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## **SOCIAL ADAPTATION OF UKRAINIAN YOUTH ABROAD: OPPORTUNITIES AND LIMITATIONS**

Migration is a complex phenomenon that involves individuals or groups relocating from one place to another, often in search of better opportunities or to escape unfavourable conditions. Among those who migrate are young Ukrainians, who face various challenges and opportunities when adapting to life abroad. Understanding the process of adaptation among Ukrainian youth in foreign countries is crucial for addressing their needs and facilitating their integration into new cultural environments.

One of the main aspects of migration is adaptation to a new socio-cultural environment. Young Ukrainians who migrate abroad face various challenges and stages of adaptation, which are complex and require time and effort. A comprehensive analysis of interpersonal, social, ethnic, and cultural barriers and tensions requires social scientists to better understand the dynamics, challenges, and outcomes of sociocultural interactions and practices. Consequently, researchers from a variety of disciplines, including sociology, have been studying the sociocultural interactions between migrants and host communities. To support the data for this term paper, a sociological study was conducted on the dynamics of the stages and phases of cultural adaptation of Ukrainian migrants when entering the host society. To analyze better these complexities, the study used the research method of semi-structured interviews to collect data. The participant selection process was focused on young Ukrainians aged from 18 to 26 living abroad, and the data collected was analysed using a close description.

Thus, the process of adaptation abroad can be difficult for young Ukrainians, but at the same time it can be an important experience for personal development and international mobility. It allows young people to broaden their horizons, develop intercultural competence, acquire new knowledge, skills, and experience in a different cultural environment. The research provided information about the experience of

social adaptation of Ukrainian youth living abroad and identified key opportunities and constraints faced by young Ukrainians in a foreign environment. This understanding will contribute to the development of support systems and policies that will facilitate smoother social and cultural adaptation of migrant youth.

The first stage includes the initial understanding and expectations of immigrants about their future culture, values, and neighborhood with the host country, planning for passive social integration, i.e. they can count on the support of a wide range of people and active social integration, which includes opportunities to realise the culture, values, and environment of the host country. In particular, these are opportunities for self-realisation in certain areas of life after displacement. This stage is characterised by a cognitive comparison between the area of residence and the environment. The second stage of adaptation of Ukrainian youth abroad is the stage of emotional changes. Leaving a familiar environment, family, friends, and mother tongue can be difficult for young Ukrainians. They may experience doubts and anxiety, especially in the first months of their stay in a new country. Culture shock can also affect the emotional state of young Ukrainians. There are significant differences in mentality, customs, and values that can cause anxiety and confusion. In the third stage, when the level of integration increases, migrants – sometimes by choice, sometimes by force – become members of social groups and perform certain social roles. At first, new roles and difficulties of everyday life can be frustrating for migrants. However, as soon as immigrants begin to overcome the difficulties inherent in their socio-cultural situation, they gain self-respect and self-confidence. It should be noted that during the enhanced integration phase, migrants' reactions vary greatly, depending on their personal characteristics and accumulated social capital. The fourth stage of adaptation is the stage of socio-cultural adjustment. Young Ukrainians may face difficulties in communicating with the local population due to language and cultural differences. Learning the language of the new country and familiarizing themselves with local customs, rules of behavior, religion, and traditions are important aspects of socio-cultural adaptation. Young Ukrainians may also seek to live together with other Ukrainians and people from other countries. This can provide them with support, shared experiences, and the opportunity to understand each other. The fifth stage of adaptation is socio-economic adaptation. Young Ukrainians who move abroad may face economic challenges, such as finding a job, obtaining educational and professional qualifications, and finding a place in

the labor market. They may also face discrimination and difficulties in everyday life, such as obtaining appropriate documents, renting housing, and accessing healthcare. However, with hard work and determination, young Ukrainians can overcome these difficulties and thrive in their new country. The final stage of adaptation is integration into the new culture and society. Ukrainian youth gradually enter a new social and cultural environment, take an active part in local life, and learn local values and codes of behavior. Having passed all the previous stages of adaptation, Ukrainian youth can interact more deeply with the local community, and understand local values, rules of behaviour, and social structures. They can speak the language of the country they live in and understand local cultural differences. Integration can also include participation in local social, cultural, and sporting events, expanding social networks, and getting to know the local community [1].

The process of adaptation abroad can be challenging for young Ukrainians, but at the same time, it can be an important experience for personal development and international mobility. It allows young people to broaden their horizons, develop intercultural competence, and gain new knowledge, skills, and experience in a different cultural environment. The study showed that the younger the age of Ukrainians at the time of moving, the easier the adaptation process was for them and the faster it went. The process of adaptation is always a challenge for a person who finds himself/herself in a new environment. Ukrainian youth face numerous problems in the process of their adaptation abroad. These problems can be broadly divided into cultural, social, psychological, and economic aspects, which often intertwine and increase the difficulties of the adaptation process.

Among the cultural challenges, there are two main subtypes: language barriers and culture shock. Language is one of the most serious problems faced by young Ukrainians abroad. Adapting to a new language can be a slow and unpleasant process, making it difficult to communicate effectively and establish social ties in a new environment. Culture shock is also a common phenomenon faced by people who move to another country with a significantly different cultural background. It can be difficult for young Ukrainians to adapt to the “local” social norms, values, customs, in short, the everyday socio-cultural infrastructure, which in turn can cause feelings of isolation and alienation. The informant Oleksandr (20 years old, Berlin) draws attention to this aspect of the “socio-cultural interface” mismatch, namely, the problem of understanding some aspects of German humor and some difficulties

in communication in this regard. At the same time, adapting to different cultural norms and expectations can be challenging and may lead to misunderstandings or conflicts [2].

In terms of social challenges, discrimination and stereotyping are significant barriers to adaptation for young Ukrainians abroad. They may face prejudice or negative attitudes from the local population due to their nationality, ethnicity, or migrant status. This can manifest in various forms, such as exclusion from social groups, unfair treatment in the workplace, or even verbal or physical harassment. Discrimination and stereotyping can have a profound impact on the mental well-being of young Ukrainians, leading to feelings of alienation, frustration, and injustice.

Moreover, the lack of social support networks can exacerbate the challenges of adaptation. Without friends, family, or other forms of support in the host country, young Ukrainians may feel isolated and lonely. They may struggle to navigate the complexities of their new environment or cope with homesickness and nostalgia for their homeland. Social isolation can contribute to mental health issues such as depression and anxiety, further hindering the adaptation process [3].

Financial difficulties also pose a significant obstacle to the adaptation of young Ukrainians abroad. Limited access to employment opportunities, coupled with language barriers and difficulties in obtaining recognition for their educational qualifications and professional experience, can leave them economically vulnerable. High competition for jobs, especially during economic downturns, can exacerbate these challenges, leading to unemployment or underemployment among young Ukrainians. Financial instability can further compound feelings of stress and uncertainty, making it difficult for them to establish a stable and fulfilling life in the host country [4]. Despite these challenges, young Ukrainians demonstrate remarkable resilience and adaptability in navigating the complexities of life abroad. They employ various strategies and forms of adaptation to overcome obstacles and thrive in their new environments. These adaptation strategies include:

- Searching for self-affirmation. Young Ukrainians seek opportunities for self-fulfillment through continuous job search and exploration of different activities. By embracing change and pursuing diverse interests, they enhance their adaptability and self-esteem, ultimately fostering personal growth and resilience.\
- Self-affirmation through education. Many young Ukrainians pursue higher education or vocational training in the host country as a pathway to socio-

economic advancement. By acquiring new knowledge and skills, they increase their employability and competitiveness in the labor market, while also fostering critical thinking and problem-solving abilities.

- Adaptation through the accumulation of cultural capital. Learning the language, customs, and traditions of the host society enables young Ukrainians to better navigate their new environment and establish meaningful connections. Acquiring cultural capital reduces the likelihood of social isolation and promotes a sense of belonging and inclusion in the host community.

- Adaptation through the creation of social capital. Establishing new social ties, participating in community activities, and building support networks facilitate the integration of young Ukrainians into the host society. By fostering intercultural understanding and mutual support, social capital enhances their well-being and contributes to the development of a more cohesive and inclusive community.

In conclusion, the process of adaptation among young Ukrainians abroad is multifaceted and dynamic, characterised by various challenges and opportunities. Despite facing obstacles such as language barriers, discrimination, and financial difficulties, young Ukrainians demonstrate resilience and adaptability in navigating their new environments. By employing diverse adaptation strategies and leveraging personal strengths, they not only overcome barriers to integration but also contribute to the cultural diversity and social cohesion of their host countries. Understanding the complexities of adaptation among young Ukrainians is essential for developing effective support systems and policies that promote their successful integration and well-being in diverse cultural contexts.

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