to migrate irregularly to countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia because of the scarcity of legitimate income opportunities. Similarly, many members of the host community have turned to informal employment, although they continue to experience marginalization and economic insecurity. This study elucidates how specific individuals previously employed by NGOs are now facing difficulties due to diminished funding and limited job prospects.

For instance, one local participant remarked,

> "As a watchman, I was earning a solid 25,000 BDT, which was more than sufficient. Though my work title has changed, my employer is still the same, and my duties have not changed, but I have been given the job of watchman for volunteers. The problem is that my pay was reduced to 10,000 BDT. Everything seems increasingly expensive, so I am always balancing on the edge of financial instability."

Similarly, within the camps, participants voiced their dissatisfaction with current aid arrangements. One Rohingya refugee from Camp 1E stated,

> "I was respected in the camp as a volunteer team leader. My modest wages and food rations enabled me to purchase all the required goods. Now, we only receive rations, and escalating prices render it impossible to acquire all we need. Presently, unemployment and the loss of respect are also detrimental to my mental health."

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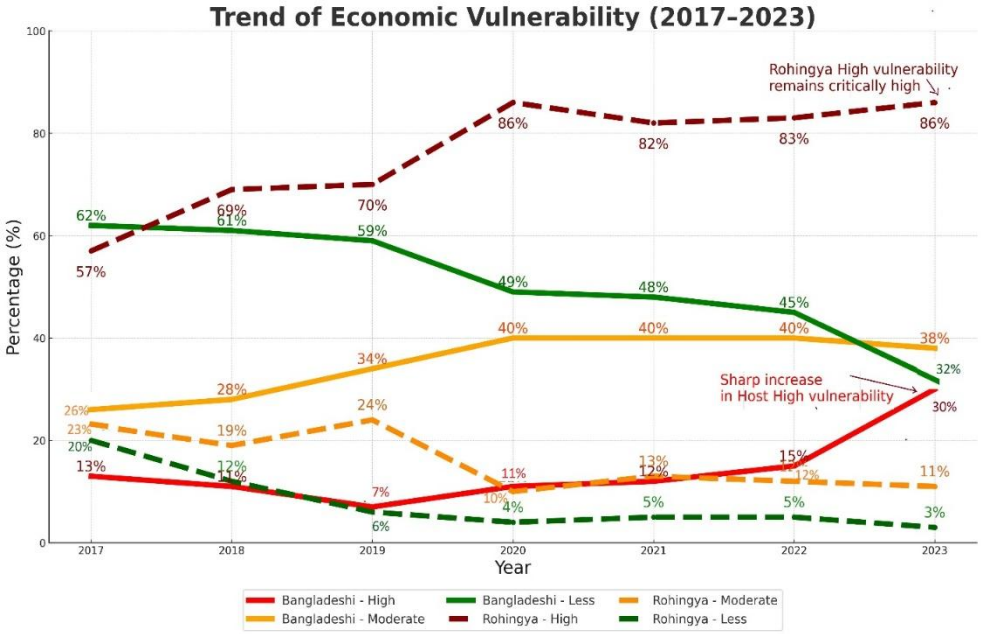
A 45-year-old female participant in the camp conveyed her frustration, stating,

> "When my husband was able to work casually with NGO activities, our livelihood status was different. Those days are over. Now unemployed, he receives food as a ration. It is hardly sufficient to prevent hunger. Clothing? Fish? Fruits? We can barely conceive of such luxuries."

3.5 Economic Vulnerability and Outlook

Figure 4: Economic Vulnerability among the Rohingya Refugees and the Host Community



As illustrated in Figure 4, the findings from the REVA-7 revealed a significant shift in the vulnerability levels of Bangladeshi host communities over time. The proportion of individuals experiencing high vulnerability has markedly increased, doubling from 15% in 2022 to 30% in 2023, underscoring heightened stress and diminished capacity to manage shocks. Meanwhile, moderate vulnerability has remained relatively stable at approximately 40% since 2020, indicating that a substantial portion of the population continues to contend with unresolved risks.

In contrast, the proportion of the less vulnerable (resilient) group has decreased dramatically from 62% in 2017 to 32% in 2023, suggesting a troubling decline in resilience, likely attributable to persistent socioeconomic challenges and resource depletion. Several factors contribute to this situation, as host communities face rising vulnerability due to interconnected challenges. The protracted refugee crisis has pressured local resources, services, and infrastructure, while reduced donor support has limited aid availability. Climate events, such as floods and cyclones, further impact livelihoods. Economic inflation and job competition have heightened financial insecurity, and social tensions have escalated due to the prolonged presence of refugees. Collectively, these elements gradually eroded community resilience.

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In contrast, the Rohingya population continued to endure persistently high levels of vulnerability (Figure 4). High vulnerability sharply increased from 57% in 2017 to 86% in 2023, reflecting deep-seated insecurity, marginalization, and reliance on aid. Simultaneously, moderate vulnerability significantly decreased from 23% to 11%, not due to improved conditions but because more individuals have transitioned into the highly vulnerable category. The less vulnerable (resilient) group nearly disappeared, declining from 20% to just 3%, indicating that the community has almost no segment with sufficient coping capacity or stability. The underlying reason for this is that the Rohingya population faces chronic vulnerability rooted in legal statelessness, which restricts easy access to education, livelihoods, and freedom of movement. They resided in overcrowded, disaster-prone camps with inadequate sanitation and infrastructure. Work restrictions keep them dependent on aid, while diminishing humanitarian support reduces access to necessities. Years of displacement and trauma have also adversely affected mental health and community resilience, exacerbating long-term insecurity. Without targeted investments in livelihoods, education, infrastructure, and governance reforms, both populations risk being further entrenched in poverty and long-term vulnerability. Addressing this complex situation requires an integrated response that balances immediate humanitarian needs with sustainable development support for the host regions.

REVA-7 further reports that in 2023, household expenditures in Bangladesh increased due to the global economic crisis, characterized by price hikes, USD shortages, and food inflation, reaching a 12-year high of 12.56%. The average monthly per capita expenditure for Rohingya households in Cox's Bazar increased by BDT 203, while the Bangladeshi community experienced an increase of BDT 122 compared to that in 2022. However, Rohingya households in Cox's Bazar spent significantly less (BDT 1,252 or US$11.3 per capita per month) than the Bangladeshi community (BDT 3,131 or US$28.3). When accounting for the imputed value of humanitarian assistance, expenditures for Rohingya households in Cox's Bazar rose to BDT 2,732 (US$24.7) per capita per month, and for Bangladeshi households, it reached BDT 3,430 (US$31.0). This finding underscores the critical role of aid in meeting these basic needs. Nevertheless, ration cuts led to a significant decrease in Rohingya household spending in Cox's Bazar, highlighting the severe impact of reduced support (World Food Programme, 2024).

The data shown in Figure *5* below shows a stark and escalating food insecurity crisis among the Rohingya population in Cox's Bazar, particularly in the absence of humanitarian assistance. Without aid, over 80% of the Rohingya fall below the food Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB) consistently from 2019 to 2023, with negligible improvement. Even with assistance, the percentage below food MEB rose from just 1% in 2022 to 23% in 2023, indicating a deterioration in aid adequacy. This sharp decline is likely driven by several causal factors: declining international funding, increasing population pressure, and rising food prices due to inflation and supply chain disruptions. Moreover, the policy shift to reduce rations from $12 to $8 per person/month in early 2023 critically undermined the coping capacity of an already aid-dependent population.

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Figure 5: Economic Vulnerability with and without Assistance among Rohingya Communities (Data Source, REVA-7)

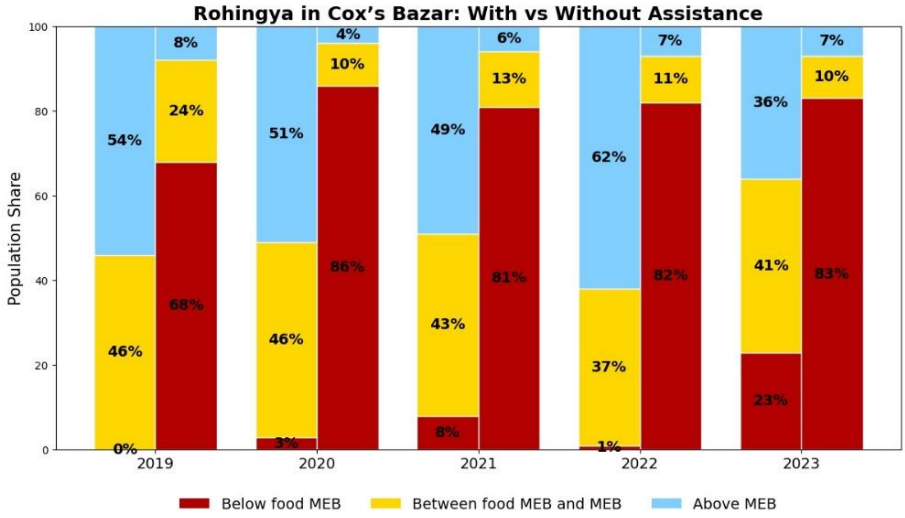
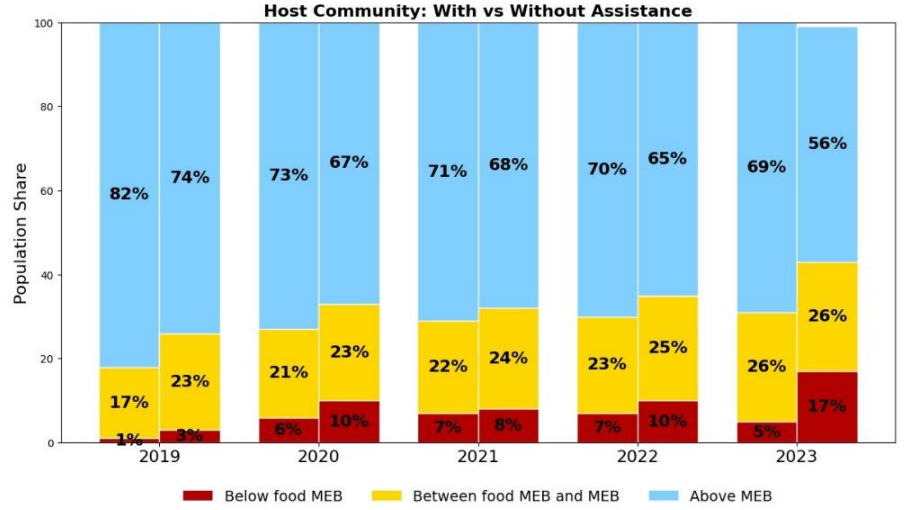


Figure 6: Economic Vulnerability with and without Assistance among Bangladeshi Host Communities (Data Source, REVA-7)



While the host community demonstrated in Figure 6 above has a relatively more resilient food security status compared to the Rohingya, recent trends suggest emerging vulnerabilities. The proportion of host households below food MEB without assistance increased from 3% in 2019 to 17% in 2023, showing a slow but concerning erosion of economic security. Even with aid, food insecurity among the host rose to 5% in 2023. This pattern is likely driven by prolonged resource strain from the protracted refugee presence, rising living costs, and limited livelihood diversification in Teknaf and Ukhiya, which remain economically fragile. There may also be a growing perception of inequality and aid imbalance, which can strain social cohesion and increase local resentment.

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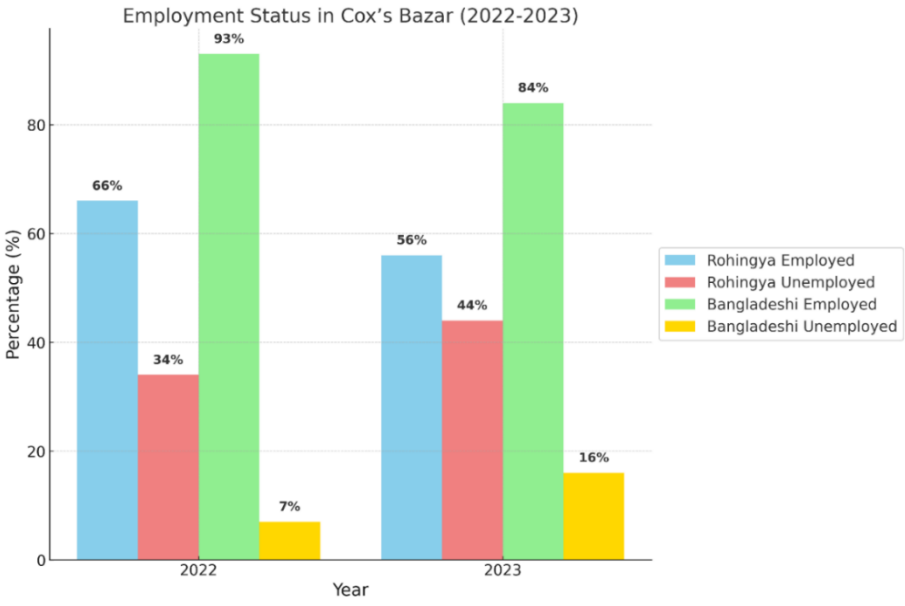
Comparing both scenarios revealed that food assistance is a critical stabilizing factor for the host and Rohingya communities. Without assistance, the host population's economic resilience deteriorates rapidly, indicating their growing dependence on support amidst external shocks, such as inflation, reduced livelihoods, and resource competition. In contrast, while the Rohingya community remains chronically vulnerable even with assistance, food support reduces the severity of hardship, increasing the proportion of those reaching above the MEB.

These trends suggest that both structural constraints (e.g., lack of income-generating opportunities for the Rohingya) and increasing economic pressure on host communities (e.g., rising costs of living and strain on local markets) drive heightened vulnerability. Food assistance is a buffer against these pressures, and its absence directly correlates with deteriorating outcomes.

Figure 7 below illustrates the employment and unemployment trends among the Rohingya community in Cox's Bazar and the host Bangladeshi community for 2022 and 2023. There was a noticeable decline in employment in both groups over the two years. In the Rohingya community, employment dropped from 66% in 2022 to 56% in 2023, while unemployment rose from 34% to 44%. Similarly, employment among the Bangladeshi host community fell from 93% to 84%, with unemployment increasing from 7% to 16%. Although both communities experienced worsening employment conditions, the Rohingya population remained significantly more vulnerable, with a much higher unemployment rate than the host community. This trend may be due to economic slowdowns, reduced humanitarian support, and restrictions on formal employment opportunities for Rohingya refugees. The data highlight the need for targeted livelihood interventions to address the growing economic challenges faced by both Rohingya and host communities.

Figure 7: Employment and Unemployment Status among the Rohingya refugees and Bangladeshi Host Communities (Data Source, REVA-7)



3.6 Food Insecurity: Availability, Accessibility, and Utilization

Participants in the host community's FGDs frequently mentioned difficulties accessing food. A local leader from Whykong stated,

> "Finding food in the market can be particularly challenging for us. Most of the food seems to be allocated to the Rohingya refugee camps. It appears they neglect us, the residents. We feel excluded, especially when buying food at the Rohingya market" (male, 55; local leader from Whykong).

This sense of deprivation among the host community highlights the competition for limited resources between the two populations. Although assistance has decreased over time, the Rohingya community has received rations, contributing to further tensions. A Rohingya participant from Refugee Camp 11 explained,

> "The ration can be useful for some essential products, but it cannot be used to purchase other nutritious food and meat. Humans desire to eat various fruits and meats, yet those rations cannot provide adequate sustenance" (male, 28; Camp 11).

Initially, the Rohingya received approximately $12 (1,224 BDT) per month for food, which included essential items, such as rice, vegetables, oil, and eggs. However, ration cuts reduced this amount to $8, forcing families to cut back on essential purchases even as food prices continued to rise. A subsequent increase brought the amount to $10 and then $12.5, and there was a high-risk situation when U.S. fund cuts and ration allocation were proposed. Fortunately, the allocation of $12.5, as a fund cut, was not considered for emergency food. Despite this, challenges persist, owing to the rising prices of essential goods. Households with many children may sell products to acquire other necessities, but this remains insufficient. The rising cost of food has forced many participants to skip meals and reduce the quantity of food consumed. One-third of the participants reported eliminating one meal from their daily routine.

According to KIIs, Table 4 presents an overview of the monthly ration allocation per person. The data clearly show that as ration cuts increase, access to food decreases, a trend directly linked to rising malnutrition rates. The UNHCR Standardized Expanded Nutrition Survey reported a deterioration in the Global Acute Malnutrition rate, reaching 15.1%. This level signifies a situation of very high public health concern. The crisis may worsen further if the recent shift in U.S. policy, specifically, the termination of USAID funding, negatively affects ongoing humanitarian programs in the region.

Table 4: Food Ration Access to the Rohingya Refugees with the Current Allocation.

Items	Unit	$8	$10	$12	$12.50
Rice	kg	13	13	13	13
Vegetable oil	liter	1	1	1	1
Salt	kg	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Dry Chilli	kg	0.15	0.2	0.2	0.25
Red lentils	kg	0	0.5	1	0.5
Egg	pcs	0	5	10	11
Onion	kg	0	0.74	0.5	1
Garlic	kg	0	0	0.25	0.274
Sugar	kg	0	0	1	0
Vegetable	kg	0	0	1	0
Broiler chicken	kg	0	0	0	1.4

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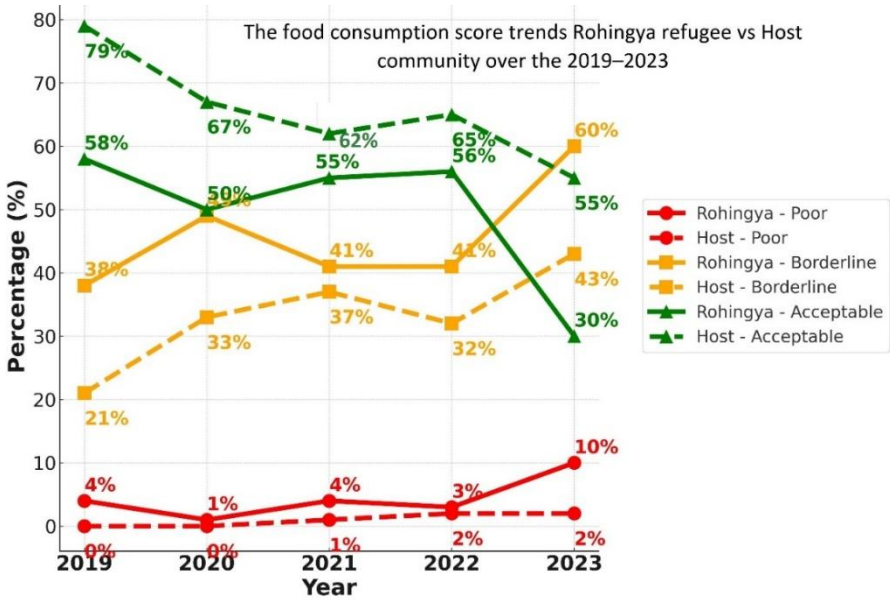
Figure 8: Food consumption score of Rohingya refugees and Bangladeshi Host Communities (Data Source, REVA-7)



The patterns of food consumption from 2019 to 2023 (Figure 8) reveal significant disparities and evolving dynamics between Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar and the local Bangladeshi population:

- *Acceptable Food Consumption:* The local community consistently demonstrates higher levels of acceptable food consumption, beginning at 79% in 2019 and gradually decreasing to 55% by 2023. Conversely, the Rohingya community started at 58% in 2019 but experienced a dramatic decline to merely 30% by 2023. This sharp decrease suggests deteriorating conditions, potentially attributable to ongoing reliance on aid, movement restrictions, and limited employment opportunities.
- *Borderline Category:* The Rohingya community exhibits a notable increase in borderline scores, rising from 38% in 2019 to 60% in 2023, indicating a shift from acceptable to borderline consumption. The local community also showed an upward trend in borderline scores, but the increase gradually increased from 21% to 43%.
- *Poor Food Consumption:* While the local community maintains very low levels of poor food consumption (1-2%), the Rohingya community experiences a significant rise to 10% by 2023, reflecting growing food insecurity. The declining food security among the Rohingya population could be attributed to donor fatigue, employment and movement restrictions, and a lack of integration policies, which likely limit their access to a variety of nutritious foods.

Although the local community also shows signs of stress, possibly owing to the pressures of hosting and economic challenges, it benefits from greater mobility, employment opportunities, and resilience mechanisms, enabling it to sustain a relatively higher level of acceptable consumption.

The disparity in food access between the two communities highlights the burgeoning food security crisis. A 26-year-old female participant from Rajapalong Union articulated the challenges posed by the absence of livelihood support programs:

> "In the early years after the influx, cash-for-work and cash-for-training programs helped me support my family. Now, those programs are gone, and my husband has to bear the burden of providing for us alone. It has been difficult not being able to contribute as I used to" (female, 26; Rajapalong Union).

3.7 Economic Impact of Food Insecurity

Declining food availability and rising costs have placed an additional economic burden on both Rohingya refugees and host communities in Cox's Bazar. A key informant involved in food security interventions highlighted the growing challenges in accessing diverse and affordable food options compared with the previous year. He noted that

> "People are facing increasing difficulties affording various food options. Host communities, particularly those without assistance, are struggling economically. It is equally concerning for the Rohingya community, as more families are now skipping meals to ensure their children can eat, a situation that has worsened since November 2022."

Data from food security programs revealed that most households in both the host community and refugee camps rely on coping strategies to survive. These include reducing portions, skipping meals, and consuming less-preferred foods. Funding reductions have severely affected food aid, with transfer values falling short of meeting the needs of the Rohingya population. As a result, food insecurity has become a pressing concern, particularly for refugees whose heavy reliance on aid leaves them vulnerable to any reduction in assistance.

According to REVA-7, in 2023, over 60% of Rohingya households resorted to extreme coping strategies, such as asset depletion, withdrawing children from school, or begging due to ration cuts and limited alternatives. By contrast, 44% of Bangladeshi households avoided extreme measures, although 48% relied on stress-coping mechanisms, including borrowing and selling assets. Both communities prioritized food over non-food expenses, often cutting back on education and health care. Approximately 50% of Rohingya households and 40% of Bangladeshi households borrowed money to meet their basic needs, highlighting ongoing economic challenges. The highest borrowing rates were reported by Cox's Bazar, particularly for food and healthcare expenses (World Food Program, 2024).

This situation reflects broader systemic issues in the humanitarian response, where funding shortages and logistical challenges frequently result in gaps in food assistance. Food insecurity in Cox's Bazar mirrors a global trend in which crises amplify vulnerabilities in resource-constrained settings.

4 Discussion

The results of this study indicate that the reduction in humanitarian funding has had significant negative impacts on both the economic and food security of Rohingya refugees and the host communities in Cox's Bazar. By applying standard economic security measures such as income, livelihood opportunities, job stability, asset ownership, and coping strategies, this study uncovers a worsening crisis, especially for host communities that lack similar safety nets.

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A fundamental aspect of economic security is stable income and access to employment. Both refugees and host community members have experienced a sharp decline in their livelihood opportunities. Among the host communities, wage rates dropped from BDT 550 to as low as BDT 300–350, with 81% of respondents indicating insufficient job availability. Rohingya refugees face similar challenges: over 63% reported a lack of job opportunities, although 20% mentioned occasional work in camp-based, humanitarian roles. However, these marginal employment opportunities are often inconsistent and highly susceptible to funding changes. Job security has also worsened, particularly with the reduction in NGO operations.

Many individuals who previously had regular salaries are now considered "volunteers" with reduced pay and benefits. The shift from stable to precarious employment has led to widespread dissatisfaction and increased psychological stress. Unemployment data further illustrate these trends, with the rate among Rohingyas rising from 34% to 44% between 2022 and 2023 and doubling from 7% to 16% among host communities. In addition to job losses, the erosion of household assets and growing reliance on aid further underscore economic insecurity. Several host families, particularly those leasing land for subsistence farming, lost access to camp settings. As a result, income and land ownership have declined.

For the Rohingya, restricted legal status prevents participation in formal labor markets, deepening their dependence on external assistance.

The REVA-7 data shows that high economic vulnerability among host communities has doubled, from 15% in 2022 to 30% in 2023. In the Rohingya group, 86% of households were classified as highly vulnerable. Without ongoing external support, the resilience of both populations deteriorates rapidly. The proportion of host households living below the Food Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB) increased from 3% to 17%, whereas for Rohingya, over 80% remained below the MEB threshold. These indicators show the emergence of a dual crisis that necessitates both immediate and structural responses.

The consequences of funding reductions are equally dire when evaluated through FAO's four pillars of food security: availability, accessibility, utilization, and stability.

- *Food availability:* Cuts in humanitarian ration directly affected food availability. The monthly food allowance per person decreased from $12.5 to $8 in 2023, before being partially reinstated. These reductions affected not only the quantity but also the variety of food, leading to decreased access to fresh produce, meat, and protein-rich foods for refugees.
- *Food accessibility:* Access to food has been compromised by inflation, lower incomes, and diminished purchasing power. Rohingya households spent significantly less on food (BDT 1,252 per person) than host households (BDT 3,131), and 72% of the Rohingya households remained below the food expenditure threshold. Host communities grappling with rising prices and stagnant wages also struggle to meet their basic food needs.
- *Food utilization:* The ability to consume a varied and nutritious diet has deteriorated, especially in the Rohingya community. Many households reported reductions in meal frequency and portion size. According to the 2023 Standardized Expanded Nutrition Survey, the Global Acute Malnutrition rate among Rohingya children has reached

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15.1%, a serious public health concern. This crisis is directly tied to funding cuts, which restrict access to essential items, such as eggs, chickens, and lentils.

– *Food stability:* Food stability is threatened by the communities' reliance on humanitarian aid. Given global funding challenges, the temporary restoration of the $12.5 food ration is not assured to continue. Any future reduction could endanger household nutrition and worsen malnutrition and hunger, particularly in the absence of sustainable livelihood options and policy-level support for local integration.

This study underscores the notion that declining humanitarian funding has disrupted not only material conditions such as income and food access but also social cohesion and personal dignity. Economic and food security interconnection reveals cyclical vulnerability: economic marginalization reduces food access, whereas food insecurity undermines the ability to seek and maintain livelihoods. Without a multiyear investment in employment, infrastructure, nutrition, and psychosocial resilience, both host and refugee communities are trapped in a prolonged crisis. Sustainable support and burden sharing at the international level are crucial to breaking this cycle.

These findings are consistent with this study's theoretical foundations. Sen's Capability Approach as discussed by Wells (2011) is particularly relevant to understanding how reduced aid limits income and people's ability to lead meaningful and secure lives. Declining food rations and employment opportunities directly diminish individual freedom and capabilities, especially for marginalized groups.

These results also resonate with the Relative Deprivation Theory, as host communities increasingly perceive themselves as unfairly neglected. Despite having access to national systems, many feel worse off than aid-supported refugees do, contributing to social friction and weakening inter-group solidarity.

The Burden-Sharing Theory provides additional insights into the structural imbalance identified in this study. The projected funding shortfall, anticipated to reach 47% by 2024, exemplifies the international community's failure to fulfill its collective responsibility concerning the Rohingya crisis. Without increased financial support from wealthier nations, the strain on Bangladesh remains unsustainable, as Betts (2009) and Rashid (2020) noted. These findings are consistent with those of broader global research. Talukder (2022) and Ahmad and Naeem (2020) documented the adverse effects of forced migration on host economies, particularly through declining wages and heightened competition. Similarly, Ullah et al. (2021) observed a 24% reduction in income and a 39% decrease in land ownership among host households following a refugee influx. Regarding food security, evidence from Anwar et al. (2023) and Abdullah et al. (2018) confirms that reductions in aid exacerbate nutritional deficiencies and increase food insecurity among refugee populations.

One surprising finding from this study is that even with aid, some Rohingya participants experienced a decrease in self-esteem and dignity due to their restricted social roles and economic reliance. This psychological impact underscores the limitations of solely providing material aid and indicates the need for more comprehensive support, including community involvement and mental health services. This study offers valuable insights into humanitarian policy discussions, particularly concerning aid dependency, social tension, and the sustainability of humanitarian models. The dual crisis faced by refugees and hosts in Cox's Bazar reflects similar situations in Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, and

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Uganda, where displaced populations and host communities vie for scarce resources in under-resourced settings. These similarities highlight the importance of inclusive, development-oriented humanitarian responses. This study aligns with its objectives by examining diminishing aid's effects on the economy and food security. Both qualitative and quantitative data revealed worsening economic marginalization, increasing food insecurity, and reliance on harmful coping mechanisms. Although centered on Cox's Bazar, the findings have broader implications for other prolonged displacement contexts worldwide, especially those with limited donor support and refugee legal protection.

The study's findings demonstrate clear connections to several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), and SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being). The significant decline in livelihood opportunities, reduced wages, and growing dependence on aid have exacerbated multidimensional poverty among both Rohingya refugees and host communities, directly threatening progress toward SDG 1. At the same time, food insecurity has worsened due to ration cuts, limited dietary diversity, and inflation.

The fact that 72% of Rohingya households fall below the food expenditure threshold, coupled with a 15.1% Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) rate, highlights a severe breach of SDG 2 targets related to hunger and nutrition. Health-related vulnerabilities have also deteriorated. This study highlights psychological stress, increasing malnutrition, and limited access to healthcare, all of which hinder the achievement of SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being). Regarding employment, the crisis affected the availability of decent work, particularly among youths who left school for now-discontinued NGO jobs. This regression in employment opportunities undermines SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). The SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) was also at risk. Host communities increasingly perceive aid as unequally distributed, fueling resentment and social friction. Finally, the growing humanitarian funding gap of 47% in 2024 reflects insufficient progress on SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals), pointing to stronger global cooperation and burden sharing. These findings illustrate how local humanitarian crises, when underfunded, can obstruct global development targets, reinforcing the need for integrated and sustained responses aligned with the SDGs.

However, several limitations of this study must be acknowledged. Purposive sampling, suitable for in-depth community analysis, introduces selection bias and limits generalizability.

The geographic focus on Ukhiya and Teknaf excludes other areas such as Bhasan Char, which may present different dynamics. Additionally, time and resource constraints limited the number of focus group discussions and key informant interviews. Finally, the study's cross-sectional design captures conditions at a single point, making it difficult to assess long-term trends or seasonal variations.

5 Recommendations

The following recommendations can be derived from this study's findings:

- *Maintain and boost humanitarian funding:* Immediate advocacy is essential to tackling the funding shortfall. Donors and international stakeholders should focus on long-term, multi-year pledges to guarantee the ongoing aid provision.

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- *Strengthen livelihood initiatives:* Provide inclusive livelihood support to refugees and host communities by providing vocational training, cash-for-work opportunities, a skill development program, and micro-enterprise grants.
- *Prioritize nutrition-sensitive aid allocation:* Ensure that food assistance meets the minimum dietary requirements and supports nutritional adequacy. Adjusting rations based on inflation and population is needed to prevent deterioration in malnutrition rates.
- *Foster social cohesion:* Launching community-driven projects offers mutual advantages, easing tensions between hosts and refugees through shared services and development.
- *Broaden food assistance:* Modify food aid to align with dietary requirements and inflation, incorporating fresh produce and nutritional education.
- *Advocate policy on burden sharing:* Facilitate participatory governance at the local level by empowering both host and refugee communities to actively engage in planning and decision-making in host communities and the Rohingya refugee camp. This encompasses initiatives for local conflict resolution, community representation, and the inclusive implementation of development policies.

Recent policy changes, such as the cessation of USAID funding, present a considerable threat to ongoing humanitarian initiatives. Given that U.S. funding constitutes a significant portion of the food assistance budget, any reduction could exacerbate malnutrition and disrupt livelihoods. These developments highlight the necessity for diversified multi-donor strategies and contingency planning in humanitarian operations.

6 Conclusion

This study thoroughly analyzes the effects of declining humanitarian aid on the economic and food security of Rohingya refugees and host communities in Cox's Bazar region. This study uses quantitative and qualitative data to demonstrate that funding reductions leads to limited livelihood opportunities, decreased food access, and intensified social tension. The study highlights alarming levels of economic hardship and food insecurity in both communities, with 72% of the Rohingya and a growing number of host households falling below the food expenditure thresholds. These outcomes stem from funding cuts, which have led to reduced employment, diminished purchasing power, increased competition, and decreased availability of essential services.

The sharp reduction in food rations, initially from $12.5 to $8 in 2023, has had immediate consequences on household food consumption and nutrition, contributing to malnutrition. As humanitarian funding shrinks, the evidence underscores the importance of preserving core food assistance to avert further health and social deterioration. Long-term neglect of nutritional needs escalates the crisis from food insecurity to a full-blown public health emergency.

This is significant because, without adequate support, both communities face the risk of long-term marginalization, creating a dual crisis that threatens regional stability and human security. These findings suggest shifting from short-term humanitarian efforts to a sustainable, equity-focused response strategy. Stakeholders must collaborate to build inclusive systems that balance relief with development, ensure refugee protection, and strengthen host community resilience.

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Future research directions could particularly be devoted to:

- *Longitudinal studies:* Future research should adopt longitudinal methodologies to track economic and food security trends over time and assess the effectiveness of various interventions.
- *Comparative studies:* Conducting comparative analyses across different refugee-hosting regions in Bangladesh, such as Bhasan Char or other districts, will enhance the generalizability of the findings. Gender and Youth Dynamics: More focused investigations into gender-specific impacts and youth perspectives could reveal additional vulnerabilities and coping mechanisms.
- *Environmental and infrastructure impact:* Examining how reduced aid affects environmental sustainability and infrastructure services in host areas is essential. Additionally, digital innovation should be considered to improve aid distribution and economic participation among refugees.

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QRP

Persisting in Dispossession: Palestinian Dialect, Identity, and 75 Years of Exile in Lebanon[1]

Rania Mansour[2]

Abstract

This research aims to illuminate the resilience and adaptability of a community that has long been confronted with obstacles and to contribute to a deeper understanding of the dynamism of Palestinian refugees to preserve and promote their cultural heritage, especially dialect within the complicated tapestry of the Lebanese society. The researcher used the ethnographic method, building theoretically on Berry's acculturation theory, to investigate this issue despite 75 years of displacement. This theory identifies four strategies: assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization. Despite the legal restrictions and social exclusion, poverty, and restricted access to education, health, and employment, Palestinians show perseverance in their language identity, as exemplified by the separation and marginalization aspects described by Berry.

Key Words:

Cultural identity, acculturation, dialect, ethnographic study, Lebanon, Palestinian refugees.

1 Introduction

This study contributes to understanding how linguistic resilience functions as a form of cultural resistance among Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. It brings renewed focus to dialect as a site of identity preservation amid deepening socio-political marginalization. By applying Berry's acculturation theory, the research offers a timely contribution to understanding how language, specifically the persistence of the Palestinian dialect, functions as a strategy of cultural resilience and resistance. Such insights can inform language policy, refugee support programs, and efforts to foster social cohesion while respecting cultural preservation.

1.1 A Glance at the Lebanese Context

The people of Lebanon, citizens, and residents, including Palestinian refugees and other vulnerable groups, are currently facing a multitude of challenges because of systemic governance failures, the ripple effects of the conflict in Ukraine, and the country's worsening economic and financial woes. The systemic governance failures are enduring weaknesses within public institutions and policy systems, often rooted in corruption, weak legal enforcement, and poor accountability. These deficiencies affect key sectors like

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health and education, leading to underdevelopment and a loss of trust in state authority (Fukuyama, 2013; Grindle, 2004).

The political patronage, known locally as "*wasta*", dominates Lebanon's political landscape. Services and employment are frequently distributed based on loyalty rather than merit, undermining the effectiveness of public administration and the judiciary. This clientelist system has normalized corrupt practices, further eroding institutional integrity (Farida & Ahmadi-Esfahani, 2008; Transparency International, 2024).

Lebanon has experienced prolonged periods without a functioning government, leading to institutional paralysis. The failure to elect a president for extended durations has hampered efforts to address the country's economic crisis, which the World Bank describes as one of the worst globally since the 19th century. This governance vacuum has exacerbated public disillusionment and hindered crisis response initiatives (World Bank, 2022; Naharnet Newsdesk, 2022).

Most of the population probably falls below the national poverty line, and most of the workforce receiving payment in the Lebanese pound is experiencing a significant decline in purchasing power. Alongside the escalating unemployment rate, many households face challenges accessing critical services, such as healthcare (World Bank, 2022).

The situation has been exacerbated by currency devaluation, inflation, and a lack of access to essential services. This has led to increased poverty levels and a growing reliance on humanitarian aid for the Lebanese and their residents. As per the Lebanese Response Plan's (LRP) statistics, by mid-year 2024, it was supposed to have supported 1.5 million vulnerable Lebanese, 1.3 million displaced Syrians, 145,000 Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, and 23,026 Palestinian Refugees from Syria (Mansour, et al., 2025). The crisis's effects on residents' rights have been devastating and unparalleled. According to the UN, as of March 2021, 78% of Lebanon's population lived below the poverty line, three times the estimated figure in 2020. The proportion of the population living in extreme poverty has risen to 36% from 8% in 2019 and 23% in 2020 (Human Rights Watch, 2022). Recent reports have highlighted the urgent need for assistance among most of the population, particularly Palestinian refugees, who are struggling to cope with rising costs and shortages of essential goods. The recurring statement of any activist working with the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon stresses their repeated tragedy, conflict, discrimination, and marginalization (Pasquini, 2022).

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), created by UN General Assembly Resolution 302 (IV) of December 8, 1949, to implement work and direct assistance programs for Palestine refugees (UNRWA, n.d.c). It is considered the primary humanitarian agency for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. It emphasized the deteriorating living conditions and the prevailing sense of despair within the community (UNRWA, 2023l). Consequently, it is the only United Nations agency created specifically for one group of people — the Palestinian refugees displaced by the 1948 Nakba and subsequent events. It supports over six million registered refugees across the West Bank, Gaza, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. This institutional singularity underscores the magnitude and exceptional nature of the Palestinian exile experience in the modern era (Mansour et al., 2025).Despite ongoing efforts to provide essential services such as healthcare and education, Palestinian refugees continue to face significant obstacles, including widespread illness and joblessness. The COVID-19

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pandemic has only worsened the situation, intensifying feelings of anxiety and mental distress among both Lebanese nationals and refugees due to a lack of social support. Economic hardship, unemployment, and a scarcity of necessities have fueled tensions within refugee communities, pushing many to undertake dangerous journeys on overcrowded boats in search of a better life elsewhere, considering that the number of people who succeeded or tried the death boat experience to leave Lebanon by sea nearly doubled between 2020 and 2021 (Reuters, 2022). Tragically, these journeys often end in loss of life, underscoring the severity of the crisis and the urgent need for a coordinated response to address it.

In terms of religion, following the Nakba, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians fled to Lebanon through successive waves. Religion heavily influenced their reception: Christian Palestinians were more easily integrated into Lebanese cities and public life. At the same time, Sunni Palestinians were largely marginalized — both legally and spatially — and confined to camps (Kaylor, 2022). Nonetheless, both groups maintained traditional cultural practices, including embroidery, music, and their respective dialects. For those in the camps, dialect became a powerful emblem of rooted identity and communal continuity (NPR, 2025; Khalaf, 2022).

Theoretically, this study is guided by Berry's acculturation framework, which explores how individuals navigate cultural preservation in contexts of systemic exclusion (Berry, 2005; Sam & Berry, 2006). By applying the 'separation' dimension of this model, the research highlights the deliberate retention of cultural identity, especially language, as a strategy of survival and resistance among Palestinian refugees.

1.2 Contextual background

This article provides a grounded understanding of the physical and emotional context within which this study is situated. It outlines daily life inside Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, focusing on spatial marginalization, infrastructure challenges, and community resilience. It also introduces the researcher's positioning and the broader narrative voice through field quotes illuminating lived realities. These contextual elements are essential for understanding how dialect functions as both a cultural anchor and a marker of exclusion.

1.3 Definitions

The Arab world predominantly communicates using classical and formal Arabic, which presents variations across local dialects depending on the region's geographical location. The more closely situated the countries are, the higher the degree of shared vocabularies and pronunciations, resulting in increased linguistic similarities. As the distance between nations widens, the linguistic similarities diminish accordingly, reflecting the diversity and uniqueness of each dialect.

This detailed study examines the nuances of Arabic dialects, specifically within Lebanon, emphasizing the intricate dynamics between Palestinian migrants and the native Lebanese population. By exploring fundamental concepts and theories related to dialectal distinctions and racial prejudices, this research sheds light on how these factors influence communication patterns and social interactions within the Lebanese Palestinian context. It delves into the complexities of language use and discrimination, providing insights into

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the underlying factors that shape the communicative and behavioral dimensions of this social dynamic.

1.3.1 Dialect

In the Arabic language, dialect is called the colloquial or spoken language. Local or colloquial language is the language that people use orally every day. It is the daily, spontaneous dialect for meeting their needs and understanding each other, acquired in a person's early years, which they use in public dealings. It differs from one region to another in all countries. It also represents a group of linguistic characteristics that belong to a unique environment, and these characteristics are shared by all members of this environment (Sewell, 2022). In the same context, dialects share a set of linguistic characteristics and speech habits that constitute a language independent of other languages. There is no doubt that dialects are branches of the common language and are influenced by it, even if they are distorted or altered ("Allougha wa Allahja," n.d.).

1.3.2 Racial Discrimination

As per the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (OHCHR, 1965), the term

> "[r]acial discrimination shall mean any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, color, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life".

Drawing on the theoretical underpinnings of the study, which primarily focus on the nuances of spoken dialects intertwined with environmental influences, the researcher explores the intricate relationship between the dialect spoken by Palestinian refugees and the socio-cultural dynamics of their original and host communities, as articulated in Berry's acculturation theory. By exploring how these linguistic and socio-environmental factors converge, the study sheds light on the tangible manifestations of racial discrimination that impact Palestinian refugees residing in Lebanon. Furthermore, the researcher examines how these individuals align with the categories delineated in Berry's theory. It comprehensively analyses how acculturation processes intersect with the refugee experience, shaping their interactions and sense of belonging within the host society. By meticulously examining these interconnected threads, the study elucidates the complex web of identity formation, cultural adaptation, and discrimination faced by Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, underscoring the enduring significance of linguistic and environmental contexts in shaping their lived realities and social integration.

1.3.3 Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon

UNRWA defines Palestinian refugees as

> "[p]ersons whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict" (UNRWA, n.d.b).

As of March 2023, the overall count of registered Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, as reported by UNRWA, was 489,292 individuals. Moreover, UNRWA data indicates that there is a total of 31,400 Palestinian refugees from Syria living in Lebanon (PRS). Nevertheless, registration with UNRWA is a voluntary process, and instances of deaths and emigration

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are frequently unreported. At the same time, refugees can continuously register newborns as they relocate abroad using the UNRWA online registration system. In 2017, the Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee and the Palestine Central Bureau of Statistics conducted a census among Palestinians residing in Lebanon, revealing 174,000 individuals. Approximately 45% of Palestinian refugees are believed to be living in the 12 refugee camps across the country (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2018). Every year, around 200,000 Palestinian refugees utilize UNRWA services in Lebanon. The Agency estimates that the government's current number of Palestinian refugees does not exceed 250,000 (UNRWA, n.d.c).

The population of Palestinian refugees is highly susceptible to the challenges they encounter at legal, administrative, and security levels. The worsening economic conditions will increase the troublesome effects of long-standing constraints on their job prospects. Despite significant progress in Lebanese labor laws since 2005, including specific provisions for Palestinian refugees, their right to work is still constrained by both official and unofficial barriers. They continue to encounter significant obstacles in pursuing 39 regulated professions, and substantial changes are unlikely in the near to medium term. Additionally, Palestinian refugees are prohibited from owning property and face restrictions on their freedom of movement. Palestine refugee populations are further disadvantaged as they often lack the social connections needed to secure housing and work opportunities and encounter difficulties in registering life events and accessing civil documentation (UNRWA, 2023l). Detailed information related to the status of each camp is given in section 4.5.

2 Relevant Theories

2.1 Berry's Acculturation Theory

As the definition explains, dialect is closely tied to culture. Consequently, immigrants may adopt cultural aspects of the host society, which can gradually shape and influence their dialect (Backus,2010). Accordingly, Berry (1997) proposed a model of acculturation that classifies individual coping strategies along two dimensions: The first dimension relates to retaining or rejecting the individual's original culture, which is associated with the value of preserving the individual's identity and characteristics. The second dimension relates to the adoption or rejection of the host culture and is linked with the value that the larger society attaches to it. Consequently, Berry proposed four strategies for acculturation:

- *Assimilation* occurs when individuals follow the same cultural norms as the host culture which then dominate their culture of origin.
- *Separation* occurs when individuals reject the dominant culture of the host society to maintain their original culture.
- *Integration* occurs when individuals can adopt the cultural norms of the host society's culture while maintaining their culture of origin.
- *Marginalization* occurs when individuals reject the culture of both societies: the original and the host community.

2.2 Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory, developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner, posits that individuals derive their self-concept from affiliating with various social groups. In the context of

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language and dialects, this theory highlights the significance of ingroup and outgroup dynamics (Hogg et al., 2004):

- Dialects can act as indicators of social identity and may be employed to express solidarity with a specific cultural group.
- The adoption of a particular dialect or language can reflect ingroup identity and serve as a form of resistance against assimilation into the prevailing culture.

This theory provides insight into the persistence of particular dialects despite pressures to conform to the dominant language, particularly when there is a strong sense of loyalty to the ingroup.

2.3 Language Maintenance and Shift

This theory examines the processes of language maintenance and shift, particularly concerning minority dialects and languages (Kedrebeogo, 1998):

- Language maintenance refers to the efforts made by a community to sustain its dialect and cultural traditions in the face of influences from a dominant culture.
- Language shift occurs when a community gradually transitions to the dominant language, resulting in the erosion or extinction of their original dialect.

In exploring these theories, Berry's framework integrates the three concepts and investigates the interplay between dialects and various social, cultural, and psychological factors. Furthermore, it provides valuable insights into the evolution of dialects, the persistence of language among individuals in multicultural environments, and the role of language as a marker of identity during the acculturation process. Consequently, this research aligns with Berry's theory, which can be utilized to evaluate and analyze the four cases related to Palestinian refugees.

3. Methodology

3.1 Geographical context

This intricate research project adopts an anthropological framework to explore the intimate lives of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon through a multifaceted approach. This methodology entails the meticulous collection of personal narratives and a thorough examination of relevant resources. The methodology used is ethnographic research, emphasizing in-depth, immersive observation, which is particularly effective in capturing the everyday cultural practices and identity negotiations of marginalized communities, such as Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. By engaging directly with community members, researchers can document how dialect, traditions, and resistance strategies are lived and expressed within specific socio-political contexts (Atkinson, 2007). Complementing this, blog analysis allows researchers to access self-representations and narratives produced by refugees, often offering raw, unfiltered perspectives that may be absent in formal academic discourse (Hookway, 2008). Together, these methods offer a richer and more nuanced understanding of how language and identity are constructed and maintained under conditions of exclusion and displacement.

A significant aspect of this methodology was based on the researcher's direct involvement in the National Institution of Social Care and Vocational Training (NISCVT). Considering the researcher's professional affiliation with the NISCVT, it was crucial to adopt measures to

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reduce potential bias and maintain research integrity. To uphold objectivity, the researcher engaged in continuous reasonable reflexivity that differentiated between the organizational role and the position as a researcher. Peer debriefing sessions were conducted to cross-check and validate interpretations based on diverse data sources. These strategies collectively strengthened the credibility and transparency of the study, helping to ensure that the findings reflected the data rather than being shaped by institutional ties or preconceived views.

For five years serving as the director of the social work department within this organization, the researcher expertly supervised 23 social workers dedicated to assisting Palestinian refugees. Their duties encompassed regular field visits and active engagement with beneficiaries and their families dispersed across various Palestinian camps in Lebanon. This hands-on engagement proved instrumental in gaining profound insights into the multifaceted challenges encountered by Palestinian refugees, covering areas such as education, social welfare, economic status, health (with a specific focus on mental well-being), and living conditions. The firsthand testimonies shared by the refugees in Lebanon yielded invaluable qualitative data, offering a poignant portrayal of their lived experiences.

Noting that the researcher gathered the ten blogs through visits to the NISCVT centers over two months (June-July 2020), after obtaining the beneficiaries' permission, it was approved to transcribe the blogs word by word, without revealing any private information, and to numerate them since they were written. Ten blogs that fit the research themes were selected for scientific research purposes.

The researcher did not ask for names but built on the observation and the location at the NISCVT services. Moreover, the researcher conducted an exhaustive exploration of relevant reports to complement and contextualize personal encounters. Using statistical data and academic literature, the researcher strove to better understand the socio-economic and political factors influencing Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. A meticulous critical analysis identified recurring themes and dynamics in the refugee narrative by amalgamating information from diverse sources. Mirroring this synthesized approach is the article's structure, which commences with an overview of Lebanon's critical landscape, focusing on the existence of Palestinian refugees. It then transitions into a detailed literature review and theoretical examination, delving into the underlying reasons that preserve refugees' linguistic heritage despite the challenges they face. Handling insights and reflections from her experiences at the NISCVT organization, the researcher strategically incorporated Palestinian refugee perspectives and examples into the study. This comprehensive methodology aptly expounds on the intricacies of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon by effectively merging ethnographic fieldwork with a rigorous desk-based review.

Regarding the data analysis, the researcher went through the ten blogs and classified them into themes. Consequently, the researcher coded the ten blogs and translated them into English, and tried to link them with the separation and discrimination of Berry's theory as shown in the table below:

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Table 1: Blogs

Blog quote's number	Content in English	Characteristics	Themes link to Berry's separation and/or marginalization.
Blog No.1	"I try to imitate the accent of the Lebanese citizens; it works with the first two words, and the third leads me to failure, as in the school's exams."	A young Palestinian female refugee enrolled in the family planning project at NISCVT	Accent: discrimination
Blog No.2	"Most of the Lebanese do not welcome our presence, without denying that others believe in the Palestinian cause. I hope they return us to beloved Palestine."	A Palestinian female who visited the dental clinic at NISCVT	Accent – hate: marginalization
Blog No.3	"Sometimes Lebanese citizens name us the *Bandora* community [*Bandora* is an Arabic word that means tomato], but it is shameful for them to give us this name; yes, we have distinguished accents, and our traditions are different, but we are human."	A Palestinian male at the NISCVT social worker's office	Accent – stigma: discrimination
Blog No.4	"I believe that we, as Palestinian refugees, preserve our culture. As you can see, the NISCVT, other NGOs, and the UNRWA promote our culture through the Dabka program – traditional songs, and musical instruments such as "Garba: Bagpipe", which are our differences. *Msakhan* and *Mouloukhiyyi* are our unique foods, and we are keen to transfer them to the generations; we could not feel safe outside the camp; in other words, we are stigmatized and never accepted as neighbors of the Lebanese people who are different. We, our tradition are different: our weddings are different."	A young male refugee at the social worker's office at NISCVT	Culture – traditions preserved: separation, marginalization
Blog No.5	"UNRWA school classes are overcrowded, even though our people like to be enrolled."	A Palestinian man refugee at the kindergarten project	Discrimination in education: separation marginalization
Blog No.6	"What can we do if UNRWA does not provide the medication or the operational fees? It contributes a small percentage that does not cover the expenses. The medicine in Lebanon is too expensive even for the Lebanese themselves."	A young Palestinian male refugee	Discrimination in health care: separation, marginalization
Blog No.7	"Even though it has been more than 70 years since I left our country, the Lebanese government inhibited us from working in the most critical fields. I am a pharmacist, and I worked as a seller in a library outside the camp; after a minute or two of conversation had passed, and due to my "well–known" accent, some Lebanese visitors who came to my section sometimes asked my colleagues to assist them. Isn't this a punishment or what?"	A young Palestinian refugee man at the social worker office	Discrimination in the labour market Separation marginalization

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Blog No.8	"The homes all over the camps risk being demolished at any time. We should turn on the lights in our houses during the day if we can afford the electricity fees; otherwise, our homes will be dark. We lose our children and sons since most homes have attached the wire in a hazardous way, leading to death."	A Palestinian female refugee at a social worker's office	Discrimination in accommodation Separation marginalization
Blog No.9	"My mom, RIP, was Lebanese; she bought our house 25 years ago. When she passed away, the old owner's sons took over the property, as we were not allowed to own properties. Can you imagine that?"	A Palestinian male refugee at the social work office	Discrimination in accommodation Injustice Separation Marginalization
Blog No.10	"Most often, I do not go outside the camp because I am afraid of the Lebanese army at the checkpoints; they search for any prohibited items upon my entry and exit. They do not intervene inside the camp in any case."	A Palestinian refugee at the social worker's office	Security in the camps Discrimination Separation Marginalization

3.2 Research Question

This background is the starting point for our research that poses the question: "How does dialect function as a marker of cultural resilience and social exclusion among Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, and to which challenges does it respond?"

3.3 Aim

This research explores the unique techniques and approaches that Palestinian refugees in Lebanon adopt to safeguard and maintain their rich cultural identity amid challenging circumstances, based on the strategies proposed by acculturation theory, namely assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization. It sustains the integrity of their distinctive dialect. By focusing on the resilience and determination exhibited by the Palestinian refugee community, particularly in the realm of linguistic preservation, this study aims to provide valuable insights into the multifaceted strategies employed by these individuals to maintain their cultural heritage within the complex social landscape of Lebanon. Through a nuanced examination of the various methods and practices employed by Palestinian refugees to protect their artistic legacy, this research aims to illuminate the resilience and adaptability of a community that has long been confronted with formidable obstacles. Ultimately, this investigation aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the intricate dynamics at play among Palestinian refugees, preserving and promoting their cultural heritage within the complex tapestry of Lebanese society.

4 Challenges

This section mentions the multilayered challenges Palestinian refugees face in Lebanon. At least one blog is referenced for each refugee, highlighting the specific challenges. The blog's classification is enfolded under the relevant challenge, explaining and/or describing it, the real situation, and the refugees' sufferings. Additionally, the researcher reveals the relationship between the challenges and Berry's strategies, aligning with the research question.

4.1 Challenges of Accent Imitation

The speech patterns exhibited by Palestinian refugees carry a unique distinction that deserves close observation and analysis. Despite efforts to assimilate to the Lebanese accent, Palestinian refugees often even find themselves compelled to mask or modify

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their true linguistic identity under specific circumstances, as the Palestinian dialect can sometimes trigger negative responses, mainly due to the complexity of Lebanese perspectives toward Palestinians residing in Lebanon. These diverging views within the Lebanese population towards Palestinians range from expressions of empathy related to their challenging living conditions to accusations levied against them for their perceived role in fueling the civil war, which plagued Lebanon in the past (Khaled, 2014). The multifaceted nature of these sentiments underscores the intricate dynamics at play when Palestinian refugees grapple with their linguistic identity in a context heavily influenced by the region's historical and political complexities. This phenomenon highlights the complexities and challenges Palestinian refugees face in navigating Lebanon's intricate social landscape, where linguistic differences can often be intertwined with broader issues of identity and perception (Saleh, 2023).

Below is the blog of a young Palestinian refugee woman and a university student enrolled in the family planning project at NISCVT (Blog No.1):

> "I try to imitate the accent of the Lebanese citizens; it works with the first two words, and the third leads me to failure, as in the school's exams."
> *(Bahawel marrat agalled kif behkoo billahja illebnani, awwal kelmten bahkihen eltalte bitsaggatni methl elemtihanat almadaress.)*
>
> *" بحاول مرات اغلد كيف بحكو باللهجة اللبناني، اول كلمتين بحكيهن الثالثي بتسقطني متل الامتحاناتالمدارس"*

Most Palestinians find it challenging to change their dialect, and their attempts may reveal their original accent. For example, the pronunciation of the word tomato in the Lebanese way, as *Bandora* instead of *Banadoora*, is a word that was used during the Lebanese Civil War to test individuals passing through checkpoints and determine whether they were Lebanese or camouflaged Palestinians (Khaled, 2014).

In the same context, a Palestinian woman visited the dental clinic at NISCVT, mentioning the hate of the Lebanese toward Palestinians (Blog No.2):

> "Most of the Lebanese do not welcome our presence, without denying that others believe in the Palestinian cause. I hope they return us to beloved Palestine."
> *(Aghlab el libnanyi ma behebbounash biftekro ihna kenna sabab laharbhen ben baadhen w kaman ma benkerish fi baadhen maa elgadiyyeh bas ya ammi ma beddonsh yana yrajouna al flesteen.)* Blog No. Two (a Palestinian woman visited the dental clinic at NISCVT).
>
> *" أغلب اللبنانيي ما بحبوناش بفتكرو احنا كنا سبب لحربهن الاهلييوكمان ما بنكرش في بعضهن مع الغضبة بس يا عمي ما بدهنش يانا رجعونا عفلسطين"*

Palestinians often face the challenge of fully mastering the nuances of the Lebanese dialect, which can result in feelings of isolation or misunderstandings during conversations. This linguistic barrier may be deeply rooted in an unconscious need to grasp onto their dialect as a tangible representation of their heritage, particularly in times when a sense of detachment from Palestine is overwhelming. In choosing to hold onto their distinct way of speaking, Palestinians are engaging in a subtle yet powerful act of self-affirmation and resistance against the erasure of their cultural roots. This act of linguistic solidarity serves as a poignant declaration of their shared experiences and historical ties, akin to their yearning for the fundamental right to return to their ancestral lands. By preserving their unique manner of speech, Palestinians are preserving a part of themselves and reaffirming their place within a broader narrative of resilience and perseverance in the face of adversity. This bond between language and identity becomes

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a vital thread that links past, present, and future aspirations, solidifying their sense of belonging and connection to a heritage that withstands the test of time (Khaled, 2014).

The Blog No. 3 highlighted the discrimination in terms of the Palestinian accent (Palestinian men at the social worker's office):

> "Sometimes Lebanese citizens name us the Bandora community [Bandora is an Arabic word that means tomato], but it is shameful for them to give us this name; yes, we have distinguished accents, and our traditions are different, but we are human."
> *(Akthar kelma maaroufa baad elahyan ellibnanyyi ysammouna mojtamaa el Bandora, bas eib aleyhen ysamoona heka sahih endn a ladja gher w adatna gher anhen bas nehna insan.)*
>
> *" أكثر كلمة معروفةبعض الاحيان، اللبنانيي يسمونا مجتمع البندورة، بس عيب عليهن يسمونا هيكا، صحيح عندن اللهجا غيرعنهن بس نحنا انسان"*

The Palestinian refugees in Lebanon have been grappling with various obstacles in pursuit of establishing secure and sustainable livelihoods within the country. Despite their extended residency in Lebanon, they encounter significant challenges when accessing employment opportunities. This predicament is exacerbated by the restrictive Lebanese policies that have placed severe limitations on the type of work Palestinians are permitted to engage in. They are prohibited from pursuing employment in approximately 70 job categories, narrowing their options for viable work. Even when these refugees manage to secure jobs within the specified categories, they are often subjected to discriminatory treatment based on their accent, further hindering their ability to integrate successfully into the workforce. Interestingly, this bias is notably absent when considering the experiences of Syrian refugees residing in Lebanon, highlighting a disparity in treatment towards different refugee populations. Thus, the issue of limited employment prospects and discriminatory practices faced by Palestinian refugees in Lebanon has contributed to their overall struggle to establish stable and sustainable livelihoods in a foreign land.

The culture of Palestinians is preserved throughout activities and special foods explained by a young refugee man at the social worker's office at NISCVT (Blog No.4):

> "I believe that we, as Palestinian refugees, preserve our culture. As you can see, the NISCVT, other NGOs, and the UNRWA promote our culture through the Dabka program, traditional songs, and musical instruments such as "Garba: Bagpipe," which are our differences. Msakhan and Mouloukhiyyi are our unique foods, and we are keen to transfer them to the generations; we could not feel safe outside the camp; in other words, we are stigmatized and never accepted as neighbors of the Lebanese people who are different. We, our tradition is different: our weddings are different"
> *(Bashouf el lagiin bennsoush sagafethen metel ma shefti bilsomoud (NISCVT) w gherha men lmouassassat wel anerwa kaman endhen dabkeh w kaman aghani turathiyyeh wel baramejGERBA w kaman ma bnensash aklatna elshaabiyyeh mloukhiyyeh wel msakhan w lahgetna illi mnehras eno tentegel la ajyalna, bekelmten thnen ma finash nlagi halna barra lmokhayam alena wasma w ma mnagdaresh nkoon giran elbab bil bab maa lebnanyah bikhafoo menna, adatna gher adathen w aarasna gher.)*
>
> *" بشوف اللاجئين بنسوش ثجافتهن متل ما شفتي بالصمود وغيرها من المؤسسات والانروا كمان عندن دبكة وكمان اغاني تراثية والجربة وكمان ما بنساش اكلاتنا الشعبية الملوخية والمسخن ولهجتنا اللي منحرص انو تنتجل لاجيالنا ، بكلمتين اثنين ما فيناش نلاجي حالنا برا المخيم علينا وصمة وما منجدرش نكون جيران الباب بالباب مع اللبناني بيخافو منا عاداتنا غير عاداتن واعراسنا غير" .*

Going back to Berry's acculturation strategies, an analytical eye reveals the intricate interplay between the practical application of these strategies and the underlying

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theoretical framework. This connection becomes particularly salient when considering the actual everyday struggles faced by the Palestinian refugee population residing within the Lebanese hosting community. It becomes evident that Berry's acculturation strategies serve as a framework for understanding and addressing the complex dynamics in this context. Moreover, the application of these strategies takes on a nuanced significance when viewed through the lens of the specific social, economic, and political realities that shape the lives of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. In this light, the intersection of theory and practice becomes a key focus for examining how acculturation processes unfold within this unique setting. By reviewing these dynamics through a critical analytical perspective, one can gain deeper insights into how acculturation strategies can be adapted and refined to better meet the needs and challenges of marginalized communities such as Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. Ultimately, this exploration underscores the importance of bridging theory and praxis to develop more effective and culturally sensitive approaches to supporting the integration and well-being of refugee populations in diverse hosting contexts.

At this stage, the assimilation strategy according to Berry's theory is not yet adopted by Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon. Quite the opposite, they still follow their original cultural norms, as in Palestine, which have not been dominated yet by the culture of the hosting community (seen in Blog No. 3, Blog No. 4, and Blog No. 7). Instead, the strategy of separation describes best their case. Many indicators show the rejection of the dominant culture of the host society (Lebanon). Palestinian refugees are keen to maintain their original culture (clearly seen in Blog No. 3 and Blog No. 4 in addition to the information given in the introduction and the following livelihood sections). Consequently, the separation strategy aim at preserving dignity and being human, which is apparent from the following details.

4.2 Challenge of Discrimination in the Education Sector

Education represents one of the main sectors of discrimination against Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. As shown in this paragraph, the experienced injustice and inequality in the education field is countered by cultural resilience and resistance strategies.

Palestinian refugees in Lebanon face systemic discrimination in education, rooted in legal, institutional, and socioeconomic barriers. Lebanese law prioritizes Lebanese nationals in public school enrollment, often leaving Palestinian children with limited access to public education. Consequently, many rely on UNRWA schools, which are underfunded and overcrowded, with class sizes reaching up to 55 students, compromising educational quality (Al-Hroub, 2022) Furthermore, non-registered Palestinian children, particularly those lacking official identification documents, are often unable to sit for national exams like the Brevet, effectively barring them from progressing to secondary or higher education (Gatev, 2024).Economic hardship exacerbates these challenges; with limited employment prospects due to legal restrictions, families often deprioritize education, leading to high dropout rates among Palestinian youth (Anera, n.d.). This confluence of factors perpetuates a cycle of marginalization, denying Palestinian refugees' equitable educational opportunities and hindering their socioeconomic advancement.

UNRWA-operated schools in Palestinian camps situated within Lebanon grapple with severe issues related to overcrowding. This overcrowding is exacerbated by the fact that Palestinian students are unjustly deprived of the opportunity to enroll in Lebanese public

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schools. In stark contrast, Syrian refugee students are granted permission to attend these public schools, albeit during the afternoon shift (Mansour et al., 2025). This differential treatment based on nationality not only deepens divisions within the educational system but also perpetuates discrimination against Palestinian students residing in Lebanon.

This systemic injustice marks the educational landscape in Lebanon, impeding Palestinian students from accessing quality education on par with their peers. As a result, these students face limited prospects for academic advancement and personal development. The policy barring Palestinian students from public schools not only hinders their educational progress but also perpetuates a cycle of marginalization and exclusion within the country's education sector.

The disparity threatens Palestinian students' academic success and undermines the principles of equality and inclusivity in the Lebanese education system. By denying Palestinian students the right to enroll in public schools, Lebanon is failing to fulfill its duty to provide equal educational opportunities for all children within its borders. Addressing this inequality and promoting equitable access to education for all students, regardless of nationality, is vital to fostering a more inclusive and just educational environment in Lebanon.

> "UNRWA school classes are overcrowded, even though our people like to be enrolled."
> *(Sfoof el anerwa fog ma tetsawari tollab fog baadan bas shaabna beheb elelem) - Blog No. 5.*
>
> *" صفوف الانروا فوج ما تتصوري طلاب فوج بعضن بس شعبنا بحب العلم".*

4.3 Challenge of Discrimination in the Healthcare Sector

Palestinian refugees in Lebanon face significant healthcare challenges due to a combination of legal exclusion, chronic underfunding, and deteriorating living conditions. Excluded from Lebanon's public healthcare system, they rely heavily on the UNRWA and the Palestinian Red Crescent Society. However, these organizations are chronically under-resourced, limiting access to essential services. While UNRWA operates 27 primary healthcare centers, providing over 930,000 general consultations annually, most care is only partially subsidized, often leaving refugees to cover substantial out-of-pocket expenses (UNRWA, n.d.a). The situation is exacerbated by Lebanon's ongoing economic crisis, which has led to severe funding cuts for UNRWA, further compromising service delivery (Bower, 2024). Additionally, overcrowded and substandard living conditions in refugee camps contribute to the spread of communicable diseases and mental health issues (Electronic Intifada, 2013). These compounded challenges underscore the urgent need for sustainable healthcare solutions for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.

Hospitals within Palestinian camps, such as Haifa Hospital and UNRWA health centers, provide partial coverage for healthcare costs. When a Palestinian patient requires care beyond the capabilities of these facilities and is transferred to Lebanese hospitals outside the camps, the financial burden significantly increases. In these cases, UNRWA's expense coverage is only a tiny fraction of the overall costs, leaving the patient to shoulder most of the financial responsibility. The way that Palestinian refugees are being treated in Lebanon raises serious concerns; they are unable to pay for chronic illnesses like cancer or to purchase drugs (UNRWA, 2022).

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This financial predicament is underlined by the existing economic crisis in Lebanon, which exacerbates the already challenging situation for Palestinian patients seeking medical treatment outside their established healthcare network.

Transitioning a patient from the familiar environment of their camp's medical facilities to a hospital in Lebanon brings about medical challenges and considerable financial strain. The disparity between the coverage provided within the camps and that extended to hospitals in Lebanon places an additional burden on already vulnerable individuals and families. Consequently, many Palestinian patients and their loved ones face the daunting task of navigating healthcare expenses in an increasingly unforgiving economic landscape.

The implications of this healthcare financing dilemma extend beyond the immediate financial strain on individual patients. The broader socio-economic consequences of such disparities in healthcare coverage highlight the urgent need for sustainable solutions to ensure equitable access to quality healthcare for all Palestinian refugees, regardless of their location within the complex healthcare system serving displaced populations.

> "What can we do if UNRWA does not provide the medication or the operations fees? It contributes a small percentage that does not cover the expenses. The medicine in Lebanon is too expensive even for the Lebanese themselves."
> *(Sho baamol elwahed lamma ykoun awez ilag ma mawjoud bil anerwa, awgat ktheereh ma mnetaladg lianno elhekmeh bi lebnan barrat al moukhayyam ghalieh ktheer wel lebnani kaman biani men ghala eladwiyeh wel amaliyyat kaman el anerwa betsahem bi nesbi galeeleh welbagi alena)* - Blog No. 6.

" شو بعمل الواحد لما بكون عايز علادج ما موجود بالانروا اوجات كثيري ما بنتعالدج لانو الحكمة بلبنان بريت المخيم غالية كثير واللبناني كمان بعاني من غلا الادوية والعمليات كمان الانروا بتساهم بنسبة جليلة والباجي علينا" .

4.4 Challenges of Discrimination on the Labor Market

Palestinian refugees in Lebanon face longstanding exclusion and discrimination on the labor market, significantly limiting their economic opportunities and deepening poverty. Lebanese labor laws prohibit Palestinians from working in over 30 regulated professions, including medicine, law, and engineering, unless they obtain difficult-to-obtain work permits, despite many having been born and raised in the country (Anera, 2017). This legal discrimination forces the majority into low-wage, informal sectors without social protection or job security (Suleiman, 2006). Even when employed, Palestinian workers often receive lower wages than their Lebanese counterparts and lack access to benefits such as healthcare or pensions (UNRWA, n.d.c). The recent economic collapse in Lebanon has further compounded these challenges, reduced job opportunities, and increased competition in an already strained labor market. As a result, many Palestinian refugees remain trapped in cycles of unemployment, underemployment, and dependency on humanitarian aid.

In 2021, a significant development occurred in Lebanon when the Minister of Labor issued a decree that marked a milestone for Palestinian refugees residing in the country. This decree granted Palestinian refugees born on Lebanese territory and officially registered with the Ministry of Interior the right to seek employment in professions traditionally reserved for Lebanese citizens. Despite this progressive step, obstacles continue to hinder the seamless integration of Palestinians into the Lebanese job market. Regrettably, discrimination remains a prevalent issue, with Palestinians often encountering bias and

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unequal treatment when seeking employment opportunities. Another challenge faced by the Palestinian community is the disparity in remuneration, as they frequently earn lower wages compared to their Lebanese counterparts for similar work. It is also worth noting that this decree failed to extend its benefits to specific groups within the Palestinian community. Expressly, foreigners, even if they are Palestinian by birth or through marriage to a Lebanese woman, were unfortunately excluded from the newfound work opportunities. Consequently, while the decree represents a positive shift towards inclusivity, the road to full workplace equality and acceptance for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon is still rife with obstacles that need to be addressed through further measures and initiatives.

> "It has been more than 70 years since our country, even though the Lebanese government inhibited us from working in the most critical fields. I am a pharmacist, and I worked as a seller in a library outside the camp; after a minute or two of conversation has passed, and due to my "well–known" accent, some Lebanese visitors who come to my section sometimes ask my colleagues to assist them, is not a punishment or what?"
> *(Sarlna akthar men 70 sane tarkeen bladna wel hookoumi el lebnaniyeh manetna neshtoghol, ana darseh saydalaniyeh w betsadgi beshtghel bi maktaba barra, balaii baadhen bas ajawebhen brawho lahada tani laysaedhen mish hada ekab aw laa?)* - Blog No. 7.
>
> *" صرلنا اكثر من سبعين سنيتاركين بلادنا والحكومة اللبنانيي مانعتنا نشتغول انا دارسي صيدلانيي وبتصدجي بشتغل بمكتبا برا، بلاجي بعضهن بس اجاوبهن بروحو لحدا تاني ليساعدهن مش هادا عقاب او لاء؟"*

4.5 Challenges of Discrimination in the Residential Environment

Palestinian refugees in Lebanon face severe challenges in their residential environments, primarily due to legal restrictions, overcrowding, and deteriorating infrastructure. Lebanese law prohibits refugees from owning property or making legal improvements to existing homes, forcing many to reside in overcrowded, substandard buildings within camps and adjacent informal gatherings (UNRWA, n.d.c). The 12 official refugee camps, initially designed for temporary shelter, now suffer from decades of neglect, with poor sanitation, inadequate sewage systems, and limited access to clean water and electricity (Shaaban et al. 2010). The following table gives an overview:

Table 2: Brief about the Palestinian refugee camps

The camp	Essential info	Major problems
Al-Buss Camp (UNRWA, 2023a)	Established and built by the French government in 1939 to house Armenian refugees, the camp later welcomed Palestinians in the 1950s after the Armenians were relocated to another area. Location 1.5 km south of Tyre. Due to its relatively small size and location, the camp experienced less violence compared to other camps during the Lebanese civil war. Unlike other camps, the presence of a Lebanese governmental hospital necessitates a Lebanese army force in Al-Buss camp. Apart from Palestinian Muslims and Christians, the camp also hosts several Christian and Armenian families, along with Lebanese and Syrian residents. The	The majority of the camp's residents are employed in seasonal agricultural work and construction. They reside in cement brick homes, many of which were built by the refugees themselves. The camp primarily relies on water from the Lebanese state's Litany River Authority, and residents pay an annual subscription to Lebanese villages and cities. Due to the high lime content in the water, it is only suitable for domestic use. Most camp residents purchase drinking water from water refineries, which are not subject to health control regulations. UNRWA operates three schools serving 1,600 Palestinian refugee students, including Palestinians who fled from Syria (PRS).

	UNRWA health center in Al-Buss offers primary healthcare services, attended by an average of 230 patients each day.	
Beddawi Camp (UNRWA, 2023b)	Established in 1955. Location: 5 kilometers north of Tripoli. In 2018, a Joint Security Forces Committee was formed within the camp to address the escalating security concerns. This committee collaborates closely with Lebanese authorities on matters related to maintaining security.	The camp faces numerous infrastructural challenges. UNRWA is responsible for managing all wells and water tanks, and a unified water network has been implemented. The camp's population has steadily increased, primarily as a result of the Syrian crisis, placing considerable pressure on both infrastructure and UNRWA services. Educational facilities within the camp include two elementary schools, one preparatory school, and one secondary school, collectively serving approximately 3,700 students. The UNRWA health center delivers medical care to an average of 560 patients daily. Non-communicable diseases (NCDs), particularly diabetes mellitus and hypertension, are prevalent within the population, with 11% diagnosed with such conditions by the end of 2016.
Burj al-Barajneh Camp (UNRWA, 2023c)	Established in 1948. Location: in the southern suburbs of Beirut. Residents: 13,812 inhabitants Events: (UNRWA) commenced its operations on May 1, 1950. School: 4 (for about 2,000 PRL/PRS children).	The haphazard placement of electricity cables has led to several annual fatalities, reaching around 50 cases as of mid-2018. There is no specialized authority for electricity distribution, as there are four networks.
Burj Shamali Camp (UNRWA, 2023d)	Established in 1955. The camp has a main entrance where the Lebanese army has set up a checkpoint. Three UNRWA schools.	The camp experiences severe overpopulation that surpasses its geographical capacity. Household sizes vary, with some families consisting of up to seven members. Residents face a critical shortage of potable water, as the supplied water is often unsuitable for drinking or cooking, compelling them to purchase water from local vendors. In 2008, UNRWA established a comprehensive sewage and rainwater drainage network covering the entire camp. However, the influx of Palestinian refugees from Syria has placed additional strain on the camp's infrastructure and services. Economically, the camp ranks among the poorest in Lebanon, with a notably high incidence of thalassemia and sickle cell disease among its population. Unemployment rates remain exceptionally high, with seasonal agricultural labor serving as the primary source of income for both men and women.

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Dbayeh camp (UNRWA 2023e)	Dbayeh Camp was established in 1952. Location: on a hillside overlooking the Beirut–Tripoli highway, on a 61,450 m^2. There are 1,771 residents in the camp.	The Camp currently lacks an UNRWA school, compelling children to seek education in distant institutions, which many families find financially burdensome. Healthcare services are limited to a part-time clinic operating two days a week, which is often insufficient for the residents' needs, necessitating referrals to hospitals outside the camp.
Ein al-Hilweh Camp (UNRWA, 2023f)	Established in 1948. Location: in the south, near the city of Sidon. UNRWA commenced its operations in the camp in 1952, progressively replacing the initial tents with concrete shelters. Ain El Hilweh is Lebanon's largest and most prominent refugee camp, housing an estimated population of approximately 35,000 residents. Schools: 8. There are two primary healthcare centers within the camp, while secondary and tertiary care services are delivered through a network of contracted hospitals located in Saida and its surrounding areas. The health centers collectively manage an average of 1,000 medical consultations daily.	The security and governance in the camp are the responsibility of Popular Committees and Palestinian Factions, which are in continuous armed conflicts. Walls surround the camp. The camp suffers from structural overcrowding with the waves of PRS who fled Syria. Elementary and preparatory education is offered through a network of seven schools, complemented by one secondary school that also serves students from outside the camp. Together, these institutions educate approximately 6,000 Palestinian refugee students residing in the camp, including those displaced from Syria (PRS). Life in the camp is harsh. Houses are piled on each other, depriving people of sunlight and fresh air. Multiple families, including married brothers, their children, wives, and unmarried brothers, reside in single houses consisting of two rooms. Every available space in the camp has been utilized, even to construct one room. Despite the hardships and overcrowding, the camp's population continues to grow due to ongoing childbirth.
Mar Elias Camp (UNRWA, 2023g)	Established in 1952. Location: in Beirut. Residents: 1,650 inhabitants. The popular committee is responsible for Security and governance in the camp. One health center provides primary healthcare services to the camp's residents. It manages around 680 active family files and receives an average of 50 patients per day. School: 1	One elementary school serves about 230 students.
Mieh w mieh Camp (UNRWA, 2023h)	Established in 1954. Location: south of the city of Saida, extends over an area of 63,000 m^2. The camp has one school that provides basic education to approximately 474 students. There is one health center in the camp that provides primary healthcare, serving an average of 87 patients per day.	Mieh Mieh camp faces major challenges, including overcrowded housing, poor sanitation, limited healthcare, and overstretched schools. Legal work restrictions force many into low-paying, informal jobs, while recurring security issues exacerbate the residents' hardship and instability.

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Nahr al-Bared Camp (UNRWA, 2023i)	Established in 1949. Location: 16 kilometers from Tripoli (northern Lebanon). Residents: 27,000 inhabitants. Events: UNRWA commenced its services for the refugees in 1950. In 2007, armed conflict between the Lebanese army and the extremist group Fatah al-Islam, which was operating within Nahr al-Bared camp, resulted in the displacement of approximately 27,000 Palestinian refugees and the destruction of nearly 95% of the camp's infrastructure. In contrast to other Palestinian camps in Lebanon, Nahr al-Bared has since been placed under the direct authority of the Lebanese government Schools: 7 As of April 2021, the available funding enabled an additional 479 families to return to Nahr Al-Bared camp by the beginning of 2022, resulting in 82% of the camp's population having been able to return.	Due to the conflict between the Lebanese army and Fatah al-Islam, 1,470 displaced families currently remain displaced (homes were destroyed).
Rashidieh Camp (UNRWA, 2023j)	Established: The old section was built by the French government in 1936 to house Armenian refugees who had fled to Lebanon. The new section was constructed by UNRWA in 1963. The camp has one health center through which UNRWA provides primary healthcare services.	The camp lacks a sewage system. UNRWA is awaiting the construction of the municipality's main sewage line to establish and connect a proper sewage system. Recently, efforts have been made to rehabilitate the stormwater drainage and supply systems. The camp has four schools that serve over 2,000 Palestine refugees.
Shatila Camp (UNRWA, 2023k)	Established in 1949. Location: south of Beirut. Residents: 14,010 inhabitants. Events: It was destroyed during the Israeli invasion in 1982 (between 3,000-5,000 martyrs) Part of the land is leased to the (UNRWA), and another part belongs to the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). School: 1	Shelters are damp and overcrowded, with many having open drainage ditches. The sewage system in the camp requires significant expansion. The water is so salty and contaminated with chemicals that camp authorities are forced to bring water from outside for bathing and cleaning. Medical Center: One UNRWA health center provides primary health care.
Wavel Camp) (UNRWA, 2023l)	Known as Galilee campa. Established in 1948. Situated in the Baalbek area near the renowned Roman castle in Lebanon's Bekaa region, Galilee camp is among the smaller Palestinian refugee camps in the country. The camp hosts two schools that in total serve around 960 students. Medical services are provided at the camp's health center by two medical officers and three specialists, catering to approximately 170 patients daily, including Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS). Due to the camp's remote location, access to hospitalization services is both challenging and costly.	One of the significant challenges faced by the camp is the lack of potable water. Laboratory tests revealed that the extracted water was unsuitable for drinking, so residents were compelled to purchase water. The Syrian crisis has also led to additional PRS. Both schools face a shortage of available teaching positions due to UNRWA's policy of reducing services.

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These conditions significantly impact residents' physical and mental health, particularly youth and the elderly. Additionally, the high population density – some camps have more than 40,000 residents in less than 1 km² - intensifies social tensions and increases vulnerability to fire hazards and disease outbreaks (UN-Habitat , 2019). Without the legal right to improve their living spaces or access equitable urban services, Palestinian refugees remain trapped in a cycle of environmental and social marginalization.

Palestinian camps in Lebanon face extreme challenges due to their high population density and limited space. For example, Shatila camp, which spans approximately one square kilometer, shelters over 12,000 refugees, rendering it one of the most densely populated areas in the region. The camp faces significant challenges, including inadequate sanitation facilities and unregulated construction practices. Additionally, a shortage of building materials exacerbates these problems by impeding essential repairs and maintenance, resulting in structural issues such as wall cracks and insufficient support (Mansour et al., 2025).

Adding to the predicament, the electricity infrastructure in these camps needs urgent attention. Frequently, electrical wires are carelessly installed, posing significant risks to the residents, and are colloquially known as "death wires". The situation is particularly alarming in the Burj al-Barajneh Camp, where a poorly maintained electrical network has contributed to a heightened number of fatalities (RefugeesPS, 2023).

These camps grapple with many interconnected challenges, ranging from overcrowding and inadequate infrastructure to restrictions on critical construction materials. The conditions in these camps not only endanger the well-being of the residents but also underscore the urgent need for comprehensive interventions to address the multiple issues plaguing these marginalized communities.

> "The homes all over the camps risk being demolished at any time. We should turn on the lights in our houses during the day if we can afford the electricity fees; otherwise, our homes will be dark. We lose our children and sons since most homes have attached the wire in a hazardous way, leading to death."
> *(Byoutna bil moukhayyamat momken tesgot bi ay waget.lazim ndawi elnoor bil nhar iza gderna nehmel ajar ishtarak el kahraba aw byoutna atma. Am nekhsar wladna besabab sharayet elkarbaba alashwaee betmawet)* – Blog No. 8
>
> *" بيوتنا بالمخيمات ممكن تسقط بأي وجت لازم نضوي النور بالنهار ازا جدرنا نحمل اجار اشتراك الكهربا او بيوتنا عتمة . عم نخسر ولادنا بسبب شرايط الكهربا العشوائي بتموت"*

Palestinian refugees face dire challenges in Lebanon as they are unjustly prohibited from owning property or houses, severely limiting their prospects for housing rehabilitation and improvement. This oppressive policy robs them of fundamental human rights and condemns them to endure bleak living conditions with little hope for change. The deteriorating infrastructure within the refugee camps exacerbates their plight, as dilapidated systems contaminate freshwater with seawater, leading to elevated salinity levels. To access clean water, Palestinians are forced to purchase it, further burdening their already strenuous daily lives. Moreover, the onset of winter brings added hardships, such as inadequate drainage and a lack of sewage maintenance, resulting in flooding within the camps, inundating homes with rainwater, and exacerbating their already dire living conditions. The situation is further compounded by the layout of the camps, where closely packed houses obstruct sunlight, fostering excessive humidity levels that contribute to respiratory issues and heighten the risk of contracting various diseases

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among the community members. The continued neglect of the refugee camps' infrastructure perpetuates a cycle of suffering and indignity for Palestinian refugees, who seek nothing more than a semblance of dignity and basic living standards.

Overcrowding, run-down shelters, and unsanitary conditions in the twelve camps in Lebanon are significant challenges. UNRWA is working on improving shelters for the poorest and most vulnerable families; currently, there are over 6,000 petitions from camp residents. The population increase, along with the arrival of Palestinian refugees from Syria, has strained water supply sources, sewerage and drainage systems, and solid waste management in the camps (UNRWA, 2022).

> "My mom, RIP, was Lebanese; she bought our house 25 years ago. When she passed away, the old owner's sons of the property retrieved the ownership of our home since we were not allowed to own properties. Can you imagine that?"
> *(Oumi allah yerhamha lebnaniyeh ishtarat beit men 25 saneh lamma twaffat, awlad elmalek elgadeem akhado beitnaaaaaa laan ehna falastinyeh malna hag netmallak betsadgeh!)* - Blog No. 9.

" امي الله يرحمها لبنانية اشترت بيت من 25 سنة، لما توفت اولاد المالك الجديم اخدوا بيتنا لان احنا فلسطينيي مالنا حج نتملك بتصدجي!".

4.6 Challenges of Discrimination in the Security Sector

Palestinian refugees in Lebanon face persistent security challenges, mainly stemming from their marginalized legal status, camp governance issues, and the absence of formal state oversight in refugee camps. Most camps are self-managed by Palestinian factions due to a longstanding policy of Lebanese non-intervention, leading to fragmented authority, weak law enforcement, and periodic outbreaks of armed violence (Shaaban et al. 2010)). Armed clashes, particularly in camps like Ain al-Hilweh, often result in casualties, displacement, and the destruction of property, creating a constant state of insecurity for residents (UNRWA, n.d.c). Moreover, the lack of legal protection and limited access to Lebanese judicial institutions exacerbate feelings of vulnerability and impunity, especially among youth. Security crackdowns and stigmatization of Palestinians – frequently associated with militancy – further restrict their movement and deepen mistrust between refugees and state authorities (Knudsen, 2007). These conditions not only endanger physical safety but also undermine social cohesion and mental well-being within refugee communities.

The Lebanese security forces' authority within Palestinian refugee camps is mainly limited to controlling entry points through checkpoints. They generally do not provide broad protection or intervene in internal matters, with exceptions such as the Nahr al-Bared camp, where the Lebanese army successfully repelled extremist attacks. Security within the camps is primarily managed by Palestinian armed factions organized into security committees, which include major groups like Fatah, Hamas, the Popular and Democratic Fronts, Islamic Jihad, the Liberation Party, and At-Tahrir. Although these committees attempt to coordinate with Lebanese authorities, their effectiveness is often undermined by corruption, which negatively impacts their capacity to investigate criminal activities and protect vulnerable populations, including children (Mansour et al., 2025).In addition, various forms of violence, including gender-based and sexual abuses, persist within the camps despite the presence of community-led committees tasked with addressing social issues. These popular committees often struggle to address and prevent such violations due to complex challenges. Moreover, ongoing tensions between the rival factions of

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Fatah and Hamas contribute significantly to the enduring instability and unrest within the camps. This is especially evident in camps like Ain El Hilweh, where rivalry between these factions exacerbates existing tensions and fuels a cycle of conflict that hampers efforts to achieve lasting peace and security for the residents.

> "Most often, I do not go outside the camp because I am afraid of the Lebanese army at the checkpoints; they search for any prohibited items upon my entry and exit. They do not intervene inside the camp in any case."
> (Ktheer men elmarrat ma begder anam aw edhar barrat almoukhayyam, tafteesh attalaa welnazleh bifatshoo an mamnouat .malhen dakhl jouwat al mokhayyam.) - Blog No. 10.

" كثير من المرات ما بجدر انامو اضهر برات المخيم تفتيش عالطالعة والنازلة بفتشو عن ممنوعات. مالهن دخل جوات المخيم" .

4.7 Coping

Returning to the various strategies outlined in Berry's theory, integration poses a complex challenge for Palestinian refugees residing in Lebanon, as they struggle to adopt the cultural norms of the host society fully. This challenge stems from the inherent difficulties in reconciling their Palestinian heritage with the expectations of their new environment.

Despite the obstacles they face in assimilating into Lebanese society, Palestinian refugees steadfastly hold onto their cultural roots, evident in linguistic nuances and deep-rooted traditions that persist through generations. This delicate balance between adapting to their current surroundings while passionately preserving their historical identity highlights the intricate nature of their integration process within the Lebanese context.

Marginalization emerges as a pertinent issue among Palestinian refugees, manifesting as a paradoxical dynamic that underscores their role as both cultural custodians and marginalized individuals. While they actively uphold their Palestinian identity and cultural practices as a form of resistance and resilience, this very commitment to their heritage often relegates them to the periphery of mainstream Lebanese society. This marginalization is palpable in various facets of their lives, from limited socio-economic opportunities to social exclusion based on their distinct cultural markers. Consequently, while Palestinian refugees find strength and solidarity in preserving their cultural heritage, they also grapple with the consequences of being relegated to the margins of society, reflecting the intricate interplay between identity preservation and societal marginalization within the Lebanese context.

5. Discussion

This study explored how Palestinian dialect functions as cultural identity and resistance within displacement and systemic marginalization. It intricately delves into the multifaceted dynamics surrounding Palestinian refugees' accents within the borders of Lebanon, shedding light on how these linguistic nuances intertwine with the Palestinians' sense of identity, social interactions, and economic prospects. The narratives shared by Palestinian refugees vividly illustrate the myriad challenges they encounter within Lebanon's diverse linguistic terrain, where their distinctive accent often becomes a focal point of discrimination and prejudice. Furthermore, the practice of adjusting or concealing their accents among Palestinian refugees serves as a pivotal reflection of their intricate negotiation of self-identity within an environment rife with hostility and suspicion.

Moreover, the imperative nature of altering one's accent to assimilate into Lebanese society serves as a stark reminder of the intricate socio-political complexities that envelop

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the Palestinian presence in Lebanon, a sentiment eloquently underscored by Blog No. 1 where the refugee failed in trying to imitate the Lebanese accent, emphasizing this delicate balance. Another participant's remark, "Most of the Lebanese do not welcome our presence, without denying that others believe in the Palestinian cause. I hope they return us to beloved Palestine", points out the oscillating sentiments and the hate speech from the side of the Lebanese populace towards Palestinians, ranging from expressions of sympathy to manifestations of antipathy. This dichotomy further underscores the challenging terrain that Palestinian refugees navigate within Lebanon, where their accents become both a linguistic marker and a symbolic battleground for broader socio-political tensions. Language is used to exclude and marginalize Palestinians, as seen by the importance of linguistic identifiers like *"Bandora"*.

One female participant said, "I try to imitate the Lebanese accent so people will not know I am Palestinian. However, I always mess it up. They can tell. It is humiliating." (Blog No. 1). This quote shows how the speaker feels caught between two identities. Many Palestinians try to sound Lebanese to avoid being judged or treated differently, but they fail, which leads to even more embarrassment.

From a narrative perspective, this story tells us more than just what happens. It shows how the speaker sees herself as different. She wants to fit in but cannot hide who she is. The speaker is not just describing fear or shame; she is telling a story that shows how language, accent, and identity are deeply connected. In this sense, the quote reflects Berry's strategy of "separation": The speaker is trying to survive in a society that excludes her, but her original accent remains part of who she is. Even though she tries to change her pronunciation, her Palestinian dialect still shines through. This shows how her identity is not erased but still present in how she speaks and tells her story.

Similarly, as another participant said, "

> "I believe that we, as Palestinian refugees, preserve our culture. As you can see, the NISCVT, other NGOs, and the UNRWA promote our culture through the Dabka program, traditional songs, and musical instruments such as "Garba: Bagpipe," which are our differences. Msakhan and Mouloukhiyyi are our unique foods, and we are keen to transfer them to the generations; we could not feel safe outside the camp; in other words, we are stigmatized and never accepted as neighbors of the Lebanese people who are different. Our tradition is different: our weddings are different."

This quote shows the speaker's attachment to the culture and the desire to preserve it, how he insists on the cultural gaps and differences in traditions and foods. Also, the narrative reflects the power of "we" and not "I", which can lead to feeling separated, excluded, and marginalized from the Lebanese community, and matched with Berry's acculturation theory.

Palestinian refugees also claim their language and cultural heritage to assert their identity and oppose assimilation. Palestinian refugees like the speakers of Blog No. 3, Blog No. 4 and Blog No. 7 are dedicated to maintaining and passing on their culture despite their hardships. Berry's concept of separation as a way of acculturation supports this resistance to assimilation, where people keep their cultural identity while coexisting with the dominant culture. The subject goes beyond language to include Palestinian refugees' socio-economic inequities in Lebanon. Lack of education, healthcare, work, and property ownership promotes their marginalization and socioeconomic fragility. Blog No. 5, Blog

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No. 6 and Blog No. 8 show how structural impediments prevent Palestinian refugees from integrating into the Lebanese society, resulting in persistent inequality and poverty.

The findings from the study indicate a concerning trend wherein the existing policies and institutions in place lack the necessary efficacy to ensure the adequate protection and well-being of Palestinian refugees residing in Lebanon. Additionally, the evident absence of access to essential healthcare services and suitable housing options for Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon sheds light on a deep-rooted issue of systemic neglect and discriminatory treatment within the country's structures and societal attitudes. This collective narrative underscores the urgent need for comprehensive reforms and a concerted effort to address the systemic inequalities and injustices disproportionately impacting Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, emphasizing the importance of upholding fundamental human rights and ensuring fair treatment and inclusivity for all members of society, regardless of their background or ethnicity.

6 Limitations

In terms of limitations, a key limitation of the research is that much of the data emphasized experiences of hardship and marginalization, with less direct focus on the intentional preservation of dialect and cultural identity. This imbalance may obscure the more subtle or everyday forms of resilience and continuity. Additionally, the blogs analyzed were limited in number and scope, potentially restricting the diversity of voices represented and the generalizability of the findings across different Palestinian refugee communities in Lebanon. To conclude, this study shows that dialect remains an embodied form of cultural continuity even when unacknowledged. By exploring stories told through Palestinian speech, this work contributes to understanding how displaced identities are maintained through language, often in silence.

7 Implications

7.1 Theoretical Implications

This study contributes meaningfully to the development of the acculturation theory by challenging the assumption that strategies like integration or separation are always the result of individual or group choice. In refugee contexts such as that of Palestinians in Lebanon, separation often emerges not from cultural preference but from structural exclusion, including legal restrictions, spatial segregation, and limited access to rights and services. These conditions force communities to retain distinct cultural identities, such as dialect, as a means of resilience and survival. The findings suggest the need for adapted or hybrid models of acculturation that more fully account for power imbalances, institutional barriers, and the role of intergenerational transmission in shaping identity under displacement.

7.2 Policy Implications

The findings hold important implications for policymakers, especially in contexts where displaced populations are systematically denied fundamental rights such as employment, education, and mobility. Host state policies that demand linguistic or cultural integration often overlook the structural exclusions that make such integration unattainable. This research shows that language retention, such as preserving Palestinian dialect, is not a refusal to integrate but a response to prolonged marginalization. When access to rights is

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blocked, communities turn to cultural practices to assert identity and maintain dignity. Therefore, genuine integration requires structural change, not just cultural adaptation. Policymakers are urged to adopt rights-based, inclusive approaches that respect and support refugee identities, rather than attempting to erase or assimilate them.

7.3 Practice Implications (NGOs, Educators, Humanitarian Actors)

This research offers valuable implications for practitioners working with refugee populations, particularly in the fields of education and psychosocial support. It highlights that language and storytelling are vital tools for communication and mechanisms for affirming identity and emotional resilience. Cultural practices, including the use of dialect, serve as meaningful sources of pride and continuity, especially in contexts of displacement and exclusion. Programs that promote oral history, intergenerational storytelling, and dialect recognition can foster a stronger sense of belonging among refugee youth. Therefore, education and community-based initiatives should embrace dialect as a living expression of identity and create inclusive spaces where heritage and hybrid language use are celebrated rather than stigmatized. Similarly, social work plays an important role at the mezzo level by supporting refugee groups through integrative approaches that promote social inclusion and access to services (Mansour, 2021). By working directly with communities, social workers help reduce isolation, strengthen social networks, and empower refugees to rebuild their lives. These group-focused interventions are crucial for fostering resilience and advocating for the rights of refugees within host societies.

Moreover, employing a multicultural team within NGOs, INGOs, and GOs brings valuable diversity of perspectives, cultural insight, and linguistic skills, enhancing the relevance and sensitivity of programs for refugee communities. This richness fosters more inclusive, adaptive, and empathetic approaches to addressing complex needs across different cultural contexts.

8 Conclusion

The Palestinians who have sought refuge in Lebanon despite facing immense misery are, unfortunately, often marginalized and estranged from the Lebanese community that initially welcomed them during the joyous occasions of newborn arrivals. However, amidst the joys, they also endure profound sorrow as they bid farewell to their loved ones, who eventually depart, being laid to rest in distant lands far from the sacred soil of their heritage. These heart-wrenching separations intensify the hardships faced by the Palestinian refugees as they navigate the challenges and injustices that continue to undermine their fundamental human rights in Lebanon. Such difficulties are exacerbated by the prejudice that lingers due to their distinct accent, further deepening the sense of stigmatization they endure daily. The involuntary nature of their presence in Lebanon, imposed upon them against their will, pushes many to embark on perilous journeys, risking life and limb in pursuit of solace and freedom from the harsh realities they confront. The passage of seventy-five long years spent in exile only highlights the urgent need for broader recognition and unwavering support for the Palestinian refugees as they strive to reclaim their dignity and rebuild their shattered lives.

Palestinian refugees residing in Lebanon face numerous socio-political challenges and marginalization, yet they persist in safeguarding their cultural identity by preserving their distinct dialect. Despite the obstacles they encounter in their host country, they can uphold

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their traditions and heritage through the unique language they speak. This linguistic aspect is a vital link to their Palestinian roots and helps them maintain a sense of belonging and unity within their community. By continuously using and passing down their dialect from generation to generation, these refugees keep their cultural practices alive and forge a solid connection to their homeland. Reserving their linguistic heritage among the Palestinian refugee population in Lebanon is a testament to their resilience and determination to uphold their cultural identity despite difficult circumstances.

As shown in Blog No. 1, "I try to imitate the accent of the Lebanese citizens; it works with the first two words, and the third leads me to failure, as in the school's exams", the Lebanese dialect is often unfamiliar to many Palestinians in Lebanon. This distinction becomes evident when they speak, especially in interactions with Lebanese nationals. For example, a Palestinian refugee raised in a camp like Ain al-Hilweh may use Palestinian vocabulary or intonation patterns that differ from the Lebanese vernacular, immediately signaling their non-Lebanese origin. This linguistic difference is not accidental but reflects a more profound cultural attachment. Many Palestinians see their dialect as one of the few enduring links to their homeland, especially in a context where they lack legal status, face restrictions on employment and property ownership, and are marginalized from full social integration (Suleiman, 2006). For some, preserving the Palestinian dialect becomes a symbolic act of identity and resistance, a way to maintain dignity and assert a collective memory. Holding onto their dialect is akin to affirming their right of return. As seen in Blog No.2, "Most of the Lebanese do not welcome our presence, without denying that others believe in the Palestinian cause. I hope they return us to beloved Palestine"; it is a daily expression of belonging and solidarity with their history and people (Khaled, 2014).

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QRP

Examining the Positive Association Between Self-Efficacy and Emotional Exhaustion: A Moderation Analysis[1]

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Abstract

Burnout is a critical problem among refugee resettlement staff and volunteers. Their job entails emotionally demanding tasks, high caseloads, and exposure to traumatic client histories, resulting in emotional exhaustion, one of the most prominent dimensions of burnout. The current study examines how three psychological resources – hope, optimism, and resilience – mediate the relationship between self-efficacy and emotional exhaustion. Using data from an earlier dissertation, the study included 112 participants who worked or volunteered in refugee resettlement organizations within the United States. Emotional exhaustion was measured with the Maslach Burnout Inventory – Human Services Survey (MBI-HSS), while psychological capital facets were measured with the Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ-24). Moderation analysis was conducted using Hayes' PROCESS macro version 4.2 (Model 2) in SPSS. Contrary to common assumptions, higher self-efficacy was associated with higher emotional exhaustion. This correlation was moderated strongly by hope, however. Individuals with high hope levels were less emotionally exhausted even when their self-efficacy was high. Optimism and resilience were examined but found to have weaker or non-significant moderating effects than hope. These results contradict the assumption that self-efficacy is always beneficial and demonstrate that, in cases of high-stress work, such as refugee support work, self-efficacy can actually become a cause for burnout if individuals lack sufficient psychological resources to offset it. The study highlights the importance of building hope through purposeful support and interventions as a potential way to reduce burnout among humanitarian practitioners.

Key Words:

Burnout, resettlement workers, refugee workers, self-efficacy, emotional exhaustion

1 Introduction

Burnout is a psychological syndrome that results from chronic occupational stress, particularly in human service professions (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Among its three

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dimensions – emotional exhaustion (EE), depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment – emotional exhaustion is the most essential component that has been studied the most (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Emotional exhaustion is a state of chronic physical and emotional depletion that results from overwork-related demands and interpersonal stressors. Studies have shown that EE negatively impacts job performance, well-being, and retention across various occupations, including those of physicians (West et al., 2018), dentists (Calvo et al., 2021), social workers (Ho & Chan, 2022), and human service professionals (Dyrbye et al., 2019). Refugee resettlement workers and volunteers also are likely to suffer from emotional exhaustion because the work involves extremely emotionally taxing and interpersonally straining tasks in helping displaced people with complicated needs. The same perspective was also shared by Espinosa et al. (2019), Kim (2017), Sagaltici et al. (2022), and Wirth et al. (2019). As a result, refugee workers experience negative consequences, including low compassion satisfaction (Posselt et al., 2019), psychological distress (Posselt et al., 2021), and high turnover intentions (Di Maggio et al., 2021).

In line with this, studies on protective and risk factors for EE have been an important area of research in occupational burnout-related research. One of the most widely used models of psychological resilience at work is Psychological Capital (PsyCap), which comprises hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism (Luthans et al., 2007). Previous research has determined that PsyCap is a protective factor for burnout in various professions (Di Maggio et al., 2021; Vîrgă et al., 2020). Specifically, research has determined that hope reduces burnout and secondary traumatic stress in pediatricians (Passmore et al., 2020). Optimism has also been shown to enhance the well-being of refugee resettlement workers (Posselt et al., 2021). Resilience reduces burnout in employees who engage with refugees (Tessitore et al., 2023). Self-efficacy is generally associated with lower levels of stress and better coping in challenging professions (Espinosa et al., 2019; Isawi & Post, 2020).

Though self-efficacy has been proposed as a protective factor against emotional exhaustion, prior dissertation research conducted by one of the authors (Kim, 2024) found a contrary positive relationship between self-efficacy and emotional exhaustion in refugee resettlement workers and volunteers. Building on this work, the current study further investigated this relationship. These findings contradict conventional theories that link high self-efficacy with lower burnout, suggesting that in certain contexts, higher self-efficacy may actually contribute to increased emotional exhaustion rather than reducing it.

While PsyCap and burnout have separately been examined, less is documented on the distinct individual elements of PsyCap and how these elements individually relate to aspects of emotional exhaustion in traumatic occupations such as refugee resettlement. This counterintuitive yet positive finding, which is based on a preliminary analysis presented in the earlier dissertation (Kim, 2024), raises several theoretical and practical questions: Why does high self-efficacy contribute to greater emotional exhaustion? When does self-efficacy become a vulnerability rather than a resilience factor? Several theoretical explanations suggest that high self-efficacy may lead to overcommitment, taking on too much work, and maladaptive persistence, all of which can lead to emotional exhaustion rather than decreasing it (Dicke et al., 2015). The current study seeks to expand on the dissertation's findings by further investigating this relationship and

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identifying moderators, such as hope, resilience, and optimism, that may influence the strength or direction of this effect.

2 Problem Statement, Objectives, and Hypertheses

Although self-efficacy is widely considered a protective factor against emotional exhaustion, recent findings in the refugee resettlement context suggest that self-efficacy might be a cause of enhanced emotional exhaustion under certain conditions. This contradicts existing theory and represents a critical gap in the literature. The purpose of this research was to examine the relationship between self-efficacy and emotional exhaustion in refugee resettlement workers, investigating whether psychological capital resources – hope, optimism, and resilience – moderate this association and provide burnout prevention recommendations based on these moderating effects.

Based on the literature and theoretical framework, the current research hypothesized various relationships between emotional exhaustion and self-efficacy, as well as potential moderating roles of resilience, hope, and optimism. Hypotheses that were tested and will be addressed hereafter throughout the Results and Discussion, as H1 to H5, have been outlined below. In the first model, model 2A, it was hypothesized that self-efficacy would significantly predict emotional exhaustion (Hypothesis 1). In addition, hope and optimism were expected to each significantly predict emotional exhaustion (Hypotheses 2 and 3). It was further hypothesized that hope would moderate the relationship between self-efficacy and emotional exhaustion, such that individuals with higher levels of hope would experience a weaker association between self-efficacy and emotional exhaustion (Hypothesis 4). Similarly, it was expected that optimism would moderate this relationship, such that the association between self-efficacy and emotional exhaustion would be weaker at higher levels of optimism (Hypothesis 5). In the second model, model 2B, it was hypothesized that self-efficacy, hope, and resilience would each significantly predict emotional exhaustion (Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3). Furthermore, hope was expected to moderate the relationship between self-efficacy and emotional exhaustion, such that this relationship would be weaker when hope was high (Hypothesis 4). It was also hypothesized that resilience would moderate the relationship between self-efficacy and emotional exhaustion, such that individuals with higher resilience would experience less emotional exhaustion associated with high self-efficacy (Hypothesis 5).

3 Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in the Psychological Capital (PsyCap) theory, which comprises four constructs: self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism. Each of these is hypothesized to be a psychological resource that enhances well-being and performance in the face of stress. In very stressful occupations like refugee resettlement, where workers frequently must contend with traumatic stories, chaotic policies, and systemic barriers, these resources are particularly relevant. Specifically, self-efficacy refers to having a belief in one's ability to deal with challenges effectively; hope entails agency and routes to achieve objectives despite adversity; resilience refers to the capacity to recover from stress or adversity; and optimism is a general anticipation that positive things will occur. PsyCap was negatively associated with burnout among other human services workers, including social workers and psychiatric nurses (Kim & Kweon, 2020; Vîrgă et al., 2020). According to research, PsyCap may act as a mediator between burnout and occupational stress (Kim & Kweon, 2020). However, studies conducted on athletes revealed that the only PsyCap

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component that significantly reduced fatigue was hope; other PsyCap components had no discernible benefit (Yang et al., 2023). Self-efficacy is the belief that one can overcome obstacles. It was linked to trauma-informed training and cultural intelligence in refugee resettlement situations (Yalim et al., 2022). In counselors, lower levels of secondary traumatic stress were associated with higher levels of self-efficacy (Isawi & Post, 2020).

Outside of human services, self-efficacy has been shown to improve nurses' job performance (Terry et al., 2019) and exhibit an inverse association with anxiety and depression among firefighters (Duran et al., 2019). Resilient individuals are better equipped to handle stress and recover from setbacks in their professional lives. Resilience among refugee resettlement professionals was positively correlated with work meaning and negatively correlated with workplace stress (Robelski et al., 2020). To remain resilient, volunteers turned to their spiritual identity and social support (Rush et al., 2022). Resilience has been shown to mitigate the effects of secondary traumatic stress and reduce burnout in the healthcare industry (Harker et al., 2016; Ogińska-Bulik & Michalska, 2021). In all human service domains, hope, which is defined as goal-directed motivation, was inversely correlated with burnout. Hope decreased secondary traumatic stress and exhaustion in child abuse physicians (Passmore et al., 2020). Hope influenced emotional tenacity and job engagement in different occupations (Ender et al., 2018; Kang & Jang, 2019). Hopelessness was found to be positively connected with psychological discomfort and burnout in police officers and healthcare personnel (Civilotti et al., 2022; Korkut, 2022).

Studies have found an association between optimism and reduced burnout. Optimism is the tendency to anticipate the greatest potential conclusion from any given scenario. Optimism and self-efficacy enhanced well-being and job retention among refugee resettlement workers (Posselt et al., 2021). Optimism was found to be inversely correlated with depersonalization and emotional weariness in other professions (Theofilou et al., 2023). The association between burnout and antidepressant usage among nurses was mediated by optimism (Martos Martínez et al., 2021). The existing literature has yielded conflicting findings regarding the relationship between self-efficacy and emotional exhaustion. While some authors claim that self-efficacy prevents burnout, others find positive relationships between the two. Given that emotional exhaustion serves as an enhancing mechanism that people create when they must cope with extremely challenging conditions, Dicke et al. (2015) believe that it can eventually foster self-efficacy. Similarly, Bellemans et al. (2023) did not find a mediating effect of self-efficacy on burnout; hence, factors such as workplace problems and crises can influence this relationship from the outside. Such intricacy is supported by an earlier study, which found an unexpectedly positive correlation between emotional exhaustion and self-efficacy in volunteers and staff involved in refugee resettlement (Kim, 2024). This contradicts the widely held belief that self-efficacy always serves as a protective factor against burnout. Given the particular stressors faced by refugee resettlement professionals, it is essential to investigate how psychological resources, such as optimism, hope, and resilience, modulate the aforementioned relationship.

As a result, PsyCap has recently been the subject of increased research from various human service fields, including Di Maggio et al. (2021) and Posselt et al. (2021). Research on its specific function for workers in the context of refugee resettlement is still lacking, nevertheless. Additionally, thresholds beyond which these resources are protective have

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not been examined in previous studies; therefore, finer-grained analyses employing moderation techniques, such as the Johnson-Neyman approach, would be necessary to address this gap. To shed light on how psychological resources can protect workers from burnout in high-stress refugee resettlement workplaces, this study examines hope, optimism, and resilience as modifiers of the self-efficacy-emotional exhaustion link. Since hope is a cognitive, psychological, and motivational tool, it was included in both Model 2A (hope and optimism) and Model 2B (hope and resilience). Hope is unique in its combination of goal-oriented motivation and problem-solving coping, as opposed to optimism, which is characterized by broad, positive expectations, and resilience, which is defined as the ability to cope in adverse situations (Snyder, 2002). Due to its close theoretical and empirical ties to optimism and resilience, studying hope in these settings facilitates a deeper understanding of how psychological resources and self-efficacy interact to influence emotional exhaustion.

4 Methods and Materials

4.1 Ethics and Approval

On January 30, 2024, the Institutional Review Board approved this study (Kim, 2024). The Qualtrics XM data-collecting tool was used to recruit participants (Qualtrics, 2024). The link to the Qualtrics online survey, which comprised the demographic questions, online informed consent, study information sheet, and measurement tools discussed in this research, was included in the invitation to participate. This 2024 research study received approval from GCU's Institutional Review Board in accordance with ethical guidelines. The following data, gathered in accordance with the Belmont Report's guidelines, protected human subjects, showed respect for persons, and participants gave their consent to be studied. They were also allowed to leave at any time without jeopardizing their circumstances. Additionally, the research aimed to significantly advance the body of knowledge on psychological capital and exhaustion among refugee resettlement professionals, with a focus on maximizing benefits while minimizing harm. Finally, justice, ensuring fair treatment, and access to study benefits were guaranteed for all eligible participants through equal opportunities.

4.2 Participants

A total of 112 participants were working or volunteering for refugee resettlement organizations across the United States at the time of data collection. Convenience sampling was used for initial recruitment in a non-probability purposive sample, and snowball sampling was used to maximize responses. Peer recommendations, professional Facebook groups, and emails inviting refugee resettlement agencies have all been used to recruit participants. Participants who were 18 years of age or older, employed by or volunteered for a refugee resettlement organization, and had at least six months of experience resettling refugees in the United States met the eligibility requirements. Participants willingly provided their email address for use in the prize draw procedure in exchange for an incentive of four $25 Amazon e-gift cards.

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4.3 Measures

4.3.1 Demographics

Participants provided information on their location, years of experience, age, and gender. Most of the respondents fell into the following categories: Northeast (36.4%), with more than two years of experience (60%), between the ages of 25-34 years (42%), and female (70.9%). Each demographic variable was measured at the nominal or ordinal level, with frequencies and percentages reported. Demographic information is summed up in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic Variables, Region, Years of Experience, Age, and Gender

Demographics		*n*	Percent
Region	Northeast	40	36.4
	Midwest	21	19.1
	South	27	24.5
	West	22	20
Years of Experience	6 months to 2 years	43	39.1
	2 years or more	66	60
	Prefer not to say	1	.9
Age	18-24	19	17
	25-34	47	42
	35-54	34	30.4
	55 and older	9	8
	Prefer not to say	3	2.7
Gender	Male	28	25.5
	Female	78	70.9
	Other	3	2.7
	Prefer not to say	1	.9

N = 112

4.3.2 Maslach Burnout Inventory – Human Services Survey (MBI-HSS)

The MBI-HSS is one of the most widely used instruments for assessing burnout among human service professionals (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). For the current study, only the emotional exhaustion (EE) subscale served as the outcome variable. The EE subscale comprises nine items that assess the frequency of feelings of emotional overextension and fatigue related to work. Response scores range from 0 (Never) to 6 (Every day) on a 7-point Likert scale, with higher scores indicating higher emotional exhaustion. The internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha) for the EE subscale in this study was .88, reflecting good reliability as reported in previous studies.

4.3.3 Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ-24)

The PCQ-24 is a valid measure of Psychological Capital (PsyCap), which is a positive psychological resource comprising four components: self-efficacy (six items), individual belief in one's capability to succeed. Hope (six items): Goal determination and persistence.

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Resilience (six items): Capability for recovery from misfortune. Optimism (six items): The perceived capability to pull oneself through difficult situations, with positive expectations about the future. Responses were recorded on a six-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 6 (Strongly Agree) (Luthans et al., 2007).

The current study focuses on self-efficacy as the key predictor, while investigating hope, resilience, and optimism as potential moderators of its relationship with emotional exhaustion. Reliability testing of the PCQ-24 subscales was conducted: self-efficacy showed very good internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha of .81. Hope turned out to be a fairly valid construct, Cronbach's alpha being .82. In resilience, Cronbach's alpha was .68, a bit below the threshold of .70, but comparable with already published studies. The Cronbach's alpha in the case of optimism was .62 – internally valid with low consistency, and that forms one of the limitations admitted in the present study. The overall PCQ-24 has shown very good reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of .90, whereas the aggregate PsyCap was not considered as part of a multiple regression, as this research only focuses on investigating the moderating role of particular PsyCap elements. As Suárez Álvarez et al. (2018) outlined, the lower reliability in some subscales, such as resilience and optimism, may be due to the inclusion of both positive and reversed items, which diminish internal consistency and add secondary variance. Despite slight disparities in reliability among subscales, the internal consistency of the MBI-HSS (EE subscale) and PCQ-24 was appropriate for measuring burnout and psychological capital, respectively, which ensured the validity of the results in this study.

5 Procedure

5.1 Statistical Power Analysis

We performed a priori power analysis using G*Power 3.1 to determine the appropriate sample size for identifying interaction effects resulting from moderation analysis (Faul et al., 2007). According to Aguinis and Stone-Romero (1997), for testing moderation effects in multiple regression, the recommended approach includes two power analyses: one to examine the interaction effect of a single moderator and another to assess the combined effect of two moderators. In the detection of a small-to-moderate effect size- $f^2=.15$ *- with five predictors, for 80% power and* $\alpha=.05$, sample sizes were 55 for the interaction effect. Thus, with a final sample size of 112, statistical power was sufficient to detect the hypothesized moderation effects.

5.2 Data Preparation

Workers and volunteers involved in refugee resettlement across the United States make up the study's sample. In February 2024, 14 refugee resettlement agencies and eight Facebook groups were contacted using convenience and snowball sampling. Agency leadership received a recruitment mail with a link to the survey, which was also posted in Facebook groups that had been approved. Informed consent was acquired before the survey was completed, and participation was entirely optional. The survey included optional demographic questions, the Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ-24), which measures self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism, and the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Human Services Survey (MBI-HSS), which assesses emotional exhaustion. Participants aged 18 years or older who had been working or volunteering in refugee resettlement for at least six months were considered to fit the inclusion criteria. They were allowed to take the survey, which took approximately 15 to 20 minutes.

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To safeguard respondents' privacy, data gathering was anonymized, and no IP addresses were recorded. Email addresses were gathered independently from survey replies in order to offer a raffle with a $25 Amazon gift card in exchange for completing the survey. Qualtrics was used to collect data anonymously, with no personally identifiable information gathered. Responses from all participants were kept completely private; no names were gathered. Only pseudonyms such as Participant 1 and Participant 2 were used to ensure anonymity. The consent form stated that only the researcher, committee members, IRB, and approved reviewers would have access to the data. A computer that required a password to access was used to store electronic data. After being safely stored for three years, the electronic data will be permanently erased. Regarding this study, no conflicts of interest have been found. To guarantee the reliability and repeatability of the results, the researcher closely adhered to ethical guidelines. Following data gathering, a thorough cleaning process was carried out. Qualtrics identified 327 examples out of the 559 initial responses as possibly bot submissions and removed them from the dataset. 120 responses were eliminated through additional human cleaning because they contained duplicate entries, unreal reaction times, incomplete responses, and failed attention checks. 112 valid replies were left for examination after exclusions. The dataset was scanned for quality control when it was finished. Duplicate or incomplete responses, as well as those that failed attention check questions, were eliminated. IBM SPSS Statistics, Version 29, was used to clean, code, and analyze the data (IBM Corp, 2022). Imputation techniques were used in SPSS to impute missing values. Variables were combined, and reverse-coded items were altered in accordance with regular scoring protocols. Only the researcher and approved reviewers had access to the password-protected PC where all of the data was kept. To maintain confidentiality and adhere to ethical research norms, data will be kept for three years before being totally erased.

6 Statistical Analysis

Two distinct sets of assumptions were investigated independently in this study. A Bonferroni adjustment was no longer required for this investigation due to a better knowledge of the application of alpha value corrections. Significant findings were identified using an alpha value of less than .05. Every important regression assumption was examined and found to be true.

- Linearity: A linear relationship was confirmed by the scatter plot of residuals, which had no discernible pattern. Error Independence: There was no autocorrelation, according to the Durbin-Watson statistic (1.925).
- Multicollinearity: There was no multicollinearity, as evidenced by tolerance values over 0.1 and VIF values (1.652–2.634) below 10.
- Normality: The residuals were approximately normally distributed, with skewness (-0.053) and kurtosis (-0.534) within acceptable ranges.
- Homoscedasticity: Residual variance was constant across predictor levels, confirming homoscedasticity.
- Outliers & Influential Cases: Cook's Distance (<0.075) and leverage values indicated no undue influence from outliers.

Overall, the model satisfies the necessary assumptions, ensuring valid regression results. This study examines the moderating effects of hope, optimism, and resilience on the relationship between self-efficacy (EFF) and emotional exhaustion (EE) using PROCESS

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Model 2 (Hayes, 2013). A moderation model investigates whether the effect of an independent variable (self-efficacy) on a dependent variable (emotional exhaustion) depends on the levels of one or more moderators (hope, optimism, and resilience).

Moderation Model 2 Equation: The moderation model follows this regression equation:

$$y = b0 + b1(X) + b2(W) + b3(Z) + b4(XW) + b5(XZ) + e$$

Where:

- Y (emotional exhaustion - EE) → The dependent variable, measuring burnout or fatigue.
- X (self-efficacy - EFF) → The independent variable, representing one's belief in their ability to handle tasks effectively.
- W (Moderator 1: hope - HOPE) → The first moderator, measuring one's expectation for positive outcomes.
- M (Moderator 2: optimism - OPT or resilience - RES) → The second moderator, either optimism (Model A) or resilience (Model B).
- XW (Interaction between self-efficacy and hope - EFF × HOPE) → Measures whether hope changes the strength of the relationship between self-efficacy and emotional exhaustion.
- XM (Interaction between self-efficacy and optimism/resilience - EFF × OPT or EFF × RES) → Measures whether optimism or resilience moderates the effect of self-efficacy on emotional exhaustion.
- b0 (Intercept) → The baseline level of emotional exhaustion when all predictors are zero.
- e (Error Term) → Represents unexplained variance in the model.

By testing these moderation effects, we aim to determine whether psychological resources such as hope, optimism, and resilience buffer the impact of self-efficacy on emotional exhaustion. A moderation analysis was selected to examine whether the self-efficacy and emotional exhaustion connection would be impacted by either of the two PsyCap variables: optimism or hope and resilience (Figure 1). Using multiple linear regression and Hayes' PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2013), Model 2's moderation analysis evaluated the effects of self-efficacy with two-way interactions on hope, resilience, and optimism in relation to emotional exhaustion. This approach will try to determine how each psychological capital component affects the link between emotional exhaustion and self-efficacy as moderators. 5000 bootstrap samples and SPSS v.29 were used for the analyses.

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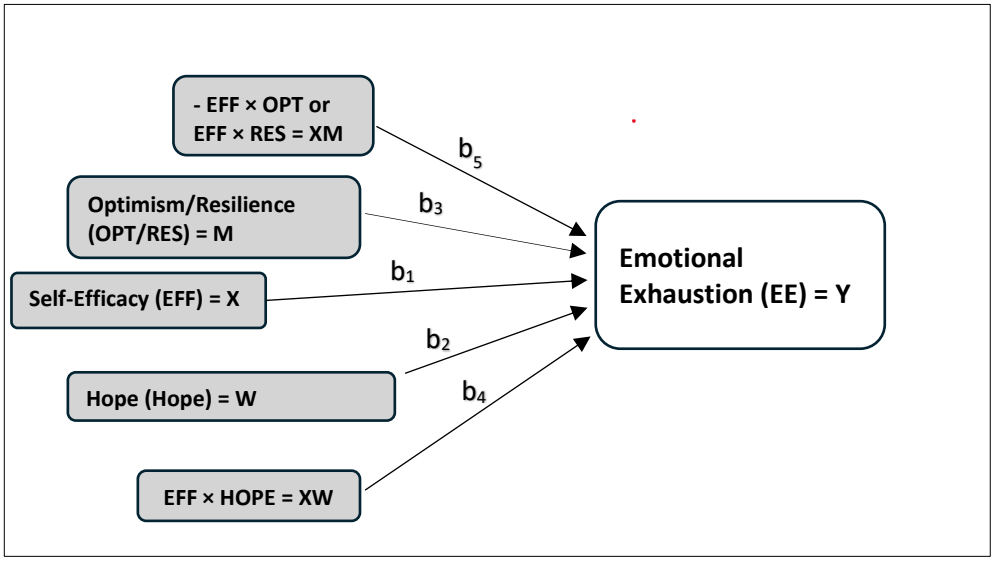
Figure 1: Conceptual Representation of Moderation in a Statistical Diagram



7 Results

Table 2 reports the descriptive statistics for the study variables: emotional exhaustion (EE), hope (HOPE), self-efficacy (EFF), resilience (RES), and optimism (OPT). It also shows the minimum and maximum value, mean (M), standard deviation (SD), median (Mdn), skewness, and kurtosis of each variable. EE: The average score for EE was 36.67 (SD = 11.95), ranging between 9.00 and 60.00. The skewness statistic was -0.053, which is close enough to zero to consider the distribution symmetric. The kurtosis statistic was -0.534, indicating a distribution close to normal. Hope: The participants' hope level ranged from a mean of 26.27, with an SD of 5.41. The skew was slightly negative (-0.137), which showed that scores were fairly evenly distributed. The mean of the self-efficacy score was 28.24 (SD = 5.39), and the skewness was slightly negative, -0.334, showing a slight positive asymmetry. Resilience: The average score of resilience was 26.18 (SD = 4.70). The distribution of this scale showed relatively low skewness, -0.337, and kurtosis, -0.172, indicating an approximately normal distribution. The average score for optimism was 22.90 (SD = 4.83), and the distribution was somewhat negatively skewed (-0.572), indicating that more cases had higher optimism scores. However, the kurtosis statistic is 0.679, which indicates a relatively peaked distribution compared to the standard curve. Skewness and kurtosis for none of the variables are extreme; hence, the normality assumptions are met approximately, which is a prerequisite for the planned moderation analyses. The standard deviation indicates the general average variability of all participants, while emotional exhaustion has the largest spread of participants' scores. This descriptive overview is essential before the main moderation analyses on how psychological resources, in this case, hope, resilience, and optimism, act as moderators between self-efficacy and emotional exhaustion.

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Table 2: Original Data Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Variable	Min	Max	M	SD	Mdn	Skewness Statistic	Kurtosis Statistic
Emotional Exhaustion	9.00	60.00	36.67	11.95	36.00	-.053	-.534
Hope	14.00	36.00	26.27	5.41	26.50	-.137	-.553
Self-efficacy	14.00	36.00	28.24	5.39	29.00	-.334	-.667
Resilience	13.00	35.00	26.18	4.70	26.50	-.337	-.172
Optimism	6.00	32.00	22.90	4.83	23.00	-.572	.679

N = 112

In both models, the overall model significance of moderated multiple regression is obtained by the F-statistic and R^2 values.

7.1 Model 2A: Self-Efficacy, Hope, and Optimism

A hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the moderating effects of hope and optimism on the relationship between self-efficacy and emotional exhaustion, using Hayes' Model 2 in PROCESS (Hayes, 2013). The full model was significant: $F(5,106) = 9.56$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .3107$, suggesting that 31.07% of the variance in emotional exhaustion was explained by predictors (Table 3).

Table 3: Model 2A: Model Summary

Model	R	R^2	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
1	.557	.311	103.031	9.557	5	106	<.000

In the Model 2A analysis, H1 was supported as self-efficacy (EFF) line describes the effect of EFF within the model and is expressed as a significant predictor of emotional exhaustion ($b_1 = 2.672$, $t(106) = 3.022$, $p = .003$). The HOPE line describes the effect of hope within the model and was not a significant predictor of emotional exhaustion ($b_2 = 2.045$, $t(106) = 1.628$, $p = .107$), failing to support H2. The Int_1 line describes the interaction effect (moderation) between self-efficacy and hope within the model and it was marginally significant ($b_4 = -0.084$, $t(106) = -1.965$, $p = .052$), partially supporting H4. The OPT line describes the effect of optimism within the model and optimism was not a significant predictor of emotional exhaustion ($b_3 = -1.447$, $t(106) = -1.074$, $p = .285$), failing to support H3. The Int_2 line describes the interaction effect (moderation) between self-efficacy and optimism within the model and it was not significant ($b_5 = .006$, $t(106) = .140$, $p = .889$), failing to support H5. These results that high level of self-efficacy is associated with greater emotional exhaustion, but hope had a weak influence on that relationship, while optimism did not buffer the effects of self-efficacy on emotional exhaustion. Table 4 provides a visualization of the interaction coefficients.

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Table 4: Model 2A: Interaction Coefficient

Predictor	Coeff	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	.544	24.411	.022	.982	-47.854	48.941
EFF	2.672	.884	3.022	.003	.919	4.424
HOPE	2.045	1.256	1.628	.107	-.445	4.535
Int_1	-0.084	.043	-1.965	.052	-0.169	0.000
OPT	-1.447	1.347	-1.074	.285	-4.117	1.223
Int_2	.006	.046	.140	.889	-0.085	0.097

Note: EFF = self-efficacy, OPT = optimism

The test of highest-order unconditional interactions of self-efficacy and hope (X*W) showed a marginally significant effect of moderation on the overall model ($F(1,106) = 3.863$, $p = .052$, $\Delta R^2 = .025$), indicating that the interaction accounts for 2.51% of the variance in emotional exhaustion. The interaction of self-efficacy and optimism (X*Z) did not show a significant moderating effect ($F(1,106) = 0.020$, $p = .889$, $\Delta R^2 = .000$), explaining only 0.01% of the variance in emotional exhaustion. However, when both interactions (self-efficacy × hope and self-efficacy × optimism) are considered together, the model shows a significant overall moderation effect ($F(2,106) = 3.103$, $p = .049$, $\Delta R^2 = .040$). The findings indicated that optimism and self-efficacy, in combination, influenced the relationship between self-efficacy and emotional exhaustion rather than acting as separate moderating variables. Although hope had a marginal influence in mitigating exhaustion when paired with self-efficacy, optimism did not have any influence; however, their combined influence was substantial, suggesting that the two variables, when paired, play a role in reducing emotional exhaustion. Table 5 provides the model summary.

Table 5: Model 2A: Unconditional Interactions

Interaction Term	R^2 Change	F	df1	df2	p-value
X*W	0.025	3.863	1	106	0.052
X*Z	0.000	.020	1	106	0.889
BOTH	0.040	3.103	2	106	0.049

Table 6 presents the Johnson-Neyman probing results, illustrating how hope and optimism moderated the relationship between self-efficacy (EFF) and emotional exhaustion (EE) at different percentiles. At low levels of hope and optimism (16th percentile: HOPE = 21, OPT = 18.08), self-efficacy was significantly associated with increased emotional exhaustion ($b = 1.019$ $p < .001$), indicating that individuals with high self-efficacy were more prone to burnout when these psychological resources were insufficient. At moderate levels (50th percentile: HOPE = 26.5, OPT = 18), the effect weakened ($b = 0.556$, $p = .078$) but remained marginally significant, suggesting a partial buffering effect. At high levels of hope and optimism (84th percentile: HOPE = 32.92, OPT = 18.08), the effect becomes non-significant ($b = 0.0154$, $p = .976$), indicating that when psychological resources are abundant, self-efficacy no longer contributes to emotional exhaustion. These findings suggest that hope and optimism played a protective role in mitigating emotional exhaustion, with their buffering effect becoming stronger as their levels increase.

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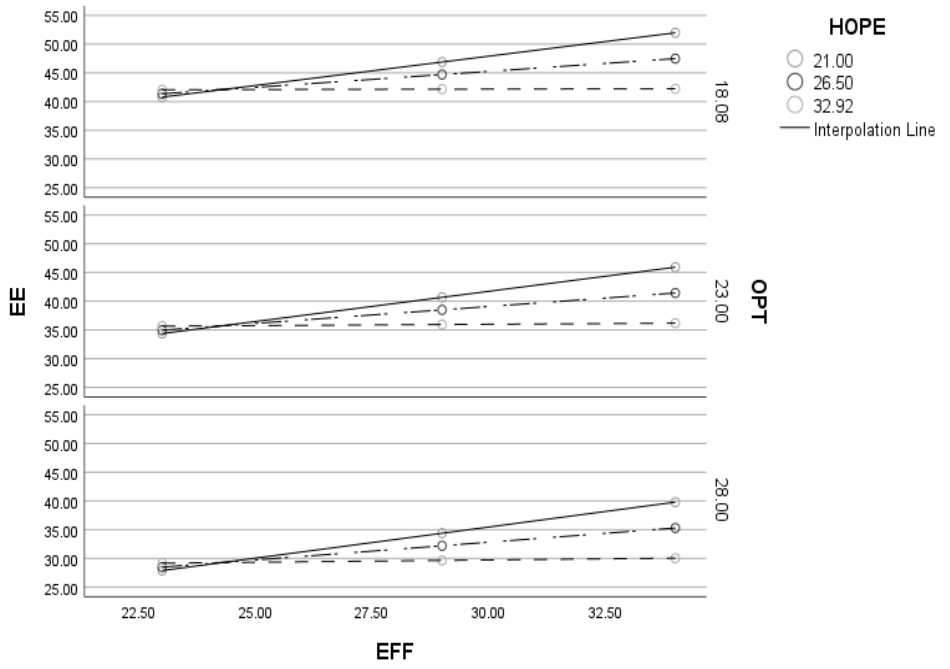
Table 6: Johnson-Neyman Probing of the Moderating Effects of Hope and Optimism on the Relationship Between Self-Efficacy and Emotional Exhaustion

Percentile	HOPE Level	OPT Level	Effect	*SE*	*t*	*p*	*95% CI LLCI*	*95% CI ULCI*
16th	21	18.08	1.0191	0.2763	3.6881	0.0004	0.4713	1.567
50th	26.5	23	0.556	0.3119	1.7829	0.0775	-0.0623	1.1743
84th	32.92	28	0.0154	0.512	0.0302	0.976	-0.9996	1.0304

Note: OPT = optimism

The graph (Figure 2) demonstrates the interaction effects of self-efficacy (EFF), hope (HOPE), and optimism (OPT) on emotional exhaustion (EE). Each panel corresponds to three different levels of emotional exhaustion (18.08, 23.00, and 28.00), while different line styles depict the different levels of hope (21.00, 26.50, and 32.92). The relationship between self-efficacy and higher levels of emotional exhaustion was stronger in lower levels of hope and optimism, indicating that higher levels of self-efficacy cause emotional exhaustion when psychological resources are low. Higher levels of these psychological resources decreased or eliminated the effect of self-efficacy on emotional exhaustion because the slope flattened out as hope and optimism increased. This does support the idea that hope and optimism might act as a buffer, lowering the likelihood of burnout in those with high levels of self-efficacy.

Figure 2: Conditional Effects of Self-efficacy (EFF) on Emotional Exhaustion (EE) Moderated by Hope (HOPE) and Optimism (OPT)



Note: The interpolation lines represent estimated slopes for different levels of the moderators.

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7.2 Model 2B: Self-Efficacy, Hope, and Resilience

In the Model 2B analysis, the overall model was significant, $F(5,106) = 4.23$, $p = .002$, $R^2 = .166$, indicating that 16.62% of the variance in emotional exhaustion is explained by the predictors, supporting H1 (Table 7).

Table 7: Model B: Model Summary

Model	R	R^2	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
1	.408	.166	124.635	4.236	5	106	.00

In the Model 2B analysis, self-efficacy (EFF) was not a significant predictor of emotional exhaustion ($b_1 = 1.677$, $t(106) = 1.532$, $p = .129$), failing to support H1. The HOPE line describes the effect of hope on emotional exhaustion, and it was not significant within the model ($b2 = 1.861$, $t(106) = 1.357$, $p = .178$), failing to support H2. The Int_1 line represents the interaction effect (moderation) between self-efficacy and hope on emotional exhaustion, which was statistically significant ($b4 = -0.104$, $t(106) = -2.21$, $p = .029$), supporting H4 and suggesting that hope plays a buffering role in reducing the impact of self-efficacy on emotional exhaustion. The resilience line described the effect of resilience on emotional exhaustion within the model ($b_3 = -1.535$, $t(106) = -1.010$, $p = .315$), and it was not significant, failing to support H3. The Int_2 line represents the interaction effect (moderation) between self-efficacy and resilience, which was non-significant ($b_5 = 0.062$, $t(106) = 1.156$, $p = .251$), failing to support H5. These results suggest that a higher level of self-efficacy did not directly predict emotional exhaustion in this model, but hope significantly buffered this relationship. At the same time, resilience did not moderate the self-efficacy and emotional exhaustion relationship. Table 8 provides a visualization of the interaction coefficients.

Table 8: Model 2B: Interaction Coefficient

Predictor	Coeff	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	13.507	29.717	.455	.650	-45.410	72.424
EFF	1.677	1.095	1.532	.129	-0.494	3.847
HOPE	1.861	1.372	1.357	.178	-0.858	4.580
Int_1	-0.104	.047	-2.214	.029	-0.198	-0.011
RES	-1.535	1.519	-1.010	.315	-4.547	1.478
Int_2	.062	.053	1.156	.251	-0.044	0.168

The test of highest-order unconditional interactions of self-efficacy and hope (X*W) showed a significant moderation effect on the overall model ($F(1,106) = 4.902$, $p = .029$, $\Delta R^2 = .0386$), indicating that the interaction accounts for 3.86% of the variance in emotional exhaustion. The interaction of self-efficacy and resilience (X*Z) did not show a significant moderating effect ($F(1,106) = 1.335$, $p = .251$, $\Delta R^2 = .011$), explaining only 1.05% of the variance in emotional exhaustion. When both interactions (self-efficacy × hope and self-efficacy × resilience) were considered together, the model did not reach statistical significance, $F(2,106) = 2.533$, $p = .084$, $\Delta R^2 = .040$, suggesting that the combined moderating effects of hope and resilience were present but not strong enough to influence emotional exhaustion significantly. Table 9 provides the model summary.

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Table 9: Model 2B: Unconditional Interactions

Interaction Term	R^2 Change	F	df1	df2	p-value
X*W	0.039	4.902	1	106	0.029
X*Z	0.011	1.335	1	106	0.251
BOTH	0.040	2.533	2	106	0.084

Conditional effects of self-efficacy on emotional exhaustion were significantly moderated by hope, but not by resilience. Table 10 presents the results of the Johnson-Neyman analysis, illustrating the influence of hope and resilience on the self-efficacy (EFF) - emotional exhaustion (EE) relationship at three significant percentiles (16th, 50th, and 84th). The results showed that, at low hope and resilience levels (16th percentile: HOPE = 21, RES = 22), self-efficacy was strongly associated with higher emotional exhaustion (b = 0.843, p =.010). This implies that individuals with high self-efficacy may suffer from greater burnout when lacking adequate psychological resources. At moderate levels of hope and resilience (50th percentile: HOPE = 26.5, RES = 26.5), the effect is reduced (b = 0.547, p =.060), suggesting a partial buffering effect, even though the relationship remains marginally significant. When hope and resilience are high (84th percentile: HOPE = 32.92, RES = 22), the effect was rendered non-significant (b = -0.401, p =.493), so that at high levels of these resources, self-efficacy was no longer predictive of emotional exhaustion.

Table 10: Johnson-Neyman Probing of the Moderating Effects of Hope and Resilience on the Relationship Between Self-Efficacy and Emotional Exhaustion

Percentile	HOPE Level	RES Level	Effect	SE	t	p	95% CI LLCI	95% CI ULCI
16th	21	22	0.843	0.321	2.627	0.010	0.207	1.479
50th	26.5	26.5	0.547	0.287	1.904	0.060	-0.023	1.116
84th	32.92	22	-0.401	0.583	-0.68	0.493	-1.556	0.755

Note: RES = resilience

Figure 3 graphically displays these conditional effects, plotting the difference in the relation between self-efficacy and emotional exhaustion at varying levels of hope and resilience. With low hope and resilience, the high slope confirms that there was a strong positive relationship between self-efficacy and emotional exhaustion, supporting the contention that those who were high in self-efficacy were susceptible to burnout when psychological resources were lacking. As hope and resilience grew, the slope decreased, and there was evidence of a buffering effect against burnout. Interestingly, when hope and resilience were high, the slope approached a horizontal relationship, which suggested that these psychological strengths actually buffered the risk of emotional exhaustion involved with high self-efficacy.

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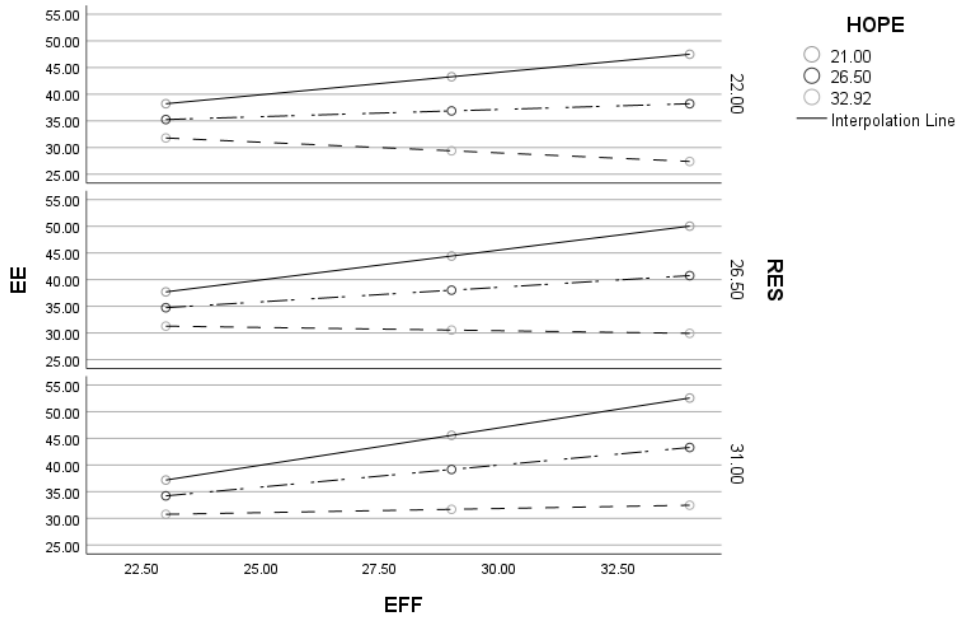
Figure 3: Conditional effects of self-efficacy (EFF) on emotional exhaustion (EE) moderated by hope (HOPE) and resilience (RES).



Note: The interpolation lines represent estimated slopes for different levels of the moderators.

8 Discussion

The present study used moderated multiple regression analyses (Model 2A: hope and optimism; Model 2B: hope and resilience) to investigate the moderator effects of hope, optimism, and resilience on the association between self-efficacy (EFF) and emotional exhaustion (EE). The results have significant implications for our understanding of how psychological resources can mitigate the negative consequences of burnout resulting from low self-efficacy. Hope is intentionally included in Models 2A and 2B because of its established role as a fundamental psychological resource that affects resilience and optimism. According to Snyder's (2002), Hope Theory and other theoretical frameworks, hope can take two forms: paths, or the capacity to solve issues, and agency, or the drive to achieve goals. Because of this, hope is different from optimism and resilience, but it also serves as a vital link between the two. While resilience is the ability to handle hardship, optimism is typically characterized by wide, positive hopes about future outcomes. In turn, hope surely has both cognitive and motivational components. Thus, we may better capture the interaction between different psychological resources and self-efficacy on emotional exhaustion by analyzing hope in conjunction with optimism (Model 2A) and resilience (Model 2B).

In Model 2A, hope and optimism were hypothesized to be moderating variables in the self-efficacy and emotional exhaustion relationship. The results showed that hope provided a better buffering effect than optimism. More specifically, hope demonstrated a borderline significant interaction effect with self-efficacy (p = .052), whereas optimism did not reveal a significant moderating effect (p = .285). Nonetheless, simultaneous examination of

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hope and optimism showed their interaction with self-efficacy to be statistically significant (p =.049, ΔR^2 = .040), indicating that the synergistic effect of the two resources has a higher resilience towards burnout. This was supported by the Johnson-Neyman (J-N) analysis, which showed that under low levels of hope and optimism, self-efficacy was highly related to higher emotional exhaustion (b = 1.02, p <.001). As hope and optimism grew, the impact of self-efficacy on emotional exhaustion decreased, becoming non-significant at high levels of these psychological resources.

In Model 2B, hope and resilience were tested as moderators. As in Model 2A, hope once more proved to be a significant protective factor, showing a stronger buffering effect than resilience. The interaction between hope and self-efficacy was statistically significant (p =.029, ΔR^2 =.039); in contrast, resilience was not found to have a significant independent effect. However, the interaction between resilience and hope approached significance (p =.0842, ΔR^2 =.0399), suggesting a synergistic effect in reducing emotional exhaustion. The J-N analysis indicated that at low levels of hope and resilience, self-efficacy was strongly associated with high emotional exhaustion (b = 0.843, p = .010). At the moderate levels, the association weakened but was still marginally significant (b = 0.547, p = .060). However, in the presence of high hope and resilience, the effect of self-efficacy on burnout became non-significant (b = -0.401, p =.493), indicating that psychological resources acted as buffering factors.

The results of this study support psychological resource theory by showing that self-efficacy by itself may not always provide protection from burnout. In fact, great self-efficacy may contribute to increased emotional exhaustion when hope and resilience are low. This can occur because people with high self-efficacy tend to overextend themselves when they don't have the right coping mechanisms. Though optimism and resilience had additional, less reliable buffering effects, hope was consistently the biggest protective component in both models. This speaks to the special function of hope as an internal psychological resource that can create a bright future, drive for objectives, and adaptability, making it a crucial component in preventing emotional exhaustion. Practically speaking, the findings suggest that interventions aimed at boosting hope and resilience can be highly successful in preventing burnout. The development of psychological interventions that boost people's sense of hope through goal-directed tasks, cognitive restructuring, and resilience training should be a top priority for mental health practitioners and organizations. The synergistic effect of optimism and hope suggests that encouraging both hopeful and optimistic thinking can have an additive protective effect, even though optimism alone does not reduce emotional exhaustion.

Despite these benefits, a few limitations must be noted. First and foremost, causal inference is limited by the study's use of cross-sectional data. In order to ascertain the temporal impact of psychological resources on burnout, future studies must employ longitudinal designs. Second, although hope, optimism, and resilience were given priority in the studies, it is important to recognize that other psychological resources, such as social support, emotional intelligence, and coping mechanisms, may also have an impact on the relationship between self-efficacy and emotional exhaustion. Future research should take these additional factors into account. Finally, the results may not be as broadly applicable as they may be due to the very small sample size (N = 112). More convincing proof of these moderating effects might be provided by future studies with bigger and more representative participant groups.

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9 Implications

The findings of this research suggest that interventions aimed at reducing emotional exhaustion among refugee resettlement staff need to extend beyond encouraging self-efficacy alone. Hope-building, resilience-strengthening programs, in combination with self-efficacy, could be more protective against burnout. Training that incorporates hope-oriented cognitive-behavioral processes, goal setting, and adaptive coping may buffer against the potentially detrimental effects of overcommitment, particularly in individuals with high self-efficacy. Additionally, organizations would benefit from integrating the development of psychological capital into onboarding and supervision. To extend this research, subsequent research could measure these interventions longitudinally and examine other possible moderating variables, such as social support and emotional intelligence.

10 Conclusion

This study shows that the relationship between emotional exhaustion and self-efficacy is complex and depends on the presence of other psychological resources such as optimism, resilience, and hope. High self-efficacy is frequently viewed as positive, but if working individuals lack the psychological resources to cope with job-related demands, it can also result in increased emotional exhaustion. According to our research, optimism and resilience provide some additional, albeit less reliable, buffering effects against emotional exhaustion, but hope appears to be the most important protective factor. In essence, self-efficacy alone did not protect against emotional exhaustion in refugee resettlement workers and volunteers, but when combined with hope, its negative outcomes were reduced. This emphasizes how crucial it is to foster optimism, resilience, and hope in burnout prevention programs. Findings underscore the value of incorporating hope-based resilience training into refugee worker support systems to reduce burnout and enhance long-term service delivery outcomes. These findings also offer important results for organizations and mental health professionals to create focused interventions that improve stress management for working individuals.

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Ukrainian Refugees in Poland: Between Reception and Integration[1]

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Abstract

The outbreak of full-scale Russian aggression against Ukraine on 24 February 2022 initiated a long-term and unprecedented exodus of Ukrainian citizens. By the end of 2002, 3.8 million Ukrainians had crossed the border into Poland, and some 1.4 million Ukrainian refugees were staying in Poland. In our report, we briefly present the main legislative efforts made by the Polish authorities to regulate the legal status of incoming Ukrainians fleeing their country. We also identify the main obstacles and challenges faced by the Polish government and society in connection with the social integration of Ukrainians in Poland. From today's perspective, it is clear that there were several shortcomings in the humanitarian response and assistance, which weakened the social anchorage of Ukrainians and explain why only 30% of Ukrainian IDPs who found refuge in Poland chose to stay.

Key Words:

Ukrainian refugees, Polish migration policy, humanitarian response, social integration, refugee settlement

1 Introduction

The outbreak of full-scale Russian aggression against Ukraine on 24 February 2022 initiated a long-term and unprecedented exodus of Ukrainian citizens. By the end of 2002, 3.8 million Ukrainians had crossed the border into Poland, and some 1.4 million Ukrainian refugees were staying in Poland (Urząd ds. Cudzoziemców, 2023a; Urząd ds. Cudzoziemców, 2023b). It is estimated that prior to the outbreak of war, there were approximately 2 million Ukrainians residing in Poland on various terms: legal residence, international protection or short stay (including the visa-free regime) (Personnel Service, 2024; Łodziński, 2022).

However, there is a clear downward trend: according to data from the Ministry of the Interior and Administration, there are more than 1.5 million Ukrainian citizens in Poland, of whom 988,000 fled the war and are enjoying temporary protection in Poland (Sejm, 2024). It is still quite difficult to estimate the number of Ukrainians living temporarily or permanently in Poland, due to the enormous number of arrivals and departures across

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the Ukrainian-Polish border: 18.8 million border crossings were recorded by the Border Guard towards Poland from 24 February 2022 to 1 February 2024. Initially, just after the beginning of the full-scale aggression, up to 140,000 people crossed the border each day. In February 2024, these numbers stood at around 18,000 people per day (Border Guard Statistics, 2024). This is a migration of unprecedented proportion for this part of the world. Its scale is eight times greater than the total number of migrants to Europe during the 2015 migration crisis.

According to Eurostat (2024), at the end of October 2024, about 4.2 million Ukrainians had temporary protection status in the EU. Germany had the highest number of beneficiaries of temporary protection from Ukraine (1,140,705 people; 27.2% of the EU total). Around 23% of them (983,880) had found refuge in Poland. In third place was Czechia, which was sheltering 379,370 Ukrainian citizens (9.0%) (Eurostat, 2024).

According to publicly available data, the number of Ukrainian nationals seeking refuge in different European countries is constantly changing, because of both flows between countries and returns to Ukraine. This phenomenon also applies to Poland. Despite the unprecedented arrival in the first months of 2022, a significant number of Ukrainian refugees have decided not to stay in Poland, even though (as is briefly presented in the next section) the Polish authorities have made enormous efforts to allow refugees to adapt smoothly to Polish society.

In our report, we briefly present the main legislative efforts made by the Polish authorities to regulate the legal status of incoming Ukrainians fleeing their country. We also identify the main obstacles and challenges faced by the Polish government and society in connection with the social integration of Ukrainians in Poland over the last two and a half years.

2 Domestic Legislative Response to the Massive Influx of Ukrainian Refugees into Poland

The legal framework in Poland for protecting persons displaced from Ukraine because of war consists of various but complementary elements (Górny et al., 2017). The full-scale Russian aggression against Ukraine, which began on 24 February 2022, led to the activation, for the first time in history, of Council Directive 2001/55/EC of 20 July 2001 on minimum standards for giving temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons and on measures promoting a balance of efforts between Member States in receiving such persons and bearing the consequences thereof ("the 2001 Temporary Protection Directive"), which sets the minimum standards for giving temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons. The Directive was implemented in Polish law through the Act of 13 June 2003 on granting protection to foreigners on the territory of the Republic of Poland (the "Act on granting protection to foreigners") in the way of introducing an institution of "temporary protection". The Act on granting protection to foreigners regulates in general the legal status of foreigners in Poland and different forms of protection that can be granted to them (international and domestic).

The Directive was first activated in 2022 – in response to the influx of millions of people fleeing the war in Ukraine into the European Union. On 4 March 2022 the Council of the EU adopted Implementing Decision 2022/382 (the "Implementing Decision"), the object

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of which was to introduce temporary protection for certain groups (mainly Ukrainian nationals residing in Ukraine) who were displaced on or after 24 February 2022 as a result of the military invasion by Russian armed forces that began on that date. The Implementing Decision specifies the categories of persons fleeing Ukraine who could benefit from the special provisions of the 2001 Temporary Protection Directive. The Directive grants certain rights to those it covers by imposing obligations on states to provide them with housing, social and medical assistance and the right to work and education (Articles 12–14 of the Directive).

Despite the Council adopting the Implementing Decision, which activated temporary protection, the Polish authorities decided to regulate the legal status of displaced persons from Ukraine. The Act of 12 March 2022 on assistance to citizens of Ukraine in connection with the armed conflict on the territory of Ukraine (the "Special Act") established a national form of temporary protection ("UKR temporary protection"), under which eligible claimants may be granted "UKR foreigner status". The Special Act was adopted on 12 March 2022, but it entered into force retroactively on 24 February 2022. Notably, the Act was passed without any societal controversies or political opposition: 439 out of 460 deputies voted in favor of the Act.

The last element of the legal framework for protecting persons fleeing Ukraine is the provisions regulating refugee status as guaranteed in national regulations implementing the provisions of the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the New York Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees of 31 January 1967 (Fermus-Bobrowiec et al., 2016). As a result, three protection regimes are in force simultaneously in Poland (Klaus, 2022):

- procedure for granting temporary protection under the 2001 Temporary Protection Directive
- procedure for granting "UKR foreigner status"/ "UKR temporary protection" under the Special Act
- procedure for granting refugee status (international protection).

A separate procedure must be started in order to obtain any of these forms of protection. All three procedures are available for persons who left Ukraine, provided that they fulfil the requirements specified in the relevant domestic provisions. However, the three legal regimes differ in the personal and material scope of protection.

According to the Implementing Decision the following groups of people can benefit from protection under the 2001 Temporary Protection Directive:

(a) Ukrainian nationals residing in Ukraine before 24 February 2022
(b) stateless persons and nationals of third countries other than Ukraine who benefited from international protection or equivalent national protection in Ukraine before 24 February 2022
(c) family members of the persons referred to in points (a) and (b).

The Implementing Decision also mandates that States shall apply either this Decision or adequate protection under their national law towards stateless persons and nationals of third countries other than Ukraine who can prove that they were legally residing in Ukraine before 24 February 2022, on the basis of a valid permanent residence permit issued in

accordance with Ukrainian law, and who are unable to return in safe and lasting conditions to their country or region of origin.

Under the provisions of the Special Act the group of potential beneficiaries is narrower and includes only the following groups:

a) Ukrainian citizens who came to Poland from Ukraine (not necessarily directly, but also passing through other countries) due to the warfare[4]
b) spouses of Ukrainian citizens who are not of Ukrainian nationality (and do not have Polish or any other European Union Member State citizenship) and who came to Poland from Ukraine due to the warfare
c) Ukrainian nationals with a "Pole's Card"[5] who fled to Poland due to war (who did not necessarily come from Ukraine, but may have previously been residents of other countries, e.g. Russia or Belarus)
d) minor children of Ukrainian nationals who are not Ukrainian nationals and who have come to Poland from Ukraine because of the war (and are not citizens of Poland or any other European Union Member State)
e) minor children of spouses of Ukrainian nationals who are not Ukrainian nationals and who have come to Poland from Ukraine because of the war (and are not citizens of Poland or any other European Union Member State)
f) children born in Poland to mothers referred to in point a).[6]

The requirements that must be fulfilled to be granted protection under refugee status are provided for in Article 13 of the Act on granting protection to foreigners; according to them a foreigner is granted refugee status if, as a result of a well-founded fear of persecution in their country of origin on account of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group, they are unable or unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country.

[4] The originally envisaged requirement of the need for "direct" entry was removed from the wording of the Special Act by its first amendment, dated 23 March 2022, with retroactive effect from 24 February 2022 (Ustawa z dnia 23 marca 2022 r. o zmianie ustawy o pomocy obywatelom Ukrainy w związku z konfliktem zbrojnym na terytorium tego państwa [Act of 23 March 2022 amending the law on assistance to Ukrainian citizens in connection with the armed conflict on the territory of that country] [Journal of Laws of 2022, item 683]).

[5] The Pole's Card is a document confirming that a foreigner is a member of the Polish nation. It does not grant to the foreigner Polish citizenship, the right of temporary or permanent residence in Poland nor the right to cross Poland's borders without a visa. According to the 2007 Act on the Pole's Card, it may be granted to a person who demonstrates Polish nationality, connection with Poland through at least a basic knowledge of the Polish language and familiarity with and cultivation of Polish traditions and customs, and who submits a written declaration of affiliation with the Polish nation. Ukrainian citizens may apply for a Pole's Card on the territory of Poland, and not, as in the previous legislation, only at Polish consulates abroad (Ustawa z 7 września 2007 r. o Karcie Polaka [Act of 7 September 2007 on the Pole's Card] [consolidated text, Journal of Laws of 2023, item 192]).

[6] Article 1(1) of Ustawa z 15 maja 2024 r. o zmianie ustawy o pomocy obywatelom Ukrainy w związku z konfliktem zbrojnym na terytorium tego państwa oraz niektórych innych ustaw [Act of 15 May 2024 amending the Act on assistance to citizens of Ukraine in connection with the armed conflict on the territory of that country and certain other laws] (Journal of Laws of 2023, item 854).

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A simple comparison of the personal scope of these provisions demonstrates that under the Special Act *de facto* only Ukrainian citizens, their spouses and minor children who fled from the territory of Ukraine can enjoy the national form of temporary protection. Other groups mentioned in the Implementing Decision – e.g. refugees, stateless persons, other (than spouses and minor children) family members without Ukrainian citizenship – can benefit only from the temporary protection defined in the Act on granting protection to foreigners in conjunction with the Implementing Decision. Additionally, it can be generally concluded that persons fleeing from Ukraine – regardless of their nationality – will fulfil the prerequisites for being granted refugee status in Poland.

As a result of the above-mentioned provisions, persons fleeing Ukraine can be divided into at least two, if not three protected groups (considering that they can also apply for international protection), which enjoy different levels of protection. It will be interesting to look at the statistics for granting protection to these three groups.

With regard to granting international protection in Poland in connection with the war in Ukraine, it should be taken into account that persons who have left Ukraine and applied for refugee status may be of very different nationalities, especially considering the fact that Ukrainian citizens may apply for a different protection status (as the data below show, primarily UKR foreigner status). There are no publicly available data indicating exactly how many persons who have been granted refugee status in Poland arrived in Poland as a result of the hostilities in Ukraine. General data on the granting of refugee status is as follows:

In 2022, 9,900 foreigners applied for international protection in Poland (approximately 28% more than in 2021). These were mostly citizens of the following countries: Belarus (3,100), Russia (2,200), Ukraine (1,800), Iraq (600) and Afghanistan (400). Almost 5,000 foreigners met the conditions for international protection. They were mainly citizens of Belarus (3,600), Ukraine (1,000) and Russia (100). The proceedings concerning 4,100 individuals, on the other hand, were discontinued. These mainly concerned citizens of Iraq (1,200), Russia (900) and Ukraine (500). Cases are discontinued, for example, when the foreigner leaves Poland before a decision is issued or withdraws their application (most often in the case of Ukrainian citizens) (Urząd ds. Cudzoziemców, 2022).

In 2023, the number of applications for international protection filed in Poland was 4% lower than in 2022. The largest number of refugee applications came from citizens of the following countries: Belarus (3,700), Ukraine (1,800), Russia (1,800), Turkey (300) and Egypt (200). Among them, 4,600 foreigners met the conditions for international protection. They were mainly citizens of Belarus (2,900), Ukraine (1,100) and Russia (200) (Urząd ds. Cudzoziemców, 2023a).

In 2024, 17,000 foreigners had applied for international protection in Poland. The most numerous groups of applicants were citizens of Ukraine and Belarus. The number of applications for international protection was approximately 80% higher (+5,500 persons) than in 2023. The largest number of cases concerned citizens of Ukraine (7,000), Belarus (3,900), Russia (1,000), Somalia (600) and Eritrea (600). The conditions for international protection were met by 4,800 foreigners. They were mainly citizens of Ukraine (3,900), Belarus (2,600) and Russia (200) (Urząd ds. Cudzoziemców, 2025).

During the refugee procedure, foreigners may benefit from social assistance (e.g. accommodation, food and medical care) provided by the Office for Foreigners and

education (e.g. learning the Polish language). They have a choice of staying in a center for foreigners or living on their own outside the centers with financial assistance from the Office. As of 30 September 2024, 6,200 foreigners benefited from social assistance, of whom almost 900 were staying in centers for foreigners (Otwarte dane, 2024a).

The above data – presented in detail due to the impossibility of distinguishing refugees from Ukraine on the basis of their nationality – should be juxtaposed with the number of persons who opted for temporary protection, either domestic or under European law. According to publicly available data, as of 10 December 2024 987,781 persons enjoyed temporary protection UKR under the Special Act (Otwarte dane, 2024b). According to data obtained from the Office for Foreigners in the framework of the procedure of accessing to public information, as of 1 December 2024, 1,451 persons were granted temporary protection in Poland under Polish law in conjunction with the Implementing Decision (temporary protection under European law).[7] These figures give a good indication of which legal regime was of most interest to refugees from Ukraine.

In light of this, it is important to look at what rights have been granted to those enjoying UKR foreigner status. The Special Act has a very broad material scope of regulation; there are provisions concerning:

- legalization of stay of Ukrainian citizens who arrived in the territory of Poland after 24 of February 2022
- extending the period of legal residence for citizens of Ukraine that were in Poland before the war
- the employment and business activities of Ukrainian citizens, including provisions on the status of academic teachers or researchers entering from Ukraine and special employment conditions for practitioners of certain professions (medicine, dentistry or psychology)
- social insurance
- social and family benefits
- access to the health care system
- access to education, in particular care of children and students, including access to higher education
- other fields.

The Act has been amended for various reasons 27 times between 12 March 2022 and the end of the third quarter of 2024 (13 in 2022, 7 in 2023 and 7 in 2024). The first goal of these amendments was to mitigate the shortcomings and react to the criticism identified by NGOs and other institutions actively involved in assisting the injured Ukrainian population, mainly concerning certain gaps in the scope of persons eligible for protection. As indicated above not all groups indicated in the Implementing Decision could benefit from the assistance specified in the Special Act. At the time of its original enactment, the law offered protection mainly to Ukrainian citizens and their spouses. Other family members, including children of Ukrainian citizens who were not Ukrainian citizens, were, in principle, excluded from the scope of this law. From 1 July 2024, the protection under the Special Act was extended to include:

[7] Response of 18 December 2024 from the Office for Foreigners to the author's request of 13 December 2024.

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- minor children of Ukrainian citizens (regardless of their citizenship)
- minor children of spouses of Ukrainian citizens.

The second aim of the amendments was to limit (over time) certain benefits provided at the beginning of the protection period. In 2023, the authorities introduced a requirement for Ukrainian citizens to contribute to the costs of food and accommodation provided directly by the state and set the maximum duration of assistance.[8] Subsequently, the authorities abolished the benefit (the so-called "40 złoty+") paid to persons who decided to take in Ukrainian refugees and provide them with food and accommodation.[9]

The third objective was to improve the monitoring of granting benefits. One of the most important mechanisms introduced into the regulations was to link social benefits for children to compulsory education. Since 1 July 2024, benefits are only paid if parents can prove that their child is attending school.[10]

The fourth reason for adopting the amendments was the reality that there are no real prospects of an end to the conflict in the foreseeable future, that some of those who have benefited from temporary protection are interested in a permanent settlement of their status and that the State cannot finance the benefits indefinitely. As of 1 April 2023, Ukrainian citizens who have a PESEL number (personal ID number) with UKR status can apply for temporary residence permits for the purposes of work or business. The solution is optional and aimed at people who feel confident on the Polish labor market and decide to resign from temporary protection status.[11] On 1 July 2024, another amendment came into force, which introduced a new path for legal residence for Ukrainian citizens under temporary protection: the possibility of obtaining a residence card valid for 3 years if the following conditions are met:

- UKR status on 4 March 2024
- UKR status on the date of applying for the residence card

[8] Article 1(8) of Ustawa z dnia 13 stycznia 2023 r. o zmianie ustawy o pomocy obywatelom Ukrainy w związku z konfliktem zbrojnym na terytorium tego państwa oraz niektórych innych ustaw [Act of 13 January 2023 amending the Act on assistance to citizens of Ukraine in connection with the armed conflict on the territory of that country and certain other acts] (Journal of Laws of 2023, item 185).

[9] Ustawa z 15 maja 2024 r. o zmianie ustawy o pomocy obywatelom Ukrainy w związku z konfliktem zbrojnym na terytorium tego państwa oraz niektórych innych ustaw [Act of 15 May 2024 amending the Act on assistance to citizens of Ukraine in connection with the armed conflict on the territory of that country and certain other laws] (Journal of Laws of 2023, item 854).

[10] Article 26(1)(2), as amended by Article 1(22)(a) of Ustawa z 15 maja 2024 r. o zmianie ustawy o pomocy obywatelom Ukrainy w związku z konfliktem zbrojnym na terytorium tego państwa oraz niektórych innych ustaw [Act of 15 May 2024 amending the Act on assistance to citizens of Ukraine in connection with the armed conflict on the territory of that country and certain other laws] (Journal of Laws of 2023, item 854).

[11] Article 1(21)(g) of Ustawa z dnia 13 stycznia 2023 r. o zmianie ustawy o pomocy obywatelom Ukrainy w związku z konfliktem zbrojnym na terytorium tego państwa oraz niektórych innych ustaw [Act of 13 January 2023 amending the Act on assistance to citizens of Ukraine in connection with the armed conflict on the territory of that country and certain other acts] (Journal of Laws of 2023, item 185).

- uninterrupted UKR status for at least 365 days.[12]

The newly introduced procedure for granting residence cards is simplified, as the office examining the request will not have to examine the prerequisites customarily required for granting temporary residence permits, such as being employed, having a place of residence, etc. (Grześkowiak, 2024). The residence card can only be refused on the following enumerative stated grounds:

- failure to meet the conditions referred to in Article 42c (e.g. a Ukrainian citizen who did not have UKR status on 4 March 2024)
- a citizen of Ukraine currently named on the list of foreigners whose residence in the Republic of Poland is undesirable
- a citizen of Ukraine listed in the Schengen Information System for the purpose of refusing entry and stay
- reasons of defense, state security or public safety and an order requiring refusal to issue a residence card
- non-payment of the fee for issuing a residence card
- non-payment of the stamp duty for granting a temporary residence permit.[13]

Although the regulations formally entered into force on 1 July 2024, the authorities have not yet put in place an electronic system to process them, so no data is available. It should be noted that so far Ukrainians have been relatively eager to regularize their legal status in Poland with a temporary residence permit, permanent residence permit or long-term EU residency. In 2022, 213,298 persons received positive decisions for a temporary stay, 7,614 persons for permanent stay and 6,589 for long-term EU residence; in 2023 the respective figures were 199,848 persons, 9,326 persons and 8,054 persons and in 2024 (until 31 July 2024) there were 190,529 persons, 7,603 persons and 13,543 persons, respectively (Urząd ds. Cudzoziemców, 2024b). The acquisition of temporary residence status removes the possibility for a Ukrainian citizen to exercise their rights deriving from residence status under Article 2(1) of the Special Act.

3 Demographic Structure and Declining Number of Ukrainian Refugees in Poland

Prior to February 2022, there were significant numbers of Ukrainian migrant workers in Poland, especially in professions where it is difficult to find suitable workers. In 2021 almost 300,000 Ukrainians were legally staying in Poland (on the basis of a temporary residence permit, permanent residency or long-term EU residency) (Urząd ds. Cudzoziemców, 2024b), while according to Deloitte, an estimate of about 1.5 million

[12] Article 1(33) of Ustawa z 15 maja 2024 r. o zmianie ustawy o pomocy obywatelom Ukrainy w związku z konfliktem zbrojnym na terytorium tego państwa oraz niektórych innych ustaw [Act of 15 May 2024 amending the Act on assistance to citizens of Ukraine in connection with the armed conflict on the territory of that country and certain other laws] (Journal of Laws of 2023, item 854).
[13] Article 1(33) of Ustawa z 15 maja 2024 r. o zmianie ustawy o pomocy obywatelom Ukrainy w związku z konfliktem zbrojnym na terytorium tego państwa oraz niektórych innych ustaw [Act of 15 May 2024 amending the Act on assistance to citizens of Ukraine in connection with the armed conflict on the territory of that country and certain other laws] (Journal of Laws of 2023, item 854). This article introduced into the Special Act a new article – Article 42(e) – which contains the grounds for refusing to issue a card as indicated above.

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Ukrainians were staying in Poland for economic purposes (Deloitte, 2022). This group, which should be described as economic migrants, was quite well received in Poland, even though most of them did not have residence permits and made use of the free visa regime (Łaźniewska et al, 2024). The attitude of the Polish population towards them was mostly neutral or favorable. Ukrainians already living in Poland became an important source of support for the refugees in 2022.

A survey commissioned by the National Bank of Poland and published in 2023 shows that a majority of Ukrainian citizens in Poland are women: about 68% of the total number of respondents (Narodowy Bank Polski, 2023). The predominance of women is even more pronounced among adult refugees (78%) (Urząd ds. Cudzoziemców, 2023b). Among both pre-war migrants and refugees, half of the respondents were between 27 and 44 years of age, i.e. the prime age for family-starting and peak professional activity. Among refugees, on the other hand, the proportion of older people – those who would not normally decide to migrate – is significantly higher (9% are aged 60+).

The education of refugees was also investigated in this survey. The proportion of Ukrainian citizens with a higher education is 42% among pre-war migrants and 48% among refugees. A further 43% of refugees and 38% of pre-war migrants have a secondary education. In both sub-groups of interviewees, one person in five had a primary or vocational education (Narodowy Bank Polski, 2023).

These figures are important because Poland is one of the countries facing a severe demographic crisis and labor shortages in many sectors. Therefore, the mass migration and sheltering of refugees from a neighboring country was a great opportunity for Poland to improve its labor market and demographic structure but it only partially succeeded. However, current figures show that there are as many Ukrainians in Poland today as there were before the war, which means that most of them have left Poland, despite the enormous efforts of the authorities and Polish citizens (Polski Instytut Ekonomiczny, 2022)[14] and the special legal conditions created for Ukrainian refugees.

It is important to remember that the two groups of Ukrainian citizens – pre-war migrants and people displaced by war – currently in Poland and other European countries are very different. The war refugees came to Poland because of the threat of war, the destruction of their homes and a fear of military action and terror. The migrants have sought (and continue to seek) better living conditions in Poland and other European countries. Over time, this distinction has become blurred due to the prolonged war, but it is important to remember that the motivations and therefore the attitudes towards a prolonged stay outside one's home country also differ. However, there is no doubt that economic factors influence migrants' plans for their future in Poland. Such factors include inadequate work and income, as well as lack of social rooting in education and housing.

4 Key Challenges for Refugee Assistance

Some of the most important factors in ensuring the integration of refugees into society are the opportunity to study, work and find housing. The following sections provide a brief

[14] Citizens and the authorities acted spontaneously, providing ad hoc humanitarian aid and trying to take care of people who had no shelter, no livelihood and often no travel documents. According to data, 77 per cent of adult Poles have been involved in helping Ukrainian refugees since the Russian aggression.

description of the legislation and practice in these areas, which we believe are key to the integration of Ukrainians in their host countries.

4.1 Work – Requirements and Exemptions

According to Article 22 of the Special Act, all Ukrainian citizens (both those who arrived after 24 February 2022 and those who lived in Poland before that date) have the right to work in Poland if they are legal residents of Poland. They may also engage in economic activities on the same principles as Polish citizens, provided that they formally register and obtain an identification number, the so-called PESEL UKR (Art. 23). Ukrainian citizens legally residing on the territory of Poland may also register and be recognized as unemployed or as seeking employment (Art. 22(1)(1) of the Special Act). The employment rate of refugees in Poland is the highest among OECD countries at 65% (the lowest employment rates are in Germany (18%), Switzerland (19%) and Italy (19%) (Zyzik, et al., 2023).

The Special Act grants special exemptions to professionals working in professions that require specific national recognition of qualifications. This applies particularly to professionals working in medicine. According to Art. 61, a citizen of Ukraine who has qualified as a physician or dentist may be authorized to practice the profession of physician or dentist for a period of 32 months[15] and may be granted the conditional right to practice these professions if they fulfil the conditions specified in the Act on the professions of physician and dentist.[16]

Similar exemptions were provided for psychologists: starting 24 February 2022, according to Art. 64a of the Special Act, psychologists from Ukraine have been able to provide psychological services to Ukrainian citizens residing in Poland for a period of 18 months, including health care services in the field of psychiatric care and addiction treatment. This period has been extended until 30 September 2025 (Article 64b). Ukrainian citizens may work as nurses and midwives in Poland under similar conditions and for the same period (Article 64). In practice, however, a significant obstacle to practicing these professions has been the lack of knowledge of the Polish language – the same reason is reported as an obstacle to Ukrainians obtaining healthcare (Biesiada et al., 2023).

Such exemptions from regular Polish requirements also applies to persons working in regulated professions in mining (Art. 23b). The Special Act also provides some exemptions for university teachers and academics who wish to work in Poland. Such a person may be employed as an academic teacher at a higher education institution without the usual requirement to hold a competition (mandatory for Polish academic institutions), if they declare that on 24 February 2022 they were working as an academic teacher at a higher education institution on the territory of Ukraine and they have the required professional title, academic degree and relevant qualifications (Art. 47). This applies to Polish citizens who have worked in Ukraine as well as to Ukrainian academics.

In practice, however, there were some problems with the implementation of these exemptions. Applications by doctors and medical staff to the Ministry of Health have been

[15] This period has been extended several times due to subsequent amendments; the original period was 18 months.
[16] Act of 5 December 1996 on the profession of physician and dentist (consolidated text, Journal of Laws of 2002, no. 76, item 1673, as amended).

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subjected to lengthy procedures, and medical chambers have protested against doctors being entitled to practice, particularly on the grounds of their poor use of the Polish language. Language tests were introduced as a prerequisite for such registration. In addition, a doctor who was qualified outside the European Union (e.g. from Ukraine) can only work in Poland on a temporary basis – for 5 years – without notification of their diploma, during which time they must pass the Medical Verification Examination (LEW). Passing the LEW confirms that they have met the minimum training requirements set out in EU law. If they do not pass the LEW during this period, they will not be able to continue working in Poland after the 32-month period.

However, the most important aspect of work for Ukrainians in Poland is of a different kind and has a much broader scope: the relatively low wages in Poland create uncompetitive working conditions compared to the markets in Germany and other Western European countries. According to research by the National Bank of Poland (NBP), 36% of pre-war migrants and 28% of post-war migrants say they spend 50% of their income on living expenses. But up to 19% of migrants and up to 34% of refugees spend up to 80%–100% of their income on current needs.

The attitudes of Ukrainians reflect their relatively weak attachment to Poland due to the difficult economic and social situation and unsatisfactory income. As many as 29% of respondents declared that they would leave Poland in the near future. These were predominantly younger men, under 45 years of age, who are well educated and speak English (Narodowy Bank Polski, 2023).

According to the NBP survey, people who run their own business and those who have a stable job are also likely to declare an intention to return to Ukraine soon (36% and 43% of pre- and post-war migrants, respectively). Almost as many people (around 40% of those surveyed) who do not have a job or are employed on a casual basis intend to return to Ukraine (Narodowy Bank Polski, 2023). In these sub-groups, however, the number of those determined to return is less than half. In turn, persons who are not economically active are more likely to want to return to Ukraine (62%), which reflects their more difficult living situation in Poland. The most numerous age group among these people is the over-60s.

The second issue is working in jobs that do not match education and qualifications. In 2023, the percentage of foreigners working below their qualifications in Poland was as high as 48%. This is higher than the average in the European Union, which was 39.4%, according to Eurostat data (European Commission, 2024). The problem of not finding a job in a foreign country that matches one's qualifications is quite common in Europe, but in Poland it mainly affects Ukrainian citizens. The results of a survey conducted by the EWL Migration Platform, the EWL Foundation and the Centre for Eastern European Studies at the University of Warsaw show that the percentage of Ukrainian citizens working in Poland in a job that matches their qualifications has declined significantly, from 68% in 2021 to 35% in 2024. This means that a majority of them are working below their qualifications (Wrona, 2019).

4.2 Education – Opportunities and the Right to Choose

The right to education for foreign pupils is guaranteed by the Polish Constitution, which stipulates that education up to the age of 18 is compulsory (Art. 70(1)), and the public authorities ensure universal and equal access to education for everyone (Jarosz-

Żukowska &_Żukowski, 2014).[17] The right to education is also guaranteed by international documents, including Article 2 of the Additional Protocol of 20 March 1952 to the European Convention on Human Rights, which is part of the Polish legal order. The right to education, including free compulsory education and the freedom to found educational establishments, is also provided for in Article 14 of the 2000 Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (Kierznowski, 2016). The Education Act of 14 December 2016 fulfils these state duties to ensure education and regulates conditions regarding access to education and the terms and conditions for people coming from abroad. Pursuant to Article 165 of the Act, children who are not Polish citizens are entitled to education and care in public and non-public kindergartens; compulsory education and care in public primary schools, public art schools and public institutions – including art institutions – under the conditions applicable to Polish citizens (Article 165(1)); and education and care in public post-primary schools under the conditions applicable to Polish citizens until they reach the age of 18 or graduate from a post-primary school (Article 165(2)).

Ukrainian children and adolescents who fled the war in Ukraine were then granted full rights to education under Polish law from the beginning of their stay, and a system to facilitate their learning in Polish schools was created. The Special Act then introduced some specific regulations for the education, upbringing and care of children and pupils who are citizens of Ukraine, including support for local self-government in the implementation of education, in particular special preparatory and Polish language classes.

For children from Ukraine, however, one clear difference was introduced in the legislation to distinguish their status from other foreign children. Ukrainian children were exempted from compulsory education in the sense that they do not have to attend Polish educational institutions. The Special Act granted Ukrainian children the right – but did not impose an obligation – to attend school. Pursuant to §15 of the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Science of 21 March 2022 (the Act issued on the basis of the Special Act).[18] Ukrainian children who received education in a kindergarten or school operating in the Ukrainian education system using distance learning methods and techniques were not subject to compulsory schooling. Parents or guardians needed to submit a declaration to the local authorities that the pupil was entitled to continue remote education in the Ukrainian schools. Such declarations and actual learning were very difficult to verify. According to data from the Educational Information System, as of February 2024 there were approximately 141,500 Ukrainian pupils in primary schools across Poland, of which 110,500 were children and adolescents who had arrived from Ukraine after the outbreak of the war. There were 16,000 Ukrainian pupils in secondary schools, of which 9,600 had

[17] The obligation to ensure that everyone has access to education derives from many instruments of international law, such as Article 26 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, followed by Article 13 of the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ratified by Poland in 1977). These guarantee everyone the right to free, compulsory and accessible primary education and access to, as far as possible, free secondary and tertiary education. The right to free, compulsory and accessible education for every child is also guaranteed by Article 28 of the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child.

[18] Regulation of the Minister of Education and Science of 21 March 2022 on the organisation of education, upbringing and care for children and young people who are citizens of Ukraine (Journal of Laws of 2022, item 645).

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arrived since February 2022 (Portal Samorządowy, 2024). However, as indicated above, 293,229 children of school age, i.e. up to the age of 18, had been registered under the UKR PESEL number by November 2023. Meanwhile, Ukrainian children between the ages of 10 and 18 enrolled as Polish pupils represented only 49% of the registered Ukrainians in this age (Save the Children et al., 2024). It was very difficult to reliably determine how many children were not attending Polish schools and how many had already left the country, returning to Ukraine or migrating to other countries. Thus, it was difficult to assess how many pupils had initially enrolled in the Polish education system, but either never attended or dropped out. There was no structured system for comprehensively monitoring Ukrainian teenagers out of school, and the movement of the population and the possibility of remote learning, the lack of information from teachers on the reasons for children's absence and the lack of effective measures to address their absence during the school year all contributed to this difficulty. Based on official data, it was estimated that the number of children and adolescents out of school was over 111,500 (Save the Children et al., 2024), while the data compiled by the Ministry of Science in consultation with the Ukrainian authorities showed that the number of children who remained in Poland and were not subject to compulsory education in Polish schools was estimated at only 60,000 pupils. Surveys among Ukrainian adolescents showed that the majority of Ukrainian adolescents (around 80%) chose Ukrainian schooling over Polish schooling because they were hoping to return to their country and continue their education in Ukraine. Undoubtedly, this attitude was also influenced by the language barrier, having missed part of the school year, cultural barriers among their peers, formalities when recruiting to Polish schools and transferring grades from Ukrainian ones (Sroka, 2024).

On 1 September 2024, according to the amendment of 26 August 2024 to the Regulation of the Minister of Education on the organization of education, upbringing and care for children and adolescents who are citizens of Ukraine, children from Ukraine residing in Poland became subject to compulsory education. Additionally, the families of those children who do not attend Polish schools will lose the "800+" benefit. The Ministry of Education estimated that 60,000 to 80,000 refugee children would join Polish schools in September 2024. In the end, however, only 20,000 additional pupils enrolled, and this corresponds to the number of children for whom the "800+" allowance is paid. It is still unknown why these estimates are so different and, in fact, where a large number of "lost" Ukrainian children are (according to the Ministry of Education it is about 60,000; according to the Educational Information System and Ukrainian data it is as many as 120,000). These discrepancies show that the system of registering children and pupils was very flawed. Secondly, the children's absence from Polish schools and the voluntary nature of their attendance for more than two years resulted in poor integration of the youngest generation of refugees.

4.3 Housing

For years, Polish housing policy has been very limited and unstable, providing insufficient numbers of both social and rent-regulated housing to meet the needs of those who cannot afford their own homes. Such systemic measures have also been lacking in the case of Ukrainian migrants and refugees; people in an extremely difficult situation, deprived of a place to live from one day to the next, forced to flee to a foreign country, often with young children and no source of income, at least initially.

The Special Act introduced a very specific solution to the sudden problem of finding immediate accommodation for hundreds of thousands of refugees. This solution was a response to the unprecedented behavior of Polish society in the first weeks and months of the war, welcoming Ukrainian refugees into their homes *en masse* (Szeptycki, 2024). There is no precise data on this so far, but according to surveys and estimates, half of the refugees who arrived found shelter in private homes (Bednarek, 2022). The Special Act regulated the situation by granting assistance to those hosting refugees: persons providing shelter and food to a Ukrainian citizen fleeing the war were to be paid a cash benefit of PLN 40 per day ("40+" benefit) or about PLN 1,200 per month (Art. 17(17)). The benefits were to be paid for a maximum of 60 days. Ukrainian refugees were also entitled to financial assistance – in the form of a one-off payment of PLN 300 per person ("300+" benefit).

However, no mechanisms or instruments have been set up to support refugees in finding or renting housing, nor has public housing been made available to Ukrainian families. There are no significant forms of support for private rentals[19] and prices are very high, as are the costs of maintaining a flat.

The acquisition of real estate by foreigners is in turn regulated by the Act on the Acquisition of Real Estate by Foreigners of 24 March 1920, according to which a foreigner from outside the European Economic Area must obtain a permit to purchase real estate in Poland. The foreigner submits an application to the Minister of Internal Affairs and Administration, who issues the permit. However, there is an exception; foreigners from non-EU countries, including Ukrainians, do not need a permit to purchase a flat, garage or share in a flat if it is intended to meet the housing needs of the purchaser or owner. In other words, they can buy a flat without a permit from the Minister of Internal Affairs and Administration.

Despite the lack of housing stock and the relatively high prices of buying and renting flats in Poland, many Ukrainians do buy property, but mostly those who came to Poland before 2022. In 2024, 15% of respondents who came to Poland before the war said they had their own flat or house, while in the 2022 survey less than 9% of immigrants had their own property. For refugees the percentages were 0.6% in 2024, 1.4% in 2023 and 0% in 2022.

In the same survey, 67% of refugee respondents lived in a rented flat, 14.3% in a rented room, 4.5% in a dormitory, the same number in a guesthouse with a Polish family and 3.2% in a hotel or guesthouse (Polskie Radio, 2024). In the 2023 NBP survey, almost 60% of the respondents lived in rented accommodation (in 2022, it was 27.6%). Among pre-war immigrants, i.e. people who came to Poland mainly for work, more than 56% lived in a rented flat or house.

In contrast, 55% of the Ukrainians surveyed in the first quarter of 2024 declared that they were using accommodation provided by their employer (Centrum Analityczne. Gremi Personal, 2024). In 2022 only 22% of Ukrainians did so. The number of Ukrainians who

[19] Pursuant to Article 69 of the Special Act, when a contract for temporary lease of premises (*umowa najmu okazjonalna*) is concluded with a tenant who is a citizen of Ukraine and came directly from Ukraine in connection with the armed conflict there, there is no obligation to indicate the address of another premises in which the tenant will be able or permitted to reside should they be ordered to vacate the premises. This makes it much easier for such persons to conclude such contracts and thus to meet their housing needs.

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have been provided with accommodation by their employer has thus increased almost 2.5-fold since 2022, at which time 58% of respondents were renting accommodation at their own expense and 10% had been given shelter in the homes of Poles who were compensated by the government for each refugee under the Special Act. In turn, 5% lived in collective centers at the state's expense and another 5% at NGOs' expense.

The Polish public authorities have not provided any public instruments or policies for refugees and migrants – there are no other offers of social rent (supported by municipalities) for new tenants. The lack of such systemic, public instruments means that the burden of accommodating refugees and migrants is relatively often borne by private employers. This is also a sign of the urgency of the need and of the lack of solutions at the local or national government levels, which makes it difficult for displaced people to afford the burden.

5 Conclusion – The Difference Between Reception and Integration

The above data and the analysis of Polish practice in response to the mass exodus of Ukrainians in the almost three years following the outbreak of the war lead to several conclusions. It should be remembered that the people who arrived in Poland in the first months after the outbreak of the full-scale invasion were fleeing from a threat to their lives and thus met the definition of refugees. According to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, they had been forced to flee their country because of persecution, war or violence, forced to leave behind their lives and all their possessions, were unable to return home and had very limited financial resources. They came to Poland for a short period of time and without carefully considering their choices.

However, the prolonged war and the relatively better living conditions in Poland made the difference between refugees and migrants quite fluid. Subsequently, newcomers from Ukraine began to consciously choose their place of residence. The ability to stay in the EU and other countries under temporary protection made some of them to decide to move from Poland to Western European countries (mainly Germany). Some of them also decided to return to Ukraine. For those who remained in Poland, the huge, spontaneous humanitarian support from Poles in the first weeks, as well as the presence of a significant number of Ukrainian migrants already living in Poland, proved to be a great support. The response of the authorities was swift and widespread.

From today's perspective, however, it is clear that there were several shortcomings in the humanitarian response and assistance. Firstly, support for Ukrainian citizens in finding work was poorly organized – there was a lack of training and the qualifications in many professions were not recognized. A second, very serious deficiency was the lack of sufficient integration of children and adolescents. Although at first it seemed right on humanitarian grounds that children should voluntarily enroll in Polish schools, over time it proved to be an obstacle to the socialization and language learning of a significant part of the younger generation.

The lack of accurate data on the number of displaced people (except for those who have been granted UKR status, where the statistics are very accurate) is also surprising, as perfectly illustrated by the problem of estimating the number of out-of-school children, who are repeatedly overestimated in official statistics.

Finally, the lack of systemic solutions to meet housing needs proved to be a serious problem for displaced people, and the solution turned out to be assistance from employers. However, this is not an appropriate solution for people who arrive in a developed country that claims to have a social market economy and to provide housing assistance.

These are what we consider to be the key reasons for the inadequate social anchoring of Ukrainian refugees in Poland. The extensive legal and social measures taken by the Polish authorities to accommodate Ukrainian refugees have proved insufficient to keep them in Poland, for which they need a good, stable job, a decent place to live and social integration for their children and other family members. The lack of support in finding work (e.g. refugees should be supported throughout the job search process), of support for training or retraining (Oduntan, Ruthven, 2017) of clear (unambiguous) educational regulations encouraging the integration of children and adolescents and of systemic solutions for adequate affordable housing explain why only 30% of Ukrainian displaced persons who found refuge in Poland have chosen to stay (Narodowy Bank Polski, 2023).

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QRP

Crisis Mechanisms and Temporary Protection: The War in Ukraine and Its Effects on Hungary[1]

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Abstract

The European Union has recently been confronted with a series of crises, with the war in Ukraine serving as a recent illustration of this pattern. The refugee crisis of 2015 and its subsequent years-long aftermath was followed by the health crisis caused by the pandemic of Coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2). The repercussions of the virus have also persisted for an extended duration, and the EU had only recently begun to recuperate from it when hostilities erupted in its immediate vicinity, leading to a refugee crisis on the scale of that witnessed in 2015. In response, the European Union utilized a crisis management instrument not previously employed during the 2015 refugee crisis: the provision of Temporary Protection (TP), which entails the issuance of residence permits for refugees fleeing Ukraine. The present study assesses the legal framework of the implementation of the Temporary Protection Directive and the dynamics that shape the protection offered by Hungary.

Key Words:

Hungary, Ukraine, EU, temporary protection, rights

1 Introduction

The Council Directive (EU) 2001/55/EC[3] establishes minimum standards for the provision of temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons. The Directive also promotes a balanced approach among Member States in their reception of such persons and the associated responsibilities. The Temporary Protection Directive, which was adopted in 2001, had never been implemented, not even during the 2015 refugee crisis. It had been relegated to the normative deadstock of the acquis (Karageorgiou-Noll, 2023: 406). This was despite the directive having been established in direct response to the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia. The Directive was adopted in the aftermath of the Balkan wars but was never activated to aid victims of similar conflicts. However, in the aftermath of the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, the European Council was quick to revive the Directive (Krasnicka–Szymanski, 2023: 512). Following the adoption of Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382 on the reception of displaced persons from Ukraine, the European Commission published its guidelines for the implementation of the Regulation

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[3] Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382 of 4 March 2022 establishing the existence of a mass influx of displaced persons from Ukraine within the meaning of Article 5 of Directive 2001/55/EC, and having the effect of introducing temporary protection ST/6846/2022/INIT OJ L 71, 4.3.2022, p. 1–6

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on March 4[4] and 21[5]. This is grounded in its flexible eligibility criteria, broad personal scope, precise harmonization, and formalization of the protection standards to be provided to temporarily protected individuals, as well as its voluntary-based burden-sharing mechanism (Meltem Ineli-Ciger, 2023: 81).

Since their inception, the aggression and the 'special military operation' perpetrated by the Russian Federation against Ukraine have not only constituted violations of fundamental customary and treaty norms of international law, but have also concomitantly undermined the foundations of the contemporary international legal order (Lamm, 2023: 570). Hungary's response to the geopolitical and demographic challenges resulting from the Russian invasion of Ukraine has been shaped by a combination of legal frameworks, historical migration patterns, labour market needs, and political considerations. The country's geographical proximity to Ukraine has resulted in its role as a pivotal transit and hosting nation for displaced persons, thereby necessitating swift and frequently evolving policy responses. The present article aims to examine the dynamics that define Hungary's approach to beneficiaries of temporary protection.

2 Ukrainians in Hungary

2.1 The Structure of the Society in Terms of Nationality

In comparison to the reception previously observed for other migratory influxes, Ukrainian refugees are reported to be receiving more favourable reception. This observation has given rise with speculation concerning the factors that may influence attitudes towards refugees. These factors include geographical, cultural, ethnic, and identity-based proximity (Moise et al., 2023). In this context, it is important to examine the presence of Ukrainians in Hungary before the war broke out. Censuses conducted in Hungary in 2011 and 2022 provide an interesting comparison regarding Ukrainian citizens. In the 2022 census, 89% of respondents answered the optional nationality questions, with 492,000 identifying themselves as belonging to a nationality in their country of origin. The Nationality Act recognises the following 13 nationalities as legally belonging to Hungary based on their historical presence: Bulgarian, Greek, Croatian, Polish, German, Armenian, Roma, Romanian, Ruthenian, Serbian, Slovak, Slovenian, and Ukrainian.

The Hungarian population accounts for 84.8% of the total population. The second-largest ethnic group is the Roma community, which comprises 2.5% of the population or around 210,000 individuals (Hungarian Central Statistical Office, 2022). Other notable ethnic groups include Germans (143,000 people), Slovaks (30,000 people), Romanians (28,000 people), Ukrainians (25,000 people), Croats (22,000 people), and Serbs (12,000 people). It was estimated that the population of the Slovenian, Armenian, Bulgarian, Greek,

[4] Commission Communication Providing operational guidelines for external border management to facilitate border crossings at the EU-Ukraine borders 2022/C 104 I/01 C/2022/1404, OJ C 104I, 4.3.2022, p. 1-6.
[5] Communication from the Commission on Operational guidelines for the implementation of Council implementing Decision 2022/382 establishing the existence of a mass influx of displaced persons from Ukraine within the meaning of Article 5 of Directive 2001/55/EC, and having the effect of introducing temporary protection 2022/C 126 I/01 C/2022/1806, OJ C 126I, 21.3.2022, p. 1–16.

Ruthenian, and Polish communities was estimated to be between 4,000 and 7,000 individuals in 2022 (Hungarian Central Statistical Office, 2024).

Table 1: Nationalities by Mother Tongue and Gender, 2022

Mother tongue, nationality	Mother tongue	Nationality	Mother tongue	Nationality
	Male		Female	
Bulgarian	1,257	1,908	1,279	1,862
Romani, Beás	12,255	102,190	10,937	98,116
Greek	945	2,369	816	2,404
Croatian	3,753	9,165	4,479	9,934
Polish	1,229	2,454	2,169	3,148
German	13,770	48,684	14,703	49,718
Armenian	358	1,762	318	1,480
Romanian	5,515	9,028	5,671	9,167
Rusyn	865	2,540	1,116	2,622
Serbian	2,445	4,416	1,804	3,619
Slovak	4,379	11,487	5,744	14,047
Slovenian	701	1,403	840	1,581
Ukrainian	6,455	8,547	8,860	10,517

Hungarian Central Statistical Office (2022)

The largest population increase since the 2011 census was among people of Ukrainian ethnicity. Their numbers rose from 7,396 to 24,615, primarily due to the war in Ukraine. Ukrainians are the most urbanized ethnic group, with 82% living in cities and 35% in the capital. The 13th and 11th districts of Budapest stand out, with 6.7% and 3.7% of their populations identifying as ethnic Ukrainians in 2022. In addition, two county capitals, Nyíregyháza (3.6%) and Győr (2.7%), also had populations exceeding 2% of the total Hungarian population (Hungarian Central Statistical Office, 2024). In parallel with the overall increase in numbers, each age group of ethnic Ukrainians has grown, with the largest in the 10-years old and under-age group. The figures for economic activity follow this trend. The number of economically active and employed persons has almost quadrupled.

Table 2: Ethnic Ukrainians by Economic Activity in 2011 and 2022

Status	2022	2011
Economic activity	19,064	5,633
Employed	11,094	2,508
Unemployed	621	492
Inactive beneficiaries	1,680	1,194
Economically inactive	3,012	941
Person aged under 15	2,657	498

Hungarian Central Statistical Office (2022)

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2.2 Ukrainian Citizens as a Group Before the War

Ukrainian citizens who fulfil the criteria for legal residence (i.e., possession of a biometric passport) are permitted to enter and remain in Hungary. In the event that individuals do not seek protection but wish to pursue employment or study in Hungary, they are required to submit an application within the framework of an alien policing procedure at the designated client service offices of the NDGAP (National Directorate-General for Aliens Policing). Furthermore, individuals possessing Hungarian nationality are at liberty to enter and reside in the country (see the subsequent section on dual nationality).

Table 3: Ukrainian Nationals in Hungary During the Censuses of 2011 and 2022

Date of census	Total
2022	36,093
2011	11,820

Hungarian Central Statistical Office (2022)

Based on Government Decree 445/2013 (28.11)[6] stipulates that, from 2017 onwards, simplified employment provisions have been introduced for neighbouring third-country nationals in certain occupations experiencing labour shortages. In practice, this means that their employment, although subject to authorisation, is not subject to examination by the relevant government office, which determines whether there is a domestic workforce available for the given job. Consequently, Serbian and Ukrainian workers now constitute a significant proportion of the foreign workforce in the country. Nevertheless, even prior to the war, the Hungarian economy was incapable of retaining Ukrainian guest workers. Consequently, in the absence of a labour market permit, and according to the declaration by employers, 4,539 Ukrainian workers were employed in 2021 (A Technológiai és Ipari Minisztérium, 2022: 10), the year before the outbreak of the war, with 3,744 in 2022 (Gazdaságfejlesztési Minisztérium, 2023: 15) and 2,080 in 2023 (Nemzetgazdasági Minisztérium, 2024: 17) in occupations affected by labour shortage. As previously stated, the figure indicates a consistent decrease. As of 31 December 2022, a total of 55,266 permits had been issued to nationals of Ukraine, whereas as of 31 December 2023, this figure had decreased to 39,819. The data from both years demonstrate that, in accordance with the Hungarian standard of occupational classification FEOR (Foglalkozások Egységes Osztályozási Rendszere), permits were issued to Ukrainian citizens in following the categories: unskilled, simple, machine operators, assemblers, and drivers. Nevertheless, Act XC of 2023 imposed limitations on the duration of stay for foreign workers, revised the categories of residence, rendered family reunification

[6] 445/2013. (XI. 28.) Korm. rendelet a harmadik országbeli állampolgárok magyarországi foglalkoztatásának nem összevont kérelmezési eljárás alapján történő engedélyezéséről, az engedélyezési kötelezettség alóli mentességről, a fővárosi és megyei kormányhivatal munkaügyi központjának az összevont kérelmezési eljárásban való szakhatósági közreműködéséről, valamint a Magyarországon engedélymentesen foglalkoztatható harmadik országbeli állampolgárok magyarországi foglalkoztatásának bejelentéséről [Government decree on the employment of third-country nationals in Hungary under a non-unified application procedure, the exemption from the obligation to obtain a permit, the involvement of the employment centres of the capital and county government offices in the unified application procedure, and the notification procedure for employment without a permit in Hungary, and on the reimbursement of wages] https://net.jogtar.hu/jogszabaly?docid=a1300445.kor.

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unfeasible, and reduced the prospects of interaction with the host society, thereby making integration efforts more challenging. Additionally, it introduced stricter employment conditions. In 2024, Ukrainians constituted the largest group of foreign nationals employed in Hungary, numbering 20,100 people. Furthermore, there has been a notable increase in the number of foreigners from Asian countries. As illustrated in the table below, the number of Ukrainian nationals among foreign employees reached its peak in the quarter following the outbreak of the war in Russia, with 26,462 recorded in 2022 and 22,802 in 2023. Since then, there has been a gradual decline (Magyar Nemzeti Bank, 2024, p. 44).

Table 4: Number of Employees with Ukrainian Citizenship

	2023	2022
Ukrainian	22,802	26,462

Central Statistical Office (2022)

The largest foreign worker population in the manufacturing sector is comprised of Ukrainians; however, the number of Ukrainian nationals in this sector has been in decline, particularly since the 2022 invasion. A significant shift in employment by gender has also been observed. Across all other job categories, both genders have experienced an increase between 2019 and 2024, suggesting a shift in the composition of the Ukrainian workforce. In 2024, construction was the third-largest sector in terms of employment, with 2,064 Ukrainians working in the sector Subsequent to this, the transport and storage sectors employed 866 Ukrainians, while the information and communication sector provided employment for 598 Ukrainians. In 2024, Ukrainians constituted the largest group of non-temporary non-EU workers in manufacturing, with 4,839 individuals, accounting for 34.2% of the total migrant workforce in this sector. The Ukrainian workforce was the largest in almost all manufacturing sectors, with the highest concentrations found in the production of transport equipment (1,396), electrical equipment (820) and computer, electronic and optical products (802). In 2024, the biggest group of third-country workers with non-temporary status in the vehicle manufacturing sector were Ukrainians (1,396), followed by those working in the manufacture of fabricated metal products (487). In the field of electrical equipment manufacturing, Ukrainian workers (820) were an important group. In the electronics industry, Ukrainians also hold a dominant position (802). Similarly, in the rubber and plastic industry, Ukrainians (426) were a notable presence (Bodor, 2024).

2.3 War-Related Population Influx

By the end of 2021, the number of Ukrainian citizens in possession of a residence permit in one of the EU member states stood at 1.57 million. Of these, 1.2 million had a residence permit with a duration of at least 12 months. Furthermore, at the end of 2021, Ukrainian citizenship constituted the third most numerous non-EU citizenship, with regard to both the total number of residence permits issued by the EU and for those with a duration of a minimum of 12 months. An analysis of data from five EU member states reveals a notable increase in the number of Ukrainians holding residence permits between 2013 and 2021, with a total growth exceeding 25,000 individuals., This was also due to the exemption from the visa requirement, which came into effect in 2017. Specifically, holders of biometric passports from Ukraine are permitted to remain in the EU for a maximum duration of 90 days within a 180-day period. Specifically, Poland (476,000), the Czech

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Republic (86,000), Hungary (50,000), Slovakia (48,000), and Lithuania (29,000) have experienced significant increases in their respective populations of Ukrainian residents. The collective increase observed in these five Member States was equivalent to 95.1% of the increase observed across the entire EU (Eurostat, 2022).

Table 5: Border crossings, Hungarian Central Statistical Office

Direction of Border Crossings	2022	2023
Individuals entering Hungary from Ukraine	2,302,366	2,116,877
Ukrainian nationals entering Hungary from Romania	592,373	379,003

In the aftermath of the Russian invasion, an influx of approximately 200,000 individuals from Ukraine was recorded in Hungary (Hungary Today, 2022). In response to this significant influx, the authorities extended the operating hours of all border crossing points between the two nations. At the end of October 2024, the number of beneficiaries of temporary protection residing in Hungray stood at 38,480, comprising 24,260 females and 14,220 males (Eurostat, 2024). While the majority of individuals granted temporary protection were women and children, there was an increase in the number of men receiving this status during 2023. According to data from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), as of 12 January 2025, a total of 61,470 refugees from Ukraine had been recorded in Hungary, with 48,725 applications for asylum, temporary protection, or similar national protection schemes having been submitted by Ukrainian nationals (UNHCR, 2025). The precise number of refugees is somewhat obscured by the fact that Ukrainian citizens in possession of a biometric passport were permitted to travel visa-free to Schengen countries and remain for a period of up to 90 days within a 180-day period, even prior to the implementation of the decision. This exemption from the visa requirement is limited to holders of biometric passports issued by Ukraine.[7] In Hungary, the majority of refugees from Ukraine are women and children. As of the 2022/23 academic year, the number of Ukrainian students studying in Hungary stood at 4,856. 1,164 children were enrolled in kindergarten and 3,692 attended primary and secondary schools (UNHCR, 2024a).

Table 6: Number of persons from Ukraine by status as of 1 December 2022

Status	2022
Border crossing from Ukraine	1,800,000
Application for temporary protection	32,564
Positive decision	28,379
Asylum applications	40
Refugee status granted	10
Subsidiary protection granted	17

UNHCR, Fact sheet Hungary (2022)

[7] Regulation (EU) 2018/1806 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 November 2018 listing the third countries whose nationals must be in possession of visas when crossing the external borders and those whose nationals are exempt from that requirement (codification). PE/50/2018/REV/1. OJ, L 303, 28.11.2018, pp. 39–58. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2018/1806/oj

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3 Legal Frameworks

3.1 The Notion of Mass Migration Crisis

The notion of a mass migration crisis was introduced in Hungary by the 2015 amendment to Act LXXX of 2007 on the Right of Asylum.[8] As stated in the explanatory memorandum to the draft law amending certain laws relating to the management of mass immigration, the government's response to mass immigration of foreigners cannot be given in the current Hungarian legal environment, or only after a considerable delay. The introduction of the concept of a "mass immigration crisis" is therefore substantiated. This will require the amendment of certain legal provisions. Should the government opt to declare a state of emergency by decree, this will be initiated by the county (capital) police chief concerned and the head of the asylum authority, upon the proposal of the Minister. The declaration of a state of emergency is a legal mechanism that allows for the suspension of certain general rules of the legal system.[9] Thus, Act CXL of 2015,which amends certain acts related to the management of mass immigration, introduced the concept of a mass immigration crisis situation.[10] This can be declared by the government for a maximum period of six months, but can be extended thereafter.

Concurrently, the Prime Minister submitted a proposal for a constitutional amendment that would enable it to exercise exclusive control over its asylum policy. The rationale for this proposal was that it was imperative to address the deleterious consequences of the migration crisis, which included the threat of terrorism.

Until that time, the Fundamental Law, which was adopted in 2011, included a detailed set of instructions for state authorities to follow in emergency. The constitutional said that there were five times when special measures could be used for reasons of national security. These were: a state of national crisis, a state of emergency, a state of war, a state of preventive defence, and an unexpected attack.

The 6th Amendment of the Fundamental Law added Article 51/A about the 'state of terrorist threat' to the constitution. This provision says that that specific emergency powers must be set up in situations where there is a heightened risk of a terrorist attack.

The 9th Amendment replaced the previous six special legal order regimes with three distinct categories: the state of danger, the state of war, and the state of emergency. The most significant change is that all three new special legal order regimes concentrate power in the hands of the government without adequate constitutional restraints (The Hungarian Helsinki Committee, 2023).

The government adopted Government Decree 269/2015 on the declaration of a state of crisis caused by mass migration due to the Syrian refugee crisis and on the rules related

[8] Act No. LXXX of 2007, Act on Asylum [Act No. LXXX of 2007 on Asylum]. https://www.refworld.org/legal/legislation/natlegbod/2008/en/110732

[9] T/5983. számú törvényjavaslat indoklással - egyes törvényeknek a tömeges bevándorlás kezelésével összefüggő módosításáról [Bill No. T/5983 with explanatory memorandum – on the amendment of certain laws relating to the management of mass immigration]. https://jogkodex.hu/doc/1922859

[10] 2015. évi CXL. törvény egyes törvényeknek a tömeges bevándorlás kezelésével összefüggő módosításáról [Act CXL of 2015 – on the amendment of certain laws relating to the management of mass immigration]. https://jogkodex.hu/jsz/2015_140_torveny_7043438?ts=kozlony

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to the declaration, continuation, and termination of the state of crisis. Territorial scope of the decree was limited to Bács-Kiskun County and Csongrád County.[11] The decree was implemented in two southern regions of Hungary. The implementation of the measure facilitated the closure of roads and accelerated asylum procedures.

Subsequently, the scope of the 'state of crisis caused by mass migration' was expanded to encompass four additional counties through Governmental Decree 270/2015. The decree formally declared a state of crisis in the counties of Baranya, Somogy, Zala, and Vas, and established the regulations governing the declaration, continuation, and termination of the state of crisis. The geographical distribution of these counties is such that they are situated along the borders of the neighbouring countries of Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia and Austria.

The extension was scheduled to expire in March 2016, but a state of emergency was declared for the entire country in the same month. Therefore, the state was extended for a period of six months with Government Decree No. 41/2016 (9.III.)[12], referring to Article 80/A (1) c) of Act LXXX of 2007 and accordingly to "the emergence of a circumstance related to the migration situation that directly threatens the public security of a settlement". The decree cited above was adopted in order to declare a nationwide state of crisis caused by mass migration for a further period of six months, thereby enabling the implementation of more stringent measures by the police and army to patrol borders and search for illegal migrants throughout the country. Since 2017, government decrees have continuously extended the state of emergency for a period of six months at a time, despite the absence of any of the statutory conditions that would typically justify its maintenance. This latest extension is set out in Government Decree 265/2024 (2.IX.)[13]

As the government declared a nationwide state of emergency due to mass immigration, as stipulated by criteria laid down in 80/A of Act LXXX of 2007, it is possible for a mass immigration crisis to be declared in three cases. The first case is when the number of asylum seekers in Hungary surpasses 500 individuals per day, on average, over the course of one month, 750 individuals per day, on average, over two consecutive months, or 800 individuals per day, on average, over one week, in scenarios where the number of persons in transit zones[14] would reach the order of thousands. The second case pertains

[11] Government Decree No. 269/2015 (IX. 15) announcing a crisis situation caused by mass immigration and establishing the rules related to the declaration, maintenance and termination of the crisis situation

[12] 41/2016. (III. 9.) Korm. rendelet a tömeges bevándorlás okozta válsághelyzet Magyarország egész területére történő elrendeléséről, valamint a válsághelyzet elrendelésével, fennállásával és megszüntetésével összefüggő szabályokról [Government Decree on the declaration of a state of crisis due to mass immigration across the entire territory of Hungary, and on the rules relating to the declaration, existence, and termination of the crisis situation]. https://njt.hu/jogszabaly/2016-41-20-22.19.

[13] 265/2024. (IX. 2.) Korm. rendelet a tömeges bevándorlás okozta válsághelyzet Magyarország egész területére történő elrendeléséről, valamint a válsághelyzet elrendelésével, fennállásával és megszüntetésével összefüggő szabályokról szóló 41/2016. (III. 9.) Korm. rendelet módosításáról [Government Decree No. 265/2024 (IX. 2.) on the amendment of Government Decree No. 41/2016 (III. 9.) on the declaration of a state of crisis due to mass immigration across the entire territory of Hungary, and on rules concerning the declaration, existence, and termination of the crisis situation]

[14] Transit zones were abolished in 2020, and the so-called embassy procedure was introduced.

to instances where the number of persons in transit in Hungary, excluding those providing assistance to foreign nationals exceeds one thousand persons per day, on average over one month, one thousand five hundred persons per day on average over two consecutive weeks, or an average of one thousand six hundred persons per day over a period of one week. The third case is when any circumstances related to the migration situation, other than those mentioned above, arise that directly jeopardize the protection of the external border of Hungary under Article 2(2) of the Schengen Borders Code, or directly threaten the security, public order or public health of the territory of Hungary within a 60-metre radius of the external border line or border fence as defined in Article 2(2) of the Schengen Borders Code, or a municipality in Hungary, in particular in the event of disturbances or acts of violence in that area or in a reception centre or any other facility for the accommodation of foreign nationals located in or outside that municipality.[15]

The National Police Chief and the Head of the Asylum Authority are responsible for continuous monitoring of the existence of the conditions that would necessitate the declaration of a mass immigration crisis. In the event that such conditions are not met, the aforementioned authorities are required to initiate the process for the Minister to propose to the Government the repeal of the Government Decree.

3.2 State of Emergency in Connection with the War in Ukraine

In accordance with Article 53(1) of the Fundamental Law, the Government declared a state of emergency by means of Government Decree 180/2022 (24.V.2022)[16]. The Government initially declared a state of war emergency in May 2022, several months after Russia had launched a military attack on Ukraine. However, this necessitated an amendment to the Basic Law in 2022, as a prerequisite for the government to declare a state of emergency in the event of war in a neighbouring country. The amendment resulted in a change to the wording of Article 53(1) of the Fundamental Law, authorising the government to declare a "state of danger" in the event of an "armed conflict, war or humanitarian disaster in a neighbouring country".

The state of danger constitutes a form of special legal order declared by the government on three occasions during the pandemic. Consequently, the government had already been able to govern the country by decree even before that, as it had already introduced a special legal order in 2020, citing the Coronavirus epidemic. The initial state of emergency was declared in response to the spread of the novel coronavirus with the declaration taking effect on March 11, 2020. This marked the first instance of emergency legislation being implemented since the adoption of the Constitution, and it was invoked on three subsequent occasions in response to the ongoing pandemic of the Coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2). The armed conflict in Ukraine has led to the fourth declaration of a state of emergency. The government has lifted the state of emergency declared to address the

[15] Act LXXX of 2007 on Asylum. https://net.jogtar.hu/jogszabaly?docid=a0700080.tv
[16] 180/2022. (V. 24.) Korm. rendelet az Ukrajna területén fennálló fegyveres konfliktusra, illetve humanitárius katasztrófára tekintettel, valamint ezek magyarországi következményeinek az elhárítása érdekében veszélyhelyzet kihirdetéséről és egyes veszélyhelyzeti szabályokról [Government Decree No. 180/2022 (V. 24.) on the declaration of a state of danger in light of the armed conflict and humanitarian catastrophe in Ukraine and on certain emergency rules to address their consequences in Hungary] https://njt.hu/jogszabaly/2022-180-20-22

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consequences of the pandemic, effective from 1 June 2022, thereby replacing it with a state of emergency due to the war.

In November 2022, the government declared a new state of danger under these new rules, in reference to the war in Ukraine, with Government Decree 424/2022. (X. 28.)[17]. Furthermore, the government has extended the state of danger for a further 180 days by means of Government Decree 479/2022. (XI. 28.).[18] This document concerns the extension of the state of emergency declared in response to the armed conflict and humanitarian disaster in the territory of Ukraine, and the subsequent elimination and management of its consequences in Hungary. The Parliament's authorization was based on Act XLII of 2022 which deals with the elimination and management of the consequences in Hungary of an armed conflict and humanitarian disaster in a neighbouring country.[19]

According to the Act, the Russian-Ukrainian war in Hungary's neighbourhood has created a humanitarian situation that is without precedent since the Second World War and has led to the economic crisis in Europe. In order to deal with the humanitarian crisis and mitigate the consequences of international economic changes, it is vital that Hungary continues to develop an effective and rapid national response. In light of the foregoing, the Hungarian government has proposed the extension of the state of emergency, with the aim of ensuring the availability of all necessary means to assist, support and shelter those fleeing, to avoid the adverse economic effects that may arise, to mitigate the consequences and to ensure that the country emerges from the harmful effects of the war as soon as possible.

The Parliament has stated that the state of emergency declared in connection with the war in Ukraine, which has been in effect since May 2022, will remain in force until May 18, 2025. In relation to ongoing state of emergency concerning mass migration, the government has recently announced the extension of mass immigration crisis situation until September 7, 2025. This development can be situated within a broader pattern of recurrent extensions. Since 2016, the migration emergency has been renewed every six months, and since 2022, the state of war emergency has been in force.

3.3 Ad hoc Actions in the First Days of the War

The Hungarian government was the first in Europe to grant temporary protection to all individuals who had a legal basis to reside in Ukraine and had fled to Hungary, regardless

[17] Government Decree 424/2022. (X. 28.) on Declaring a State of Danger Due to the Armed Conflict and Humanitarian Catastrophe in the Territory of Ukraine, and in Order to Eliminate and Manage the Consequences of these in Hungary and on Certain State of Danger Rules.
[18] Decree 479/2022. (XI. 28.)[18] on Extending the State of Danger Declared Due to the Armed Conflict and Humanitarian Catastrophe in the Territory of Ukraine, and in Order to Eliminate and Manage the Consequences of these in Hungary.
[19] 2022. évi XLII. törvény szomszédos országban fennálló fegyveres konfliktus, illetve humanitárius katasztrófa magyarországi következményeinek elhárításáról és kezeléséről [Act XLII of 2022 on the prevention and management of the consequences in Hungary of an armed conflict or humanitarian catastrophe in a neighbouring country]. https://njt.hu/jogszabaly/2022-42-00-00.5.

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of their nationality. Chapter V (Articles 19-25) of Act LXXX of 2007 on Asylum[20] sets out the detailed rules regarding the conditions for obtaining temporary protection. The exclusion clauses relating to temporary protection, the legal status of persons enjoying temporary protection, the duration of temporary protection and the cessation of temporary protection status are also outlined in this chapter.

Regarding temporary protection, Act LXXX of 2007 on Asylum delineates two forms of temporary protection, distinguished by their respective geographical scopes of application. Article 19(1)(a) of the Act incorporates the provisions of the Temporary Protection Decree (TPD) into Hungarian law. For the implementation of this article, the Council of the EU must declare that due to a substantial influx of third-country nationals, temporary protection must be granted to a predefined group of eligible persons in EU Member States. However, Article 19(1)(b) of the Asylum Act is not contingent upon the TPD and thus exists exclusively within the confines of Hungarian law, with its application limited to the territory of Hungary.

The implementation of Government Decree 56/2022 (II. 24.)[21] consequently led to the application of Article 19(1)(b) of the Asylum Act. On 24 February 2022, the Hungarian Government adopted Government Decree no. 56/2022 on the derogation from the temporary rules on asylum as set in Act LVIII of 2020 on the temporary rules related to the end of the state of danger and on the epidemiological preparedness (56/2022. (II. 24.). The Decree stipulated that displaced persons arriving from Ukraine must be recognised as persons entitled to temporary protection.

On 7 March 2022, Government Decree no. 56/2022 was replaced by Government Decree 86/2022 (III. 7.)[22] (TP Decree), and on 8 March 2022, the provisions of the Council Implementing Decision were incorporated into the Hungarian legal system. This development has led to the implementation of temporary protection measures under Section 19(1)(a) of the Asylum Act, thereby extending the scope of the TPD within the Hungarian legal system.

It is important to note that the former government decree was found to offer more extensive protection than the provisions in the TP Decree. This is due to the fact that, under Article 19(1)(b) of the Asylum Act, it permits non-Ukrainian third-country nationals who have fled from and are legally residing in Ukraine to apply for temporary protection. However, this is no longer a possibility in accordance with the TP Decree that is currently in force. Prior to this, displaced persons arriving from Ukraine on and after 24 February

[20] The most recent major amendments were adopted in June 2016, March 2017 and May 2020. The first of these amendments revoked the Integration Contract and Support Scheme for beneficiaries of international protection, while the second established special 'transit zones' for asylum seekers to remain in while their status was being determined by the authorities. The third amendment subsequently cancelled these zones, instead introducing the so-called 'embassy procedure'. This procedure stipulates that an individual seeking asylum is required to have submitted a declaration of will at the Hungarian consulates in Belgrade and Kyiv. However, due to the ongoing war in Ukraine, it has become impossible to submit an asylum application in Kyiv. https://njt.hu/jogszabaly/2007-80-00-00

[21] Government Decree 56/2022 (II. 24.). https://njt.hu/jogszabaly/2022-56-20-22.

[22] Government Decree 86/2022 (III. 7.). https://njt.hu/jogszabaly/2022-86-20-22 (English translation:https://helsinki.hu/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/03/HUgovdecree_implementing_councildecision_tempprotEN.pdf.

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2022 were granted temporary protection. However, according to the prevailing regulations, individuals who are not Hungarian and/or Ukrainian nationals are no longer eligible for temporary protection. Instead, they are issued with a certificate that permits them to remain in Hungary for a maximum duration of 30 days. The new government decree further stipulated that Hungarian nationals arriving from Ukraine are entitled to all care and assistance as those receiving temporary protection. The decree also encompassed provisions pertaining to the employment of third-country nationals and the medical care granted to beneficiaries of temporary protection. The decree was issued on March 8, 2022, and took effect on the same date.

The rights and obligations of the applicant, beneficiary, and asylum authority with regard to temporary protection are set out in the Asylum Act and Government Decree 301/2007 (XI. 9.) on the implementation of Act LXXX of 2007 on asylum (Asylum Decree),[23] in line with the TPD. Government Decree No. 301/2007 establishes the regulations governing the document issued to certify temporary protection status (Articles 8-11), in addition to the provisions for care and services provided to individuals granted temporary protection in Hungary (Articles 12-36 and Articles 37-61/C).

Following the enactment of the TP Decree, the Hungarian government promulgated a series of subsequent decrees establishing a more detailed framework for the provision of accommodation, employment, education, information, and supplies for individuals eligible for temporary protection. The provisions of these laws either establish a more detailed 'executive' regulation than those promulgated in the Asylum Act and Decree or diverge from their provisions. As previously stated, it is important to note that in Hungary, a 'state of danger' special legal order has been implemented. The initial declaration of a 'mass immigration crisis' was issued in March 2016 and has been repeatedly extended, most recently until 2025. In the event of an emergency, the government may issue a decree that suspends the application of certain laws, derogates from legal provisions, and takes other extraordinary measures, as provided for in a cardinal law (Chronowski, 2024). This legislative development is of particular relevance to TP holders, as a significant proportion of the government decrees governing their rights have been adopted in the form of emergency decrees. Consequently, these decrees would expire by law if the state of danger is not extended.

4 Legal Status of Displaced Persons

4.1 The Eligibility of the Persons Concerned

Individuals in possession of a biometric passport are permitted to remain within the Schengen area for a period of up to 90 days without the requirement of a visa. During this time, they have the option to apply for temporary protection in Hungary. In the absence of a biometric passport, the Hungarian border police will undertake a verification process involving the inspection of other documents to ascertain the individual's identity. These documents may include a national passport or other valid identification documents such as a marriage certificate, birth certificate, or any other appropriate document, a valid residence permit, or a visa. In the event of a person being granted entry to Hungary, they will be issued with a renewable temporary residence permit for a period of 30 days. This

[23] Government Decree 301/2007 (XI. 9.). https://njt.hu/jogszabaly/2007-301-20-22.

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document will facilitate their continued legal residence in the country and enable them to submit an application for temporary protection in Hungary.

Per the provisions stipulated in the EU Council Implementing Decision, the TPD establishes the following criteria for eligibility for temporary protection:

- Ukrainian nationals residing in the territory of Ukraine prior to the 24 of February 2022; stateless persons and nationals of third countries other than Ukraine who benefited from international protection (e.g. having refugee status) or equivalent national protection in Ukraine before 24 February 2022; and family members of persons referred to the groups mentioned above (see below for the definition).
- Third-country nationals who were asylum seekers in Ukraine on 24 February 2022 are not eligible for temporary protection under Article 2(1b) of the Implementing Decision 2022/382.[24] This is due to the fact that eligibility is only applicable to beneficiaries of international protection who were residing in Ukraine at the time of their application.[25] Additionally, the Council Implementing Decision does not apply to Ukrainian nationals who arrived from Ukraine prior to 24 February 2022.
- In the context of family members, following individuals are to be considered: spouses, minor children, and other close relatives who resided together as part of the family prior to 24 February 2022 and were wholly or primarily dependent.

A number of judgments addressed the matter of temporary protection. The Budapest District Court has provided a ruling on access to temporary protection for family members, establishing that dependency between adults extends beyond the scope of emotional or economic community, as it necessitates a state of inseparability. The notion of material dependence encompasses interdependencies associated with subsistence, such as instances where a family member provides regular care to another family member. The notion of responsibility entails a comprehensive or near-total financial reliance or personal assistance. In emphasizing the material dependence between adults in the context of temporary protection, the court invoked the French term '*à la charge de'*, as articulated in the Council Implementing Decision 2022/382.[26]

The situation of Hungarian-Ukrainian dual citizens residing in Ukraine has become a matter of significant concern, particularly in the context of the ongoing war. A considerable number of these individuals, estimated at approximately 150,000, have sought refuge in Hungary due to historical and cultural affinities. The Zakarpattia Oblast, located in the easternmost reaches of Ukraine, situated near the Hungarian border, is home to a significant ethnic Hungarian population. This population holds dual citizenship, being both Hungarian and Ukrainian. However, these individuals did not fall under the scope of the

[24] Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382 of 4 March 2022 establishing the existence of a mass influx of displaced persons from Ukraine within the meaning of Article 5 of Directive 2001/55/EC, and having the effect of introducing temporary protection, ST/6846/2022/INIT, OJ L 71, 4.3.2022, p. 1–6, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec_impl/2022/382/oj/eng.

[25] Hungary, Regional Courts of Appeal [ítélőtáblák], Applicant, 11.K.703.567/2022/6, 7 December 2022. https://caselaw.euaa.europa.eu/pages/viewcaselaw.aspx?CaseLawID=3213.

[26] Hungary, Budapest District Court [hu. Fővárosi Törvényszék], Applicant v National Directorate-General for Aliens Policing (Országos Idegenrendészeti Főigazgatóság, NDGAP), 11.K.703.874/2022/8, 9 January 2023. https://caselaw.euaa.europa.eu/pages/viewcaselaw.aspx?CaseLawID=4061.

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Asylum Act or the Temporary Protection scheme due to their Hungarian citizenship. Furthermore, the majority of these individuals were unable to exercise the full range of rights typically accorded to Hungarian citizens, as the majority of these rights are contingent upon Hungarian social security status and registered address.

Consequently, the TP Decree, which implements the application of the TP and Council Decision, introduces a special provision regarding dual citizens. This provision stipulates that all benefits and advantages granted to a temporary protection beneficiary are to be extended to Hungarian citizens who had a permanent residence in Ukraine and arrived from Ukraine on or after 24 February 2022, unless they are granted more favourable treatment by virtue of their Hungarian citizenship.

Regarding family relations between dual citizens, the Budapest District Court provided clarification on the eligibility criteria for temporary protection for a Russian national residing in Ukraine, whose Ukrainian partner holds dual citizenship in Hungary. In March 2023, the court delivered a ruling that Section 8(1) of the Government Decree on the implementation of temporary protection does not engender a less favourable situation for third-country nationals who are family members of Hungarian nationals residing in Ukraine, solely on the ground that their family member has (also) Hungarian citizenship. The court determined that such an interpretation would be inconsistent with the principles of the Hungarian Constitution.[27] In the absence of citizenship status in Ukraine, refugee status, or statelessness previously recognised by Ukraine, along with the lack of familial ties to a Ukrainian citizen (or a recognised refugee or stateless person), an individual is not eligible for temporary protection.

The Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382[28] stipulates the requirement for 'adequate protection' in instances where the Council Decision cannot be applied to stateless or third-country nationals other than Ukrainians. This provision is intended to address the situation where these individuals, unable to return to their country of origin, possess a valid long-term residence permit in Ukraine. The following criteria were required for individuals to be considered for this classification: prior legal and permanent or temporary residency in Ukraine before 24 February 2022, and the inability to safely return to the country of origin under durable circumstances. A comprehensive evaluation of the individual circumstances was necessary to determine compliance with these criteria. This evaluation encompassed a comprehensive review of the status in Ukraine prior to 24 February 2022, along with a detailed assessment of the country or region of origin. However, a third-country national in possession of temporary residence permits in Ukraine who was unable to furnish evidence of impediments to safe and durable return to their country of origin was deemed ineligible for temporary protection. Nonetheless, the court determined that in the event applicants had particular concerns that had not been

[27] Hungary, Budapest District Court [hu. Fővárosi Törvényszék], Applicant v National Directorate-General for Aliens Policing (Országos Idegenrendészeti Főigazgatóság, NDGAP), 11.K.703.874/2022/8, 9 January 2023. https://caselaw.euaa.europa.eu/pages/viewcaselaw.aspx?CaseLawID=4061

[28] Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382 of 4 March 2022 establishing the existence of a mass influx of displaced persons from Ukraine within the meaning of Article 5 of Directive 2001/55/EC, and having the effect of introducing temporary protection. ST/6846/2022/INIT. OJ, L 71, 4.3.2022, pp. 1–6. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec_impl/2022/382/oj

addressed, they were entitled to submit an application for international protection.[29] Furthermore, a third-country national transiting through Ukraine was not eligible for temporary protection. This was due to the absence of a legal residence permit in Ukraine and the lack of grounds for preventing their return to their country of origin.[30]

Third-country nationals who lack valid travel documents, as well as those who were residing in Ukraine prior to 24 February 2022 and subsequently departed but later returned, are denied entry to Hungary. These individuals, despite their eligibility, are ineligible for temporary protection in Hungary (The Hungarian Helsinki Committee, 2024).

Despite the absence of official data concerning the number of Hungarian-Ukrainian dual citizens residing in Ukraine who have fled to Hungary due to the war, the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, based on information received from the Ministry of National Economic, has reported that 26,127 requests for financial support were submitted by dual citizens to the relevant government authority between February 2022 and 31 December 2023. Of these, 25,903 requests were answered positively (AIDA, 2024, p. 5).

4.2 Rights and Assistance

While the creation of temporary protection measures has provided material support to tens of thousands of people, it has also pushed questions of temporality and rights down the road (Dalkiran–Lipman, 2025). Nevertheless, the Hungarian government's decisions (in line with the EU Charter) about the repeated extensions of temporary protection, with the latest until March 2026, are a significant development with far-reaching implications for the individuals concerned. It allows them, among others, to continue residing legally in Hungary, to engage in employment, or to acquire residential accommodation. These measures are designed to facilitate successful integration, recognising that social inclusion is key to this process, along with all the measures developed to achieve it (Guild, 2006: 40). Although Ukrainian refugees are granted several rights considered crucial for integration, there are also examples of a 'waiting dilemma'. This is characterised by individuals maintaining a close connection to their home nation and expressing a desire to return once conditions are safe. Such a situation can complicate the process of acclimatising to the host nation, as it undermines the motivation to engage in activities such as language acquisition, formal training, or educational programmes, and the integration of children into the host country's education system (European Commission & Asscher, 2023: 11).

Social security benefits provided by the umbrella legislation (sickness allowance, unemployment allowance, job seeking support, industrial accident and disease compensation, family allowances, child allowances, old age pension) apply to displaced persons from Ukraine in the same way as to Hungarian nationals.

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[29] Hungary, Budapest District Court [hu. Fővárosi Törvényszék], Applicant v National Directorate-General for Aliens Policing (Országos Idegenrendészeti Főigazgatóság, NDGAP), No 11.K.701.503/2023/4., 20 June 2023.
https://caselaw.euaa.europa.eu/pages/viewcaselaw.aspx?CaseLawID=4060

[30] Hungary, Budapest District Court [hu. Fővárosi Törvényszék], Applicant v National Directorate-General for Aliens Policing (Országos Idegenrendészeti Főigazgatóság, NDGAP), No 11.K.704.538/2022/6, 14 March 2023.
https://caselaw.euaa.europa.eu/pages/viewcaselaw.aspx?CaseLawID=4073

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4.2.1 Education

In the Hungarian educational system, children over the age of three are legally obliged to attend kindergarten or school until they reach the age of sixteen. Consequently, no child over the age of three may remain at home without formal education. Article 45 of the Asylum Decree establishes the framework for financing education in public schools up to the age of 16. This includes nursery, kindergarten, elementary school, and secondary/vocational school, ensuring that children have access to education free of charge. Furthermore, Subsections (1) a) and (3)-(4) of Section 92 of Act CXC of 2011 on national public education[31] stipulate that preschool-age children (from the age of three) and school-age children are eligible for free preschool and school education at public educational institutions within their district of accommodation.

In the context of the Ukrainian refugee situation, Ukrainian children fleeing to Hungary become subject to compulsory education when they submit an application for recognition as a beneficiary of temporary protection. They are entitled to participate in public education under the same conditions as Hungarian citizens. The principle of free choice of school also applies to pupils who apply, while district schools are obliged to admit children who arrive at their schools.

In order to facilitate the placement of a minor, the beneficiary of temporary protection who is caring for a minor is entitled to use the following services under conditions identical to those for Hungarian nationals following Section 3 of Government Decree No. 106/2022 (III. 12.): nursery care, kindergarten care and education and services of the '*Biztos Kezdet Gyerekház'*, belonging to the Hungarian Reformed Church. In the event that the individual designated as the beneficiary of temporary protection assumes the role of a child or student carer as per Section 3/A (1) of Government Decree No. 106/2022 (III. 12.), the child or student is entitled to free institutional and holiday childcare under Act XXXI of 1997 on the Protection of Children and the Administration of Guardianship [32] for a period of six month from the date of the application submission. Following this period, the child or pupil is eligible to institutional childcare in accordance with the regulations outlined in the aforementioned Act in the event of social need. The enrolment process is conducted within the jurisdiction of the educational institution designated as the competent authority for the applicant's designated place of accommodation.

The law stipulates that all Ukrainian refugees who receive any form of financial assistance in Hungary are obliged to enrol their children in kindergarten from the age of three. Failure to comply with this requirement within the designated timeframe will result in the forfeiture of financial aid. Despite the fact that this stipulation is not consistently enforced in practice, the law does permit legal action to be taken against the parent, including the possibility of a prison sentence.[33]

The public education system provides free textbooks to schools through two channels: the first is school libraries, and the second is a non-profit library supply company. In order to facilitate the learning of Hungarian as a foreign language by children whose mother tongue

[31] 2011. évi CXC. törvény a nemzeti köznevelésről
https://net.jogtar.hu/jogszabaly?docid=a1100190.tv
[32] 1997. évi XXXI. törvény a gyermekek védelméről és a gyámügyi igazgatásról
https://njt.hu/jogszabaly/1997-31-00-00
[33] See more on this on https://migaid.org/en/nursery-kindergarten/

is Ukrainian, a textbook for this purpose has been made available to schools for grades 3 through 8. The government provides a subsidy to cover the costs for five hours per week of individual preparation for refugee pupils, including Hungarian language learning and subject-related tutoring. Furthermore, children who hold dual citizenship between Ukraine and Hungary are granted access to the education system on an equivalent basis to their Hungarian counterparts.

However, it is important to note that not all children are enrolled in formal educational institutions. In Hungary, numerous factors have been identified as influencing access to education. These include expectations of eventually returning to Ukraine, language barriers, a preference among older students for online learning offered by Ukrainian schools, and costs, as well as a lack of awareness among refugees regarding their eligibility for related benefits. Concerns have been raised about the recognition of foreign education credentials upon return, as well as the challenges associated with determining the appropriate grade level for these students (UNHCR, 2023a).

Most educational institutions do not offer Hungarian language classes, which appears to be the main reason many Ukrainian families continue to opt for Ukrainian online education over Hungarian in-person schooling. The language barrier has been identified as the primary obstacle to the integration of Ukrainian children, too. The Hungarian education system has been the subject of criticism due to its failure to adequately integrate Ukrainian refugee children. A significant number of these children continue to participate in Ukrainian online education. This is due to the fact that the Ukrainian Ministry of Education and Science permits children to participate in online education through distance learning, homeschooling, or individual education. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasise that in Hungary, informal education programmes and online learning are not recognized as substitutes for compulsory education (UNHCR, 2024b).

A significant development in the education was the establishment of the Ukrainian-Hungarian Bilingual Secondary School and Gymnasium in September 2024. Notably, this institution stands as the sole bilingual school in Europe for Ukrainian refugee children. The school provides a certificate that is recognised by both the host country (in this case Hungary) and Ukraine. Following official registration by the Hungarian government for the 2024-2025 academic year, the school welcomed 300 Ukrainian students from grades 1 to 11 and began operations as a bilingual institution in September 2024.[34] The establishment of the Leszja Ukrajinka National Ukrainian Ethnic Support Language School in Budapest and Nyíregyháza marked a significant development in the field of ethnic education. These institutions offer instruction in the native language to approximately 100 Ukrainian students, including 15 Ukrainian refugee children. Students enrolled in the Ethnic Support Language School undertake a dual-curricular approach, with their day spent in Hungarian public education institutions, and their afternoons devoted to Ukrainian language and ethnography classes.[35]

[34] The teachers' salaries are paid by the Hungarian state, but all other costs – from maintaining the building to buying the things needed to teach – are covered by grants from charities, Ukrainian companies and international aid organisations. https://ucap.help/2024/10/school-for-ukrainian-refugees-in-hungary/

[35] See for more information about the school: https://ukraniskola.hu/.

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4.2.2 Livelihood Cash Benefit

In accordance with the provisions stipulated in Government Decree 106/2022 (12.III),[36] the allocation of regular subsistence allowance is exclusively designated for recognised beneficiaries of temporary protection and for Ukrainian-Hungarian dual citizens who departed from Ukraine after 24 February 2022.

In accordance with Article 53 of the Asylum Decree, the amount of the allowance is set at HUF 22,800 (approximately EUR 55) per adult per month and HUF 13,700 (approximately EUR 30) per child per month. In order to apply for this benefit, individuals are required to submit a form to the NDGAP. However, recipients are required to accept a job offer within 45 days of receiving the initial payment of the allowance. The allowance is subject to a monthly in-person presentation at the district office, and entitlement to the allowance ceases upon gaining employment or receiving a pension.

4.2.3 Access to the Labour Market

A significant advantage of temporary protection is that Ukrainian citizens in possession of a biometric travel document may be permitted to engage in paid employment in certain shortage occupations immediately upon entry, without the need to apply for recognition as an asylum seeker. For non-niche professions, Ukrainian nationals in possession of a biometric travel document may be employed for a period not exceeding 90 days after entry, provided they hold a work permit, which must be obtained by the employer through the relevant government office. Government Decree No. 106/2022 (12.III),[37] stipulates that individuals permitted to engage in labour are those who have attained the age of 16 years of age and are in possession a of temporary protection, or those who are Hungarian nationals and arrived in Hungary on or subsequent to 24 February 2022 with a permanent residence in Ukraine.

In accordance with Article 6(4) of Government Decree 86/2022 (7.III.), an individual who submitted an application for recognition as a beneficiary of temporary protection is permitted to engage in employment in Hungary without the necessity of obtaining a permit, including temporary employment. In accordance with Section 71 of Act II of 2007, the employer is obligated to notify the employee about this fact. Moreover, temporary protection applicants may also be employed in communal work.

[36] 106/2022. (III. 12.) Korm. rendelet a veszélyhelyzet ideje alatt szomszédos országban fennálló humanitárius katasztrófára tekintettel, az ideiglenes védelemre jogosultként elismert személyek foglalkoztatásával és juttatásaival kapcsolatos egyes szabályokról, valamint a menedékjogról szóló 2007. évi LXXX. törvény végrehajtásáról szóló 301/2007. (XI. 9.) Korm. rendelet módosításáról https://njt.hu/jogszabaly/2022-106-20-22.

[37] Government Decree 301/2007. (XI. 9.) on certain rules related to the employment of and benefits to persons recognized as beneficiaries of temporary protection and on the amendment of Government Decree 301/2007. (XI. 9.) on the implementation of act LXXX of 2007 on Asylum, with respect to a humanitarian disaster in a neighbouring country during the state of danger 301/2007. (XI. 9.) Korm. rendelet a menedékjogról szóló 2007. évi LXXX. törvény végrehajtásáról. https://net.jogtar.hu/jogszabaly?docid=a0700301.kor.

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Following the Government Decree No. 121/2022 (III. 28.) on rules of the state of danger relating to the Hungarian employment of health workers fleeing Ukraine,[38] such workers are permitted to commence work upon presenting to their employer a document evidencing their Ukrainian educational diploma and scientific degrees recognised by the Hungarian state and concurrently initiating the licensing or official approval procedure for their qualifications. In the event that a refugee possesses professional qualifications in healthcare, they are permitted to engage in relevant activities until the conclusion of the recognition or homologation procedure. For those with qualifications in medicine, dentistry, or pharmacy, participation in the tertiary-level health vocational training system is permissible without prior licensing, official approval or recognition of their professional qualifications until the conclusion of such a procedure.

4.2.4 Health Care

In the absence of social security coverage, refugees are entitled to free health care services, encompassing primary care and, in cases of urgent need, specialist care or hospitalization. An important consideration is that individuals with special needs – including unaccompanied minors, elderly people, disabled persons, and pregnant women – are entitled to these services not only in cases of urgent need but also for other medical reasons. According to Article 6(2) of Government Decree no. 86/2022, individuals who are beneficiaries of temporary protection, as well as who have submitted applications for such status, are entitled to the following range of medical care services:

- basic medical care, including services of a family doctor,
- examination, medical treatment, medication, and bandage used during the urgent need for outpatient care,
- urgent inpatient medical care and the treatment of the physician,[39] after outpatient specialist care or inpatient care, until healing from the disease or stabilization of their medical condition.[40]

Furthermore, it also includes other medical care ordered by a physician, including:

- emergency dental care and tooth retention,
- pregnancy and obstetric care, and for the protection of the life of the fetus,
- transportation, if it cannot be resolved otherwise due to the health condition,
- mandatory vaccination,
- oncology specialist care and other chronic patient care, including examination and treatment.

In accordance with Section 6(2) of Government Decree No. 86/2022 and Section 44(2) of Government Decree No. 301/2007, the designated location for treatment is the

[38] 121/2022. (III. 28.) Korm. rendelet az Ukrajnából menekült egészségügyi dolgozók magyarországi foglalkoztatásának veszélyhelyzeti szabályairól https://njt.hu/jogszabaly/2022-121-20-22.

[39] Including surgical interventions, as well as the medicinal products and prosthetic tools used in it, for medicinal care.

[40] For the necessary examination and treatment that is not a substitute for any other medications, and the medical assistance needed to administer them.

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healthcare institution that is deemed competent for the applicant's place of residence within the Hungarian jurisdiction.

Beneficiaries are entitled to basic health care, even in the absence of social security coverage. However, many health care providers remain unaware of this entitlement and consequently refuse to provide care to Ukrainians and dual nationals who have fled Ukraine. In addition, the fact that the extension of the validity of the TP cards is not physically indicated on the cards generally leads to confusion among health care providers, who may mistakenly believe that the TP card holder is not entitled to access TP benefits, such as health care (AIDA, 2024: 145). Despite health care being a fundamental human right, individuals often encounter obstacles such as language barriers and limited resources that hinder their access to essential services (IOM Hungary, 2024: 17).

4.2.5 Housing Assistance

On 1 August 2023, the Hungarian government introduced a new housing allowance scheme. Under this scheme, the state will reimburse the accommodation costs of sheltered workers at a rate of HUF 80,000 or HUF 120,000 per month even if they work only 20 hours a week. Eligibility depends on whether the accommodation is located in a preferred small settlement as defined in Annex 2 of Government Decree 17/2016 (10.II.), or in a settlement not designated as such. Ukrainian citizens must have temporary protection status to receive assistance. If there is one or more minors under the age of 16 who have not yet completed primary school living in the same household as the above worker, the condition for receiving the allowance is that the minors must be enrolled in Hungarian public education until they have completed primary school. The legal rules on the allowance are set out in Part 1/A of Government Decree 104/2022 (12.3.).

Furthermore, Ukrainian-Hungarian dual nationals who are permanent Ukrainian residents who fled to Hungary on or after February 24, 2022, may be eligible for the accommodation allowance provided they meet the above criteria.

As of 21 August 2024, individuals fleeing the Russian-Ukrainian war who reside in war-torn areas of Ukraine may be eligible for supplementary accommodation provided by the Hungarian government, provided they do not wish to utilise the Housing Allowance for Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection Workers after entering Hungary, see above.[41] If they do not apply for temporary protection status, they will be eligible to work for 30 days from their arrival. The benefit is available until the last day of the month following the month in which they are recognised as a beneficiary of temporary protection (approximately two to three months). This benefit is available until the beneficiary of temporary status is granted for those who fall under the exceptions defined in Government Decree 104/2022 (until the end of the emergency). The exceptions to the aforementioned regulations pertain to the following vulnerable groups: pregnant women from the time of pregnancy confirmation;; persons under the age of eighteen and their legal guardians residing in the same household; persons with disabilities and their caregivers; and persons over the age

[41] The target groups comprise workers who are beneficiaries of temporary protection, and workers with Hungarian citizenship who are permanent residents of Ukraine and arrive from Ukraine on or after 24 February 2022. The allowance is granted upon application by the employer of the company and the payment is made after the end of the month. Menedékes Munkavállalók Lakhatási Támogatása
https://nfsz.munka.hu/cikk/3076/Menedekes_munkavallalok_lakhatasi_tamogatasa

of sixty-five. Following the issuance of the residence card, these groups may continue to receive accommodation and meals for a duration exceeding the initial 30-day period.

We shall highlight the issue of accommodation, a topic that has become a controversial in the Hungarian context. In 2022, the EU adopted the 'Safe Homes' initiative (European Commission, 2022) and published key guidelines for Member States on how to ensure that private housing initiatives for displaced people from Ukraine are suitable. The guidance provides advice on measures to support hosts and match them with individuals in need of accommodation (EMN, 2022).

Nevertheless, an amendment to Government Decree 104/2022 (III. 12.) on the provision of accommodation to persons arriving due to a humanitarian disaster in a neighbouring country during the state of danger, and on other related measures, which was issued in June 2024, entered into force on 21 August.[42] The amendment imposes limitations on access to state-funded housing confining it exclusively to Ukrainian refugees whose previous registered residence situated within a war-torn area as defined by the Hungarian authorities. This effectively signifies a presumption that other regions of Ukraine are deemed safe for return. Accommodation for displaced persons from areas of Ukraine affected by armed conflict is provided in hostels run by the Hungarian Maltese Relief Service Association, an organisation with extensive experience in social integration programmes.

The decree represents an amendment to a decree issued in June 2023, which had already restricted eligibility for state-funded housing to Ukrainian refugees classified as 'vulnerable': pregnant women, children under 18, individuals with disabilities, and those aged 65 and older. An annex to the decree lists 13 oblasts in Ukraine designated by the Hungarian government as war-torn regions. It is notable that the decree excludes explicitly those regions situated in western Ukraine. These are the following: Dnipropetrovsk County, Donetsk County, Zaporizhzhya County, Kyiv County and Kyiv City, Nikolaiv County, Odessa County, Sumy County, Kharkiv County, Kherson County, Chernihiv County, Luhansk County, Zhytomyr County, Crimea Autonomous Republic and Sevastopol City. In accordance with Article 2/A of Government Decree 104/2022 (III.12.), the list of war-affected areas is drawn up by the Government Commissioner for Persons Fleeing to Hungary from the Russian-Ukrainian War, with the involvement of the Minister of Defence and the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

In accordance with the provisions of the decree, the government is required to undertake a monthly review of the situation, subsequently issuing an updated list of oblasts covered by the regulation by the 10th of each month. In practice, refugees are permitted to continue benefitting from the state scheme for a maximum period of one month following their cross-border arrival, and they can remain on the scheme as long as their place of residence in Ukraine is situated within a war-affected area. Those regions not included in the aforementioned list are not beneficiaries of state support. However, the EU's 2001 Temporary Protection Directive stipulates that all refugees from Ukraine must be granted temporary protection and assistance by EU Member States, irrespective of the specific regions of Ukraine from which they are fleeing. The decree also contradicts several

[42] The government introduced a new concept, the so-called war-torn area, which includes administrative units (oblasts) of Ukraine directly affected by military operations. See Government Decree 134/2024 (amending Decree 104/2022). https://njt.hu/jogszabaly/2024-134-20-22.

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guidelines issued by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR, 2022, 2023b), who makes no distinction between Ukraine's regions when determining whether a person needs protection. With regard to housing, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) has emphasized that Article 13(1) of the TPD stipulates that Member States must guarantee beneficiaries of temporary protection have access to adequate housing or the means to obtain it. The Agency has highlighted that the EU Charter is legally binding on Member States, including local authorities, when they transpose the TPD into national law. When implementing the Directive, it is essential to interpret it in compliance with the Charter, encompassing, for instance, human dignity as a component of an adequate standard of living, the right to social and housing assistance, the right to education, the right to work, the right to access health care, and the right to life (FRA, 2023).

5 Conclusions

The Hungarian government was the first in Europe to grant temporary protection to all persons legally entitled to stay in Ukraine and who had fled to Hungary, regardless of nationality. However, this policy has since been revised in relation to third-country nationals. Despite Hungary's border being one of the most affected following the invasion of Ukraine, it took 15 months for the Hungarian government to appoint a commissioner for people seeking refuge in Hungary from the Russian-Ukrainian war.

In 2024, Ukrainians constituted the largest group of foreign nationals employed in Hungary, with 20,100 individuals. Furthermore, Ukrainians also constitute one of the most significant foreign worker populations in various sectors. It is evident that there is deliberate strategy to orient beneficiaries of temporary protection towards the Hungarian labour market, as evidenced by the implementation of various support measures. However, the absence of a standalone integration law in Hungary highlights a broader policy approach in which migrant integration is not considered an independent policy domain. Following the enactment of the Nationality Act which permitted dual nationality for individuals belonging to the Hungarian minority, there was a substantial increase in the number of individuals from Ukraine. This dynamic subsequently resulted in their favourable treatment, particularly in terms of employment opportunities.

The situation of Hungarian-Ukrainian dual citizens residing in Ukraine has become a matter of significant concern, particularly in the context of the ongoing war. Consequently, the TP Decree, which activated the application of the TPD and the Council Decision, introduced a special provision concerning dual citizens. This provision stipulates that all benefits and advantages granted to beneficiaries of temporary protection are to be extended to Hungarian citizens who possessed permanent residence in Ukraine and arrived in Hungary on or after February 24, 2022, unless they are granted more favourable treatment on account of their Hungarian citizenship.

In times of emergency, the government may issue a decree that suspends the application of certain laws, derogates from legal provisions, and takes other extraordinary measures, as provided for in a cardinal law. This legislative development is particularly relevant to TP holders, given that a substantial portion of the government decrees governing their rights have been enacted as emergency decrees. Consequently, should the state of danger not be extended, these decrees would automatically expire.

Hungary's response to migration, particularly in the context of the Ukrainian crisis, reflects a complex interplay between humanitarian obligations, economic pragmatism, and political strategy. The country has provided sanctuary to a significant number of displaced persons, yet its broader migration policies remain restrictive. Although immediate relief measures have been shown to be effective, the long-term integration remains an unresolved issue. As Hungary navigates future migration challenges, the balance between national interest and international cooperation will shape the trajectory of its policies and the experiences of those seeking refuge within its borders.

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