Olena CHUIKO, DSc (Psychol.), Prof.
ORCID ID: 0000-0001-7088-0961
e-mail: chuiko@knu.ua
Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Kyiv, Ukraine

Jiahang DONG, PhD Student
ORCID ID:0000-0002-9199-3970
e-mail: dongjiahang111@gmail.com
Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Kyiv, Ukraine

Xutong DENG, PhD Student
ORCID ID: 0000-0001-7999-9344
e-mail: dengxutong96@gmail.com
Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Kyiv, Ukraine

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN THE UNIVERSITY EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF THE WAR IN UKRAINE: RISKS OF EXCLUSION AND PROVIDING WELL-BEING

B a c k g r o u n d . *The article is a theoretical analysis of the situation of risks of social exclusion of foreign students in the educational environment of the university caused by the threats of war and wartime in Ukraine. The purpose of the article is to actualise the problem of a safe university educational environment, to present a theoretical model of conditions for preventing social exclusion of foreign students in it.*

M e t h o d s . *Analysis, synthesis and generalization of published Ukrainian and foreign materials on the phenomenon under study, prognostic analysis and modelling.*

R e s u l t s . *In the context of social crises and upheavals that Ukrainian society has experienced in recent years (starting with the Covid-19 epidemic and continuing with military events in the country), significant changes are taking place in the educational policy of universities. Threats and risks are faced by both individual actors in the educational environment and certain social groups that may potentially experience social exclusion and isolation. These groups include international students who have found themselves in a situation of uncertainty, stress, threat, and unpredictability since the outbreak of war, and whose urgent task is to complete their studies at universities and maintain their physical and mental health. The analysis of Ukrainian and foreign practices of supporting the well-being of foreign students in times of crisis indicates the need to create special conditions for the educational environment, which have a multi-component structure and levels of support.*

C o n c l u s i o n s . *The developed theoretical model of the structural components of the university educational environment contains five components: academic, information and communication, infrastructure, professional and socialization, and socio-cultural, each of which is endowed with conditions and opportunities for the development of the personality of an international student, his/her professional socialization and in every way contributes to his/her active inclusion and participation, which is a condition for ensuring psychosocial well-being and counteracting social exclusion.*

K e y w o r d s : *international student, psychosocial well-being, social exclusion, theoretical model of educational environment, university educational environment.*

Background

The destructive power of war strikes hard at all social systems of the state of Ukraine. Education is no exception, as it suffers unprecedented losses (both in terms of material resources and social resources) and is forced to adapt to the threats and challenges of today, given the importance of ensuring the safety and accessibility of education in extremely difficult conditions. The Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine reports that since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, 3798 educational institutions (schools, universities, kindergartens and orphanages) have been affected by bombing and shelling, and 365 of them have been destroyed (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, n. d.). The Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv has repeatedly come under Russian attack and virtually all university campuses have been destroyed (on 10 October 2022, the Red Building and the Institute of Philology, the Maksymovych Scientific Library, the Faculty of Chemistry, and the greenhouse of the Fomin Botanical Garden were damaged (Chernovol, 2022); 31 December 2022 – the destruction of the buildings of the Institute of Biology and Medicine, the Institute of High Technologies, the Faculties of Psychology, Sociology, Computer Science and Cybernetics, Radiophysics, Electronics and Computer Systems, the Faculties of Mechanics and Mathematics and Geography, the Sports Complex, the Ukrainian Physical

and Mathematical Lyceum and some campus dormitories (Saienko, 2023); on 3 November 2024, the buildings of the Institute of International Relations and the Institute of Journalism were damaged (Ustymenko, 2024). Such a detailed and sad statement of facts emphasizes how fragile and unprotected the physical space of Ukrainian universities is today, and how difficult it is for the university community "acting in crisis conditions, suffering human and material losses" to carry out educational activities focused "on the sustainable development of educational and scientific activities" (Rector's Report, 2022). At the same time, the psychological safety of all its subjects is no less 'fragile', and its presence in the educational space of the university is a guarantee of preserving a person's mental health, psychological well-being, and a preventive measure against the socio-psychological phenomena of exclusion and social isolation.

These tendencies point to the need to develop balanced university policies for the security of the educational environment, effective models of the functioning of the educational environment in a crisis, which promote and enhance the sense of psychological safety and security of its subjects.

Analysing recent studies and publications. The educational environment is a component of an individual's life and social environment and reflects the totality of all

educational factors that influence the formation of a personality in the processes of learning, education and development. It is a key condition for the functioning of any educational institution, providing conditions to meet the needs of all participants in the educational process. The level of security of these conditions may vary depending on the presence or absence of certain psychological characteristics, states and circumstances that affect the nature of interpersonal relationships between participants in the educational environment (Baidyk et al., 2023). Scientists consider the educational environment as a complex system that combines intellectual, cultural, programmatic, methodological, organizational and technical resources, creating conditions for the comprehensive development of the individual (Tsymbalaru, 2016). In most foreign studies, the educational environment is often interpreted through the prism of 'school effectiveness' as a social structure that includes the emotional climate, personal well-being, specifics of microculture, as well as the level of educational and training work (Gurkova, 2019).

The war has significantly affected the functioning of the educational system in Ukraine, both in general and at the level of the educational environment of each educational institution. Given the challenges and the need to rebuild all parts of the system, we have to recognize the change in the educational landscape due to the emergence of certain categories of people in the university educational environment who are distinguished by social inequalities in the receipt and provision of educational services, may (or already are) subject to social exclusion and alienation (Chuiko, Jiahang, & Xutong, 2024).

These groups include students who are internally displaced and discriminated against (Bereziak, Vasylieva, & Nakorchevska, 2022); students who have moved abroad and continue their studies online, experiencing a lack of resources: educational, psychological, financial, and sometimes legal (for example, Ukraine has recently introduced a rule that denies these students scholarships), which gradually makes them outsiders in the university educational environment (Chuiko, Jiahang, & Xutong, 2024).

The categories of persons at risk of social exclusion also include foreign students who studied at Ukrainian universities and, for the most part (85 %), returned home (or moved to other countries) with the outbreak of full-scale war.

R. Levitas (2007) defines "social exclusion" as a complex and multidimensional phenomenon that explains the absence or denial of resources, rights, goods and services to a person, as well as the inability to participate in normal relationships and activities available to the majority of people in society, whether in the economic, social, cultural or political spheres. It affects both the quality of life of individuals and the equity and cohesion of society as a whole (Levitas et al., 2007). The above definition can be extrapolated to the phenomenon of social exclusion in university education, where the main subjects – recipients of educational services – have found themselves at increased risk of receiving them since the beginning of the full-scale war in Ukraine. Among them are foreign students, of whom more than 60,000 went abroad after russia's invasion of Ukraine began, and just under 500 foreign students expressed a desire to stay in Ukraine. Most of them switched to online learning at their educational institutions, some students (47 %) returned to Ukraine to continue their full-time studies, and 17 % (according to the survey) want to continue their studies remotely (Foreign students about higher education..., 2023). The strategy of returning to Ukraine, which is in a state of war, and the need

to continue full-time education in conditions of physical danger, was chosen by foreign students under pressure from the policies of the countries from which they came to study. In particular, it is known that the government of the People's Republic of China has introduced new legal regulations on the recognition of diplomas of graduates of higher education institutions, according to which a diploma where 75 % of the study time was spent in a distance mode is considered not legitimate. Accordingly, the "inability to participate" (according to Levitas), or the presence of obstacles to achieving a goal (where most people achieve without any difficulties), is relevant for international students, which exacerbates their position of social exclusion and requires the development of new coping strategies for adaptation.

The third element in the concept of social exclusion is interesting and predictive – quality of life, which covers the specific consequences of non-participation for people who experience exclusion. It turns out that people who did not even openly declare that they were in isolation, but were in fact in it, have less chances for a happy life, health and well-being than others. This fact is especially important for international students, who may face double difficulties in the future related to career development, professional recognition, professional identity, etc. (Xuitong, & Deng, 2022).

Analyzing these data, it can be assumed that distance learning for international students is not a positive solution to the problems of academic learning, rather this format can be considered a temporary (forced) option, since a large list of professional competencies, professional values, professional practices are formed in direct relationships and communications in the university environment and mastering them online is impossible. In addition, according to the research of L. Prokofieva, distance learning significantly increases the level of anxiety among students, only 5 % of respondents demonstrate "low anxiety" (according to the Taylor method), and such problems as "poor sleep, difficulty concentrating, headaches and constant fatigue" become more relevant (Prokofieva, 2024, p. 151). Difficulties in using distance technologies in modern Ukraine are also related to limited access to the Internet due to blackouts, unstable Internet connections, and insufficient digital competence (Bereziak, Vasylieva, & Nakorchevska, 2022). "Students demonstrate increased sensitivity to social exclusion, which is felt directly or indirectly through the transition to online learning. The war has a clear impact on the life satisfaction of young people in Ukraine" (Tamilina, Ihnatenko, & Gogol, 2024).

15 % of foreign students stayed in Ukraine, and alongside Ukrainian students, they are studying in difficult conditions of physical security threats. Is there an increased risk of social exclusion for foreign students under such conditions, as the 'traditional' problems of socio-cultural adaptation and language barriers are compounded by new ones related to real security and a welcome threat. The answer to this question should automatically solve the following problem: what resources should the educational environment of an educational institution have in order to eliminate the risks of social exclusion and well-being of foreign students as effectively as possible? What should be the conditions of the educational environment to prevent them?

The purpose of the article: to analyze the educational environment of the university in terms of social and psychological safety and security in modern languages and to present a theoretical model of conditions for preventing social exclusion of foreign students in it.

Methods

The following methods were used in the study: analysis, synthesis and generalization of published Ukrainian and foreign materials on the phenomenon under study, prognostic analysis and modelling.

Results

In a study aimed at examining the practices of educational training of social workers in times of war, the authors O. Chuiko, V. Shkuro, T. Semigina conclude that an important task of the academic environment in times of crisis is to organise student-centred support and welfare: "Giving priority to student well-being to ensure adequate support systems during the crisis is crucial" (Chuiko, Shkuro, & Semigina, 2024, p. 11). Student-centered approaches should include mentoring programs, counselling services and resilience building initiatives to ensure emotional, mental and psychological well-being during a crisis. The same opinion is shared by other Ukrainian researchers, who note that the events of the war and its widespread deployment in Ukraine have had a significant impact on the psycho-emotional state and psychological well-being of students. In this regard, it was particularly important to organize psychological support for students, which was implemented, in particular, through the creation of a special communication platform on the Telegram channel. An important conclusion was that this activity contributed to the formation of a community and the development of resilience (Kot, & Lytvychenko, 2022). The study by Lavryk O.V. suggests areas of activity aimed at overcoming stress and distress in students during distance learning in wartime: 1) psychological support; 2) pedagogical support; 3) flexible curriculum; 4) stress resilience training; 5) support for research projects; 6) support for access to information (Lavryk, 2024).

The problems of educational socialization of foreign students in times of crisis have been studied by many foreign researchers. The research of many authors focuses on the search for factors of development of resilience of foreign students during the global epidemic Covid-19. Thus, it turned out that among all the other factors that influence the improvement of educational socialization, those focused on social support for students stand out (Brunsting, Zachry, & Takeuchi, 2018). It has been found that sources of social support can include academic peer groups, informal interactions with teachers, social networks, student support services, and close ties with friends and family (Myers-Walls et al., 2011). All of these are important resources for coping with the stress faced by international students. They can help psychologically reduce stress levels and facilitate adaptation to the new environment.

Another study examined the role of social support for students with mental health problems. It found that friends were the most effective source of support for this group of students, challenging the assumption that family support remains the constant primary source of support from 18 to 85 years of age. Friendships appear to be important for university students, contributing to a sense of belonging and facilitating the psychological transition to university. At the same time, additional evidence was found that stigmatization of these students hindered help-seeking and access to support networks, especially for people with mood disorders. Thus, the authors conclude that social support should be considered as a potential target for interventions aimed at supporting students with mental health problems (Vicary et al., 2024).

S. Brown and colleagues found that giving help to others is more important for psychological health than receiving it (Brown et al., 2003). This was also confirmed by the research conducted by Dunn and others (Dunn, Aknin, & Norton, 2008): people get more satisfaction when they give than when they receive. It is particularly worth noting that volunteering, due to its ability to reduce stress, has a positive impact on well-being. Participants who volunteered under stressful conditions demonstrated lower levels of negative emotional well-being compared to those who avoided such activities (Han, Kim, & Burr, 2019). Volunteering, which has become widespread in Ukraine (Ozerskyi, 2019), helps to strengthen the sense of belonging and identification with a group, which in turn increases an individual's self-confidence. Given this, it can be assumed that the provision of opportunities for universities to participate in volunteer initiatives and support other students can have a positive impact on the well-being of international students.

Therefore, after conducting a theoretical analysis of the literature and empirical research data, the article develops a theoretical model of the structural components of the university educational environment as a condition for ensuring the psychosocial well-being of international students. In this context, J. Gibson's Theory of Affordances may be progressive, where the category of 'opportunity' appears as a special unity of the properties of the environment and the subject of the environment, which are complementary to each other and equal. At the same time, this development is two-way: the environment provides opportunities for the formation of the subject's personality, while the subject's activity determines how he or she will perceive the opportunities of the environment and to what extent he or she will be able to influence it. J. Gibson emphasises the active nature of a human subject who is mastering the environment. The more and more fully a person uses the possibilities of the environment, the more successful is his or her free and active self-development (Gibson, 1950). Consequently, the central mechanisms of counteracting social exclusion in education are "inclusion", "participation", "support", which generally requires changes and modifications of the content, approaches, structure and strategy of education, taking into account the needs of participants in the educational process, guided by the belief that the educational environment should provide maximum opportunities for their implementation.

In our model, we distinguish 5 structural components of the educational environment of the university: academic, information and communication, infrastructure, professional and socialization, and socio-cultural. Each of these components is endowed with conditions and opportunities for the development of a foreign student's personality, and in every way contributes to their active inclusion and participation, which is a condition for ensuring psychosocial well-being and counteracting social exclusion (see Fig. 1).

The academic component is capable of providing a system of opportunities for personal self-development, organizing the process of mastering professional knowledge and competences, motivating personal activity, taking into account cultural, ethnic and social diversity. A condition for the inclusion of international students in the academic environment is the organization of the educational process on the principles of building a dialogue between participants (subjects) of learning, the principles of collaboration through inclusion in project, research and creative groups, the organization of support and quality feedback on the path of individual advancement in academic activities, the development of intercultural communication skills.
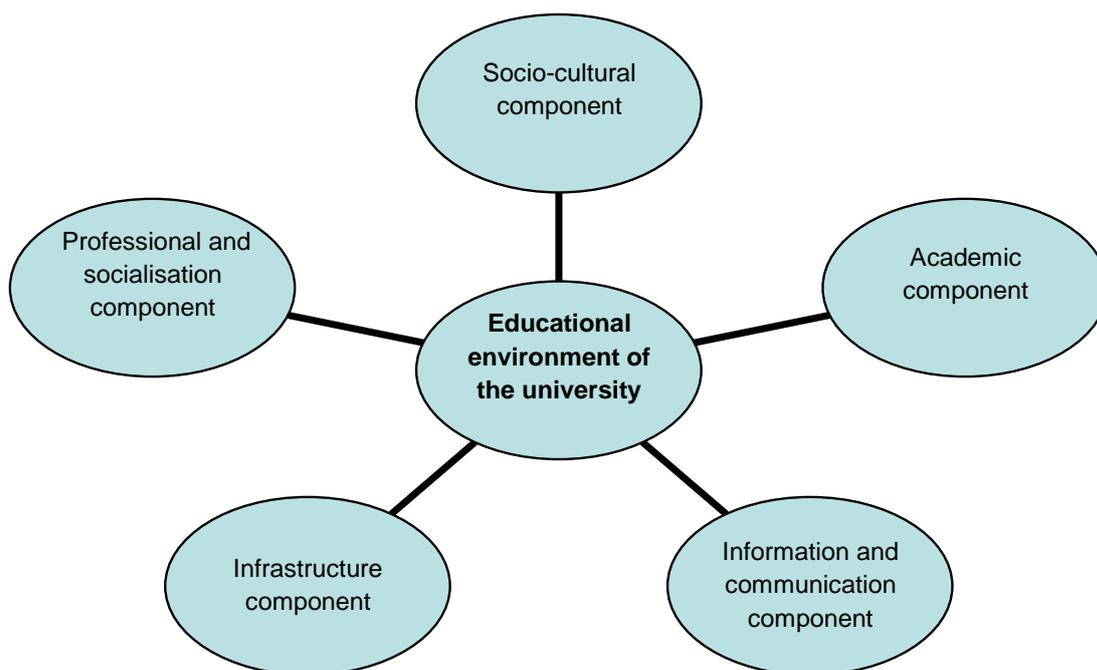
Fig. 1. Theoretical model of the structural components of the university educational environment as a condition for ensuring the psychosocial well-being of international students

Informational and communicational covers the organization and information support of the educational process, which is implemented through the creation of a wide network of external and internal communications. External communication should provide clear and transparent information about the rules, guarantees, and obligations of the university to provide educational services, taking into account existing risks and challenges. Internal communication involves the use of various social networks and modern means of communication that provide students and teachers with a forum for informal communication on both educational and personal issues, as a mechanism for creating mutual support among students.

The infrastructure component covers the physical conditions of the learning environment and various resources for educational activities. Important in this regard is the modern material and technical equipment of classrooms and university laboratories, whose computer and technological design allows for an interactive and dynamic environment to maximize student engagement. An important element is the accessibility of international students to various services of the academic environment: library, canteen, medical centre, psychological service, service equipment (computers, scanners, printers), bank terminals, various devices and tools for computer technology, etc. The university infrastructure should be as streamlined and understandable as possible for a foreign student, which will facilitate their adaptation.

Professional and socialization provides professional socialization and social activity through the involvement of international students in scientific, professionally oriented and social (project) activities. Involvement in student initiatives in the university environment, participation in student government and volunteering is important.

The socio-cultural component is aimed at adapting to the conditions of the new social environment, type of culture, and linguistic Ukrainian space through the implementation of measures to improve intercultural competence and the organization of intercultural integration activities. The component can be implemented through the development and implementation of social adaptation programs to the socio-cultural environment (familiarity with the culture, history, traditions, geography of Ukraine), familiarity with the university map and responsible actors involved in working with international students (curators, mentors, mentors, etc.), and special physical security prevention programs considering the threats and challenges of wartime.

Discussion and conclusions

Thus, the problem of creating conditions for the educational environment at universities that would ensure the psychosocial well-being of foreign students studying there is relevant and is at the intersection of research in the field of pedagogy and psychology of higher education, social work, philosophy of education, management, etc. In the context of war, social crises and upheavals, the issue of security of the educational environment is significantly enhanced and requires a review of university policies to prevent social exclusion and isolation of certain categories (university communities) and its individual subjects.

The development of a safe environment policy at the university should be based on the principles of "opportunity" (according to J. Gibson), which appears as a special unity of the properties of the environment and the subject of the environment, which are complementary to each other and equal. The educational environment creates opportunities for the formation and development of the subject of the educational process, on the other hand, the activity of the subject is aimed at mastering the capabilities of the environment. The key mechanisms of "moving in both directions" are inclusion, participation, support, which are supported and cultivated at all levels of the educational environment through its individual components: a) academic; b) information and communication; c) infrastructure; d) professional and socialization; e) socio-cultural.

Directions for further research are seen in the empirical verification of the theoretical model and the identification of predictors of psychosocial well-being of international students in the educational environment of the university.

Authors' contribution: Olena Chuiko – conceptualization, research methodology, analysis of literary sources; Deng Xutong – analysis of literary sources; Dong Jiahang – analysis of literary sources.

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Олена ЧУЙКО, д-р психол. наук, проф.
ORCID ID: 0000-0001-7088-0961
e-mail: chuiko@knu.ua
Київський національний університет імені Тараса Шевченка, Київ, Україна

Цзяхан ДУН, асп.
ORCID ID:0000-0002-9199-3970
e-mail: Dongjiahang111@gmail.com
Київський національний університет імені Тараса Шевченка, Київ, Україна

Сюйтун ДЕН, асп.
ORCID ID: 0000-0001-7999-9344
e-mail: dengxutong96@gmail.com
Київський національний університет імені Тараса Шевченка, Київ, Україна

ІНОЗЕМНИЙ СТУДЕНТ
В ОСВІТНЬОМУ СЕРЕДОВИЩІ УНІВЕРСИТЕТУ В УМОВАХ ВІЙНИ В УКРАЇНІ: РИЗИКИ ЕКСКЛЮЗІЇ ТА ЗАБЕЗПЕЧЕННЯ БЛАГОПОЛУЧЧЯ

В с т у п . *Проведено теоретичний аналіз ситуації ризиків соціальної ексклюзії іноземних студентів в освітньому середовищі КНУ імені Тараса Шевченка, викликаних загрозами війни і воєнного часу в Україні. Мета статті полягає в актуалізації проблеми безпечного освітнього середовища університету, презентації теоретичної моделі умов запобігання соціальної ексклюзії іноземних студентів у ньому.*

М е т о д и . *У дослідженні було застосовано такі методи, як: аналіз, синтез й узагальнення опублікованих українських і зарубіжних матеріалів досліджуваного явища, прогностичний аналіз і моделювання.*

Р е з у л ь т а т и . *В умовах суспільних криз і потрясінь, що переживало і переживає українське суспільство упродовж останніх років (відлік починається з моменту епідемії Covid-19 і продовжується військовими подіями в країні), відбуваються значні зміни в освітній політиці університетів. Загрозам і ризикам підлягають як окремі суб'єкти освітнього середовища, так й окремі соціальні групи, які потенційно можуть переживати явище соціальної ексклюзії та ізоляції. До таких груп належать іноземні студенти, які потрапили в ситуацію невизначеності, стресу, загрози, непрогнозованості з початком війни, й актуальним завданням для яких є закінчення навчання в навчальних закладах, збереження фізичного та психічного здоров'я. Вивчення українських і зарубіжних практик підтримки благополуччя іноземних студентів в умовах криз вказує на необхідність створення спеціальних умов освітнього середовища, що мають багатокомпонентну структуру й рівні забезпечення.*

В и с н о в к и . *Розроблена теоретична модель структурних компонентів освітнього середовища університету містить п'ять компонентів: академічний, інформаційно-комунікативний, інфраструктурний, професійно-соціалізаційний і соціокультурний, кожен із яких наділений умовами і можливостями для розвитку особистості іноземного студента у стресогенних умовах середовища, його професійній соціалізації й усіляким чином сприяє його активному залученню й участі, що є умовою забезпечення психосоціального благополуччя та протидії соціальній ексклюзії.*

К л ю ч о в і   с л о в а : *іноземний студент, освітнє середовище університету, психосоціальне благополуччя, соціальна ексклюзія, теоретична модель освітнього середовища.*