



Case Notes and Studies

SOCIAL COHESION IN HOST COMMUNITIES IN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIAL WORK

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Abstract

Relevance. Under conditions of large-scale internal displacement in Ukraine (3.6 million people as of October 2024), the issue of social cohesion in host communities has become increasingly important. According to the International Organization for Migration, 76% of internally displaced persons plan to stay in their new region for more than a year, which requires effective social integration mechanisms.

Methodology. A theoretical analysis of scientific research and statistical data on the integration of internally displaced persons in Ukraine was conducted. Data from the International Organization for Migration, Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, and the reSCORE project were analyzed. Social cohesion is examined through three main dimensions: cultural-territorial, state-administrative, and social capital. These dimensions encompass various aspects of social interaction, including social connections, sense of belonging, and society's ability to ensure the well-being of its members.

Results. The challenges faced by internally displaced persons have been systematized: psychological trauma (67%), employment difficulties (45%), limited access to social services (34%), problems with access to medical services (28%). Existing mechanisms for developing social cohesion during wartime have been generalized: institutional (establishment of advisory bodies), socio-economic (employment programs), social integration (creation of hubs), and communication (development of information platforms).

Conclusions. It has been established that social cohesion is not merely a theoretical construct but a practical mechanism of social work that requires a comprehensive approach to address socio-economic, socio-psychological, and cultural-communicative challenges. Through the development of inclusive practices and the formation of a common space for interaction in host communities, social cohesion serves as the foundation for social stability, promoting mutual trust and strengthening social bonds between local residents and internally displaced persons.

Keywords: internally displaced persons, host communities, social cohesion, social integration, social work.

Relevance

According to the International Organization for Migration, as of October 2024,



there are approximately 3.6 million internally displaced persons in Ukraine. The largest number of internally displaced persons are located in Dnipropetrovsk (509,000, 14% of the total number of internally displaced persons) and Kharkiv (441,000, 12%) regions in eastern Ukraine, while Kyiv (374,000, 11%) and Kyiv region (305,000, 9%) rank third and fourth respectively. About 30% (1,052,000) of registered internally displaced persons live in frontline areas.

At the same time, a significant number of internally displaced persons have settled in the western regions of Ukraine, which are considered relatively safe. Specifically, Lviv region hosts 146,000 internally displaced persons, Ivano-Frankivsk - 95,000, Vinnytsia - 106,000, Khmelnytskyi - 83,000, Zakarpattia - 66,000, Chernivtsi - 56,000, Volyn - 29,000, Rivne - 36,000, and Ternopil - 43,000.

According to the International Organization for Migration, about 76% of internally displaced persons plan to stay in their new region for more than a year, indicating their desire to integrate into these communities. However, the adaptation and integration of internally displaced persons into host communities is accompanied by significant challenges.

According to the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, 38% of local residents have a cautious attitude towards internally displaced persons (Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, 2023). Research by the International Organization for Migration found that 45% of internally displaced persons face difficulties with employment, 52% need housing solutions, 34% have limited access to social services, and 28% indicate problems with access to medical services (International Organization for Migration, 2024).

Among the biggest challenges faced by internally displaced persons are cultural and communication barriers. According to research by Palatna and Semygina (2024), 28% of internally displaced persons encounter obstacles due to language differences, 35% experience adaptation difficulties due to different cultural traditions, and 41% of respondents note significant differences in worldview orientations.

Research by Holotenko and Udoenko (2023) revealed that 67% of internally displaced persons have experienced psychological trauma related to war experiences; 43% perceive their stay as temporary, which complicates integration.

Research by Chuiko and Fedorenko (2020) emphasizes the importance of a comprehensive approach to the integration of internally displaced persons, which includes support at socio-economic, sociocultural, and personal levels, and empirically demonstrates three levels of integration of internally displaced persons: low at 12.9% of respondents, medium at 60.2%, and high at 26.9%.

Creating conditions for self-realization, employment, housing provision, and establishing communication with the community are key factors for successful integration of internally displaced persons into host communities and indicate the need to develop comprehensive integration strategies for internally displaced persons, taking

into account the identified correlations.

Methodology

Social cohesion plays a crucial role in the integration and development of host communities. Social cohesion is a multidimensional phenomenon, defined as a state of society in which its members experience a strong sense of community and belonging, ensuring stability and resilience to social challenges and conflicts. Increasing the level of social cohesion contributes to growing tolerance, reducing social inequalities, and strengthening civic responsibility.

In the context of the war in Ukraine, vertical cohesion, expressed through trust between citizens and the state, has significantly increased due to a shared awareness of existential threat. In 2023, the growth of such indicators as sense of civic duty and belonging to one's country reflects profound social transformations in Ukrainian society (Minich & Sereda, 2024). In political and academic discourses, social cohesion is examined through three main dimensions: cultural-territorial, state-administrative, and social capital. These dimensions encompass various aspects of social interaction, including social connections, sense of belonging, and society's ability to ensure the well-being of its members.

Important elements that influence the level of cohesion are mutual trust, horizontal and vertical social connections, as well as shared values and identity, which reduce social barriers and promote integration of different population groups. In the political discourse of the European Union and the World Bank, social cohesion is viewed as a means of improving quality of life, protecting rights, and ensuring social justice in society (Dovhan, 2024).

In Ukraine, social cohesion consists of various dimensions, particularly horizontal, which includes relationships between different social groups, and vertical - relationships between citizens and authorities. The development of these dimensions during wartime contributes to the stability and resilience of Ukrainian society. According to the reSCORE research, during wartime there has been a significant strengthening of both civic engagement and tolerance and cooperation in communities, which emphasizes the importance of horizontal and vertical connections for national unity (Minich & Sereda, 2024).

According to Berger-Schmitt (2002), social cohesion includes two key dimensions: reducing inequalities and strengthening social capital. In the context of internally displaced persons integration, this involves both ensuring equal access to resources and opportunities, as well as developing social connections and trust between displaced persons and local residents.

Methods. Analysis of statistical data, theoretical analysis of scientific literature on social rehabilitation of internally displaced persons in Ukraine; content analysis of regulatory and legal documents and analytical materials, systematization of obtained data and development of recommendations.



Results

Summarizing the research findings, three key groups of challenges for successful integration of internally displaced persons can be identified:

1. Socio-psychological: challenges of psychological adaptation to new conditions
2. Socio-economic: challenges of integration into the economic environment
3. Cultural-communicative: challenges of adaptation to the sociocultural context of the host community.

Understanding these challenges and their interrelationships is crucial for developing effective social work strategies aimed at increasing the level of integration of internally displaced persons in host communities. Based on the analysis of the report «Resilience and cohesion of Ukrainian society during the war» (2024), the following mechanisms for developing social cohesion during wartime can be identified (see Table 1.).

Table 1. Mechanisms for Developing Social Cohesion During Wartime

Development Mechanisms	Content
Institutional Mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● establishment of advisory bodies (volunteer councils, tripartite socio-economic councils)● development of public consultation systems● creation of support programs for internally displaced persons● implementation of international infrastructure reconstruction projects
Social and Economic Mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● employment programs for internally displaced persons● grant support for local initiatives● housing programs for displaced persons● creation of opportunities for business relocation
Social Integration Mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● establishment of integration hubs● organization of psychosocial support centers● development of public spaces● implementation of collaborative cultural initiatives
Communication Mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● development of information dissemination platforms● establishment of professional experience exchange platforms● inter-governmental coordination across administrative levels● implementation of collaborative frameworks between governmental bodies and volunteer organizations

Therefore, social cohesion functions not solely as a theoretical construct but manifests as a practical social work mechanism that facilitates the establishment of conditions conducive to the successful integration of internally displaced persons through the implementation of inclusive practices, enhancement of social connectivity, and development of collaborative spaces within host communities.

The professional competency of social workers serves as a critical determinant in facilitating effective integration of internally displaced persons within host communities, as inadequate professional preparation may substantially constrain the spectrum of support provision. In the context of insufficient professionally qualified personnel, the scope of services essential for internally displaced persons remains restricted, thus emphasizing the significance of specialized professional development for social workers. Moreover, the enhancement of inter-organizational collaboration among entities engaged with internally displaced persons proves fundamental, as coordination deficiencies may result in service redundancy or inadequate addressing of the distinct requirements of internally displaced persons (Hryhorenko & Savelieva, 2017).

Social integration complexities are exacerbated by societal stigmatization and adverse dispositions of local populations towards displaced persons, thereby generating impediments to social support implementation. Research demonstrates that resource mobilization, enhancement of professional competencies, and mitigation of social stigmatization constitute fundamental imperatives in facilitating integration support for internally displaced persons. A strategic information policy emphasizing the positive societal contributions of internally displaced persons serves as a critical component in this process. Strategic engagement with media entities and local governance structures facilitates the deconstruction of prejudicial perceptions regarding internally displaced persons and fosters inter-community comprehension and cohesion (Shestakova, 2022).

Implementation of destigmatization initiatives concerning internally displaced persons proves fundamental in cultivating positive societal dispositions within host communities. This methodological approach facilitates the development of a socially cohesive, culturally competent, and resilient society, capable of effectual integration of vulnerable population segments while ensuring provision of comprehensive support systems and self-actualization opportunities.

Conclusions

Therefore, the successful integration of internally displaced persons into host communities constitutes a multidimensional process necessitating a comprehensive methodological approach to address socio-economic, socio-psychological, and cultural-communicative challenges. Within this framework, social cohesion assumes paramount significance as a foundational element of social stability, facilitating the cultivation of reciprocal trust, communal identity, and enhancement of social connectivity between indigenous populations and displaced persons. Social cohesion, functioning as an integral component of integration policy, serves a mediatory function by mitigating social tensions and discriminatory predispositions.



The development of institutional, socio-economic, integration, and communication mechanisms constitutes a critical imperative for the implementation of integration strategies. Institutional mechanisms encompass the establishment of consultative bodies, systematic public engagement frameworks, and comprehensive support programs for internally displaced persons. Socio-economic initiatives, comprising grant-based support for local endeavors and residential accommodation programs for displaced populations, facilitate economic stability and enhance self-sustainability capacities. Integration mechanisms—incorporating the establishment of integration hubs, psychosocial support facilities, and implementation of cultural initiatives—foster interpersonal connectivity and social engagement. Communication mechanisms, including information dissemination platforms and knowledge-exchange forums, ensure efficacious bidirectional communication between citizenry and governmental entities.

In light of the identified challenges and integration mechanisms, subsequent research initiatives may be oriented towards the development and efficacy assessment of specialized professional development programs for social workers across diverse geographical contexts within Ukraine. Moreover, systematic monitoring and evaluation of implemented integration strategies remain imperative for methodological refinement and optimization.

The efficacious implementation of integration policy is substantially contingent upon the mitigation of social stigmatization towards displaced populations, achievable through strategic information policies that emphasize the positive contributions of internally displaced persons to local development paradigms. Addressing the stigmatization of internally displaced persons necessitates proactive information dissemination strategies oriented towards enhancing awareness of their constructive impact on community development trajectories. Pragmatic manifestations include strategic media campaigns illuminating successful integration narratives, incorporation of internally displaced persons into local developmental initiatives, and establishment of platforms facilitating dialogue and experiential exchange. Strategic collaboration with media entities and local self-governance structures can facilitate the deconstruction of prejudicial perceptions, enhance reciprocal trust, and foster positive societal recognition of internally displaced persons within host communities.

Hence, a comprehensive methodological approach to the integration of displaced populations through the enhancement of social cohesion facilitates the development of a resilient, culturally competent, and socially cohesive society capable of ensuring equitable opportunities for societal participation among all constituent members. This underscores the imperative of cultivating professional competencies among social work practitioners, as insufficient professional preparation may substantially constrain the spectrum of support provision. The effective integration of internally displaced persons into host communities necessitates specialized professional development of social workers, emphasizing intercultural communication proficiency, comprehensive

understanding of regional socio-economic resource allocation, crisis intervention communication protocols, and foundational principles of psychosocial support provision. Such professional competencies enable social work practitioners to not only facilitate direct intervention services but also to establish comprehensive support networks for internally displaced persons within communities, thereby promoting efficacious adaptation and integration processes.

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СОЦІАЛЬНА ЗГУРТОВАНІСТЬ В ПРИЙМАЮЧИХ ГРОМАДАХ У КОНТЕКСТІ СОЦІАЛЬНОЇ РОБОТИ

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Анотація

Актуальність. В умовах масштабного внутрішнього переміщення в Україні (3,6 млн осіб станом на жовтень 2024 року) питання соціальної згуртованості в приймаючих громадах стає дедалі актуальнішим. За даними Міжнародної організації з міграції, 76% внутрішньо переміщених осіб планують залишатися в новому регіоні більше року, що вимагає ефективних механізмів соціальної інтеграції.

Методологія. Проведено теоретичний аналіз наукових досліджень та статистичних даних щодо інтеграції внутрішньо переміщених осіб в Україні. Проаналізовано дані Міжнародної організації з міграції, Київського міжнародного інституту соціології та проекту reSCORE. Соціальна згуртованість розглядається через три основні виміри: культурно-територіальний, державно-адміністративний і соціальний капітал. Ці виміри охоплюють різні аспекти соціальної взаємодії, включаючи соціальні зв'язки, почуття приналежності та здатність суспільства забезпечувати добробут своїх членів.

Результати. Систематизовано проблеми, з якими стикаються внутрішньо переміщені особи: психологічна травма (67%), труднощі з працевлаштуванням (45%), обмежений доступ до соціальних послуг (34%), проблеми з доступом до медичних послуг (28%). Узагальнено існуючі механізми розвитку соціальної єдності у воєнний час: інституційні (створення дорадчих органів), соціально-економічні (програми працевлаштування), соціальної інтеграції (створення хабів), комунікаційні (розвиток інформаційних платформ).

Висновки. Встановлено, що соціальна згуртованість є не просто теоретичною конструкцією, а практичним механізмом соціальної роботи, який потребує комплексного підходу до вирішення соціально-економічних, соціально-психологічних та культурно-комунікативних викликів. Завдяки розвитку інклюзивних практик і формуванню спільного простору для взаємодії в приймаючих громадах соціальна згуртованість служить основою соціальної стабільності, сприяючи взаємній довірі та зміцненню соціальних зв'язків між місцевими жителями та внутрішньо переміщеними особами.

Ключові слова: внутрішньо переміщені особи, приймаючі громади, соціальна згуртованість, соціальна інтеграція, соціальна робота.

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