

**“SHOULD I STAY OR SHOULD I GO?”
RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN EMOTION
REGULATION AND BASIC NEEDS SATISFACTION
OF PARENTS DISPLACED IN UKRAINE AND
ABROAD
(DURING THE FIRST 6 MONTHS OF THE RUSSIAN INVASION
OF UKRAINE)**

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ABSTRACT

Aim. The ability to regulate emotions depends on many factors, but for displaced persons, the satisfaction of basic needs is likely to be among the most important. Therefore, this study aimed at determining the degree of basic needs satisfaction and their relationship with indicators of emotion regulation in parents displaced within Ukraine and abroad due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

Methods. The study sample comprised of parents (98% of whom were mothers), aged 18-55, who fled the war from 23 different regions of Ukraine to the safer Ukrainian regions ($N = 99$) or abroad ($N = 241$). Participants answered questions about their demographics, basic needs satisfaction, and emotion regulation.

Results. There was no significant difference between parents displaced in Ukraine or abroad in access to basic resources, conditions of accommodation, medical care and emotional support, but parents abroad had better access to employment and education of their children. Parents in both groups had positive (refocused on planning, put the situation into perspective) and negative (rumination) strategies of emotion regulation. Parents who had higher level of their basic needs' satisfaction, scored higher on positive emotion regulation strategies and were less likely to experience emotion regulation difficulties.

Conclusion. Basic needs satisfaction can be considered an important protective factor for displaced persons' emotional regulation. The obtained results allowed drawing of conclusions only about people who were able to participate in the study. The problem of access to a broader target population is discussed.

Key words: emotion regulation, displaced persons, parenthood, Russian invasion of Ukraine.

INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, many people, a lot of them parents with children, had to make a difficult decision – to leave their homes. According to the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), already in the first two months of the war, about half of all Ukrainian children together with their parents (mainly mothers) were forced to leave their homes (as of March 24, 2022), of which about 5 million decided to flee abroad (UNICEF, 2022). As for the parents, traumatised by the war, torn from their familiar environment, often the only caregivers of the children, how did they cope emotionally with the experience of forced displacement? Many people in many countries of the

world responded to the growing humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, offering both personal assistance and large-scale state temporary protection programmes aimed at providing Ukrainians with temporary housing, financial help, access to medical and educational services, and jobs (European Union, 2022). This raises the questions whether (a) parents who fled abroad with their children had more chances to receive such assistance compared to those who were displaced within Ukraine and (b) to what extent did such assistance in the first six months of the war work as a protective factor and help parents' to stabilise their emotional state?

Emotion regulation is one of the indicators which reflects the degree of a person's adaptation to a crisis situation. The explicit or implicit way in which a person copes with their fear, sadness, hopelessness, despair, and excitement in a crisis is an important predictor of their job performance (De Clercq et al., 2022), quality of life, and mental health (Di Giuseppe et al., 2022; Waterschoot et al., 2022). According to systematic reviews, cognitive reappraisal and problem solving are directly correlated with levels of life satisfaction and positive affect; whereas emotion suppression, avoidance or rumination are associated with anxiety, negative affect, depression and substance abuse (Aldao et al., 2010; Hu et al., 2014). A number of authors consider emotion regulation to be a transdiagnostic factor of various psychopathologies (Aldao et al., 2010, Cludius et al., 2020). Therefore, emotion regulation can be considered a diagnostically valuable indicator of how much a person manages to adapt to a situation of prolonged war-related stress and displacement.

Emotion regulation of parents also affects the quality of the child-parent relationship, which in turn can strengthen or weaken the child's mental health problems. There are studies that have shown a relationship between parents' emotion regulation abilities and their capacity to mentalise, namely to notice their own and their child's mental states, linking them to behaviour (Schwartz et al., 2021). For example, in a study by Alysse M. Schultheis and colleagues (2019), mothers who were inclined to experience emotion dysregulation and suppress their emotions less often showed interest and curiosity in the child's thoughts and feelings, and in general were less able to notice and reflect on the child's mental state (Schultheis et al., 2019). Furthermore, parents with difficulties in regulating their emotions are less likely to have a positive relationship with their children (Shaffer & Obradović, 2017). And as it was shown in numerous studies, lack of the emotion regulation skills of parents also affects the internalised and externalised difficulties of the child (Cohodes et al., 2022; Han et al., 2016; Havighurst et al., 2020; Highlander et al., 2022; Milojevich, 2020; Zimmer-Gembeck et al., 2022). Therefore, understanding the characteristics of parents' emotion regulation allows prediction of not only parents' mental health problems, but also the quality of relationships between parents and their children and child psychopathology.

The ability to regulate emotions depends on many factors, but for displaced persons, the satisfaction of basic needs (such as conditions of accommodation, financial stability, access to health care, education, employment and emotional

support) are likely to be among the most important. According to a systematic review, the psychological functioning of persons displaced from countries affected by military actions (e.g., the former Yugoslavia, Iran, Chile, Vietnam and other) to high-income countries (e.g., Germany, Belgium, Sweden, the USA and other), significantly depended on the stability of accommodation and social support (Fazel et al., 2012). Pumariega and colleagues indicate that isolation from family and community members, or in other words lack of social support negatively affected the mental health of displaced persons (Pumariega et al., 2005). Another systematic review of the long-term consequences of war on the refugees' mental health found that, among different factors, lack of or unstable employment, lower level of education, lack of food, and poor accommodation were significant risk factors for depression, PTSD, and anxiety disorders. At the same time, one of the most prognostic factors of depression was the low post-migration socioeconomic status of displaced persons, namely lack of social support, unemployment and low income (Bogic et al., 2015). Matthew Porter and Nick Haslam (2005) in their meta-analysis summarised 56 studies between 1959 and 2002 and showed that post-migration life conditions act as moderators of refugees' mental health, namely: lower mental health scores were observed in persons who lived in shelters and had limited economic opportunities. In addition, lower indicators of mental health were more characteristic of women, older people, people with a higher level of education, and people from rural settlements. Taken together, these studies show that there is an association between the basic need's satisfaction and the mental health in the refugee communities. Moreover, gender, age, level of education, pre-displacement place of residence and post-displacement socioeconomic status can act as additional factors for the occurrence of mental health problems, probably including difficulties with emotion regulation.

Notwithstanding the previous research about the relationship between basic needs satisfaction and different mental health indicators among communities displaced by the war, not much is known about differences in the mental functioning of persons displaced within their own country or abroad. In a meta-analytic study Porter and Haslam (2005) indicate that internally displaced persons, on average, have lower mental health scores than persons who have fled abroad. This might be in part due to internally displaced persons, compared to those fleeing the country, having poorer access to basic resources such as food, hygiene products and medicine, satisfactory living conditions, employment and their children's access to education. It is likely that the failure to satisfy basic needs is an additional stress factor that affects various indicators of mental health and emotion regulation.

The reviewed literature allows us to assume a connection between the degree of basic needs satisfaction and emotion regulation in displaced persons. However, data on parents who were direct eyewitnesses of the war in Ukraine and who either decided to stay inside the country or fled abroad, remains extremely scarce. Therefore, this study aimed at determining the degree of basic needs satisfaction and their relationship with indicators of emotion

regulation in parents displaced within Ukraine and abroad due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Procedure

Data was collected during the 3rd to 6th month of the war (May-July 2022). Parents, who together with their children, had left their homes and moved to safer places in Ukraine or abroad, were invited to participate. Research materials were distributed at places of residence for displaced persons such as governmental shelters for Ukrainian refugees and different placements organised for Ukrainian refugees abroad (e.g., Ukrainian cultural centers, summer camps for Ukrainian children etc.). Potential participants were contacted personally with the help of flyers distributed at the abovementioned places or electronically by the authorities of the listed organisations after these organisations approved the study. Contact was also made through different communities of Ukrainians in social networks like Facebook or Telegram (in social network groups like *Ukrainians in Poland*, *Ukrainians in Italy* and other). The Academic Council of the Faculty of Health Sciences of the Ukrainian Catholic University approved the study design (Protocol No. 8 dated 03.28.2022) and the Ethics Committee of the University of Luxembourg approved the part of the study conducted in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg (ERP 22-068 PTS-SChildr). All participants were instructed in written form that they have right not to participate in the study and can withdraw anytime without negative consequences. No emails or personal contact information were shared with investigators. For all participant groups, the survey and its purpose were explained in detail during debriefing sessions and/or on the introduction page of the survey and participants gave their written consent. Contact details of a mental health counselling service (Psychological Help Service of the Ukrainian Catholic University accessible via social messengers) were also provided in case participants experienced distress due to the war and/or displacement and want to get professional help.

Participants

The final study sample comprised of $N = 340$ adults (98% of whom were mothers), aged 18-65 years, who fled the war from 23 different regions of Ukraine to other safer Ukrainian regions or abroad. Among them $n = 99$ were displaced within Ukraine and $n = 241$ were displaced in 28 other countries. 89% of respondents had been displaced for more than a month at the time of the survey. Those who were displaced in Ukraine and abroad did not differ in age, gender, number of children (in both groups more than 80% of mothers had 1-2 children) and the time that had passed since moving to a safer place. Among the participants who were abroad, there were significantly more people with master's and PhD degrees (Table 1).

Table 1
Characteristics of the study sample (N = 340)

	Displaced within Ukraine (%)	Displaced Abroad (%)	χ^2	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i> - value	Cohen's <i>w</i>
Age						
18-25	2	1	4.82	4	.31	.12, 95% CI [.11, .22]
26-35	35	30				
36-45	49	59				
46-55	13	9				
56-65	0	2				
Sex						
Female	95	98	1.95	1	.16	.08, 95% CI [.05, .19]
Male	5	2				
Education						
Incomplete secondary education	1	5	9.31	4	.05*	.17, 95% CI [.11, .27]
Completed secondary education/ vocational technical school	23	11				
Bachelor's degree	27	30				
Master's degree	43	50				
PhD	5	9				
Number of children						
1	49	46	3.55	3	.31	.10, 95% CI [.09, .21]
2	41	37				
3	7	14				
4 and more	3	4				
Time passed since displacement						
Couple of days	2	3	4.07	3	.25	.11, 95% CI [.09, .22]
1-2 weeks	4	2				
3-4 weeks	9	5				
1 month and more	85	91				

Note. * $p \leq .05$.

Source. Own research.

Measures

Questions about basic needs satisfaction included a list of statements about place of living and conditions (conditions of accommodation), possible duration of accommodation, access to basic resources (food, hygiene products, medicine, and clean clothing), access to medical care, education for child(ren), employ-

ment, financial situation (finances), emotional support and quality of relationship with the child(ren). Answers to some questions consisted of a list of options to choose from (e.g., living conditions: separate accommodation, accommodation with another family, dormitory/hostel/hotel or shelter). For other questions, participants chose the degree of access to the resources (e.g., emotional support: yes, rather yes, rather no, no). The list of questions together with the results of descriptive statistics and the results of comparative analysis (chi-square test, χ^2) are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Basic needs satisfaction of parents displaced in Ukraine and abroad

Basic needs	Displaced within Ukraine (%)	Displaced Abroad (%)	χ^2	df	p-value	Cohen's <i>w</i>
Conditions of accommodation						
in a separate accommodation	41	38				
in an accommodation with another family dormitory, hostel, hotel shelter	33	31	6.21	3	.10	.14, 95% CI [.09, .24]
Possible duration of an accommodation:						
need to change soon	12	17				
can stay for a few next weeks	16	13				
can stay for the next few months	58	58	1.65	3	.65	.07, 95% CI [.09, .17]
can stay for the next few years	13	13				
Access to food, hygiene products, medicine, and clean clothing:						
yes	74	87				
rather yes	23	12	8.45	4	.04*	.16, 95% CI [.09, .27]
rather no	2	.8				
no	1	.4				
Access to medical care:						
yes	57	55				
rather yes	32	37	2.55	3	.47	.09, 95% CI [.09, .19]
rather no	9	8				
no	2	.4				
Employment:						
yes	26	31				
rather yes	22	28	16.53	3	.00*	.22, 95% CI [.13, .33]
rather no	21	29				
no	30	12				

Basic needs	Displaced within Ukraine (%)	Displaced Abroad (%)	χ^2	df	p-value	Cohen's <i>w</i>
Finances:						
no money even for the necessities	11	7				
money enough only for the necessities	20	25	7.64	3	.05*	.15, 95% CI [.09, .26]
capable of buying things and renting an accommodation	62	66				
feel financially secure	7	2				
Emotional support:						
yes	35	38				
rather yes	43	35	3.65	3	.3	.10, 95% CI [.09, .21]
rather no	12	19				
no	9	8				
Relationship with child(ren):						
indifferent / disinterested	3	4				
depends / difficult to say	20	24	2	5	.8	.08, 95% CI [.12, .17]
warm / trusting	77	72				

Note. * $p < .05$.

Source. Own research.

Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (CERQ, Garnefski & Kraaij, 2007), which evaluated the frequency of positive (e.i. putting into perspective, acceptance, refocus on planning, positive refocusing and reappraisal,) and negative (e.i. catastrophising, rumination, blame of self or others) thoughts, which arose in the subjects in response to the war experience. Each of the 36 statements had to be rated on a scale from 1 (almost never) to 5 (almost always). Results for each of the 9 scales were calculated as the sum of points for separate statements. The CERQ Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficients for this study were from .66 to .87.

Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS-18, Gratz & Roemer, 2004) helped to determine the lack of emotional awareness, clarity, effective strategies, goal orientation, nonacceptance and impulsivity in participants under the influence of distressing emotions. Participants rated each of the questionnaire's statements from 1 (almost never) to 5 (almost always). There are 6 scales and overall DER. Each subscale was the amount of the points of the corresponding items. A higher index indicated greater difficulty in emotion regulation. The Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficients were acceptable for the five out of six DERS-18 subscales from .79 to .94 and for the overall DER .92. The scale of lack of awareness was the most problematic with Cronbach's alpha

coefficient of .49, this problem was also noted in the other publications (Hallion et al., 2018).

The participants were also asked about gender, age, education, number of children, place of residence before the war, place of displacement (within Ukraine or abroad, to which country) and duration of stay in a safer place (Table 1).

Data Analysis

The study was conducted using a Google form, in which all questions were mandatory, so the data of those who didn't complete the survey were not saved. Outlier detection was carried out using the procedures of descriptive statistics and box plots. Although the results of some individuals in both groups (displaced in Ukraine and abroad) could be perceived as potential outliers, they were not deleted, but considered as rare but likely responses. Robust statistics, which are resistant to outliers and other assumptions violations, were used in the statistical analysis. A comparative analysis using the chi-squared test (χ^2) criterion was applied to analyse difference in the basic needs satisfaction of persons displaced in Ukraine and abroad. A comparative analysis with Mann-Whitney U test was put in to determine difference in cognitive emotion regulation abilities and difficulties in persons displaced in Ukraine and abroad, since most of the research scales didn't fit normal distribution, however, they were characterised by homogeneous variances according to Levene's test. To determine the most pronounced among parents' cognitive emotion regulation skills and difficulties descriptive statistics were calculated. The relationship between basic needs satisfaction and emotion regulation was analysed separately in groups of persons displaced in Ukraine and abroad using the non-parametric Spearman test. All statistical analyses were performed in the program RStudio (RStudio Inc., Boston, MA, USA) using the following statistical packages *psych* v.2.1.9 (Revelle, 2021), *MOTE* 1.0.2 (Buchanan et al., 2019), and *jmv* 2.3.4 (Selker et al., 2022).

RESULTS

Basic Needs Satisfaction

Results of descriptive statistics and chi-square tests (χ^2) for parents displaced in Ukraine and abroad are presented in Table 2. Most displaced parents who took part in the research during the first 6 months of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, lived in a separate accommodation or in an accommodation with another family (74% of parents displaced in Ukraine and 69% - abroad), approximately one third of them lived in dormitory, hostel, hotel or shelter which were temporarily converted to accommodate people, e.g. school sports halls, office premises, cultural centres and other). More than half were confident that they would be able to stay at their current place of residence for at least the next few months (58% in both groups). Almost all families had access to food, personal hygiene, medicine and clean clothing (97% and 99%,

respectively), parents displaced abroad showed more confidence in accessing to such resources – they more likely answered “yes”, instead of “rather yes” in comparison with parents displaced in Ukraine ($\chi^2(3) = 8.45, p = .04$, Cohen’s $w = .16$, 95% CI [.09, .27]). Furthermore, the majority of parents reported to have access to medical care (89% - in Ukraine and 92% - abroad). Children’s access to education and preschool was reported by significantly more participants who were abroad (89%) than in Ukraine (76%) ($\chi^2(3) = 16.38, p = .00$, Cohen’s $w = .22$, 95% CI [.13, .33]). Parents displaced abroad statistically more often reported that they were employed (48% and 59%, respectively), however, about half of the parents in both groups remained unemployed ($\chi^2(3) = 16.53, p = .00$, Cohen’s $w = .22$, 95% CI [.13, .33]). On one hand, participants from internally displaced persons significantly more often reported about no money even for the necessities (11% - in Ukraine and 7% - abroad), on the other hand, this group contained more people who felt financially secure (7% - in Ukraine, 2% - abroad) ($\chi^2(3) = 7.64, p = .05$, Cohen’s $w = .15$, 95% CI [.09, .26]). More than half of parents reported that they were capable of buying things and renting an accommodation (62% - in Ukraine, 66% - abroad). Most parents reported that they had emotional support (78% - in Ukraine and 73% - abroad) and had a warm and trusting relationship with their children (77% and 72%, respectively).

Parents’ Emotion Regulation

In general, participants more often agreed with the statements about rumination, refocusing on planning, and putting into perspective (Table 3). Compared to parents displaced in Ukraine, parents who were displaced abroad more often used positive reappraisal ($U = 8522, p < .01, r_{rb} = .29$) and putting the situation into perspective ($U = 9743, p < .01, r_{rb} = .18$), but also statistically more often reported that distressing emotions didn’t allow them to have more goal-directed behaviour (Goals scale) ($U = 10474, p = .04, r_{rb} = .12$) (Table 3).

Table 3

Parent’s emotion regulation: descriptive statistics and Mann-Whitney U test

Emotional regulation scales	Ukraine (N=99)	Abroad (N=241)		Mann-Whitney U p (Rank biserial correlation)
	Mean/ Median (SD) Shapiro-Wilk W (p)	Mean/ Median (SD)	Shapiro-Wilk W (p)	
Self-blame	7.2/6.0 (3.1) .85(<.01)	7.5/7.0 (3.0)	.89(<.01)	.08 (.097)
Acceptance	12 / 12 (4.1) .96(<.01)	12/13 (3.9)	.98(<.01)	.07 (.099)
Rumination	13/13 (3.4) .97 (.01)	13/13 (3.7)	.98 (<.01)	.19 (.059)

Emotional regulation scales	Ukraine (N=99)	Abroad (N=241)		Mann-Whitney U <i>p</i> (Rank biserial correlation)
	Mean/ Median (SD) Shapiro-Wilk <i>W</i> (<i>p</i>)	Mean/ Median (SD)	Shapiro-Wilk <i>W</i> (<i>p</i>)	
Positive Refocusing	11 /10 (3.8) .97 (.03)	11/10 (3.4)	.98 (<.01)	.43 (.013)
Refocus on Planning	14/15 (3.2) .97 (.02)	15/15 (3.3)	.97 (<.01)	.33 (.030)
Positive Reappraisal	10/10 (3.6) .97 (.05)	12 /12 (3.8)	.98 (<.01)	<.01 (.29)*
Putting into perspective	13/13 (3.5) .99 (.34)	14/14 (3.3)	.98 (<.01)	<.01 (.18)*
Catastrophising	8.7/8.0 (3.5) .94 (<.01)	7.9/7.0 (3.6)	.90 (<.01)	.99 (.16)
Other-blame	9.6/9.0 (3.4) .96 (<.01)	9.7/ 9.0 (4.2)	.95 (<.01)	.58 (.014)
Awareness	6.4/6.0 (2.2) .93 (<.01)	6.4/6.0(2.2)	.95 (<.01)	.38 (.022)
Clarity	6.0/5.0 (2.5) .90 (<.01)	6.3/6.0 (2.5)	.92 (<.01)	.10 (.087)
Nonacceptance	5.1/4.0 (2.6) .77 (<.01)	5.7/4.0 (3.3)	.79 (<.01)	.11 (.082)
Strategies	6.5/6.0(2.6) .92 (<.01)	6.9/6.0(2.9)	.93 (<.01)	.15 (.072)
Goals	6.8/6.0 (2.9) .88 (<.01)	7.6/6.0(3.4)	.92 (<.01)	.04 (.12)*
Impulse	5.6/5.0 (3.0) .79 (<.01)	5.6/5.0(2.8)	.84 (<.01)	.48 (.0037)
DERS Overall	36/34 (12) .92 (<.01)	39/36 (13)	.93 (<.01)	.09 (.091)

Note. * $p < .05$.

Source. Own research.

Relationship Between Parents' Emotion Regulation and Basic Needs Satisfaction

Results of the correlation analysis using Spearman's nonparametric criterion are shown in Table 4 for parents displaced in Ukraine and in Table 5 for those displaced abroad. Only statistically significant correlations ($p \leq .05$) are presented.

For parents displaced in Ukraine during the first six months after the invasion, basic needs satisfaction was significantly correlated with the majority of emotion regulation abilities (Table 4). Worse conditions of accommodation ($r = -.21(.03)$, 95% *CI* [-.39, -.02]), lack of access to food, personal hygiene, medicine and clean clothing ($r = -.21 (.04)$, 95% *CI* [-.39, -.01]), lack of medical care

($r = -.21$ (.03), 95% CI [-.40, -.01]), employment ($r = -.27$ (.01), 95% CI [-.45, -.08]) and finances ($r = -.35$ (.00), 95% CI [-.51, -.16]) increased rumination. Worse conditions of accommodation ($r = -.38$ (.00), 95% CI [-.54, -.20]), lack of employment ($r = -.36$ (.00), 95% CI [-.52, -.17]) and finances ($r = -.38$ (.00), 95% CI [-.53, -.19]) increased catastrophising as a way of cognitive processing of the war experience.

The possibility of living in a separate accommodation ($r = .21$ (.04), 95% CI [0.02, 0.39]) for a longer time ($r = .27$ (.01), 95% CI [0.07, 0.44]) and employment ($r = .28$ (.00), 95% CI [0.09, 0.45]) contributed to the acceptance of the situation. Access to food, personal hygiene, medicine and clean clothing ($r = .20$ (.05), 95% CI [.00, .38]), employment ($r = .27$ (.01), 95% CI [.08, .45]) and financial security ($r = .28$ (.01), 95% CI [.08, .45]) improved positive refocusing; access to food, personal hygiene, medicine and clean clothing ($r = .21$ (.03), 95% CI [.02, .39]) and employment ($r = .20$ (.05), 95% CI [.00, .38]) helped to put the war circumstances in perspective. Access to food, personal hygiene, medicine and clean clothing ($r = .28$ (.00), 95% CI [.09, .46]) contributed to a more positive reappraisal; and emotional support of others ($r = .36$ (.00), 95% CI [.19, .52]), warm and trusting relations with a child(ren) ($r = .29$ (.00), 95% CI [.10, 0.46]) were associated with positive refocusing. Overall difficulties in emotion regulation (DERS) increased with a lack of confidence in access to medical care ($r = -.24$ (.02), 95% CI [-.42, -.05]), lack of financial security ($r = -.29$ (.00), 95% CI [-.47, -.10]), lack of emotional support from others ($r = -.23$ (.02), 95% CI [-.41, -.04]), and lack of warm and trusting relations with child(ren) ($r = -.29$ (.00), 95% CI [-.46, -.10]). Lack of confidence in access to food, personal hygiene, medicine, and clean clothing contributed to the parents' lack of awareness ($r = -.32$ (.00), 95% CI [-.48, -.13]) and lack of clarity ($r = -.35$ (.00), 95% CI [-.51, -.16]) of the emotional state under the influence of a negative experience. Overall, as can be seen in Table 4, the parents' ability to use positive cognitive strategies of emotion regulation as opposite to negative strategies, and their ability to be aware of their own emotions, regulate their emotional state and maintain goal-directed behaviour in distress depends on their basic needs' satisfaction.

Table 4

Relationships between emotion regulation and basic needs satisfaction (Spearman) in parents displaced in Ukraine (N = 99) (r (p), 95% CI)

	Accom	Duration	Needs	Medcare	Empl	Finances	Emsup	Relat
AC	.21 (.04) [.02, .39]	.27 (.01) [.07, .44]			.28 (.00) [.09, .45]			
RU	-.21 (.03) [-.39, -.02]		-.21 (.04) [-.39, -.01]	-.21 (.03) [-.40, -.02]	-.27 (.01) [-.45, -.08]	-.35 (.00) [-.51, -.16]		
Pref			.20 (.05) [.00, .38]		.27 (.01) [.08, .45]	.28 (.01) [.08, .45]	.36 (.00) .17, .52	.29 (.00) [.10, .46]
Preap			.28 (.00) [.09, .46]					

	Accom	Duration	Needs	Medcare	Empl	Finances	Emsup	Relat
PP			.21 (.03) [.02, .39]		.20 (.05) [.00, .38]			
CA	-.38 (.00) [-.54, -.20]				-.36 (.00) [-.52, -.17]	-.38 (.00) [-.53, .19]		
LA			-.32 (.00) [-.48, -.13]	-.34 (.00) [-.50, -.15]		-.36 (.00) [-.52, -.17]	-.27 (.01) [-.44, -.08]	-.32 (.00) [-.49, -.13]
LC			-.35 (.00) [-.51, -.16]	-.29 (.00) [-.46, -.09]		-.29 (.00) [-.47, -.10]		
NA						-.22 (.03) [-.41, -.03]		
LS				-.24 (.02) [-.42, -.05]		-.21 (.04) [-.40, -.01]	-.21 (.04) [-.39, -.01]	-.27 (.01) [-.44, -.07]
LG					-.20 (.05) [-.38, .00]	-.24 (.02) [-.42, -.04]	-.21 (.03) [-.39, -.02]	
IM								-.28 (.01) [-.45, -.08]
DERS				-.27 (.01) [-.44, -.08]		-.29 (.00) [-.47, -.10]	-.23 (.02) [-.41, -.04]	-.29 (.00) [-.46, -.10]

Note. Accom – accommodation, Empl – employment, AC – Acceptance, RU – Rumination, Pref – Positive Refocusing, Preap – Positive Reappraisal, PP – Putting into Perspective, CA – Catastrophising, LA – lack of emotional awareness, LC – lack of emotional clarity, NA – nonacceptance, LS – lack of strategies for feeling better, LG – lack of goal-directed behavior, IM – impulsive behavior, DERS – overall score.

Source. Own research.

Among parents displaced abroad, relationships between basic needs satisfaction and emotion regulation abilities were weaker overall. Along with this, lack of financial insecurity decreased acceptance ($r = .14$ (.03), 95% CI [.01, .26]) and increased catastrophising ($r = -.17$ (.01), 95% CI [-.29, -.04]). Access to employment contributed to positive refocusing ($r = .12$ (.05), 95% CI [.00, .25]) and positive reappraisal ($r = .15$, (.02), 95% CI [.02, .27]). Access to emotional support was also related to positive refocusing ($r = .23$ (.00), 95% CI [.11, .35]) and positive reappraisal ($r = .18$ (.00), 95% CI [.06, .30]). The total score of emotion dysregulation (DERS) increased with a lack of confidence in access to emotional support from the others ($r = -.14$ (.03), 95% CI [-.26, -.01]) and lack of warm and trusting relations with child(ren) ($r = -.20$ (.00), 95% CI [-.31, -.07]). Overall, emotion regulation of parents' displaced abroad mainly depended on access to employment, finances and emotional support; and dysregulation especially was affected by the quality of the relationships with others and with their own child(ren).

Table 5

Relationships between emotion regulation and basic needs satisfaction (Spearman) in parents displaced abroad (N=241) (r (p), 95% CI)

	Empl	Finances	Emsup	Relat
AC		.14 (.03) [.01, .26]		
Pref	.12 (.05) [.00, .25]		.23 (.00) [.11, .35]	
Preap	.15 (.02) [.02, .27]		.18 (.00) [.06, .30]	
CA		-.17 (.01) [-.29, -.04]		
LA				-.15 (.02) [-.27, -.02]
LC		-.13 (.05) [-.25, .00]		-.22 (.00) [-.34, -.10]
NA				-.14 (.03) [-.26, -.02]
LS			-.13 (.04) [-.25, .00]	
LG				-.15 (.02) [-.27, -.02]
IM				-.16 (.01) [-.28, -.03]
DERS			-.14 (.03) [-.26, -.01]	-.20 (.00) [-.31, -.07]

Note. Empl – employment, AC – Acceptance, Pref – Positive Refocusing, Preap – Positive Reappraisal, CA – Catastrophising, LA – lack of emotional awareness, LC – lack of emotional clarity, NA – nonacceptance, LS – lack of strategies for feeling better, LG – lack of goal-directed behavior, IM – impulsive behaviour, DERS – overall score.

Source. Own research.

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to analyse basic need satisfaction and emotion regulation of parents displaced in Ukraine and abroad due to the war. It is important to know more about parents' emotion regulation as it is considered a transdiagnostic factor of various psychopathologies (Aldao et al., 2010; Cludius et al., 2020) and related to many indicators of parents' mental health (Aldao et al., 2010; Di Giuseppe et al., 2022; Hu et al., 2014; Waterschoot et al., 2022), quality of relations with a child (Shaffer & Obradović, 2017) as well as to the child's mental health (Zimmer-Gembeck et al., 2022; Cohodes et al., 2022; Han et al., 2016; Havighurst et al., 2020; Milojevich, 2020; Highlander et al., 2022). Considering the colossal losses experienced by parents who flee the war, it was assumed that their emotion regulation is related to the satisfaction of their basic

needs in the new places. Also, it was assumed that parents who flee abroad might have greater access to basic resources and, as a result, use more positive strategies of cognitive emotion regulation and experience less dysregulated states in distressing situations. Finally, it was important to understand to what extent basic needs satisfaction worked as a protective factor in the internally and externally displaced communities of Ukrainians.

The findings of our study show that there was no significant difference between parents displaced in Ukraine or abroad in access to basic resources (e.g., food, personal hygiene, medicine, and clean clothing), conditions of accommodation and medical care. Most of our participants in both groups reported that they were capable of buying things and renting accommodation. No differences were found in access to emotional support and the quality of relationship with the child. However staying abroad allowed children to have better access to education, which is understandable given the unstable situation with children's education in Ukraine, especially in the first months after the full-scale invasion. Parents displaced abroad reported higher chances to be employed (the latter especially affecting parents' emotion regulation capacities). But still many parents remained unemployed in both groups (51% - in Ukraine and 41% - abroad).

Regardless of where they were displaced to - within Ukraine or abroad - parents used both more and less effective strategies of emotion regulation: on the one hand, they ruminated, and on the other hand, refocused on planning and putting the situation into perspective. Although parents displaced abroad more often applied strategies of positive reappraisal and putting the situation into perspective, at the same time they more often reported lack of goal-directed behaviour in distress. It is likely that the 'mood swings' that accompanied the experience of the first months of the war is reflected in the moving back and forth between negative (rumination, loss of goal-directedness) and positive (positive reappraisal, putting the situation into perspective) strategies of emotion regulation. These results differ from those of Porter and Haslam who found significant differences in mental health among internally displaced people and those who fled abroad (Porter & Haslam, 2005). Given that our study was conducted early in the war, these differences might be observed in the long run. Furthermore, it is possible that both of our groups (in Ukraine and abroad) represented the more positive cases of adaptation, considering their high availability of basic resources and ability to take part in the research.

We found correlations between emotion regulation and basic needs satisfaction, which is generally in line with the data reported by the other researchers (Bogic et al., 2015; Fazel et al., 2012; Pumariega et al., 2005). Parents who had more access to basic resources, better accommodation, financial security, employment and emotional support more likely developed more effective cognitive emotional regulation abilities and revealed less signs of emotion dysregulation, and vice versa.

Stronger relationships between basic needs satisfaction and emotion regulation were found for parents displaced in Ukraine compared to those who

fled abroad. Lack of satisfactory living conditions, medical care, unemployment and financial insecurity increased rumination, catastrophising, lack of awareness and clarity of parents' negative emotions; access to essentials like food, personal hygiene, medicine and clean clothing, better living conditions, employment and financial security increased acceptance of the situation, positive refocusing, putting the situation into perspective and positive reappraisal. Therefore, for parents displaced in Ukraine, basic needs satisfaction can be considered a significant risk factor for emotion regulation problems. For parents displaced abroad, emotion regulation did not correlate with essentials and living conditions. Partly it can be explained by the less variety of experience: 99% of parents in this group had access to food, personal hygiene, medicine and clean clothing. Also, it is possible that even despite different accommodation characteristics for those displaced abroad (separate accommodation, with another family, with another family, shelter), most conditions were comfortable enough to satisfy the basic needs of parents and children. Parents displaced abroad emotion regulation abilities were primarily related to the availability of employment, financial security, and emotional support.

In both groups (displaced in Ukraine and abroad), the possible duration of accommodation had little or no relationship with emotion regulation, probably because most of the displaced parents saw the place of residence as temporary and planned at the first opportunity either to return home to Ukraine, or to look for a work abroad and rent their own accommodation. Also, we didn't find correlations between children's access to education/preschool and parents' emotion regulation ability, probably it was also considered by parents as temporary, and far from the main problem at the stage of resettlement and adaptation in a new place.

The data presented in this study was collected in 28 countries, which allowed for a broad view on how parents from Ukraine experience the consequences of war and resettlement. Still, the obtained results allowed us to draw only partial conclusions – restricted to those people who were able to participate in the study (which means they had an Internet connection, the opportunity to retreat to a quiet place, and could pay attention to answering the research questions). Our results indicate that the needs of most of these participants were met at a rather high level. We are also led to such conclusions by our own experience of data collection in places of concentration of Ukrainian refugees: persons whose most basic needs were not satisfied (who lived in shelters and had no stability in access to basic resources) showed the least interest in the research and only occasionally agreed to take flyers with information and a QR code for research. It is highly plausible and understandable that participating in a scientific study was not their priority unless their basic needs were met. Considering the large population of displaced persons, and the fact that information about the study was spread also broadly via social media communities, a rather small percentage of people could be recruited (on average 1-3 people from a community of 1000 people). Thus, a significant part of the displaced community is not represented in our study, and we know little about the emo-

tion regulation of parents who were in more difficult circumstances regarding the satisfaction of basic needs. This is important to consider when analysing the results and drawing the conclusions. Conducting the study with a different design, for example, applying more in-depth interview methods to collect the data, could help in reaching the individuals in poorer life conditions. Another limitation of the study is that emotion regulation questionnaires used in the study (CERQ and DERS-18) were translated into Ukrainian and the internal consistency of the scales was evaluated, but no validation of the questionnaires was performed, which is a good perspective for future research. Furthermore, the survey did not consider participants' proficiency in the language of the country of displacement and the plans to return to Ukraine or to stay in the new country, which are probably important factors of emotion regulation that could be taken into account in similar studies. And finally, taking into account the data of previous studies about relationship between parents' emotional regulation and children's mental health difficulties (Zimmer-Gembeck et al., 2022; Cohodes et al., 2022; Han et al., 2016; Havighurst et al., 2020; Milojevič, 2020; Highlander et al., 2022), to explore how the experience of displacement affected this relationship is also an important perspective for the future research

The obtained results do not allow to clearly answer the question, what was better during first months of Russian invasion: to stay in Ukraine or to go abroad. Parents who were displaced abroad reported better access to certain resources, but none of the groups had clear advantages in emotion regulation strategies. In both cases of displacement parents were looking for the new senses of horrible circumstances. On the one side of their emotional life, their thoughts and feelings were returning to the lived experience of threat, loss and destruction (rumination). But on the other, parents concentrated on the specific steps to take to resolve the situation (refocusing on planning) and tried to reduce the pain of their experience by comparing it with much worse situations and to what others have gone through (putting into perspective). As it was shown, basic needs satisfaction matters – it strengthens more positive strategies of emotion regulation and weakens negative ones. Therefore, joint efforts of the volunteer movement and state programs of support are able to influence the distressing experiences of displaced persons and protect their mental health.

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