

Understanding the Role of Sociocultural Influences on Entrepreneurial Activities: a Study of Ukrainian Women War Refugees in Poland

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Abstract

Purpose: The aim of the article is to identify the socio-cultural determinants of entrepreneurial activities of Ukrainian refugee women in Poland. The manuscript points out the complexity of the phenomenon of entrepreneurship as an important element of economic adaptation of women experiencing migration and presents the results of empirical research.

Design/methodology/approach: the research conducted was exploratory in nature, carried out using qualitative methods. Two focus group interviews were conducted with 16 female respondents.

Findings: The analysis of the collected research material reveals the multidimensionality of the socio-cultural aspects of the entrepreneurial activities of Ukrainian refugee women in Poland, particularly highlighting such factors as the value system, entrepreneurial traditions, risk propensity, social relations and entrepreneurial competences.

Research limitations/implications: despite significant findings regarding the importance of socio-cultural determinants of the development of entrepreneurial activities of Ukrainian refugee women in Poland, the presentation of the perspective of one group, as well as the cultural context, may be a limitation of the research conducted.

Originality/value: The data obtained were classified into groups of factors stimulating and blocking the entrepreneurship of Ukrainian refugee women. In addition, the results of the research made it possible to present a fairly wide spectrum of pro-entrepreneurial initiatives that can provide recommendations for aid organisations, institutions working for the adaptation of persons in a migratory situation, as well as employers who employ these persons.

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Keywords: socio-cultural determinants, entrepreneurial activities, Ukrainian female war refugees, focus group.

JEL: M10, J61, O15

Zrozumienie wpływu czynników społeczno-kulturowych na działania przedsiębiorcze: badanie ukraińskich uchodźczyń wojennych w Polsce

Streszczenie

Cel: celem artykułu jest identyfikacja społeczno-kulturowych uwarunkowań działań przedsiębiorczych ukraińskich uchodźczyń w Polsce. W manuskrypcie wskazano na złożoność zjawiska przedsiębiorczości jako istotnego elementu adaptacji ekonomicznej kobiet doświadczających migracji oraz zaprezentowano wyniki własnych badań empirycznych.

Projekt/metodologia/podejście: badania miały charakter eksploracyjny, zrealizowano je z wykorzystaniem metod jakościowych. Przeprowadzono dwa zogniskowane wywiady grupowe, w których uczestniczyło 16 respondentek.

Wyniki: analiza zebranego materiału badawczego ukazuje wielowymiarowość społeczno-kulturowych aspektów przedsiębiorczych działań ukraińskich uchodźczyń w Polsce, w szczególności zwraca uwagę na takie czynniki, jak: system wartości, tradycje przedsiębiorczości, skłonność do ryzyka, relacje społeczne i kompetencje przedsiębiorcze.

Ograniczenia/wnioski z badań: mimo istotnych ustaleń dotyczących znaczenia społeczno-kulturowych uwarunkowań rozwoju przedsiębiorczych działań ukraińskich uchodźczyń w Polsce, ograniczeniem prowadzonych badań może być prezentacja perspektywy jednej grupy, a także kontekst kulturowy.

Oryginalność/wartość: wyniki badań pozwoliły sklasyfikować czynniki społeczno-kulturowe w grupy czynników stymulujących i blokujących przedsiębiorczość ukraińskich uchodźczyń. Ponadto pozwoliły zidentyfikować szerokie spektrum inicjatyw proprzedsiębiorczych mogących stanowić rekomendacje dla organizacji pomocowych, instytucji działających na rzecz adaptacji osób w sytuacji migracyjnej, a także pracodawców zatrudniających bądź planujących zatrudnić ukraińskie uchodźczynie.

Słowa kluczowe: uwarunkowania społeczno-kulturowe, działania przedsiębiorcze, ukraińskie uchodźczynie wojenne, grupy fokusowe.

1. Introduction

The phenomenon of escalating population migration has taken a global character. This determines a number of changes both among the host society and the settling migrants. Since 2014, Poland has seen an increase in the number of Ukrainian citizens, their migration was mostly economic in nature. After the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, the situation changed rapidly. According to data published by the border guard, from 24.02.2022 to 18.11.2023, more than 17.194 million people were cleared from Ukraine to Poland, while in the opposite direction the number was 15.398 million people (300Gospodarka, 2023). Fear of oppression and hostilities has determined millions of people to flee and seek the so-called UKR status – war refugee with temporary protection in Poland. A survey report conducted in November 2022 and published in 2023 by the National Bank of Poland

indicates that migrants from Ukraine settling in Poland are mostly women (approximately 70% of the total respondents). Women dominate both among refugees (approximately 80%) and pre-war migrants (approximately 54%) (National Bank of Poland, 2023). With prolonged migration, the issue of economic adaptation of the experiencing migration is gaining importance, with entrepreneurship in the sense of starting a business and other forms of professional activity being its main targets. According to Brieger and Gielnik starting a new business has a positive effect on the immigrant entrepreneur (e.g. through socio-economic integration) and can also evoke positive societal effects within the host country (Brieger & Gielnik, 2021). One of the main challenges facing refugee host countries is to ensure financial independence and subjectivity for newcomers (Ganassin & Young, 2020). An important form of labor market integration is employment or the creation of new businesses (Predojevic-Despic & Lukic, 2018; Kooli & Muftah, 2020). According to the Polish Economic Institute, since the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, the number of business activities established by Ukrainian citizens in Poland has been steadily increasing (Businessinsider, 2023). In 2022, Ukrainian citizens opened around 16,000 businesses in Poland, and in the first half of 2023 another 14,000. The upward trend started after the outbreak of war in Ukraine (Polish Economic Institute, 2023). The context of settlement changed from economic immigration to war immigration, linked to the special protection of Ukrainian refugees, regulating, among other things, employment and the possibility of running their own business. Every sixth Ukrainian citizen in Poland (17%) is considering opening a business in Poland (or is already doing so). Every third respondent considering opening their own business in Poland plans to operate in the service sector (33%) (State Agency for Enterprise Development, 2023, p. 20). A significant percentage in this group are women. According to data in the Central Register and Information on Economic Activity from March 2022 to January 2023, Ukrainian women represented 41% of the registered companies (Businessinsider, 2023), which makes them an attractive subject for research on the entrepreneurship of foreigners settling in Poland. The phenomenon of entrepreneurship itself is the result of many complex economic, legal, social, cultural, etc. factors, which include both challenges and opportunities (Duan, Kotey, & Sandhu, 2023). The key to success lies in understanding the factors and accessing appropriate support and resources. In particular, factors of a cultural nature, grown out of the values, beliefs, attitudes and norms of behavior emerge as an interesting aspect of entrepreneurship research covering the field of activities at the crossroads of different cultures. As Dabić et al. (2020) argue, the concepts of cultural embeddedness and cultural context analysis provide a natural base for research on immigrant and minority entrepreneurship. It is also indicated by the findings of Shahraki and Heydari (2019), Steensma et al. (2000) or Dauletova and Al-Busaidi (2022). In our research, it is overlaid by another dimension – the migration

of women. The changing migration context of Ukrainian women – from economic immigration of a voluntary nature to refugeeism of a forced nature, determined the choice of the research subject. Our study is therefore an attempt to fill in a gap in the existing research on the socio-cultural determinants of entrepreneurship among Ukrainian refugee women in Poland, thus responding to the calls by other authors, such as Volery (2007), regarding the fact that research on immigrant entrepreneurship should take into account the changing nature of migration or Dabić et al. (2020) pointing out that national contexts pose a significant challenge for research on migrant entrepreneurship, as well as Brush and Cooper, 2012; Henry et al, 2016; Rashid and Ratten, 2020, indicating the need for a more in-depth, insightful and inductive approach to the study of women's entrepreneurship. It is worth noting that the phenomenon of refugee reception in Poland (and on such a large scale as in the case of refugees from Ukraine) is a relatively new phenomenon, as is the refugeeism of women of Ukrainian origin. And although they are becoming an increasingly frequent subject of research (Pędziwiatr & Magdziarz, 2022; Andrews et al., 2023; Duszczyk & Kaczmarczyk, 2022; Długosz, 2023), the entrepreneurial aspect has so far received little attention. Hence, the article fills the research gap on the topic of entrepreneurial activities undertaken by Ukrainian refugee women in the atypical situation for them, emphasizing the importance of cultural and social factors. The theoretical analysis presented in the article is illustrated by an empirical study. We adopt an exploratory approach to capture and discuss the contextual factors that influence entrepreneurship of Ukrainian refugee women in Poland. The empirical contribution of the article relates to answering the research questions posed:

- What are the key socio-cultural determinants affecting the entrepreneurship of Ukrainian refugee women in Poland?
- Which factors stimulate and which factors block the development of entrepreneurial activities?
- What actions/initiatives are needed to develop entrepreneurship among Ukrainian refugee women in Poland?

Seeking an answer the above questions, the research was conducted in the form of two focus group interviews with a purposively selected research sample. Consequently, the research presented in the article provides insight into Ukrainian refugee women in Poland's understanding of entrepreneurship and also allows for the identification of the socio-cultural determinants of their entrepreneurial activities. In both the theoretical and empirical parts, the study identifies factors that stimulate and block entrepreneurial activities of Ukrainian refugee women in Poland. In addition, it allows for the identification of measures that will enable the development of entrepreneurship in the group of women. The collected results thus contribute to the expansion of knowledge in the area of three intersecting yet underdeveloped strands of literature: refugee entrepreneurship, women's

entrepreneurship and socio-cultural determinants of entrepreneurship. In addition to adding content to previous research in the area, our study provides useful practical implications related to the development of entrepreneurship among Ukrainian refugee women. The remainder of the article is as follows. Firstly, the theoretical rationale for the importance of socio-cultural determinants of entrepreneurship is presented, focusing on the specific subject of war refugee women from Ukraine who have settled in Poland. An attempt was also made to classify the factors, identifying those which stimulate and block the development of entrepreneurship. On the basis, an empirical research framework was developed and a methodology was presented. Subsequently, research results and discussion are presented. The final part of the manuscript contains conclusions regarding theoretical and practical implications, limitations and future research paths.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Migrant Entrepreneurship and its Determinants

Entrepreneurship can be defined in a number of ways – as the perception of business opportunities and the readiness to benefit from them, the search for all the necessary factors that enable production and economic activity and the development of the strategies needed to optimize the opportunities, and as a certain process of actions directed, under given conditions, to the use of innovative ideas to generate benefits in the market or to the development of a new enterprise or venture (Sułkowski, 2022). Eckhardt and Shane (2003) and Chmielecki and Sułkowski (2017) point out that entrepreneurship is not only about the actions of an individual, but also about the potential inherent in the culture of a society that can stimulate or constrain it. According to Wronka-Pośpiech and Kraśnicka (2010), out of the many strands of research output on the essence of entrepreneurship, focus on the role of the subject, i.e. the entrepreneur, the exposure of the process of creating new ventures (including new organizations) and the focus on the process of discovering/creating and exploiting entrepreneurial opportunities stand out quite clearly. Based on the assumption that entrepreneurship is a basic condition for development, it should be seen as a process in which individual factors, such as entrepreneurial attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control, are in constant interaction with each other and influence entrepreneurial intentions and the influence entrepreneurial behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Kurczewska, 2010; Rachwał & Wach, 2016; Rueda et al., 2010).

The discussion of migrant entrepreneurship draws attention to its specific characteristics. It is due to the institutional, economic and socio-cultural context in which the processes take place. As Glinka (2018a, 2018b) argues, their complexity is, at least potentially, greater, as the host country context is overlaid with knowledge, rules, habits and norms of behavior brought from

the country of origin. Meanwhile, entrepreneurial processes are an important part of economic adaptation, which is crucial in the adaptation of people in a migratory situation in the host country. It affects both the migrants' living conditions and their propensity for social integration, creating a certain feedback loop with, for example, cultural adaptation. According to Budyta-Budzyńska (2011, pp. 50–51), adaptation in the economic dimension can take place in four different ways:

- 1) complete withdrawal from the labor market or employment in an immigrant company,
- 2) under-qualified work, described in the literature as “3D” (dull, dirty, dangerous),
- 3) a job in a profession, compatible with one's qualifications, which involves knowledge of the language of the host society,
- 4) a job offering a promotion not possible in the home country.

The first solution involves the use of welfare assistance and indicates poor adaptation skills, a kind of marginalization from the local community. A common economic adaptation of migrants (reported in the initial stage of settlement) is also the performance of low-paid work, with low social prestige and below qualifications. For people in a migratory situation, the third and fourth options indicated by the author are particularly desirable. They are largely related to individual predispositions to learn, build social capital and entrepreneurial behavior, which can play an important role in their professional activity (including the propensity to open businesses), in the new place of settlement, form the basis for professional development also (if not especially) among those experiencing migration. According to Evansluong et al. (2019), when migrants perceive themselves as socially excluded and/or discriminated against in the labor market, they are more likely to try new business ventures in their host countries. Migrants' entrepreneurship can be a key factor in their labor force participation, also in the nature of starting their own business in their new place of settlement. However, entrepreneurship of people in a migrant situation is determined by a number of factors, both external and internal. Livanos (2009) and Piróg (2014) pay particular attention to factors such as individual characteristics of the person, social capital/social conditions, competence-qualification potential (education and experience) and external conditions (macroeconomic context). Czapińska (2020), on the other hand, emphasizes the importance of external conditions, especially economic and social conditions and conditions understood as individual characteristics of the person, his/her education and experience. Proponents of the cultural perspective point to the importance of socio-cultural factors for the development of entrepreneurship. They include the system of values and norms, traditions of entrepreneurship in a given society, attitudes towards entrepreneurial attitudes, the family model, competences and social trust capital (Hryń, 2003). The social context in which individuals are immersed influences their personal motivations,

knowledge, intentions and actions (Ismail et al., 2022). Accordingly, entrepreneurial decisions may be influenced by the values that dominate the social context in which they are involved (Hayton et al., 2002; Pinillos & Reyes, 2011). Hence, the social value structure of the cultural environment may play a significant role in explaining the entrepreneurial activity of its members (Ortega Irizo et al., 2020). Indeed, culture shapes cognitive maps of individuals, programming behavioral patterns that are consistent with the cultural context (Hofstede, 2003; Gadomska-Lila, 2016). According to Ortega Irizo et al. (2020), culture can influence the entrepreneurial spirit through two main mechanisms. Firstly, a supportive culture leads to social legitimacy, making the entrepreneurial career more valued and socially recognized, thus creating an enabling institutional environment. Consequently, more people try to start a business, regardless of their personal beliefs and attitudes. Secondly, the so-called pro-entrepreneurial culture leads to more people displaying psychological traits and attitudes that are compatible with entrepreneurial activity (Liñán et al., 2011; Davidsson, 1995). Consequently, more people seek to become entrepreneurs (Mueller & Thomas, 2001). According to Sahin, Nijkamp and Baycan-Levent (2007) the cultural, social and psychological attributes of migrants can influence their entrepreneurial behavior, but to some extent and in different ways (2006). They can be either enabling or hindering in nature, which is sometimes referred to in the literature as “push and pull” (Bhoganadam, 2015). Socio-cultural factors determining entrepreneurial activities of people in a migratory situation relate to both the cultural inventory of migrants and the social conditions in the new place of settlement. The change in the nature of migration from voluntary to forced migration due to warfare may influence the reinforcement of certain determinants of refugee entrepreneurship.

2.2. Determinants of Entrepreneurship for Ukrainian Women War Refugees

Under the law on assistance to Ukrainian Citizens in Connection with the Armed Conflict on the Territory of Ukraine (Official Gazette, 2022), the legal provisions concerning the Ukrainian minority have been significantly liberalized. People declaring to have fled the hostilities and arriving in Poland after 24 February 2022 have gained the right to employment without the need for a work permit, as well as the right to open and operate their own businesses. The factor seems to have significantly fostered increased entrepreneurial aspirations among Ukrainian migrants, the majority of whom are women. Czaplińska (2020) draws attention to the relevance of the spatial scale in considering the entrepreneurial process, which may vary not only due to the individual’s characteristics and experience and the socio-economic processes taking place in their environment, but also due to the diversity of the space in which the individual functions. Transferring the assumptions to the subject matter of the research, the subjective ways of perceiving

entrepreneurship, growing out of experiences in the home country – showing the social and cultural optics of the outlook on running a business, as well as the current sense of empowerment, of responsibility for one's own economic situation – become interesting. In the context of the migration, individuals often have to cope with dissonance resulting from their experiences, inflated expectations, deprofessionalization, which in practice requires demonstrating resourcefulness, acquiring new professional qualifications and/or economic education to match the opportunities of local labor markets. According to a report by the Polish Agency for Enterprise Development, half of the war refugees working in Poland (51%) admit that the job they have taken does not match the qualifications they have acquired (PARP, 2023). A significant obstacle to take up a job in line with qualifications among migrants from Ukraine is the lack of recognition of diplomas and the difficult (lengthy and costly) procedures for their nostrification. As reported by Lazarczyk-Bilal and Glinka (2021), the prevailing view in academic discourse is that it is more difficult for refugees to start a business than for economic migrants. One of the reasons cited for the situation is the lack of strong social networks, which is an interesting issue in the context of the situation of Ukrainian migrants in Poland (Hargrave, et al., 2023). It is worth remembering that the sudden increase of refugees (mainly women), is preceded by years of intense economic immigration. In practice, it may imply an ambiguous residency situation and migration intentions of Ukrainians. According to Lazarczyk-Bilal and Glinka (2021), unlike economic migrants who built long-term migration chains, refugees cannot use strong social networks to establish themselves in the host country. Moreover, they can neither return to their country of origin nor benefit from transnational linkages useful for potential economic activity. They are accompanied by a high degree of uncertainty about their future stay in the host country, and it may affect their propensity to become self-employed (Fuller-Love et al., 2006; Portes et al., 2002; Gold, 1988). In addition, refugees are much more likely than economic migrants to perceive obstacles to starting a business in the host country, such as a lack of investment capital, bureaucracy (Wauters & Lambrecht, 2006), or a lack of confidence and belief in self-efficacy (Zhao et al., 2005; McGee et al., 2009).

Research on women's entrepreneurship suggests that migrant women face greater obstacles than men when starting a business, problems in raising start-up capital and benefiting from relationship networks, resulting in a lower percentage of women-owned businesses (Brieger & Gielnik, 2020; Lazarczyk-Bilal & Glinka, 2021). Socio-cultural determinants seem to play a particular role here, as economic activity is still strongly influenced by social stereotypes that determine the division of labor and social gender roles (Szepelska, 2017). Traditional perceptions of women as mothers and caretakers of the household often reinforce a scenario in which a migrant woman does not enter the labor market and the job holder is

a man (Lazarczyk-Bilal & Glinka, 2021; Aure, 2013; Andrejuk, 2018). This may be common especially among migrants coming from societies with traditionally perceived gender norms (Abadli et al., 2020). In patriarchal societies, socio-cultural factors also significantly influence the construction of social networks that are so important for entrepreneurial development. It is more difficult for women entrepreneurs to develop effective networks as they have limited access to them (Kalafatoglu & Mendoza, 2017). Women's entrepreneurial motivations and intentions may also be influenced by gender roles and stereotypes (Perez-Quintana et al., 2017; Guo & Werner, 2016). Research suggests that higher levels of entrepreneurship, including female entrepreneurship, can be observed in countries where public perception reinforces the position a society gives to its entrepreneurs and whether people perceive entrepreneurship as an attractive career choice (Chhabra et al., 2020).

3. Research Design

Empirical research has been carried out to identify socio-cultural determinants of entrepreneurial activities of Ukrainian refugee women in Poland. Due to the exploratory nature of the research, as well as sensitivity to possible cultural differences which may manifest themselves, e.g. in different ways of understanding and defining concepts, the research was carried out using qualitative methods. Issues included in the research questions were the subject of the study, in particular issues concerning values, beliefs about gender roles, family, and running a business, which may constitute a socio-cultural inventory of the women surveyed that is transferable to entrepreneurial attitudes and behavior from Ukraine to Poland. In addition, issues concerning education, competences possessed, including language and social competences influencing the building of social capital of refugee women were of interest. In order to understand the attitudes, motivations and assessments made by refugee women, it was decided to use a focus group interview (Gawlik, 2012). It made it possible to find out the answers to the questions in the form of certain generalizations specific to the representatives of the minority under study. Reaching for memories, making reflections and interpreting each other's information, characteristic of the method, helped to obtain the broadest possible picture of the research subject. Moreover, referring to the migration experience and the current situation of Ukrainian refugee women, makes the subject of the study and the subjects themselves "vulnerable", and it is precisely focus group interviews that are often used to explore topics considered "sensitive" among groups perceived as potentially vulnerable (Barbour, 2011). The authors were also mindful that when using the method, one of the potential problems is to create group interactions that are engaging for both the researcher and the respondents. Indeed, the success of the

data collected depends on a lively and well-directed discussion between the participants (Berrondo, 2023). In the interest of obtaining valuable research material, the authors attempted to reach as large a group of Ukrainian refugee women as possible. However, due to the high sensitivity of both the subject and the object of the research, reaching a large research group was significantly hampered. Consequently, two focus group interviews were conducted, in two cities in the West Pomeranian Voivodeship – Stargard with 66,900 inhabitants and Szczecin with 391,600 inhabitants (Poland in Numbers, 2022), where there are thriving refugee support centers in the north-western Polish region. It was sufficient to achieve a saturation effect and reveal direct suggestions about the socio-cultural determinants of entrepreneurship. The research was conducted in May 2023. Interviews were arranged at facilities implementing aid activities for migrants and refugees from Ukraine. Participants were a purposive sample selected among the women reporting to the mentioned institutions, among others, to take part in various adaptation meetings and consultations. The total number of female respondents was 16, 8 in each group. The survey conducted in a smaller city showed a more difficult situation for women's economic adaptation. They all declared the length of their stay in Poland to be about 18 months, but during the time (at the time of the interview) only one of them had found permanent employment as a cleaner, one a casual job as a tutor, while the others described themselves as not working. Similarly, in the survey in a larger city, all women had been in Poland for 18 months or slightly less, and five of them had been employed. Respondents with tertiary education predominated in the study groups with 12 respondents and the remaining four had secondary education. All of them arrived in Poland after 24 February 2022 and were granted the status of a war refugee (UKR). All female respondents had worked professionally in Ukraine and four had experience of running a business. In Poland, all of the female respondents who were employed performed work below their professional qualifications. Detailed characteristics of the female respondents are provided in Table 1.

The research procedure was the same in both groups. One of the authors moderated the interview by asking questions based on a scenario in Polish. It served as a kind of signpost to deepen the knowledge of socio-cultural factors related to entrepreneurship among Ukrainian refugee women, including: understanding of the concept of entrepreneurship, the system of norms, values and traditions of entrepreneurship, acceptance of risk, understanding of entrepreneurial competences specific to a given nationality and situating oneself in relation to the aforementioned, as well as social relations. Questions were asked in Polish and translated into Russian by a cultural consultant present during the interviews. The choice of language was dictated by the researcher's experience of the Ukrainian citizens' language skills, i.e. not everyone is fluent in Ukrainian, but everyone speaks Russian very well. Both the researcher and the cultural consultant

Table 1
Overview of interviewees' characteristics

name	age	education	residence status	length of stay in Poland	occupation/work carried out in Ukraine	occupation/work carried out in Poland	length of employment in the current workplace
Focus Group 1							
Karina S1	40	higher	war refugee	approx. 18 months	accountant	not working	–
Larysa S2	39	higher	war refugee	approx. 18 months	economic engineer	not working	–
Tetiana S3	30	higher	war refugee	approx. 18 months	teacher	not working	–
Tetiana S4	38	higher	war refugee	approx. 18 months	Salesman-consultant	not working	–
Tetiana S5	41	higher	war refugee	approx. 12 months	lecturer in English	tutor	approx. 12 months
Larysa S6	42	medium	war refugee	approx. 18 months	seller	not working	–
Ludmila S7	40	higher	war refugee	approx. 18 months	economist	cleaning in the nursery	approx. 18 months
Olga S8	56	higher	war refugee	approx. 18 months	electronics engineer	not working	–

Table 1 – cont.

name	age	education	residence status	length of stay in Poland	occupation/work carried out in Ukraine	occupation/work carried out in Poland	length of employment in the current workplace
Focus Group 2							
Iryna Z1	49	secondary technical	war refugee	approx. 12 months	shoe factory worker	office cleaning	approx. 5 months
Viktoriiia Z2	40	higher	war refugee	approx. 18 months	paramedic	paramedic	approx. 4 months
Tetiana Z3	38	higher	war refugee	approx. 18 months	bank employee	not working	–
Lidiia Z4	52	secondary technical	war refugee	approx. 18 months	a glover in a factory	not working	–
Nadiia Z5	51	higher	war refugee	approx. 6 months	entrepreneur	cleaning	approx. 4 months
Oksana Z6	44	higher	war refugee	approx. 18 months	entrepreneurial assistance	not working	–
Alona Z7	39	medium	war refugee	approx. 1 month	company employee	employee	approx. 1 months
Nataliia Z8	34	higher	war refugee	approx. 18 months	psychologist	cultural consultant, psychologist	approx. 15 months

were interculturally competent and showed great sensitivity, also in the context of working with war refugees. Interviews were recorded, transcribed and analyzed using deductive and thematic coding. The collected material was categorized according to a key dividing responses in the area of socio-cultural determinants of entrepreneurship, including the dominant system of norms and values, entrepreneurial traditions, attitudes to risk and failure, entrepreneurial competence and social relations.

4. Findings

The collected research material made it possible to identify the socio-cultural determinants of entrepreneurial activities undertaken by Ukrainian refugee women settling in Poland after the outbreak of war in 2022, and furthermore to classify them into two categories – factors favoring and hindering entrepreneurial activities. The starting point was to identify how the respondents understood the concept of entrepreneurship itself. It is significant that all the women interviewed were in agreement on how they define and understand entrepreneurship. They inextricably link the concept with running their own business, financial independence and the freedom that comes from not having superiors. The remaining data is structured according to five concepts identified during the research, related to socio-cultural factors concerning entrepreneurial activities, i.e.: declared norms and values concerning entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial traditions in a given society, acceptance of risk and tolerance of failure, characteristics of entrepreneurial competences, as well as social relations and feelings of trust towards entrepreneurial activities and entrepreneurs (and sometimes also related to feelings of security in the new country of settlement). The results presented here relate to all identified aspects. They have been categorized as factors that favor entrepreneurial activities and those that hinder such activities. What is particularly conducive to entrepreneurial activities of Ukrainian refugee women in Poland is the vision of financial gain. Indeed, the financial aspect is very important to them and is a key value. The desire to improve their standard of living is so strong in them that they declare that they are willing to work long and hard, even at the expense of family and leisure time. It can be assumed that this is rooted in Ukrainian culture, as, according to the respondents, Ukrainian people are capable of making sacrifices when properly motivated. Moreover, in Ukrainian culture, entrepreneurs are ascribed a high status – they inspire admiration and even envy. It could even be heard in the tone of voice of the female respondents. The very prospect of benefits associated with maintaining close contacts, acquaintanceships with people running their own businesses is attractive.

A factor conducive to the entrepreneurial activities of the surveyed refugee women is the perception of Poland as a country where doing

business is transparent and honest, and where society and the authorities are open and supportive. It is of particular importance given their experiences in Ukraine, where, according to the women, there is a lack of support from state authorities, and corruption and illegal practices force entrepreneurs into various informal and even illegal activities. A great support for decisions related to entrepreneurial activities is the presence of husbands for the women interviewed. It includes financial support as well as motivation and encouragement for professional development. An important impetus for the entrepreneurial activities of the female respondents is their competences and especially their attitudes, such as a sense of responsibility for both their own and their family's fate, resulting from the experienced migration situation. Most of the female refugee respondents describe themselves as resourceful and determined to stabilize and improve their situation. It is also evidenced by the activities they undertake, including learning Polish language, seeking and making use of assistance offered by institutions such as a district employment office or aid organizations, as well as seeking employment and making use of opportunities that arise. Participants in the survey declare a desire for further learning and development. They mostly perceive Poland as a country of greater opportunities and perspectives, as well as challenges, also in terms of economic adaptation.

The analysis of the gathered material also revealed some socio-cultural factors that hinder entrepreneurial activities and actions of Ukrainian refugee women. One of them is the perception that entrepreneurial activities incur huge physical and psychological costs, which most of them are not yet ready for. The mentality of Ukrainian mothers, who, through the prism of their life in Ukraine and the norms and customs prevailing there, perceive motherhood (especially in the first three years of the child's life) as an obstacle to any professional activity, may also be a problem. The migration situation forces them to change their attitude, but they lack support in their parental duties from their relatives. The patriarchal family model prevalent in Ukraine, in which child-rearing rests mainly with the woman, appears as a significant barrier. Professional activity is a heavy burden due to an excess of responsibilities and the need to combine social roles.

The ambivalent attitude towards honesty, the way of dealing with official matters and other practices to which Ukrainians have become accustomed in their home country may also be a specific impediment to the implementation of possible entrepreneurial activities in Poland. There were differences of opinion among the women interviewed regarding the promotion of entrepreneurial people in Ukrainian culture. On the one hand, there were statements suggesting support and even admiration for such people, while on the other hand, female respondents said about annoyances experienced from friends and social envy. In the new place of settlement, they are accompanied by a lack of self-confidence, as well as fear of risks, unfamiliarity with regulations and related fears of the Tax Office or Border

Table 2
Summary of focus group findings

Code	System of values and norms	Traditions of entrepreneurship in a given society	Risk acceptance and failure tolerance	Entrepreneurial competencies	Social relations and trust
Factors that foster entrepreneurial activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • very high importance of financial factors • desire for a better standard of living 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • prospects of financial benefits associated with maintaining contacts with people running their own businesses • Ukrainian entrepreneurs are accompanied by admiration, but also envy, for the fact that they have succeeded in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • importance of the husband by the side as an important support, while at the same time the woman's desire for professional development • differences in openness to such challenges between Poles and Ukrainians – the perception that in Poland people are not afraid to open businesses and are more open to such activities • belief that having a financial background offsets the difficulties of starting a business 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • resourcefulness • cleverness • responsibility for one's own migration situation • sense of empowerment, knowing "what I can do and how I can do it", knowing the purpose for a job, using language, looking for the assistance of the District Labor Office • openness to participate in adaptation workshops • determination to improve one's situation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • it is worth maintaining relationships with entrepreneurial people to have acquaintances and take advantage of discounts and discounts resulting from these contacts • appreciation of people who run big businesses, especially if they share their profits, for example, with the weak (charity work) • perception of Poland as a more developed country, open to entrepreneurial people

Table 2 – cont.

Code	System of values and norms	Traditions of entrepreneurship in a given society	Risk acceptance and failure tolerance	Entrepreneurial competencies	Social relations and trust
Factors hindering entrepreneurial activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> running a business is associated with making money, but at the cost of lack of free time, high stress and physical and mental effort ambivalent attitude to honesty, e.g., concealing part of income having young children – lack of care (family and friends helped in Ukraine) conviction that running a business involves lack of state support and the need to “play the game” lack of a clear position on the honesty of banks providing services to entrepreneurs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> patriarchal model of the family and the associated excess of responsibilities resulting from the need to combine professional roles with the role of wife and mother lack of a clear position on supporting entrepreneurial people in the culture of Ukraine discouragement of entrepreneurial activities they faced in Ukraine, demotivation by the environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> fear of risk fear of tax authorities, border guards lack of self-confidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> no recognition of diplomas lack of opportunity to practice one’s profession age 50+. ignorance of the law lack of knowledge about the rules of running a business in Poland (how/where to start a business), lack of counseling in this area unfamiliarity with the market lack of knowledge, e.g. how to promote their activities, on what terms to sell your services lack of self-confidence lack of knowledge how to effectively seek employment in Poland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> illegal practices of larger companies blocking activities of smaller ones in Ukraine fear of war may be holding Ukrainians and Ukrainian women back from entrepreneurial activities fear of the cost of living and operating in Poland little social capital

Table 2 – cont.

Code	System of values and norms	Traditions of entrepreneurship in a given society	Risk acceptance and failure tolerance	Entrepreneurial competencies	Social relations and trust
Desired activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> personal development workshops cultural adaptation workshops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> cultural adaptation workshops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> support for Ukrainian women's entrepreneurial activities (information, education to reduce fear of risk) education about possible financial support for foreign entrepreneurs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> professional development courses free Polish language courses (also at higher levels) opportunity to supplement professional knowledge and recognition of diplomas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> use of trusted advisors to help you set up your businesses helping to build social capital with business people advertising activities supporting foreigners' entrepreneurship in immigrant groups on FB, assistance centers, distribution of leaflets near Lidl and Biedronka stores publicizing successes
Examples of statements by interviewees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "(Ukrainians) are ready to work day, night and even without a weekend to earn money", "they want fast, less effort, more money" [Tetiana S4]. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "In our region it is often the case that the man works abroad and the woman runs the house" [Natalia Z8]. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "In Ukraine, we are still like under communism, where everyone was supposed to be equal" [Tetiana S5] – i.e., a focus on collective preference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "We feel more responsible for ourselves and our family here" [Natalia Z8]. "I was an engineer in Ukraine, and here I don't work in my 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Here in a new country, it's scary to start something" [Natalia Z8]. "The war makes us think that it can also come here and we don't know what

Table 2 – cont.

Code	System of values and norms	Traditions of entrepreneurship in a given society	Risk acceptance and failure tolerance	Entrepreneurial competencies	Social relations and trust
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “There is a saying: you want to live, you need to be witty” [Lidia Z4]. • “Authorities force to cheat and get something for them” [Viktorija Z 2]. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “In our region there are still such stereotypes: the woman sits at home with the child. There is no such partnership. Although it's better now, young people are more (partnered).” [Tetiana S3]. • “here [in Poland] there is such a simple way, i.e. you produce, sell, pay out; in Ukraine you have to make something out of nothing”, “the problem is that you don't know what to expect tomorrow.” [Lidia Z4]. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rather than individual action. • “In Poland, running a business is associated with legality, compliance with laws, etc. (so it is better to run in Poland)” [Nadia Z5]. • “In Poland it is easier to take an honest business loan than in Ukraine” [Tetiana Z3]. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • profession (strong emotion). (There was) 500 + aid, now not. I am 56 years old and I don't have a job. In the Labor Office made a CV, I went around and spread myself, but to no avail. I don't engineer; I just don't have any job.” [Olga S8]. • “I'm putting all my efforts into finding a job. I have 5,6 websites bookmarked on my phone, and every day I search for information and look at offers. And I send my CV, but for those jobs what I send I can't find (a job).” [Tetiana S3]. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • will happen” [Nadliia Z8]. “It could be like that” [Viktorija Z2]. • “(There is a need for) more workshops where information and contacts can be exchanged” [Nadliia Z5]. • “I manage here because I live together with my sister” [Tetiana S5].

Guard, they block their motivation for increased activity and entrepreneurial activities. Among the main barriers, the participants of the study pointed out the lack of competences, such as the lack of knowledge of Polish, the lack of knowledge of the law or the lack of information on the applicable rules of social functioning, affecting the level of social and economic adaptation. The lack of recognition of diplomas and the undervaluation of education is a significant problem. Problems in finding employment and low levels of social education cause frustration and financial problems among refugee women. At the same time, they are constantly accompanied by the fear of war and that hostilities will reach Poland. This has a negative impact on their sense of security and is not conducive to entrepreneurial activities.

It clearly indicates the need for activities aimed at strengthening the entrepreneurial activities of Ukrainian refugee women and prompts the search for effective solutions in this regard.

The results gathered during the interviews on the determinants of entrepreneurial activities of Ukrainian refugee women, including cultural determinants – the dominant system of norms and values, entrepreneurial traditions, attitudes to risk and failure, and social determinants – entrepreneurial competence and social relations, with representative quotes, are summarized in Table 2. It also identifies proposed activities suggested by female respondents to strengthen entrepreneurial activities of Ukrainian refugee women. Particularly noteworthy are counselling and educational forms of support, as well as assistance in building social capital including the exchange of experiences and gaining valuable acquaintances.

5. Discussion

The results gathered confirm the importance of socio-cultural determinants for entrepreneurial action. Similar conclusions were reached by Chhabra et al. (2020) indicating the importance of the dynamic interaction of cognitive, social and cultural factors. Also, the results of Lazarczyk-Bilal and Glinka (2021) confirmed the importance of the cultural aspect, as well as the entrepreneurship model and previous self-employment. The factors seem to be particularly important for the surveyed Ukrainian refugee women in Poland. Classified as conducive and hindering entrepreneurial activities in terms of the dominant system of norms and values, the tradition of entrepreneurship in a given society, attitudes to risk and failure, entrepreneurial competence and social relations, they provided extensive knowledge in the area of socio-cultural conditions. At the same time, despite many cultural similarities, they highlighted the differences between Poland and Ukraine that are relevant to entrepreneurial endeavors. Among them is the belief in the transparency of regulations governing business and fair practices resulting from the absence of corruption, giving a greater sense of security to entrepreneurs in Poland. In addition, there is an aspect of

differences in the acceptance of risks and possible failures characteristic of entrepreneurial activities between Poles and Ukrainians. They blend in with the results of previous comparative studies of the cultures (Gadomska-Lila & Moskalenko, 2019). For example, the lower power distance that characterizes Polish culture, as compared to Ukrainian culture makes entrepreneurship more promoted, as individuals feel more independent (Hofstede, 2013). Indeed, it turns out that culture can promote specific values related to entrepreneurship. Among them, there are, especially valued by Ukrainian employees, financial factors that can stimulate entrepreneurship, as identified by Machtakova (2012) in her research. Our respondents identified the financial aspect as a particularly important value, even at the expense of time, physical and mental effort or stress. This also composes with the results of Blyznyuk (2017), who enriched the perspective of the youngest generation of Ukrainians valuing success in business and career development. Self-reliance and innovation also appear to be important values, as well as ethical behavior and the degree to which it is accepted in business. The very idea of what constitutes success in business and how to achieve entrepreneurial goals is rooted in the value system. That entrepreneurship is a values-based activity was argued by Morris and Schindehutte (2005), giving numerous examples of principles and practices within the entrepreneurial activities of migrants from Asian countries including Japan, Vietnam, China and Korea that reflected their values and beliefs.

With regard to entrepreneurial traditions and norms, it has been confirmed that in some cultures entrepreneurship is traditionally valued and developed from generation to generation. In other cultures, such tradition may be lacking. Added to this is the important role of a supportive environment, which to some extent reduces the barriers migrant women may face when starting a business (Brieger & Gielnik, 2020). Meanwhile, in Ukrainian culture, it has been perpetuated that women will be focused on the family and fulfilling domestic responsibilities. And this, as Roomi et al. (2009) conclude, may cause family obligations to dampen women's desire to see innovative opportunities and willingness to start businesses. Our findings on risk acceptance and failure tolerance, suggesting that in some cultures risk is well tolerated and even promoted, while in others it is avoided, confirm that the group of women studied tends to have a fear of risk and a fear of failure. This point is also referred to by Begley and Tan (2001) conducting research in ten Asian and Anglo-Saxon countries, indicating that shame about business failure may be a predictor of interest in entrepreneurial activity. To this catalog of constraints, based on other studies, one can also add attitudes toward the use of sources of financing – reliance on personal savings and loans from family, friends, and reluctance to use external sources of financing (Maysami & Goby, 1999; Chhabra et al., 2020). Differences in sourcing between immigrant and native entrepreneurs due to the impact of cultural context are also pointed out by Sui et al. (2015).

Across a wide range of competencies, it is pointed out that a lack of language skills, and relevant experience, can make it difficult to start a business (Dabić et al., 2020), as well as what has been studied by Lazarczyk-Bilal and Glinka (2021) and Smyth (2010) – namely the high risk of “deprofessionalisation” in the host country as a result of national entry requirements for a particular profession, lack of access to local professional networks or discrimination. It is compounded by low levels of entrepreneurial and management education, lack of training and career guidance, and limited access to information on business development (Davis, 2012; Chhabra et al., 2020), in addition to the lack of prior experience in self-employment (Wauters & Lambrecht, 2008).

In some cultures, social relationships and networks play a key role, as entrepreneurs can then rely on each other’s relationships to help them succeed. Research findings also indicate that being surrounded by entrepreneurs increases the likelihood of having entrepreneurial intentions (Wauters & Lambrecht, 2006). Meanwhile, as Lindvert et al. (2017) found, women tend to be confined to their family networks, and their networks are less diverse in composition (Renzulli et al., 2000). This is corroborated by the research of Chhabra et al., 2020, according to which entrepreneurial women often suffer from weak entrepreneurial networks and a lack of female entrepreneurial role models, as our research also showed. Polychronopoulos and Nguyen-Duc (2023), conducting a systematic review of the literature on migrant entrepreneurship in Europe, point to implications for further research in areas including the building of personal and social capital, the sharing of necessary information on entrepreneurial opportunities, and the active participation of migrants themselves in the preparation of entrepreneurial support programs. Our research confirms such a direction and reveals socio-cultural factors among Ukrainian refugee women that, with appropriate support, can significantly influence their increased entrepreneurial activities.

A clear need emerged to step up initiatives that would stimulate or allow the development of entrepreneurial activities of Ukrainian refugee women. This is especially true of educational activities, including more opportunities for free Polish language courses, workshops on the principles of running a business, providing at the same time opportunities for knowledge exchange and contacts between participants, development of knowledge on market principles, market access opportunities, etc. It is of great importance to undertake integration activities. Programs of such activities should take into account long-term needs of refugees (and immigrants more broadly). Opportunities should be created to learn and understand Polish culture, traditions, administrative structures, as well as to create and deepen social ties. In doing so, it is necessary to remember the difficult experiences that refugees have gone through and help them return to “normality”. A major role in this regard can be played by mentoring and personal support, inclusion in various spheres of life in Poland, building a sense of equality,

creating opportunities for involvement in the life of local communities, in new environments. The issue of wide dissemination of information about the activities undertaken, including in social media, aid centers and, retail chains (such as Biedronka and Lidl) often visited by the recipients of the activities, is very important.

6. Conclusions

Our study focused on the perceived importance of socio-cultural determinants for the development of entrepreneurial activities of Ukrainian refugee women in Poland. Due to the fact that previous research in this area is limited and selective, we conducted an exploratory study based on focus group interviews. The results of the study provided answers to the research questions posed. They identified key socio-cultural determinants that influence the entrepreneurship of Ukrainian refugee women in Poland. They made it possible to classify the factors into two groups: stimulating factors, including the attribution of great importance to financial incentives, determination to improve one's situation, readiness to learn, perception of Poland as a country conducive to the development of entrepreneurship, seeking opportunities for competence development, etc., and factors blocking the development of entrepreneurial activities, including difficulties in balancing social roles of entrepreneur/mother (childcare constraints), fear of risk, lack of self-confidence, lack of recognition of formal qualifications or low social capital. In addition, they identified a broad spectrum of activities and initiatives for the development of immigrant entrepreneurship. Regarding cultural determinants, they showed that cultural values such as family, community and tradition influence entrepreneurial decisions. The Ukrainian refugee women participating in the research are guided by the values, which influences their choices. In particular, the patriarchal family model determines the entrepreneurial activity of female respondents. Among cultural factors, sheer familiarity with business culture in Poland, ethical standards, customs in business relations, and adaptation to local norms and expectations are important. Also important, rooted in the culture, is the attitude to risk. The high uncertainty avoidance characteristic of Ukrainian culture corresponds with the surveyed women's fear of risk and adopting a more conservative approach for fear of failure. Among social determinants, competence and social relations, especially social acceptance, countering negative stereotypes and sensitivity to migration issues, as well as access to education and resources, play an important role.

Taking into account that the scope of research on the determinants of entrepreneurship of Ukrainian refugee women in Poland is limited, our study contributes to the development of knowledge in the aspect. Firstly, it shows how important socio-cultural factors are for refugee women's entrepreneurial activities. It shows that despite significant similarities

between Polish and Ukrainian culture, such as an adherence to social norms, concern for interpersonal relations, valuing equality, solidarity, a sense of security and belonging, it is not easy to overcome women's limitations in undertaking entrepreneurial activities. Secondly, it points to the multidimensionality of cultural aspects, especially the importance of the value system, the entrepreneurial tradition in a given society and attitudes to risk, and social aspects, especially the importance of competences and social relations. Furthermore, it contributes to the understanding that in order to develop entrepreneurial activities among Ukrainian refugee women, their difficult experiences, memories or fears cannot be ignored. At the same time, there is a need for broad initiatives to address barriers and stimulate entrepreneurship. The enrichment of the literature with the results of research on Ukrainian refugee women in Poland, including their perception of entrepreneurship and the importance of socio-cultural factors in its development, as well as the identification of activities conducive to entrepreneurial endeavors by the group of migrant women provide theoretical implications for the research presented. The collected results also indicate practical implications of our study. They are dedicated to both aid organizations and institutions serving the interests and needs of refugees, as well as to employers employing, or planning to employ, Ukrainian refugee women. They revolve around key values, competences and social networks for strengthening entrepreneurial intentions, attitudes and behaviors, consequently leading to the development of entrepreneurship understood as starting/running one's own business. Our study shows that representatives of the institutions can/should undertake a range of activities to foster entrepreneurship among Ukrainian female war refugees in Poland, particularly in the areas of education and training as well as economic and cultural adaptation. It provides guidance for policy makers in designing more effective programs to promote female entrepreneurship by taking into account socio-cultural and contextual factors related to entrepreneurship.

Despite providing various findings that we believe are important, we are also aware of some limitations. One of them is the fact that they present the perspective of one group. It would therefore be worthwhile to also explore the point of view of Ukrainian refugee women who are successfully running their own businesses in Poland. Limitations are also related to the cultural context, as the study was conducted in one cultural region (Poland). Due to the above, the results cannot be generalized. Nevertheless, they can provide a good starting point for further in-depth research and quantitative studies to test our findings.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and publication of this article

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