

An intersectional perspective on the entrepreneurial intention of female Ukrainian migrants and refugees

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The objective of the article is to examine potential variations among migrants from Ukraine concerning their entrepreneurial intention, considering the nature of migration (economic or forced) and their motherhood.

Research Design & Methods: In May 2023, a quantitative study surveyed 404 Ukrainian women in Poland. Utilising a research panel enabled longitudinal analysis, which is particularly valuable in migration studies aiming to grasp the entrepreneurial intentions of female Ukrainian migrants and refugees. The study unveiled demographic disparities between the two groups, encompassing migrant and parental status.

Findings: Pre-war migrant women exhibit higher entrepreneurial intentions compared to female refugees. Motherhood significantly influences the entrepreneurial intentions of both groups, particularly among women with children under 3. We observed correlations between parental status and entrepreneurial intentions. Migration's voluntary or involuntary nature significantly impacts these aspirations.

Implications & Recommendations: There's a need for inclusive startup ecosystems for female migrants, requiring targeted programs to address language barriers and cultural adaptation and improve access to education, employment and childcare. Entrepreneurship support needs to be catered to on demand. An intersectional approach is crucial to address their unique circumstances.

Contribution & Value Added: The intersectional approach, which examines not only the entrepreneurial intentions among women but also their migration status (voluntary/involuntary) and parental status, is novel.

Article type: research article

Keywords: entrepreneurial intention; intersectionality; female migrants; female refugees; motherhood

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INTRODUCTION

In Central and Eastern European countries such as Poland (Okólski, 2021), the Czech Republic (Stojanov *et al.*, 2022), and Slovakia (Benova & Brockova, 2022), migration has gained prominence. Predominantly originating from Ukraine, the current migration wave can be classified into two primary groups. The first group consists of pre-war migrants, typically attracted for economic reasons, who were already part of the labour markets in Central and Eastern European countries before the full-scale Russian aggression against Ukraine. The second group comprises forced migrants (hereafter: refugees) who arrived after February 24, 2022, compelled to leave Ukraine due to the ongoing war. This group consisted mainly of young and middle-aged women with children (Kohlenberger *et al.*, 2023). In the article, by Ukrainian voluntary migrants, we understand people who came to Poland before February 24, 2022, mainly for economic purposes, which is why we also refer to them as economic or pre-war migrants. On the other hand, we call Ukrainian forced migrants the people,

who came to Poland after February 24, 2022, due to the war. They are also referred to in the article as refugees, although formally they do not have such status in Poland.

The dynamics of migration from Ukraine have been altered by the conflict, with women accompanied by children forming the main group (OECD, 2023). Integrating this specific demographic has become the foremost challenge for countries that have become new homes for both Ukrainian labour migrants and refugees. Poland has been a focal point, currently hosting over 1.2 million migrants from Ukraine including both groups, as estimated from mobile network operators' data on active SIM cards issued to Ukrainian citizens (CSO, 2023). This particular source has some limitations including multiple ownership, inactive SIM cards, and the method may underrepresent older populations and children. Estimating the population of Ukrainian migrants in Poland is quite difficult due to the poor quality of the data. In June 2024, there were just over 995 000 Ukrainian refugees in Poland (The Republic of Poland's Open Data Platform, 2024). This sizable population not only constitutes an integral part of Polish society but also represents a group with significant potential for entrepreneurial development, given the scale of their influx. However, there are meaningful differences between voluntary and forced migrants (refugees). The number of migrants residing in Poland in 2024 is estimated at 2.5 million (Dębkowska *et al.*, 2024).

Forced migration encompasses refugees and forcibly displaced populations resulting from war, conflict, political, religious, or other persecution, as well as natural or man-made disasters, development-induced displacement, smuggling, human trafficking, and environmental factors (Reed, 2018). Declared one of the most urgent issues today (Salehyan, 2019), forced migration distinguishes itself from voluntary migration as refugees are compelled to leave their homes. Often grappling with trauma, PTSD, major depression, anxiety, and emotional-related issues (Fazel *et al.*, 2005; Kien *et al.*, 2019; Schlechter *et al.*, 2021), refugees aspire to work, establish normalcy, and contribute to their host countries (Wassenhove & Boufaied, 2015). Despite high qualifications, refugees face obstacles in credential recognition and language proficiency, hindering employment (Wassenhove & Boufaied, 2015). Compared to voluntary migrants, refugees lack preparedness, increasing susceptibility to cultural shock and limited networks in the new environment (David & Terstriep, 2023; Bernard, 1976; Un *et al.*, 2022). When starting a business, refugees often have fewer resources than migrants (David & Zaghow, forthcoming). Newman *et al.* (2018) suggested greater obstacles for female refugees in developing psychological resilience. In addition, gender issues also matter. Motivations for employment vary between male and female migrants (Kubiciel-Lodzińska, 2021). These are some of the complexities that call for an intersectional analysis to understand this population's experiences comprehensively.

This article examines the intention towards entrepreneurship among Ukrainian female migrants and refugees living in Poland. McMullen *et al.* (2021) describe entrepreneurial intention as a significant predictor of entrepreneurial activity (Obschonka *et al.*, 2010). This concept refers to the deliberate mindset directing actions towards planned entrepreneurial endeavours in the future, which could be imminent, indefinite, or never materialise (Thompson, 2009).

In 2022, Ukrainians played a noteworthy role in the Polish business landscape by founding almost 16 000 individual companies, representing 6% of all new businesses established that year. The trend continued in the first half of 2023, with nearly 14 000 additional Ukrainian entrepreneurs entering the scene, nearly matching the total for the previous year. Impressively, around one in every ten newly established companies in Poland during this period had Ukrainian origins. From the commencement of the Ukrainian conflict until June 2023, a total of 29 400 Ukrainian sole proprietorships were officially registered in the CEIDG database (PIE, 2023).

The presented research adopts a quantitative approach, surveying 404 female respondents. Notably, the analysis distinguishes itself by comparing the entrepreneurial intentions of two distinct groups: pre-war migrant women and refugee women, as defined above.

Moreover, the study incorporates an examination of the parental status of migrant women, considering their motherhood. We acknowledged the factors of being a migrant, a refugee, and a mother as potential influences on the intention to start a business and call for an intersectionality perspective adopted in the analyses.

The article's objective is to examine potential variations among migrants from Ukraine concerning their entrepreneurial intention, considering the nature of migration (economic or forced) and their motherhood. It aims to address the following questions:

- RQ1:** Are there differences in the entrepreneurial intention between female pre-war migrants and female refugees?
- RQ2:** Are there differences in the intention to start a business between groups with and without children?

We will depart from the theoretical discourse on intersectionality in section 2. Following this, we will outline our chosen research methodology (section 3). In section 4, we will present and discuss the study's findings. Finally, we will conclude by acknowledging specific limitations and delving into the implications (section 5).

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Intersectionality: Migrant Background, Gender, Motherhood

Intersectionality theory, introduced in the mid-1980s (Calas *et al.*, 2013), has become pivotal in management and organisational studies, shedding light on the intricate dynamics of inequality, oppression, and exclusion within specific demographic groups (Rodriguez & Scurry, 2019). Intersectionality is a vital framework for understanding the complex interplay of factors, situations, and structures that shape entrepreneurship (Grandy *et al.*, 2020; Scott & Hussain, 2019). Originally coined by Crenshaw, intersectionality significantly impacts the experiences of entrepreneurs (Bond, 2021). This concept acknowledges the cumulative effects of various forms of discrimination, highlighting how race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, and other personal characteristics intersect to shape individual experiences of both discrimination and privilege (Bond, 2021; Carastathis, 2016). It also addresses systemic inequalities within entrepreneurial ecosystems, driven by existing power dynamics (Acker, 2012).

Initially grounded in gender science, intersectionality has been examined alongside other diversity dimensions, including foreigner status (Rodriguez & Scurry, 2019), migrant background, and family circumstances (Maj *et al.*, 2024). Researchers have explored the intersection of gender and migrant background (Lassalle & Shaw, 2021) and the intersection of gender and ethnicity (David *et al.*, 2024). For instance, the intersectional perspective in entrepreneurship provides examples of female migrant entrepreneurs as inspiring role models for future generations (Bullough *et al.*, 2022), highlighting both oppressive structures and opportunities (Vorobeva, 2022). Thus, female entrepreneurs face ongoing obstacles such as financial limitations and gender bias, impacting perceptions of their abilities (Martínez-Zaroso, 2017). They often receive less venture capital funding than male entrepreneurs, hindering resource acquisition and credibility establishment in male-dominated sectors (David & Terstriep, 2023).

In addition to lacking financial capital, the challenges of accessing social capital through networks, mentorship, and balancing entrepreneurial endeavours with family responsibilities persist. For female migrant entrepreneurs, factors like ethnicity and migrant status exacerbate even more financial constraints due to restrictions on seeking bank loans (David *et al.*, 2023) and financial institutions' unconscious biases. Moreover, many migrant women face increased burdens overseeing extended family households, straining their mental well-being compared to native-born women (Lassalle & Shaw, 2021).

Entrepreneurial intention refers to an individual's conscious state of mind that directs their attention and actions towards starting a new business or venture (Refaat, 2009; Bird, 1988). It represents a commitment to engage in entrepreneurial behaviour and is influenced by various personal and environmental factors, such as attitudes towards entrepreneurship, perceived behavioural control, and subjective norms (Heydari *et al.*, 2020; Zhang *et al.*, 2014). This process includes the recognition of opportunities and the identification of gaps in the market. It involves evaluating the feasibility of the business idea by considering market demand, available resources, and personal skills (Jarvis, 2016). Following this evaluation, the individual commits to pursuing the business idea, developing a business plan, and seeking advice from mentors and networks. Finally, the decision to act involves taking concrete steps towards launching the business, such as securing funding and starting

the development or marketing of the product. This deliberate and planned approach to venture creation is shaped by a complex interplay of individual attitudes, perceived control over entrepreneurial outcomes, and social influences (Bird & Jelinek, 1989).

Employing an intersectional approach for the described target groups of migrant women being mothers with entrepreneurial intentions is crucial as it acknowledges that considering multiple dimensions simultaneously provides a more nuanced understanding of the group's inequalities (Acker, 2006). In this vein, Collins (1990) stresses the importance of shifting focus from singular categories of oppression to examining how various categories interact, resulting in unequal power dynamics. Using intersectionality as a theoretical framework is essential for understanding the subjectivity-identity approach (Holvino, 2010; Rodriguez *et al.*, 2016), particularly concerning identity changes within specific temporal and spatial contexts (Calás *et al.*, 2013).

Furthermore, intersectionality delves into the impact of sociocultural identities, such as racism, on power and privilege fluctuations in mothers' lives (Garland McKinney & Meinersmann, 2022). Analysing the concept of motherhood reveals its role in reproducing social inequalities and developing capital for children (Grant & Guerin, 2019). Utilising the concept of 'intensive mothering,' Garland McKinney and Meinersmann (2022) discuss the challenges black underrepresented mothers face as they navigate motherhood and work. Notably, in Poland, women are considered primary caregivers (Kość-Ryżko, 2022). Given this societal perspective, also female migrants and refugees being mothers are expected to meet the standards of intensive mothering while facing economic and social challenges, such as low socioeconomic status, limited career opportunities, language literacy, and healthcare access (Pangas *et al.*, 2019). For instance, refugee mothers, considered a 'vulnerable group,' are more commonly exposed to discrimination and racism (Pangas *et al.*, 2019). Refugee mothers from former Soviet republics in Poland may encounter additional challenges in terms of socialisation and enculturation, complicating their ethical and cultural identities (Kość-Ryżko, 2022). How gender, motherhood, refugee status, and other differences define female employees' or entrepreneurs' experiences remains understudied (Özbilgin *et al.*, 2011). An intersectional approach is vital to recognising the interface between micro-level subjectivities and broader structures and institutions, particularly for refugee mothers with problematic political status and social membership (Holvino, 2010).

To the best of our knowledge, the differences in entrepreneurial intention of voluntary women migrants and refugee mothers have not yet been studied. Women in the migrant economy have already been studied through the intersectional perspective (Crenshaw, 1991; Holvino, 2010; Clarke & McCall, 2014) to demonstrate how the multiplicity of diversity dimensions like ethnicity, race, and religion influence how women set up their businesses. Current research, albeit limited, has taken an interest in migrant mothers who are already entrepreneurs, focusing on the analysis of work-life balance strategies of self-employed parents in Norway (Munkejord, 2017) or as a response mechanism to discrimination (Andrejuk, 2018). Andrejuk (2018) found that for self-employed migrant mothers, the decision to set up a business resulted from necessity rather than opportunity, as it was mostly aimed at modifying working hours to combine work and motherhood. Andrejuk (2018) defined it as the 'family defender strategy.' The results of her research also indicate the many difficulties connected with combining the roles of caregiver and primary breadwinner. However, she also pointed out that by adopting the 'family-defender' strategy, migrant mothers gain legitimacy and stability as members of society.

As stated by García and Villares-Varela (2023), literature on migrant entrepreneurship still rarely includes women's experiences and perspectives. One of the strategies for analysing the intersectionality of migrant status, gender and motherhood is adopting a limited intersectionality approach by analysing motherhood as one of the life stages of a female migrant entrepreneur (Andrejuk, 2018). Feminist scholarly efforts have sought to address the gap in entrepreneurial literature by examining various aspects, ranging from the invisibility of women in migrant-led enterprises to interpreting business ownership as a pathway to independence and self-realization (Morokvasic, 1999; Apitzsch & Kontos, 2003; Carter *et al.*, 2015; Vershinina *et al.*, 2019). Central to these analyses is the role of migrant women as the backbone of family businesses in labour-intensive sectors typical of the ethnic economy. These sectors often exhibit a significant reliance on a flexible and cheap labour force, with blurred boundaries between work and household dynamics (Ram, 1994; Dang & Harima, 2020). There is also

literature that shows that some migrant women use entrepreneurship as an emancipation strategy (Apitzsch & Kontos, 2003; Morokvasic, 1999; De Luca & Ambrosini, 2019). While focusing on migrant women-mothers' entrepreneurs, the described research did not include an analysis of their entrepreneurial intentions. Here, we identified the theoretical gap. Against this backdrop, we hypothesised:

- H1:** There is a significant difference in the entrepreneurial intention between female pre-war migrants and refugees. Specifically, female pre-war migrants demonstrate a higher propensity towards starting businesses compared to female refugees.

Justification for the H1:

Female pre-war migrants may have better access to social and financial capital compared to refugees, who often face more significant barriers in these areas due to forced displacement and potentially traumatic experiences (David & Terstriep, 2023). The literature highlights that financial constraints and lack of social capital are significant barriers to entrepreneurship, which are more pronounced for refugees (David *et al.*, 2023). Refugees often deal with ongoing trauma, uncertainty, and instability, which can hinder entrepreneurial intentions (Lassalle & Shaw, 2021). On the other hand, pre-war migrants might experience a more stable transition, allowing them to focus on identifying and exploiting business opportunities. Both groups face discrimination, but the nature and extent can differ. Refugees might face more acute forms of racism and xenophobia due to their more vulnerable status (Pangas *et al.*, 2019), which can demotivate entrepreneurial pursuits. Intersectionality theory emphasizes how these intersecting forms of discrimination uniquely affect refugees compared to other migrant groups (Garland McKinney & Meinersmann, 2022).

- H2:** Differences in the intention to start a business exist among female migrants, particularly between those who migrated for economic reasons and those who were forcibly displaced. Moreover, both groups, female migrants and refugees with children are expected to show lower intentions to start a business compared to those without children.

Justification for H2:

The literature suggests that economic migrants, who migrate by choice for better opportunities, often have higher entrepreneurial intentions due to their proactive approach and readiness to capitalise on available opportunities (Holvino, 2010; Rodriguez *et al.*, 2016). In contrast, forced migrants or refugees, who migrate under duress, often lack the initial resources and psychological readiness required for entrepreneurship (Calás *et al.*, 2013). The intersectionality framework highlights how gender and motherhood roles impact entrepreneurial intentions. Female migrants and refugees with children face additional burdens, such as balancing family responsibilities with business activities, which can reduce their entrepreneurial intentions (Grant & Guerin, 2019). The concept of 'intensive mothering' shows that societal expectations place more significant pressure on mothers, particularly in contexts where women are primary caregivers (Kość-Ryzko, 2022). Female migrants and refugees with children often encounter more profound economic and social challenges, including lower socioeconomic status and limited career opportunities (Pangas *et al.*, 2019). These challenges are exacerbated by their caregiving roles, further reducing their ability to pursue entrepreneurial ventures (Lassalle & Shaw, 2021). The intersection of motherhood, migrant status, and other social identities creates unique obstacles that hinder entrepreneurial intentions. In particular, refugee mothers face heightened discrimination and difficulty in social integration, which impacts their ability to start businesses (Özbilgin *et al.*, 2011; Holvino, 2010).

We addressed the gap in the literature by specifically examining the entrepreneurial intentions among female pre-war migrants, female refugees, and those with and without children. Adopting an intersectional approach, it aims to provide a nuanced understanding of how various intersecting identities influence entrepreneurial behaviour. The hypotheses are grounded in the complex interplay of gender, migration status, and family responsibilities, as elucidated by the intersectionality theory and existing empirical evidence.

By identifying and analysing these factors, we sought to contribute to the broader understanding of migrant entrepreneurship and offer insights into how different dimensions of diversity impact en-

entrepreneurial intentions. This approach aligns with feminist scholarly efforts to highlight the experiences of women in the migrant economy and address their unique challenges and opportunities.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a quantitative approach and was conducted on a survey panel in May 2023, focusing on a sample size of 404 Ukrainian women – pre-war migrants and refugees – currently living in Poland. Research conducted on a panel involves gathering data from the same group of respondents or participants who have consented to participate in research activities over a defined period. Utilising a research panel offers several advantages, including the possibility to pre-recruit participants, who fit the desired profiles (in the case of this study, female migrants and female refugees). The research panel used for this study included individuals with diverse backgrounds, including hard-to-reach populations like migrants and refugees. Thus, using such panels ensures a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem. Furthermore, panels can significantly reduce the costs and time associated with recruiting participants for a study. Since they are already recruited, they can be quickly accessed, and the response rate is higher compared to other survey methods (*e.g.* Lehtonvirta *et al.*, 2021; Tourangeau, 2014). By employing a quantitative methodology within a panel framework, we aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the entrepreneurial intentions of Ukrainian migrant women in Poland, shedding light on potential variations and trends within this demographic group over time. We used frequency analysis and statistical tests to analyse the data. The analyses focused on the status of the respondents, *i.e.* whether the respondent was a pre-war migrant or a refugee, and on whether or not the respondents had children under 18 years, over 7 years and children under 3 years.

Within the cohort of migrant women surveyed, we observed that a significant majority, accounting for over 58%, fell within the age range of 30 to 44 years, indicating a prevalent presence of women in their prime working years. This age distribution was further highlighted when examining the specific cohorts within the migrant population. Among refugee women, approximately 63% fell within the specified age range, suggesting a concentration of individuals amid their professional and personal development. Conversely, among pre-war migrant women, this proportion was around 52%, indicating a slightly lower but still substantial representation within the same age bracket. Notably, the pre-war migrant demographic exhibited a higher representation, exceeding 37%, within the youngest age bracket, suggesting a relatively youthful profile within this subgroup.

Moreover, discernible differences emerged between the two cohorts concerning educational attainment within the surveyed populace. Specifically, nearly 70% of refugee women possessed tertiary education qualifications, reflecting a commendable level of educational achievement within this group. In contrast, a minority, approximately 12%, attained secondary-level education, indicating a smaller proportion of individuals with lower educational qualifications. This discrepancy in educational attainment underscores the diverse backgrounds and experiences within the refugee population, with a significant proportion benefiting from higher education opportunities.

In the sample population, it was notable that approximately three-quarters reported having children under the age of 18, highlighting the prevalence of motherhood within the migrant community. This observation was further accentuated when comparing the incidence of motherhood between the different migrant cohorts. For named reasons explained by the war conflict, a greater proportion of refugee women identified as mothers. They comprised nearly 75% of the cohort. In contrast, this proportion was slightly lower among pre-war migrant women, with approximately 58% reporting motherhood status. This disparity suggests varying family compositions and responsibilities within the different migrant subgroups, with implications for their entrepreneurial intentions and pursuits.

We conducted the analysis using frequency analysis, which allows us to understand the distribution of responses and identify trends and patterns within the data. We also used several statistical tests (like the chi-square test and V-Cramer test) to establish, whether there are statistically significant relationships and differences between the variables in the study. The article adopts two levels of statistical significance: ≤ 0.05 and < 0.1 . All results with a p-value > 0.1 were considered statistically insignificant.

Table 1. Sample structure

| Characteristics | | | Pre-war migrants | Refugees | Total |
|-------------------------|--------------------|--------|------------------|----------|-------|
| Age | 18-29 | Number | 58 | 65 | 123 |
| | | % | 37.4 | 26.1 | 30.4 |
| | 30-44 | Number | 80 | 156 | 236 |
| | | % | 51.6 | 62.7 | 58.4 |
| | Over 45 | Number | 17 | 28 | 45 |
| | | % | 11.0 | 11.2 | 11.1 |
| Education | Higher | Number | 93 | 173 | 266 |
| | | % | 60.0 | 69.5 | 65.8 |
| | Secondary | Number | 37 | 30 | 67 |
| | | % | 23.9 | 12.0 | 16.6 |
| | Vocational/primary | Number | 25 | 46 | 71 |
| | | % | 16.1 | 18.5 | 17.6 |
| Children under 18 years | Yes | Number | 89 | 185 | 274 |
| | | % | 58.2 | 74.6 | 68.3 |
| | No | Number | 64 | 63 | 127 |
| | | % | 41.8 | 25.4 | 31.7 |

Source: own study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The survey aimed to gather insights into the entrepreneurial intention of female migrants and refugees from Ukraine. The primary objective was to ascertain whether women considered engaging in business as a viable option in the labour market, noting that none of the migrant women surveyed was currently operating their businesses.

Among the respondents, slightly over 15% expressed interest in establishing a business, while nearly half indicated a reluctance to pursue such a path. Notably, a group comprising over 35% of participants remained undecided, representing a potentially intriguing segment with latent potential for entrepreneurship.

The data revealed that in the surveyed group, the proportion of pre-war migrant women willing to set up a business was slightly higher than among refugee women – 23.3% compared to 12.9%. Among refugee women, 54% expressed no interest in establishing their businesses. This disparity suggests varying levels of entrepreneurial intention within the different migrant cohorts with implications for understanding their aspirations and motivations in the labour market (Table 2). This relationship is weak (Cramér's $V = 0.122$) but statistically significant, suggesting that the circumstances of immigration influence the statements made.

Table 2. Intention to entrepreneurial activities of Ukrainian women in Poland [2023]

| Characteristics | | | Pre-war migrants | Refugees | Total |
|-----------------|--------|--|------------------|----------|-------|
| Yes | Number | | 31 | 32 | 63 |
| | % | | 23.3 | 12.9 | 15.7 |
| No | Number | | 65 | 134 | 199 |
| | % | | 42.5 | 54 | 49.6 |
| I don't know | Number | | 57 | 82 | 139 |
| | % | | 37.3 | 31.1 | 34.7 |

Note: $\chi^2=6.023$, $df=2$, $p<0.05$, V Cramer=0.122.

Source: own study.

The analysis also considered the impact of childcare responsibilities on women's engagement in the labour market (Liu & Marois, 2023), a crucial factor in assessing their intentions towards entrepreneurship. The study examined intentions to venture into business across two key dimensions: migration status and parental status, particularly focusing on individuals with children under 18.

The research findings highlight the role of motherhood in shaping entrepreneurial intention. Surprisingly, within the study cohort, female participants with dependent children (under the age of 18) demonstrated a greater entrepreneurial intention compared to migrant women without children under 18. Remarkably, this pattern persisted across both migrant subgroups, encompassing both pre-war migrants and refugees. Among pre-war migrant women with dependent children, nearly 26% expressed an intention to establish a business, contrasting with 12.5% among those without children. We observed a similar trend among refugee women, with 14% of those with children under 18 indicating a positive response to the question about their consideration of starting their own business (Table 3).

Table 3. Intention to entrepreneurial activities according to the type of migrant and presence of children aged under 18 years

| Type of migrant | Intention to entrepreneurial activities | | No, I don't have children under 18 | Yes, I have children under 18 | Total |
|-----------------|---|--------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------|
| | Pre-war migrants | Yes | Number | 8 | 23 |
| % | | | 12.5 | 25.8 | 20.3 |
| No | | Number | 27 | 38 | 65 |
| | | % | 42.2 | 42.7 | 42.5 |
| I don't know | | Number | 29 | 28 | 57 |
| | | % | 45.3 | 31.5 | 37.3 |
| Refugees | Yes | Number | 6 | 26 | 32 |
| | | % | 9.5 | 14.1 | 12.9 |
| | No | Number | 34 | 100 | 134 |
| | | % | 54.0 | 54.1 | 54.0 |
| | I don't know | Number | 23 | 59 | 82 |
| | | % | 36.5 | 31.9 | 33.1 |

Note: Pre-war migrants: $\chi^2=5.11$, $df=2$, $p<0.1$, V Cramer=0.184; Refugees: $\chi^2=1.050$, $df=2$, $p>0.1$, V Cramer=0.065.

Source: own study.

The study showed that in the analysed group of Ukrainian migrant women, differences between those with and without children under the age of 18 existed, but only in the case of pre-war migrants is statistically significant. In the case of female refugees, this relationship was minimal, as indicated by the marginal value of V Cramer, and lacks statistical significance.

Considering the results, we conducted additional analyses. We also placed focus on the respondents and their intention to start a business, with particular attention to whether they had children over the age of seven or not (Table 4).

In light of the results, we conducted further analyses. We examined respondents and their entrepreneurial intention, considering whether they had children over the age of seven.

Within the study group, we observed that slightly more pre-war migrant women with children over seven years old (34%) were willing to set up their own businesses compared to refugee women, among whom only 14% responded affirmatively.

We found that, in the case of female pre-war migrants, there was a statistically significant relationship between entrepreneurial intention and having children over the age of seven. This may indicate that the age of the child was a factor considered by these women when deciding to start their own businesses. Conversely, among the refugee women surveyed, there was no statistically significant relationship between the age of their children and their entrepreneurial intention.

Moreover, we used the entrepreneurial intention for comparison, considering whether the respondents had younger children, *i.e.*, up to the age of 3. The age of a child up to three years was the most demanding for parents, particularly mothers. This is primarily because providing institutional care for very young children is more difficult. Furthermore, due to the high incidence of illnesses in early childhood, young children often have high absenteeism from care. Consequently, it becomes challenging for parents to balance work responsibilities with childcare during this period. The results of the analyses are presented in Table 5.

Table 4. Intention to entrepreneurial activities according to the type of migrant and presence of children aged over 7 years

| Type of migrant | Intention to entrepreneurial activities | | No, I don't have children over 7 | Yes, I have children over 7 | Total |
|------------------|---|--------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------|
| Pre-war migrants | Yes | Number | 13 | 18 | 31 |
| | | % | 12.7% | 34.0% | 20.0% |
| | No | Number | 43 | 23 | 66 |
| | | % | 42.2% | 43.4% | 42.6% |
| | I don't know | Number | 46 | 12 | 58 |
| | | % | 45.1% | 22.6% | 37.4% |
| Refugees | Yes | Number | 13 | 19 | 32 |
| | | % | 11.0% | 14.5% | 12.9% |
| | No | Number | 64 | 70 | 134 |
| | | % | 54.2% | 53.4% | 53.8% |
| | I don't know | Number | 41 | 42 | 83 |
| | | % | 34.7% | 32.1% | 33.3% |

Note: Pre-war migrants: $\chi^2=12.563$, $df=2$, $p<0.05$, V Cramer=0.285; Refugees: $\chi^2= 0.054$, $df=2$, $p>0.1$, V Cramer = 0.054. Source: own study.

Table 5. Intention to entrepreneurial activities according to the type of migrant and presence of children aged under 3 years

| Type of migrant | Intention to entrepreneurial activities | | No, I don't have children under 3 | Yes, I have children under 3 | Total |
|------------------|---|--------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|-------|
| Pre-war migrants | Yes | Number | 26 | 5 | 31 |
| | | % | 22.6% | 12.5% | 20.0% |
| | No | Number | 43 | 23 | 66 |
| | | % | 37.4% | 57.5% | 42.6% |
| | I don't know | Number | 46 | 12 | 58 |
| | | % | 40.0% | 30.0% | 37.4% |
| Refugees | Yes | Number | 31 | 1 | 32 |
| | | % | 15.2% | 2.2% | 12.9% |
| | No | Number | 108 | 26 | 134 |
| | | % | 52.9% | 57.8% | 53.8% |
| | I don't know | Number | 65 | 18 | 83 |
| | | % | 31.9% | 40.0% | 33.3% |

Note: Pre-war migrants: $\chi^2=5,128$, $df=2$, $p=0,05$, V Cramer=0,182; Refugees: $\chi^2=5,721$, $df=2$, $p<0,1$ V Cramer=0,152. Source: own study.

Having young children (up to 3 years old) constitutes a barrier to start-up decisions. This trend is evident in the respondents' answers. In both groups – pre-war migrant women and refugee women – those without children under the age of three were more likely to express an intention to set up a business. Among pre-war migrant women without children under three, 22.6% indicated an entrepreneurial intention, compared to only 12.5% of those with children under three.

The difference was even more pronounced among refugee women. Here, 15.2% of respondents without young children expressed an intention to set up a business, whereas only 2.2% (one respondent) of those with children under three did so. This data highlights the significant impact that the presence of very young children has on the propensity of women to engage in entrepreneurial activities. In both cases, having the youngest children exerts a limiting effect on business start-up declarations. These differences were statistically significant.

The data suggests that pre-war migrants with children under 18 were more inclined towards embarking on entrepreneurial ventures, possibly motivated by the need to support their families financially. Interestingly, this demographic tends to be younger than their childless counterparts, with the latter likely representing the youngest segment within the sample.

Moreover, analyses stratified by migrant type failed to produce statistically significant findings. These outcomes indicate that, within the surveyed population, the nature of migration did not significantly impact the expression of entrepreneurial intentions. This is an interesting finding because, as research on Syrian refugees in Turkey shows, the refugee context has a negative emotional impact on entrepreneurship (Almohammad *et al.*, 2021).

The results of the survey provide valuable insights into the entrepreneurial intention of female migrants and refugees from Ukraine living in Poland. They show a slightly different perspective from, for example, the research conducted in Sweden among female refugees (Lazarczyk-Bilal & Glinka, 2020). Notably, while a significant portion of respondents expressed interest in establishing a business, nearly half indicated reluctance, while a substantial percentage remained undecided. This undecided group represents a potentially intriguing segment with latent entrepreneurial potential, suggesting that targeted support and interventions could encourage them to explore entrepreneurial opportunities further. A notable disparity emerged between pre-war migrant women and refugee women regarding their willingness to start a business. Pre-war migrant women exhibited a higher entrepreneurial intention compared to refugees, with a significantly higher proportion expressing interest in establishing a business. This finding suggests that the motivations and barriers to entrepreneurship may differ between the two migrant cohorts, possibly influenced by their respective migration experiences and backgrounds already discussed in the literature (Abebe, 2023).

The analysis also highlighted the significant role of parental status, here motherhood, in shaping entrepreneurial aspirations among female pre-war migrants. Surprisingly, women with dependent children (aged under 18 and the group having children over 7 years) demonstrated a greater propensity towards starting a business compared to those without children. It thus indicated that childcare responsibilities may serve as a motivating factor for entrepreneurship among migrant women to be more independent in terms of work schedules and workplace arrangements. The findings underscore the need for policies and support mechanisms that address the unique challenges and opportunities faced by migrant mothers in the labour market.

In the group of refugee women with children under the age of 18, as well as those with children over the age of 7, there was no statistically significant relationship between having or not having children and the propensity to start a business. It is also important to consider the interaction of factors – refugee women are in a state of ‘limbo.’ They often do not know how long they will remain in their host country. This uncertainty influences their decisions on how to navigate the labour market. Consequently, their decisions may be influenced not only by childcare issues but also by other factors related to their continued stay in the host country.

However, in both groups, having the youngest children exerts a limiting effect on declarations to set up a business. These differences are statistically significant.

Overall, the study’s findings provide valuable insights into the complex interplay of factors influencing entrepreneurial intentions among female migrants and refugees from Ukraine in Poland. They highlight the importance of addressing childcare responsibilities and tailoring support mechanisms to meet the diverse needs of migrant women in pursuing entrepreneurial opportunities. Further research could explore additional factors influencing entrepreneurial intentions and delve deeper into the experiences of specific migrant subgroups to inform targeted policy interventions and support programs.

CONCLUSIONS

Our article extends the theoretical understanding of the factors influencing migrants’ business start-up behaviour, with a particular focus on women, through the lens of intersectionality theory. Our analyses demonstrate that key factors affecting the decision to establish a business include the nature of the migrant’s residence status (whether it involves voluntary or forced migration) and their family circumstances, especially the ages of their children.

The complex landscape of migration from Ukraine to Central and Eastern European countries like Poland (Górny & van der Zwan, 2024), the Czech Republic (Křížková, & Ouředníček, 2020), and Slovakia (Koroutchev, 2020) has seen significant shifts, particularly with recent movements within Europe.

These migrations primarily comprise two groups: pre-war migrants, attracted to economic opportunities before the conflict in Ukraine, and refugees, compelled to leave their homes due to the ongoing war. The integration of these migrants, especially women with children, poses significant challenges for host countries like Poland, which currently hosts a substantial Ukrainian migrant population.

We delved into the entrepreneurial intention of Ukrainian female migrants and refugees in Poland, a demographic with considerable potential for business development, given their significant presence in the country. However, there are notable distinctions between voluntary and forced migrants, particularly refugees, who often face additional barriers to employment and integration (Fasani *et al.*, 2021; Lumley-Sapanski, 2021). Refugees, compelled to leave their homes due to conflict, bring with them experiences of trauma and displacement, which can impact their ability to engage in entrepreneurial activities despite their aspirations for normalcy and contribution to their host countries.

Furthermore, the research findings highlight the influence of parental status, here the motherhood on entrepreneurial aspirations among migrant women of both groups.

Surprisingly, women with dependent children (under the age of 18 and with children over 7) demonstrate a greater entrepreneurial intention compared to those without children, suggesting that childcare responsibilities may serve as a motivator for entrepreneurship. This trend persists across both pre-war migrant and refugee cohorts, indicating the universal significance of motherhood in shaping women's entrepreneurial intentions. However, we noted a statistically significant relationship between having children aged under 18 and over 7 and intention to entrepreneurial activities only in the case of pre-war migrants.

The nature of migration significantly impacts the expression of entrepreneurial intentions within the surveyed population. The study underscores the importance of considering multiple dimensions, including gender, migration status, and parental responsibilities, in understanding migrant experiences comprehensively. An intersectional analysis reveals the nuanced interactions between various identity markers and structural factors, shedding light on the complex dynamics of inequality and exclusion within migrant communities.

Against this background, the implications for policymakers might include an inclusive and sensitive startup ecosystem with support mechanisms for integration and the recognition of the diverse needs of both pre-war migrants and refugees (Simich *et al.*, 2005), especially women with children, as they navigate integration into the host country's society and economy. Targeted support programmes should be implemented to address language barriers, facilitate cultural adaptation, and provide access to education and employment opportunities (Due *et al.*, 2021). In this regard, it is essential to consider the specific challenges faced by refugee populations. Entrepreneurship support is another vital aspect to consider. Tailored entrepreneurship programmes, mainly on demand (wanted and required by these groups) should be developed for Ukrainian female migrants and refugees, acknowledging their potential for business development. These programmes should offer resources such as mentorship, training, and financial assistance to empower migrant and refugee women to start and sustain their businesses. It is important to consider the unique circumstances of refugee entrepreneurs, including trauma-informed support services and assistance with navigating bureaucratic processes.

This knowledge may be particularly valuable for policymakers in Central and Eastern European countries, which have recently transitioned from being countries of emigration to immigration. The rapid pace of these changes, accelerated by the war in Ukraine and the sudden mass influx of refugees, has often left these countries with insufficient time to adapt their policies accordingly. For instance, in Poland, the preparation of a migration strategy did not commence until 2024.

Recognising the role of childcare responsibilities as a motivator for entrepreneurship among those women is also crucial. Investing in affordable and accessible childcare services can enable women with dependent children to pursue entrepreneurial ventures without compromising their caregiving duties. It is essential to ensure that childcare support is inclusive and responsive to the needs of diverse migrant communities.

Adopting intersectional policy approaches was necessary to address the intersecting identities and experiences (Bonjour & Duyvendak, 2020) of migrant women, including their gender, migration status, and parental responsibilities. Policies and programmes should be designed to address the complex

dynamics of inequality and exclusion within migrant communities, considering the diverse needs and aspirations of different migrant groups. Establishing longitudinal monitoring and evaluation mechanisms is essential for tracking the effectiveness of integration and entrepreneurship support initiatives for Ukrainian female migrants over time. Collecting disaggregated data on key indicators such as entrepreneurial intentions, business ownership, and socio-economic outcomes can inform evidence-based policymaking and identify areas for targeted intervention. Finally, fostering collaboration and knowledge sharing among policymakers, researchers, civil society organisations, and migrant communities is crucial. As research shows, it is important to build entrepreneurial intentions (Richey *et al.*, 2022). By working together, stakeholders can co-design and implement effective policies and programmes that are responsive to the diverse needs and experiences of migrant women from Ukraine. Drawing on insights from intersectional research can further inform policy development and ensure that interventions address the complex challenges faced by migrant communities.

However, it is essential to acknowledge the study's limitations. While the survey captured insights from a significant number of female migrants and refugees from Ukraine residing in Poland, the sample may not fully represent the entire population. There could be biases in the selection process, and certain segments of the migrant population may be underrepresented, affecting the generalisability of the findings. The study focused primarily on entrepreneurial intentions among female migrants and refugees from Ukraine in Poland. While it provided valuable insights into this specific demographic, it did not explore other factors that could influence entrepreneurial aspirations, such as prior entrepreneurial experience or access to resources. The study identified correlations between certain variables, such as motherhood and entrepreneurial intentions, but did not establish causality. While the findings suggest potential relationships, further research is needed to determine causative factors that drive entrepreneurial behaviour among migrant women. While the study considered both pre-war migrants and refugees, the analysis did not delve deeply into the diverse experiences within these groups. Variations in migration trajectories, socio-economic backgrounds, and personal circumstances could influence entrepreneurial intentions but were not fully explored. The study focused specifically on female migrants and refugees from Ukraine in Poland, limiting the generalizability of the findings to other migrant populations or host countries. Different contexts may yield different results and researchers should exercise caution when extrapolating the findings to other settings.

Future research could explore the experiences of other migrant groups and consider additional factors influencing entrepreneurial intentions, such as language proficiency and access to financial resources. An important issue for future research is to determine the factors that drive women to start a business. Is it forced entrepreneurship, such as internal pressure and a desire to ensure the well-being of their children or themselves? Or is it external pressure from a potential employer? Despite these limitations, the study contributes valuable insights into the entrepreneurial landscape of migrant women in Poland, highlighting the need for tailored support and policies to address their unique challenges and aspirations.

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Conflict of Interest

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