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Civic identity and migration decisions of university students in wartime borderlands of Ukraine


Identidad cívica y decisiones migratorias de estudiantes universitarios en zonas fronterizas de Ucrania en tiempos de guerra

Bohdanna Hvozdetzka <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2240-3508>
bogdankauafm@gmail.com


Candidate of Sociological Sciences, Associate Professor, Department of Law, Sociology and Political Science, Drohobych Ivan Franko State Pedagogical University, Drohobych, Ukraine

Nataliia Varha <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6607-2969>
nataliya.varha@uzhnu.edu.ua


Doctor of Sociological Sciences, Professor, Department of Sociology and Social Work, Uzhhorod National University, Uzhhorod, Ukraine

Olena Bartosh <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6733-5516>
olena.bartosh@uzhnu.edu.ua

Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences, Professor, Department of Sociology and Social Work, Uzhhorod National University, Uzhhorod, Ukraine

Marian Tokar <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8426-4481>
marian.tokar@uzhnu.edu.ua

Doctor of Sciences in Public Administration, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology and Social Work, Uzhhorod National University, Uzhhorod, Ukraine

Oksana Ivats <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5575-5767>
ivats_oksana@ukr.net

Candidate of Sociological Sciences, Associate Professor, Department of Management and Innovative Development of Education, Zakarpattia Institute of Postgraduate Pedagogical Education, Uzhhorod, Ukraine

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Abstract

The article aims to study the youth's life orientations in borderlands under martial law in Ukraine. The loss of territory, economic capacities, and human resources due to the destabilization of the social situation, military operations, and the occupation of several borderlands affect the potential development opportunities of Ukraine. In wartime, universities have become a center of social stability, psychological



support, and national integration. Their role in forming a sense of belonging, supporting professional self-determination, activating civic position, and preventing youth migration is key to preserving the country's human capital. Systematic support of university education is considered a strategic priority of state policy in the war period. The study results were obtained from students interviewed during the second and third years of wartime. The situation has influenced the formation of youth civic identity, and the vast majority of students feel proud to be a citizen of Ukraine. 39.9% of students plan to stay and work at the borderlands after graduation. The main reasons for migration are low wages and poor prospects for the future. Still, a very high percentage of potential migrants pursuing further education or better job opportunities, and those who have not made the decision yet are observed.

Keywords: borderlands, civic identity, migration, youth, wartime.

Resumen

El artículo busca estudiar las orientaciones vitales de los jóvenes en las zonas fronterizas bajo la ley marcial en Ucrania. La pérdida de territorio, capacidades económicas y recursos humanos debido a la desestabilización social, las operaciones militares y la ocupación de varias zonas fronterizas afecta las oportunidades de desarrollo de Ucrania. En tiempos de guerra, las universidades se han convertido en un centro de estabilidad social, apoyo psicológico e integración nacional. Su papel en la formación del sentido de pertenencia, el apoyo a la autodeterminación profesional, la activación de la posición cívica y la prevención de la migración juvenil es clave para preservar el capital humano del país. El apoyo sistemático a la educación universitaria se considera una prioridad estratégica de la política estatal durante el período de guerra. Los resultados del estudio se obtuvieron de estudiantes entrevistados durante el segundo y tercer año de guerra. La situación ha influido en la formación de la identidad cívica de los jóvenes, y la gran mayoría de los estudiantes se sienten orgullosos de ser ciudadanos ucranianos. El 39,9% de los estudiantes planea quedarse y trabajar en las zonas fronterizas después de graduarse. Las principales razones de la migración son los bajos salarios y las malas perspectivas de futuro. Aun así, se observa un porcentaje muy alto de migrantes potenciales que buscan mayor educación o mejores oportunidades laborales, y aquellos que aún no han tomado la decisión.

Palabras clave: fronteras, identidad cívica, migración, juventud, tiempo de guerra.

Introduction

Societal changes at the local and global levels need to be considered when studying youth as a social category. The Global Risks Report (2021, p.11) provides the top ten global risks in the short term (0–2 years) with youth disillusionment rated at the 8th position (36.4%). Among medium-term risks (3–5 years), the top ten include rupture of interstate relations (50.7%), and interstate conflicts (49.5%).

The growth of migration under the globalization influence has strengthened its role in societies actualizing the need to coordinate efforts to solve problematic situations related to migration. This confirms the growing attention to migration processes on the part of the authorities, scholars, politicians, and entrepreneurs. The globalization of social and economic processes and the war in Ukraine have become the basis for the outflow of the working population, leading to a decrease in the creative, intellectual, and innovative development potential of Ukraine's regions. The youth from the borderlands face the negative consequences of globalization and war in the form of growing inequality.

In wartime, the issue of migration becomes super important as the outflow of the most active and educated young people can significantly impact the transformations in Ukraine. New latent factors and tools for weakening national security appear. One of them is the activation of the conflict and migration potential of the border areas, which can also be used to further destabilize the social and political situation in the country.



Military conflicts and their consequences destructively impact the education system. War destabilizes the educational process, creates an unsafe environment, and causes challenges to students, educators, and society as a whole. The impact of military actions is displayed in the psychological traumatization of educational process participants, disruption of social ties, migration, and forced resettlement. The full-scale war of Russia against Ukraine has significantly transformed all spheres of public life, including the higher education system. In the face of constant security threats, economic instability, and humanitarian crises, universities have acquired a new meaning – not only as academic institutions, but also as an environment of social support, national consolidation, and strategic development.

Thus, of particular interest is obtaining an answer to the question of the life orientations of the youth at borderlands in martial law conditions. In light of these factors, this study focuses on the migration potential of the student youth in the borderlands of Ukraine.

The hypothesis is based on the assumption that the borderlands (in our case, the western borderland of Ukraine) can accumulate significant destabilization potential, in particular, for migration. Accordingly, constant monitoring of migration stability in the region is a necessary component of ensuring national security in terms of threats preventing or overcoming.

Literature review

According to the KOF Globalization Index (2021), Ukraine is not a powerful subject of globalization and is mentioned among the peripheral states due to both the level of its social and economic development and the role of the state within the cutting-edge world political "game of events and influences" (Friedman, 2012). Nevertheless, the war against Ukraine has tragic consequences for the global economy. It creates extremely negative messages for interaction and has a particular negative impact on the security of supply (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2024).

Social transformations, political conflicts, wars, demographic growth, technological changes, etc. have always been accompanied by the displacement of people. Yuskiv (2009, p.7) argues that next to such defining spheres of human activity as financial, investment, and information globalization strengthened and changed, an important place is occupied by international migration, primarily labor.

Bobyr (2018), Khilkevych & Kudlai (2023), Riznyk et al. (2024) single out the complex consequences of the impact of globalization on Ukraine in wartime conditions, namely: the increase in labor migration of the population of Ukraine following the military actions on the territory of the state, the decrease in the competitiveness of domestic products at the international market, and the substitution of the development of certain branches of the national economy in favor of imported supplies.

Ukrainian borderlands are administrative territories along the state border of Ukraine with 7 states: Russia (Donetsk, Luhansk, Kharkiv, Sumy, and Chernihiv regions), Belarus (Chernihiv, Kyiv, Zhytomyr, Rivne, and Volyn regions), Poland (Volyn, Lviv, and Zakarpattia regions), Slovakia and Hungary (Zakarpattia region), Romania (Zakarpattia, Ivano-Frankivsk, Chernivtsi, and Odesa regions), and Moldova (Chernivtsi, Vinnytsia, and Odesa regions). The rhythms of the borderland population significantly differ from central regions. Residents of the borderlands are socially mobile and enterprising.

Cross-border integration and mobility are usually explained through the number of cross-border interactions and concentrate mainly on physical borders. Two types of cultural processes are localized on the borderlands: crystallization of oppositions and mutual adaptation of interaction practices. Addressing these issues requires better governance of border regions, wider application of place-based approaches, removing mental and administrative barriers, and mainstreaming the territorial cooperation agenda into other programs (European Commission, 2022).

Novotný & Böhm (2022) claim that it is extremely important to keep border regions as attractive areas, sometimes people stay there just because they have a chance to work on the other side of the border or profit from the proximity of neighbors in a different way.

In the conditions of military operations in the border regions, the centripetal movement of the human and social capital of young people to the centers of gravity (megacities of neighboring countries) takes place. At the same time, a particular social portrait of young people is shaped in such peripheral regions in the new frame of social interaction and the use of social resources built on multiculturalism, and cross-border movements. Hvozdetzka et al. (2022) claim that this can be reflected in a new frame of multiculturalism (in the intensification of the study of Czech, Hungarian, Polish, Romanian, Slovak, and other languages; in a different light presentation of historical and cultural events important in neighboring countries), and within the cross-border financial practices. A critical number of young individuals leave Ukraine in search of way better employment possibilities, high wages, good medicine, and education. Thus, Ukraine loses an able-bodied population capable of working for its benefit.

The military operations against Ukraine have significantly accelerated all these processes. The migration of the intellectual elite takes place, leading to the destruction of the intellectual potential of the nation. These elements of the social portrait of Ukraine's population on the borderlands require much attention. Ignoring such trends can lead to negative and irreversible processes for Ukrainian statehood, and national security. The levers of young people retention in the Motherland are to be formed by high living standards and attractive working conditions, opportunities to grow and develop.

Under conditions of war, mechanisms of effective social-pedagogical activity in the educational environment require a comprehensive approach to functioning, namely a combination of psychological, pedagogical, and social support; flexibility and adaptability of activities with the possibility of changing curricula depending on the situation. Thus, social-pedagogical activity is reoriented on mental health recovery, social adaptation, and leveling up cohesion in the educational environment. Cohesion in the educational environment becomes the basis for a stable, safe, and supportive educational environment, contributing to the adaptation, development, and preservation of the mental health of educational process participants.

Thus, we are in favour of view of Bybyk & Savelchuk (2023), who identify the following main aspects of cohesion in the educational environment: (i) psycho-emotional support, which creates an atmosphere of trust, mutual assistance and security, reduces the level of stress, anxiety and fear; (ii) prevention of social isolation or inclusion in learning and socialization of people who have experienced trauma, lost their homes, or loved ones; (iii) formation of values of cooperation and responsibility through joint activities, e.g., volunteering, collective events, trainings, allowing educational process participants to learn to support each other, participate in community affairs, and develop a civic position; (iv) strengthening self-governance, as collective participation in solving of various issues in the activity of an educational institution through student self-government activates a sense of involvement, and responsibility; (v) community restoration as cohesive educational teams can become centers of local community renewal, organizing assistance to those in need, educational work, and cultural initiatives.

Methodology

In 2022, with the beginning of the invasion of Ukraine, the main task of Ukrainian higher education institutions was to provide security, assistance, and support to their students. Drohobych Ivan Franko State Pedagogical University is located in the Western part of Ukraine, namely in the Lviv region, a rear area with no active hostilities, however, hit by missile attacks with significant destruction of infrastructure.

The study results were obtained from a large sample database of students interviewed under a sociological study entitled "Sociological portrait of a Ukrainian first-year student in wartime: a comparative analysis". The online anonymous individual questionnaire involved first-year students of five faculties of Drohobych Ivan Franko State Pedagogical University (Lviv region, borderland of Ukraine): Faculty of Physics,



Mathematics, Economics, and Innovation Technologies; Faculty of Ukrainian and Foreign Philology; Faculty of History, Pedagogy and Psychology; Faculty of Primary Education and Arts; and Faculty of Human Health and Natural Sciences.

Interviews took place during the second and third years of wartime in Ukraine: February 25th – March 12th, 2023, and February 20th – March 5th, 2024. The specific research tasks addressed the study of identity issues of freshmen, the dynamics of their plans after completion of studies, and the migration attitudes over a time interval of one year.

General 2023 population: 619 freshmen. The 2023 sample size involved 410 respondents, in particular: 74.8% females and 25.2% males all aged 17 – 18 years; 71.4% of budgetary and 28.6% of contract form of education. General 2024 population: 566 freshmen. The 2024 sample size involved 338 respondents, in particular: 74.4% females and 25.6% – males all aged 17 – 18 years; 72.3% of budgetary and 27.7% of contract form of education. Method of sample formation: random.

We tried to understand the students' moods and feelings, their involvement in public and political life, as well as to assess how much students were capable of adapting to the learning process in war conditions, and their migration attitudes.

Quantitative monitoring research was conducted using an online survey using the Google Forms tool. The tool was chosen based on the prevailing conditions since the educational process took place in a mixed form - online and offline. The questionnaire consisted of an introductory part with the message on the purpose and instructions for filling out the questionnaire, as well as guarantees and assurances regarding the anonymity and confidentiality of the survey. It was noted that the system did not collect or record the email addresses of survey participants, the data obtained would be used only in a generalized form for research purposes, and the answers were valuable for developing a strategy to support students. The questionnaire included the following blocks of questions: adaptation and the learning process; public and political block; feelings and moods of students; plans and migration moods. The survey met the requirements of complete anonymity of the study, as the questionnaire did not contain questions on any personal information that could potentially identify students. It ensured complete confidentiality and contributed to providing honest and unbiased answers. Students were informed of the right to refuse to participate in the survey or to answer.

Results and Discussion

The answers to the question "Who do you feel you are first of all?" illustrate a critical increase in 2024 within the rate of those who consider themselves as citizens of Ukraine, namely from 42.6% in 2023 to 65.4% in 2024. At the same time, there is a critical diminish in the reactions concerning the feeling of being a representative of one's nationality (Table 1).

Table 1.

Who do you feel you are first of all? (%)

	2023	2024
A representative of the ethnic group, nationality	52.1	17.2
A citizen of Ukraine	42.6	65.4
A resident of the region I live in	2.2	2.9
A citizen of Europe	0.3	0.8
A citizen of the world	2.2	3.4
Other	0.6	10.3

During the war, an increase in the respondents' feeling of belonging to Ukraine as an independent state and, accordingly, a decrease in national belonging takes place. This is an unambiguously positive dynamic

that speaks of a marker of the unity of the state and the preservation and regaining of its territorial integrity. The war is the main crystallizer of Ukrainian civic identity and other variants of territorial or national identity occupy a marginal or auxiliary place. The main markers of civic identity are language (mandatory use of it in the official sphere, in the system of education and activities of mass media, etc.), state symbols (anthem, flag, coat of arms of Ukraine), calendar of holiday dates (which commemorate significant events in the history of Ukraine, its outstanding persons), the Armed Forces (military actions in the country contribute to the self-organization of individuals, unite belonging to one state as "we", thereby support a single system of values, beliefs, ideas on the state, one's country, oneself as a member of the political and social community, relegating national identity to the background with its ethnic content).

The answers to the question "Has war influenced the formation of your civic identity?" demonstrate a 4% decrease in feeling proud to be a citizen of Ukraine. 21% of 2024 respondents do not feel any changes in belonging to their civic identity (Table 2).

Table 2.

Has war influenced the formation of your civic identity? (%)

	2023	2024
I do not feel any changes in belonging to my civic identity	8.3	21
I feel less proud to be a citizen of Ukraine	0	1.3
I feel more proud to be a citizen of Ukraine	91.7	77.7

In 2021, the first response to the question "What does a Ukrainian currently think about Ukraine?" was "sadness". That is, the war brought the society not even from a passive, but from a depressed state. Today, such emotions as indifference and shame toward Ukraine are practically absent. Feeling of sadness and fear for the state's future explain the slight decline in feeling proud to be a citizen of Ukraine among young people. Nevertheless, despite the constant tension and negative emotions, young people feel pride in their native country and retain faith in victory and a bright future. That undoubtedly leaves a big mark on the national portrait of Ukrainians and will become the basis for the further transformation of society.

Practically, there are no significant changes in the students' responses regarding their plans to stay working in the borderland region after graduation. Still high percentage of students (43.4%) cannot decide on a strategy for the plans (Table 3). Part of them, potentially, consider a scenario of moving abroad. Here the duration of the war, the conditions of its course, and possible consequences for the border regions are to be taken into account. The picture and prospects of the plans can change depending on numerous factors, but the main one is the war.

Table 3.

Do you plan to stay and work in your region after graduation? (%)

	2023	2024
Yes	42.5	39.9
No	15.3	16.8
Don't know	42.2	43.3

The percentage of respondents willing to migrate permanently has decreased by 2.4% (Table 4).

Table 4.

After graduation do you plan to migrate abroad in pursuit of further education or better job opportunities? (%).

	2023	2024
Yes, I plan to migrate abroad permanently	7.9	5.5
Yes, I plan to migrate for a longer period, but I don't want to live abroad permanently	16.5	16.3
Yes, I plan to migrate for a shorter period	15.6	16
Don't know	47	46.2
I don't want to	13	16

Respondents who have decided to migrate after graduation provide the following reasons for it: low wages, no prospects, and no possibility for professional development (Table 5). Within the answers to this question, there are more financial prerequisites for relocation, though the survey takes place during wartime. It appears that some kind of getting used to the war has taken place. The respondents become more worried about economic issues.

Table 5.

Reasons for migration (%).

	2023	2024
Low wages	20.6	18.9
No perspectives for the future	14.3	16.4
No possibilities for professional development	10.5	8.4
Insufficient chances for a decent standard of living	9.2	8.8
Lack of job opportunities	8.6	5
No possibilities for personal development	7.0	10.9
Everyone migrates	3.5	4.2
Provinciality prevails	2.9	2.1
Lack of entertainment, feeling bored	2.9	1.7

Among those respondents who plan to migrate to other countries, the USA predominates. This implies long-term migration, i.e. at least a year or more, possibly leading to the respondents' non-return. Poland is selected as the second-rated country for migration (Table 6). With Poland, this is where the shared historical, national, and cultural traditions of the borderland come into play.

Table 6.

The country of possible migration.

#	Country	%
1	the USA	16
2	Poland	8
3	Germany	5.5
4	Czech Republic	5
5	Canada	4.2
6	Italy	3.8
7	Great Britain	3.4
8	Spain	2.9
9	France	1.3
10	Israel, Slovakia, Lithuania, Japan, Hungary, Croatia, South Korea, Turkey

Bartosh (2021) claims that student age is a period of character formation and stabilization, of the most dynamic development of moral and aesthetic feelings, mastery of the full complex of social roles of an

adult: civil, professional, and labor, etc. It is amid this period the economic activity of an individual, the inclusion in independent production activity, and the beginning of a labor story begin.

Gurba (2008) contends that student age is one of the foremost imperative life periods, being the age of an individual's social maturity prime.

Student years are also characterized by an intensive transformation of motivation, the entire system of value orientations, and the formation of special abilities in connection with professionalization. Therefore this age becomes the central period of the formation of character and intelligence. In general, student age is characterized by the achievement of the highest, "peak" results based on all previous processes of biological, psychological, and social development.

The issue of migration of young people is important, especially in Ukraine. The military operations against Ukraine significantly accelerated migration processes. Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, more than 14 million Ukrainians (almost a third of the country's population) have left their homes. 3.7 million remain internally displaced persons and more than 6.5 million Ukrainians are scattered around the world as refugees (The International Organization for Migration, 2024).

Security dangers proceed to pressure on Ukrainians, who live permanently in a state of forced search for a possible country for migration. In addition, the critical rearrangement of the procedures for crossing the border and getting the status of temporarily displaced persons from Ukraine influences the demographic situation in Ukraine.

Although 4.5 million have returned home from either abroad or displacement within the country in the cases of circumstance escalation, still 18% of Ukrainians may choose to migrate abroad for the period of the war (Gradus Research Company, 2024). As for youth aged 18–24 years:

- 22% consider such a possibility;
- 48% won't consider such a possibility.
- 30% – would like to, but there are restraining factors (lack of money to move; social obligations; lack of stable work and income in the desired country of relocation; unfamiliar language; unfamiliar environment; lack of acquaintances, and connections in the desired country of relocation; can't leave a relative/partner, etc. of military age; personal or family members health issues; lack of travel skills).

The probability of youth aged 18–24 years moving to another country permanently is the following: 21% consider such a possibility, 22% – would like to, but there are restraining factors, and 57% won't consider such a possibility (Gradus Research Company, 2024).

Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (2022) conducted the all-Ukrainian public opinion survey "Omnibus". By the indicators of national and citizen Ukrainian identity, the vast majority of the population consider themselves first of all as citizens of their country (Table 7; Table 8).

Table 7.

Who do you feel you are first of all? (distribution by regions, %).

	West	Center	South	East
A resident of the village, district, or city you live in	2.6	5.5	5.4	6.3
A resident of the region you live in	2.3	1.0	0.2	2.0
A citizen of Ukraine	85.6	84.1	86.3	80.7
A representative of the ethnic group, nation	7.0	2.6	1.4	1.5
A citizen of the former Soviet Union	0.1	0.8	1.3	2.3
A citizen of Europe	1.2	1.6	1.9	1.5
A citizen of the world	0.8	2.2	2.3	5.2
Other	0.0	1.1	0.6	0.5
	0.4	1.1	0.6	0.0

Table 8.*Who do you feel you are first of all? (distribution by age, %).*

	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70+
A resident of the village, district, or city you live in	5.0	4.1	2.4	7.3	5.4	5.0
A resident of the region you live in	1.6	0.7	1.5	1.8	1.5	0.7
A citizen of Ukraine	81.7	85.9	89.9	85.9	84.0	78.1
A representative of the ethnic group, nation	5.1	3.9	2.4	1.0	1.1	7.1
A former Soviet Union citizen	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.6	2.1	3.2
A citizen of Europe	2.5	1.3	2.0	1.1	1.1	1.3
A citizen of the world	3.7	2.2	1.6	1.6	3.5	0.9
Other	0.4	0.6	0.2	0.3	0.7	1.5
Don't know	0.0	0.9	0.0	0.4	0.7	2.3

The results of the survey "Independence Day of Ukraine: the path to victory, the identity and value of the state against the war background" conducted by Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives (2023a) demonstrate that if the referendum on Ukraine's state independence is to be held today, the absolute majority of Ukrainians (82%) will stand for Ukraine's independence, in particular – 94% in the West of the country, 68% and 70% – in the South and East, respectively. Against – 3% in the country as a whole, with less than 1% in the West, and about 7% in the East. Support for independence has reached its highest point. The absolute majority of Ukrainians (almost 89%) feel proud of their citizenship with 95% in the Western, 90% Central, and 89% Southern macro-regions, slightly less in the East of Ukraine (76%).

Rating: Sociological Group (2023) researches Ukrainians' opinions on their feelings, patriotism, attitudes towards the language, and the vision of Ukraine's future. Among the main feelings, the respondents specify: pride (74%), sadness (43%), fear (17%), outrage (13%), joy (10%), shame (7%), interest (5%), and indifference (1%). The respondents, residing in Ukraine, feel more proud. The displaced people overseas feel pity and fear. Pride is felt more by the older respondents, pity and fear – by middle-aged individuals. The respondents, who speak Ukrainian or two languages, mention more often the feeling of being proud. Sorrow is noted more often by those who speak Russian.

Concerning the feelings of patriotism, the interviewees choose to speak Ukrainian (45%), donate, and volunteer (46%). Approximately a third understand patriotism as being on the front, residing and working in Ukraine, and more than a quarter – being fascinated by the history of Ukraine. Buying Ukrainian goods, consuming Ukrainian content, and engaging in public activities are chosen by 9-14% of respondents, attending Ukrainian church – 6%, knowing the anthem – 4%, wearing Ukrainian symbols – 3% (Rating: Sociological Group, 2023).

The respondents currently residing in Ukraine choose to stay, work, and do business in Ukraine. Displaced people abroad, on the opposite, choose the alternatives to donate and volunteer, to be engaged in social activities, and to consume Ukrainian goods and content. Communicating in Ukrainian is considered similarly patriotic for both interviewees in Ukraine and refugees overseas (Rating: Sociological Group, 2023).

For the younger generation, patriotism is performed in donating and volunteering, serving at the front, being fascinated by the history of Ukraine, and being engaged in social activities. For the middle-aged – to work and do business in Ukraine, and for the older ones – to stay and reside in Ukraine. Ukrainian-speaking interviewees more regularly specify communication in Ukrainian as a sign of patriotism whereas Russian-speaking interviewees more regularly mention working and doing business in Ukraine (Rating: Sociological Group, 2023).

The survey on the "Results of 2023: public opinion of Ukrainians" (Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation, 2023b) demonstrates that war affects the daily life of the absolute population majority (95%),

61% of whom define this influence as decisive. War defines the lives of people regardless of their age. Only among young people (18–29 years old), the share of those strongly impacted by war is lower than in other age groups. But even among young people, this indicator reaches 54%.

The integrity of the state of Ukraine and its future advancement to a great extent depends on the young people as tomorrow they will take a driving part in social processes. Young individuals, having high mental potential, and the capacity to see the future in new paradigms, characterized by mobility and adaptability, can impact the social processes, and determine the future trajectory of social improvement.

The borderlands of Ukraine are characterized by intense contact between ethnic groups, which produces unique identities and identification practices – it is an environment of double and complex identity. At Ukraine's peripherality, dual identity at the local level turns into dual loyalty. Zhurba and Shkilna (2023) claim that the formation of civic identity among the student youth becomes an urgent task of modern education, aimed at involving young people in nation-building processes and active public life. The civic identity of an individual is an important determinant of its semantic horizon, which is determined by identification with the civic community, the state, culture, and language. Important characteristics of civic identity in the vertical plane is the level of respect and trust in authorities. In the horizontal plane – in fellow citizens, as well as pride in the country, a sense of national dignity and patriotism, and readiness to defend the country.

Civic resilience reflects national character and solidarity in everyday life and within the conditions of war and post-war times, the ability to stand up for hostile ideology and informational impacts. In this way, the formation of civic identity among higher education students is to be based on: civic values, historical truth and historical memory, national self-awareness and national dignity, democracy, self-organization, and patriotism.

The results of our survey, conducted at the western borderland of Ukraine correlate with the results of nationwide surveys.

Universities in times of crisis serve as a safe environment where students can find academic and psychological support. Joint activities within volunteer initiatives, project activities, and cultural events, develop a sense of belonging to the academic and national community. A sense of belonging is closely related to the concept of identity, and therefore to the ability to withstand challenges and maintain internal motivation to act. The cohesion of the academic community is manifested in supporting internally displaced persons and organizing the educational process in crisis conditions. Universities, as an environment for interpersonal interaction, contribute to the integration of students from different regions and social groups. Universities launch mentoring programs, career counseling, and internships in the public sector or public organizations. Thus, an active citizen, capable of contributing to the country's restoration, is formed. Universities actively involve students in volunteering, supporting the Armed Forces of Ukraine, organizing information campaigns, holding public hearings, and conducting debates. This position has a long-term impact, laying the foundations of a democratic society. In addition, universities offer training according to the "glocal" model – globalized education with an orientation to local needs, which contributes to the retention of youth in the regions (Kremen, 2023).

Youth migration intentions are often associated with the loss of a sense of security and prospects. A university that ensures the continuity of the educational process, access to international programs, psychological support, and social guarantees is a powerful means of reducing the risks of educational and labor migration (UNESCO, 2023). In times of war and new challenges, Ivan Franko Drohobych Pedagogical University implemented important humanitarian initiatives. In the first days of military aggression, students and educators set up a volunteer center, which coordinated the organization of international humanitarian aid (receiving, sorting, and distribution of food and hygiene products); the collection of funds and medicines for the needs of the Armed Forces of Ukraine; the weaving of camouflage nets and production of trench candles; the provision of psychological assistance to internally displaced persons; the training in providing first aid; the joint activities with the Drohobych community; the organization of information support.



Educators, ensuring cohesion in the educational environment, were focused on preventing psychological traumatization of educational process participants, preventing social ties disruption, migration, and forced resettlement. (Ivan Franko Drohobych Pedagogical University, 2022; Working for victory, 2024c). Participants of the scientific circle "Student Volunteer Practices in the Educational Environment" became the initiators of the event "Box of Warmth for the Armed Forces of Ukraine" aimed at collecting necessary things for soldiers, in particular: coffee, tea, socks, dry gels for hands and feet, energy drinks, sweets, cookies. The most valuable items in the boxes of warmth were handmade postcards and letters from students with gratitude to soldiers (Ivan Franko Drohobych Pedagogical University, 2024a). By their initiative, the students implemented the charitable project "Franco-drone" to purchase FPV drones to support the Armed Forces of Ukraine (Ivan Franko Drohobych Pedagogical University, 2024b).

Conclusions

It is difficult to underestimate the social significance and importance of the study results since the preservation of social and political stability is one of the key national interests of any state, and even more so of Ukraine, which is in a state of war de facto. The loss of territory, economic capacities, and human resources due to the destabilization of the social and political situation, military operations, and the occupation of several border regions affect the potential and development opportunities of the Ukrainian state.

Identifying potential and real risks of destabilization of the social and political situation in the borderlands, prevention, and reduction of the level of conflict in society also impact the social and economic dimension. Social stability improves the investment attractiveness of the region, relieves social tension, contributes to the development of the tourism industry, and a stable flow of funds to the state treasury. It prevents the mass outflow of the labor force abroad.

The functioning of the border is a valuable source for research. Social, ethnic, electoral, and, in particular, migration factors can be used to destabilize the situation not only at the borderlands. They can also lead to a full-scale war with global consequences. The arsenal of hybrid means of destabilization includes inciting interethnic enmity, the language issue, interfering in the election process, initiating separatist movements, manipulating public consciousness, and creating an atmosphere of uncertainty and fear. Therefore, the monitoring of the impact of the specified factors on the national security of the state should be carried out constantly, based on relevant scientifically based tools.

In wartime, universities as academic institutions also become a center of social stability, psychological support, and national integration. Their role in forming a sense of belonging, supporting professional self-determination, activating civic position, and preventing youth migration is key to preserving the country's human capital. Systematic support and modernization of university education is considered a strategic priority of state policy in the war and post-war periods.

The results of the study are based on a sample database of surveyed students of a higher education institution during the second and third years of the continuing war in Ukraine. According to the study results, the vast majority of students have a strong feeling of being citizens of Ukraine, and there is a significant decrease in the responses regarding the feeling of being a representative of one's nationality. The war in Ukraine has influenced the formation of youth civic identity and the vast majority of students feel proud to be a citizen of Ukraine. 39.9% of students plan to stay and work in the borderland region after graduation. Among the main reasons for migration are low wages and poor prospects for the future in the borderland region. Still, a very high percentage of those who plan to migrate abroad in pursuit of further education or better job opportunities for a longer or shorter period, and those who have not made the decision yet are observed.



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