Profiles of resources and subjective well-being. A comparative study between Poles and Ukrainians living in Poland

Magdalena Grabowska, Marcin Rzeszutek

University of Warsaw

Extended Abstract

1. Background and the Aim of the Study

The outbreak of a full-scale war in Ukraine has caused a tremendous inflow of Ukrainians to Poland, which completely changed the demographic composition of this group. Even though Ukrainians in Poland were more directly affected by the war and additionally exposed to the stress related to migration, these events have also a large impact on the psychological and economic status of Poles (Duszczyk et al., 2023). Still, little is known about the subjective well-being and stress, which are both linked to individual resilience, of Poles and Ukrainians currently living in Poland. These potential differences between Poles and Ukrainians deserve comparative analyses of SWB and stress due to both theoretical and practical policy-related reasons because the war is not expected to end shortly. Overall, the Polish society constitutes a unique case for studying SWB and stress in times of crisis since no other country has been affected by the war in Ukraine and humanitarian immigration to such a great extent.

Our study aims to investigate the relationship between perceived levels of resources, as defined by Steven Hobfol's theory (Hobfoll, 1989), and the level of subjective well-being (SWB) among Poles and Ukrainians (migrants and war refugees) living currently in Poland with the aid of the latent profile analysis (LPA) (Williams & Kibowski, 2016). By using this approach, we are able to group individuals into specific profiles of resources. Specifically, our study has three specific goals.

1. To determine whether profiles of resources differ between Poles and Ukrainians.
2. To explore the heterogeneity of resources between the studied populations regarding their importance, perceived gains, and perceived losses.
3. To examine whether various profiles of resources (perceived gains/losses) will explain differences in levels of SWB among participants, both within and between the study samples.

We hypothesize that the resource profiles would differ between the two studied samples (Hypothesis 1). More specifically, we anticipate that Ukrainians would assess their resource losses at a higher level and their resource gains at a lower level than Poles (Hypothesis 2). Furthermore, we assume that allocation to a specific resource profile is related to socioeconomic status as this status may be considered a proxy of the level of available resources (Hypothesis 3). Finally, we hypothesize that Ukrainians would declare, on average, lower levels of life satisfaction and positive affect, and higher levels of negative affect compared to Poles with the same socioeconomic characteristics (Hypothesis 4).

By addressing SWB and stress among Poles and Ukrainian migrants in Poland in a comprehensive way, the study will attend to the postulate formulated, for example, by Hou et al., (2020) that there is a need to study various components of SWB in the case of forced migrants. Such migrants form a significant part of the Ukrainian group in Poland nowadays. Noteworthy, an analysis of the stress with the use of the COR measures allows for revealing the subjective importance of given resources to respondents. Thus, it will be possible to construct a hierarchy of resources in the case of Poles and Ukrainian migrants in Poland in times of uncertainty, which will provide valuable sociological insight into the Polish and Ukrainian societies. As far as we are concerned, no existing study explored the differences in SWB from the perspective of the Conservation of Resources theory between Poles and Ukrainian migrants in the context of the ongoing war in Ukraine.

2. Theoretical Focus

SWB is the universal strive of human beings and its improvement should be the goal of policymakers (Frey, 2018), while stress is a strong predictor of negative well-being that usually appears when individuals face challenging circumstances (Karademas, 2007). Psychological studies define SWB as consisting of three items 1. life satisfaction (a cognitive evaluation of one's life), 2. positive affect (momentary feelings of pleasure), and 3. negative affect (momentary feelings of distress) (Diener, 1984). The combination of these components results in a measure reflecting one's subjective evaluation of their whole life (Frey, 2018).

At the same time, studies are showing that SWB and stress are negatively related (Arslan & Allen, 2022; Jiang & Probst, 2019) although the results were obtained for very specific groups such as urban adolescents (Coyle, Vera, 2013). While they use various operationalizations of stress (such as the Perceived Stress Scale), they hardly directly employ measures developed within the psychological Hobfoll's Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989). According to this theory, stress occurs when the individuals' resources are lost, threatened, or inappropriately invested (ibid.).

Our study aims at filling this gap contributing to psychological research on stress and SWB. Importantly, as COR addresses stress from the perspective of subjective losses and gains in one's resources in the given period, it constitutes a powerful framework for understanding mechanisms underlying exposure to stress in times of crises and uncertainty when people encounter unprecedented changes in their lives. In general terms, the contribution of the study is a comprehensive approach to evaluate the influence of individual socio-economic factors on all three components of SWB and stress (using COR measures) in times of uncertainty.

3. Data and Research Methods

3.1 Sample

Data was gathered in March and June 2024 using the CAWI method by a professional public opinion company (Polish sample) and the recently established panel of Ukrainians in Poland at the University of Warsaw (Górny & Kaczmarczyk, 2023). The final sample consists of 1200 Poles and 1257 Ukrainians living currently in Poland. The Polish subsample is representative of the Polish population in terms of age, education, and sex, whereas the Ukrainian subsample is representative of Ukrainian migrants.The questionnaire used in the study consists of several psychological scales and a set of sociodemographic questions. The whole study plan as well as the questionnaire itself acquired a positive opinion of the Ethics Committee at the Faculty of Economic Sciences, University of Warsaw. For the survey of Ukrainians, the questionnaire was translated into Russian and Ukrainian to ensure a full understanding of the questions and answers provided.

3.2 Measures

We follow Diener's tripartite model of subjective well-being (1984) according to which SWB has three components – satisfaction with life, positive affect, and negative affect. Satisfaction with life is measured with the SWLS scale, which consists of five items. Each item is assessed using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Higher total scores indicate a higher level of satisfaction with life. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the Polish sample is 0.90 and for the Ukrainian sample is 0.81.

Next, the positive and negative affects are measured using the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS-X). This scale consists of 10 adjectives for positive affect and 10 for negative affect. Respondents rate the intensity of the described affective states on a five-point response scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (extremely). The Cronbach's alpha coefficients obtained in this study are 0.90 (PL) and 0.91 (UE) for the positive affect subscale, and 0.90 (PL), and 0.90 (UE) for the negative affect subscale.

Finally, resources are measured based on Hobfoll's Conservation of Resources Evaluation (COR-E). Resource importance, gains, and losses were assessed by the short version of the COR-E questionnaire. In the COR-E questionnaire, there are 40 items describing resources that can be divided into 5 types.

1. Hedonistic and vital resources (e.g., possessing life energy, possibility to pursue interests and hobbies)
2. Spiritual resources (e.g., hope, faith, religious beliefs)
3. Family resources (e.g., health of the loved ones, satisfaction with children)
4. Economic and political resources (e.g., income sufficient to current expenses, feeling that one lives in an economically stable country)
5. Power and prestige resources (e.g., having power, high social position)

First, respondents are asked to rate the importance of each resource on a 5-item scale ranging from 1 (not important) to 5 (very important). Then, participants are asked to state the extent to which they had experienced gains or losses in each of the resource categories from 0 (no change) to 5 (a very large loss/gain) compared to the same period last year. On this basis, after summing the results and weighing them according to their subjective importance, two indicators were obtained: the indicator of resource gain and the indicator of resource loss. Higher values indicate higher losses or gains**.** We instructed our participants to focus on the changes in the resource levels compared to a year before the survey. The Cronbach's alphas for the COR-E scores are equal to 0.97 (PL) and 0.89 (UE) for the resource importance. For the gain and losses, Cronbach's alphas are equal to 0.92 (PL) and 0.95 (UE).

3.3 Analysis

We begin our analysis with a comparison of the subjective importance of resources in the studied samples. Although Poles and Ukrainians share some cultural and historical backgrounds, there are several differences (e.g., dominant religion, and economic growth) that can shape attitudes towards the most important resources in life. Next, we use LPA to distinguish various resource profiles based on relative gain and loss within each resource type. In order to select a model with an optimal number of resource profiles, we will start with the one-step approach and choose the best model according to the multiple information criteria and entropy factor. Next, we will regress various aspects of SWB (i.e., satisfaction with life, positive affect, negative affect) on latent resource profiles. This will allow us to compare the levels of SWB between the samples while accounting for sociodemographic characteristics (i.e., sex, age, marital status, employment status, and income).

4. Preliminary and Expected Findings

4.1 Subjective Importance of Resources

Table 1 presents the lists of 5 most important resources, on average, in the studied samples. Poles and Ukrainians living in Poland have similar resources that they value the most, which might be a result of their similar cultures and shared backgrounds. The most important resources for the respondents were the health of loved ones followed by the happiness of loved ones (Poles) and children (Ukrainians). As the third most important resource in both samples respondents rated income sufficient for current expenses, thus, highlighting the importance of economic factors.

Table 1. Top five most important resources by sample

Poles		**Ukrainians**	
Resource	**Average Importance**	**Resource**	**Average Importance**
Health of loved ones	4.73	Health of loved ones	4.74
Happiness of loved ones	4.57	Happiness of children	4.66
Income sufficient for current expenses	4.53	Income sufficient for current expenses	4.58
Good relationships with loved ones	4.48	Good relationships with children	4.56
Happiness of children	4.47	Having financial security in case of dramatic life events	4.56

Note: the importance of each resource ranged from 1 (not important) to 5 (very important)

The most prominent difference between the samples is that for Ukrainian migrants "Having financial security in case of dramatic life events" is among the most important resources while for Poles this resource was less important (ranged in 12th position). For Ukrainians, the outbreak of a full-scale war in their country was undoubtedly a dramatic life event. Leaving one's own country and starting a life in another country requires financial security so it is understandable that this resource is considered as one of the most important in the case of Ukrainians.

If we look at the least important resources, the lists are almost identical. They consist of the same resources albeit in a different order. Again, this might be because of the similar culture and shared historical background. Interestingly, among the least important resources we can find resources related to faith, religious beliefs, and living in accordance with the principles of one's religion. This might be surprising since Poles are considered a traditional religious nation. Nevertheless, having a "clear conscience" was, on average, the 10th most important resource for Poles. Next, 3 out of 5 resources of power and prestige appeared at the bottom of the resource importance lists meaning that having high social position, power, or influential friends is not considered as the most important in life.

4.2 Expected Findings

We expect that LPA analysis reveals at least 3 distinct profiles of resources among the studied subsamples. We anticipate that one of the profiles will consist of individuals with the greatest resource losses and the smallest resource gains across. Thus, the respondents from this group lost subjectively more than gained during the last year. Next, we assume that there will be a profile consisting of individuals who report low gains and low losses that approximately balance out each other. Finally, we should observe a profile with the highest gains and approximately no losses among all resource types. We anticipate that the first profile (with the greatest losses) will be relatively less frequent among Poles than Ukrainians. In general, we anticipate that Ukrainians might report higher levels of resource loss although we also expect high economic resource loss among Poles because of high inflation. We argue that there will be several differences in socioeconomic characteristics between the profiles meaning that some socioeconomic groups are more sensitive to resource losses or more likely to gain resources than others. Finally, we expect that profiles with more losses than gains will be characterized by significantly lower levels of life satisfaction and positive affect and higher levels of negative affect.

5. References

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