**Digital Literacy and Information Precarity: The Paradox of Ukrainian Refugee Integration in Hungary**

**Abstract**

This study investigates the relationship between digital literacy and the challenges of integration among Ukrainian refugee women in Budapest, Hungary. Based on 26 semi-structured interviews with women aged 19-43, the research reveals that while digital tools, such as smartphones and apps like Google Translate, help with daily navigation, they do little to address larger challenges related to housing, employment, and education. Despite their digital proficiency, the women are unfamiliar with local news and have difficulty understanding Hungarian bureaucratic processes. Their reliance on transnational networks from Ukraine further limits their engagement with Hungarian society.

Participants expressed feeling tolerated but not truly wanted in Hungary, which, combined with insufficient on-the-ground institutional support, exacerbates their difficulties in integrating. This study demonstrates that digital literacy alone is insufficient to overcome the broader socio-economic and cultural challenges of integration. The findings emphasize the need for stronger social and institutional support systems that work alongside digital literacy initiatives to foster meaningful integration and help refugees better navigate local systems.

**Keywords:** Digital literacy; Refugee integration; Ukrainian refugees; Social support systems; Information precarity

**Introduction**

The escalation of the conflict in Ukraine on February 24, 2022, triggered one of the fastest-growing humanitarian crises in Europe, displacing over 8 million individuals, primarily women and children, who sought refuge in neighboring countries (Letki et al., 2024). As a transit and destination country, Hungary has seen approximately 4.2 million border crossings from Ukraine as of mid-2023. Of these, over 39,351 individuals have registered for temporary protection in Hungary (UNHCR, 2023). Hungary has faced significant challenges in adequately addressing the needs of Ukrainian refugees, as highlighted by various civil society and human rights organizations. They argue that the shortcomings in the support system are largely attributed to the government’s stringent anti-immigration policies, which create substantial barriers for refugees seeking stable housing, educational opportunities, and access to essential services (Brzozowski, 2023; MacGregor, 2023; ProAsyl, 2022). Although the European Union has extended temporary protection status for Ukrainian refugees—allowing legal residence, employment, housing, education, and healthcare access in Hungary until March 2025, with a potential extension to March 2026—the overall support infrastructure remains inadequate (UNHCR, 2024a, 2024b).

Scholars stress that Hungary’s restrictive policies are deeply intertwined with the country's complex political and social landscape, complicating efforts to provide comprehensive assistance and long-term integration(Letki et al., 2024; Zakariás et al., 2023). While Ukrainian refugees are somewhat more welcomed compared to non-European refugees, this acceptance is conditional and limited. Despite being perceived as culturally closer to Hungarians, they still encounter significant barriers and inadequate support, reflecting a broader reluctance to fully integrate any refugee group. The government’s dual stance as argued by scholars in the field illustrates the broader European dynamic of creating ‘hierarchies’ among refugees based on nationality, race, and religion (Grajczjár et al., 2022; Reményi et al., 2023).

Non-state actors, such as municipalities and hostel managers, often found to assume responsibility for managing these challenges, albeit without sufficient support. This has led many refugees to rely on informal networks and self-help groups to navigate the bureaucratic and social systems (Brzozowski, 2023; IOM, 2023; MacGregor, 2023; Matuszczyk, 2022). The government’s anti-immigration rhetoric appears to have not only complicated efforts to support Ukrainian refugees but has also fostered a dual narrative that simultaneously expresses cultural sympathy towards Ukrainians while perpetuating xenophobic sentiments. This duality is thought to have resulted in a stark double standard, where Ukrainian refugees, perceived as racially and culturally closer to Hungarians, receive more favorable treatment than non-European refugees (Korkut & Fazekas, 2023; Pepinsky et al., 2022). As a result, non-European refugees are more likely to experience severe mistreatment and face xenophobic policies, highlighting the broader inadequacies of Hungary’s refugee support system (Bathke, 2022; Gall, 2016).

Previous research by Wall et al. (2017) identified information precarity as a systemic issue for refugees, involving disrupted social networks, exposure to misinformation, and limited control over information. Berg (2021, 2023) further highlights how limited digital access exacerbates this issue, particularly for refugee women in Germany, where poor connectivity limits access to resources. A substantial body of research focuses on refugees from the Global South in Western countries, where on-the-ground support is more visible, and immigration policies have historically been more open (Hartmann (Hartmann, 2017; Owino & Weber, 2020; Walker et al., 2015). This study focuses on Ukrainian refugee women in Hungary, a country known for strict immigration policies. Despite their cultural proximity to the host society, Ukrainian refugees still face significant barriers, revealing that cultural affinity does not guarantee adequate institutional support. The study finds that the main driver of information precarity is not limited digital access or literacy, but the absence of comprehensive support systems. Without these systems, refugees must navigate complex bureaucratic and social environments alone, exposing gaps in Hungary’s refugee support infrastructure.

Following this introduction, the paper first examines the concept of information precarity and its relationship to socio-technical systems. It then explores the importance of social support and the impact of cultural isolation on refugee integration. The methodology is outlined, detailing the qualitative approach used to gather data. The paper proceeds with an analysis of the findings and concludes with a discussion of the study's implications and contributions to the field.

*Information Precarity*

Information precarity refers to the instability and insecurity in accessing reliable, relevant, and timely information, which significantly affects decision-making, daily life, and overall well-being—especially for vulnerable populations like refugees (Wall et al., 2019; Wall et al., 2017). Information precarity involves both physical barriers, such as limited internet connectivity, and social barriers, including language differences and distrust in information sources (Berg, 2021, 2022; Gillespie et al., 2018; Wall et al., 2017). Refugees are often found to experience heightened information precarity due to precarious living conditions and restricted access to technology. Recent studies show that information precarity exacerbates challenges refugees face in adapting to new environments and integrating into host societies (Alencar et al., 2019; Georgiou, 2019; Kaufmann, 2018; Udwan et al., 2020). For instance, studies in the field established that refugees experience significant difficulties in accessing reliable information, impacting their ability to make informed decisions (Emmer et al., 2020; Emmer et al., 2016; Wall et al., 2017). This lack of stable and trustworthy information sources leaves them vulnerable to misinformation, stereotyping, and rumors , which can further weaken their capacity to navigate socio-economic landscapes in host countries (Dekker & Engbersen, 2014; Madianou, 2014). Thus, digital technologies play a crucial role in mitigating information precarity. Access to mobile phones and the internet helps refugees connect with critical information and support networks essential for integration and well-being (AbuJarour et al., 2017; Andrade & Doolin, 2016; Harney, 2013). However, socio-economic and political barriers, such as limited internet access and high connectivity costs, often found to hinder these benefits (Berg, 2021; Leung, 2010; Lloyd, 2014; Vernon et al., 2016). Despite these obstacles, refugees develop strategies to mitigate information precarity, such as seeking free internet access in public places, relying on community networks, and using digital tools to navigate new environments (Berg, 2021; Borkert et al., 2018; Kutscher & Kreß, 2018; Latonero & Kift, 2018).

Research reveals the importance of effective policies and support systems in reducing information precarity among refugees. Providing reliable internet access, offering digital literacy training, and ensuring the availability of accurate information can significantly enhance refugees' ability to integrate and thrive (Alam & Imran, 2015; Baban et al., 2017; Georgiou et al., 2024; Walker et al., 2015) Tailored interventions, based on the specific needs of refugee groups, are found to be critical for improving outcomes (Echterhoff et al., 2020; Peisker & Tilbury, 2003).

*Socio-Technical Systems*

The challenges of information precarity discussed earlier are not solely due to limited access to digital technologies. Refugees face both physical and social barriers, including language differences, social isolation, and distrust of available information sources. These challenges are further compounded by inadequacies in the socio-technical systems designed to support them. While digital literacy and internet access are essential, they alone appear not to sufficiently mitigate the precarity refugees face without being integrated into broader socio-technical frameworks that address refugees’ social, cultural, and economic realities (Caidi et al., 2010; Lloyd et al., 2013). Socio-technical systems (STS) refer to the interplay between social and technological systems, highlighting that technology use and outcomes are deeply shaped by the social context in which they are embedded (Maguire, 2013; Mumford, 2006). This concept emphasizes that digital tools do not function in isolation but are part of a broader system where social structures and cultural norms are critical to technology’s success (Orlikowski & Barley, 2001; Sawyer & Jarrahi, 2014). For refugees, technology is often misaligned with their lived experiences, and without supportive socio-technical frameworks, the digital tools available often cannot address their needs effectively (Culbertson et al., 2019; Mancini et al., 2019). Research further underscores that while digital inclusion can provide vital tools for refugees, it must be contextualized within broader socio-economic and cultural frameworks to ensure meaningful social integration (Tsatsou, 2022). For example, Georgiou et al. (2024) found that teenage refugees in Europe, while possessing digital skills, often struggled due to structural barriers such as poor internet access and a lack of localized information. Similarly, Berg (2022) identified that during the COVID-19 pandemic, refugee women in Germany faced intensified inequalities due to a lack of internet access, and inadequate digital resources, deepening their social isolation and vulnerability to misinformation. Moreover, research highlights that digital inequality remains a persistent challenge for refugees, underscoring the need for socio-technical systems that not only promote digital literacy but also provide integrated social support, which is essential for facilitating effective refugee integration. Thus, socio-technical frameworks that reflect refugees' lived experiences are found to be essential for developing sustainable and effective integration strategies (Dahya et al., 2023; Leung, 2020; Lloyd, 2014; Lloyd et al., 2010; Veronis et al., 2018)

*Social Support*

Building on the critical role of digital literacy and socio-technical systems, social support emerges as another essential factor in addressing the challenges of refugee integration. Research underscores that while digital tools are helpful, they are insufficient without robust social and emotional support networks. Studies show that persistent digital inequalities, even among those with digital literacy, continue to pose significant barriers to integration, particularly when socio-technical systems fail to provide comprehensive support (Berg, 2022; Hannides et al., 2016; Lloyd, 2014; Lloyd et al., 2013; Tsatsou, 2022). Social support is critical for navigating integration challenges, while cultural isolation exacerbates psychological distress and hinders resettlement (Löbel et al., 2021). Emotional, instrumental, and informational support serves as a protective factor against the adverse effects of displacement (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Correa-Velez et al., 2010). Women refugees, in particular, face additional challenges due to gender-specific barriers and isolation (Forani, 2020; Liebig, 2018). Research consistently demonstrates that the development of social capital, particularly through bonding and bridging networks, is essential for refugees, as these networks facilitate access to critical resources and contribute to a sense of belonging within host societies (Ager & Strang, 2008; Goodson & Phillimore, 2008; Portes, 2009). Empirical studies further highlight that the creation of supportive environments and social networks is key to addressing the structural and cultural barriers that impede integration, thereby playing a crucial role in enhancing refugees' socio-economic mobility and community participation (Cheung & Phillimore, 2017; Coleman, 1988). Building on this understanding, it becomes evident that cultural isolation further compounds the challenges refugees face, particularly among women. Furthermore, cultural isolation has been widely documented as a factor that exacerbates mental health challenges and diminishes overall well-being, especially for women refugees who frequently face a "triple disadvantage" in the labor market, compounding their difficulties in resettlement (Banulescu-Bogdan, 2020; Liebig, 2018). The absence of strong social and professional networks significantly limits their employment opportunities and economic stability (Cheung & Phillimore, 2017; Kainat et al., 2022). Research underscores the importance of targeted services designed to address the specific barriers faced by women refugees. These services include mentorship programs, childcare support, job placement assistance, and language training, all of which should be tailored to meet the unique needs and challenges experienced by women refugees in the resettlement process (Fakih, 2017; Hillmann & Toğral Koca, 2021; Kainat et al., 2022; Tissot & Zimmer, 2021). Thus, while digital literacy can empower refugees by facilitating access to information and maintaining social connections (AbuJarour, 2020; Alencar et al., 2019; Imani Giglou et al., 2022), it can remain insufficient without strong social support systems (Morrice, 2007; Seethaler-Wari, 2018; Strang & Quinn, 2021). Refugees are found to frequently struggle to navigate bureaucratic procedures due to language barriers and unfamiliarity with local systems (Pearlman, 2017; Rozakou, 2017; Topal Demiroğlu, 2024). Social support from community organizations often become vital for effective integration (Stewart, 2014). Services related to legal status, housing, healthcare, and childcare become crucial for successful integration (Crawford et al., 2023; Strang et al., 2018). Formal and informal support networks, including community organizations, bridge the gap between refugees and necessary services (Francis & Yan, 2016; Mattessich et al., 2017). Social support networks, as shown by Kosyakova and Kogan (2022), are indispensable for navigating employment and education systems, ultimately enhancing successful integration and mobility. Thus, social support remains fundamental for refugee integration, particularly in navigating employment and bureaucratic systems.

**Methodology**

This study employed a qualitative approach, using 26 semi-structured, open-ended interviews with Ukrainian refugee women in Budapest, conducted in the winter of 2023. The semi-structured interview format allowed for flexibility, enabling participants to share in-depth narratives about their experiences with digital tools and integration, thus revealing themes that might not have emerged in more structured formats. Participants, aged between 19 and 43, had been living in Hungary for 6 to 18 months and came from diverse professional backgrounds, including administrative work, elderly care, teaching, and marketing. Initial recruitment was conducted through personal networks, followed by snowball sampling, a method recognized for reaching marginalized populations, particularly refugees (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981; Noy, 2008). Informed verbal consent was obtained from all participants in Ukrainian, Hungarian, or English, depending on their language preference, to ensure full comprehension. Interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes and took place in locations that were comfortable for the participants, such as cafes or communal rooms in refugee accommodations. Seven interviews were conducted in Ukrainian, three in Turkish, and the remainder in English. Two participants, who had previously participated in the study, assisted with translation during the Ukrainian interviews. They were briefed before their involvement to ensure accuracy and neutrality. Their prior participation was advantageous, as they were already familiar with the interview topics and process, facilitating smoother communication and more effective data collection. All participants, including those assisting with translation, were compensated for their time. Fourteen participants declined to be audio recorded. In these cases, detailed handwritten notes were taken during the interviews and later reviewed with the participants to ensure accuracy. This ensured the integrity of the data while respecting participants' preferences. Interviews initially focused on digital literacy and information precarity, but discussions often shifted toward broader challenges such as bureaucratic obstacles and lack of institutional support in Hungary. This flexible approach allowed for deeper exploration of participants’ experiences with housing instability, cultural isolation, and social support. Data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006/2019). Coding was conducted, with initial codes generated through open coding, followed by grouping related codes into broader themes using axial coding. Selective coding was then applied to identify key themes such as digital literacy, social support, and socio-economic barriers(Corbin & Strauss, 2014). For this study, 'digital literacy' refers to the ability to use digital tools such as smartphones and computers to access, evaluate, and manage information in everyday life. 'Information precarity,' on the other hand, involves unstable access to timely and relevant information necessary for navigating social and bureaucratic systems in a host country. Thematic saturation was reached when no new themes emerged from the data, confirming the comprehensiveness of the analysis.

**Findings**

This section analyzes the primary themes that emerged from interviews with Ukrainian refugee women in Hungary. Initially, the study aimed to understand how these women navigated information precarity, particularly in the context of perceived limited internet access. However, the data revealed broader and more complex challenges. Key themes—digital literacy, information precarity, social support, and socio-economic barriers—emerged, illustrating the multifaceted difficulties faced by these women as they integrated into Hungarian society. The thematic analysis highlights the interplay between technological access and socio-economic integration, with digital literacy alone proving insufficient for meaningful integration without adequate social and institutional support. These themes reflect the compounded socio-economic and cultural barriers that shaped the participants' experiences, particularly in their efforts to integrate into the host society.

*Navigating Digital Literacy in Displacement: Adapting to New Contexts*

Digital literacy is the ability to use digital tools, such as computers, smartphones, and the internet, to access, evaluate, and create information (Martin, 2008; Pangrazio, 2016; Van Deursen & Van Dijk, 2014). Beyond technical skills, it also involves critical thinking and navigating complex social and cultural practices (Helsper & Eynon, 2010; Jenkins, 2009). Adaptive digital literacy refers to how these skills evolve based on socio-cultural contexts, particularly for refugees facing exclusionary digital landscapes (Lloyd et al., 2010; Ragnedda & Ruiu, 2020). Refugees often face barriers in unfamiliar digital environments where social and institutional exclusion limit access to vital information (Berg, 2022; Costello et al., 2019).

The participants in this study demonstrated a high level of digital literacy, largely shaped by their professional experiences prior to displacement. Many had careers that necessitated regular use of computers and the internet, ranging from administrative work to healthcare to marketing and education. Beyond professional use, the women were also active on social media, with the majority maintaining at least two accounts on different platforms, showcasing their adeptness at navigating digital spaces. However, one could argue that it is their reliance on digital tools in daily life that truly highlights their advanced digital skills, particularly in adapting to the challenges of displacement. One of the most critical tools was the Google Translate app, which nearly all participants cited as essential for their day-to-day interactions. For example, one participant 28-year-old noted,

“Google Translate helps me with almost everything—from talking to volunteers, doctors or buying groceries. I am grateful to be here but is not easy, a lot of things to figure out. We are too many women here, I can’t blame the people”.

The reliance on technology one could argue highlights the participants' adaptability but also underscores their isolation in the absence of social support. None of the women interviewed spoke Hungarian, and the language barrier made navigating daily tasks difficult. As a result, the translation app became a vital lifeline, allowing them to communicate in various settings.

A 19-year-old university student, who was continuing her education remotely, shared her reliance on the app for survival, particularly when interacting with locals. She noted that while older Hungarians could sometimes communicate in Russian, for most encounters, her smartphone and the translation app were indispensable:

"When I am going somewhere alone, I can sometimes speak to older people who often can speak Russian. But most of the time, I rely on Google Translate."

This sentiment was echoed by other participants, reflecting how digital tools like smartphones and translation apps became crucial for navigating unfamiliar environments, accessing essential services, and overcoming linguistic challenges. The ubiquity of smartphones among participants further emphasized their role as indispensable tools, not only for communication but also as a means of coping with the lack of on-the-ground support and formal assistance. Interestingly, while all participants owned smartphones, only a few had access to laptops. This difference was particularly pronounced among those continuing their education remotely. A 21-year-old participant described the priority given to her younger siblings, who were also continuing their schooling online, in accessing the family’s single laptop. She noted that for her own studies, a smartphone sufficed, as her younger siblings needed the laptop’s larger screen for their more visually demanding classes:

"It is more important for my younger siblings to use the computers. I don’t need the screen as much; I just listen to the professor. They are small, and it’s not good for their eyes. Learning for them is more visual."

These findings underscore the centrality of digital literacy and access to technology in shaping the experiences of displaced individuals, particularly in navigating the challenges of displacement, such as language barriers and the need to maintain educational continuity. The heavy reliance on digital tools like smartphones and apps illustrates the participants’ resilience and adaptability, while also highlighting the structural gaps in on-the-ground support that make such tools indispensable in their everyday lives.

*The Role of Transnational Media and Information Precarity: Trust and Cultural Ties in Navigating Digital Spaces*

Despite their digital proficiency, participants experienced a distinct form of information precarity unlike the typical barriers in refugee contexts. Most often, information precarity has been linked to limited digital resources or poor connectivity (Berg, 2021; Wall et al., 2017). However, here it stemmed from a heavy reliance on transnational media and personal networks from Ukraine, coupled with insufficient local support to navigate the Hungarian information landscape and bureaucracy. This reliance was compounded by unfamiliarity with and distrust of local Hungarian news outlets. Rather than struggling with technological access, participants faced challenges in navigating an unfamiliar information landscape where trust in local media was low. This corresponds with Lloyd et al. (2013), who argue that refugees often rely on familiar media sources from their home country to overcome barriers in adapting to new environments. For participants in this study, platforms like Telegram, widely used in Ukraine, helped them stay connected to events back home, reinforcing their emotional and cultural ties. As one participant remarked:

"I use Telegram to stay connected with people in Ukraine and to get updates on what is happening in my city. Our national news is also not showing the truth, so most of us rely on our family and friends to know what is happening."

This shows how personal networks became the primary source of information, even surpassing official Ukrainian news outlets. Concerns about censorship in the Ukraine and delays led participants to trust personal connections over formal media. As one 40-year-old participant summarized, echoing the views of most women in this study:

"For knowing what is happening on the ground, Telegram is the best way. Everything else we don’t trust “.

The preference for personal networks over both Ukrainian and Hungarian news reveals a deeper layer of information precarity—one shaped not by access to technology but by trust deficits and the participants’ emotional attachment to their home country. This over-reliance on Ukrainian media appears to further hinder their engagement with local Hungarian news, which could be vital for their integration into the host society.

When asked whether they accessed Hungarian news to stay informed about local developments, none of the participants indicated any familiarity with national news outlets in Hungary. This unfamiliarity was exacerbated by the belief that Hungary, under its current leadership, was unsupportive of Ukraine, leading participants to assume that any local news coverage would be biased. One participant expressed:

"If I need to know what Orbán is doing and what position he is taking, I need to get this from Ukrainian news."

This quote underscores the participants’ perception that Ukrainian media was more reliable for understanding the political landscape that directly affected their lives in Hungary, even when those developments concerned their host country. Their perception of bias in Hungarian media, combined with their strong attachment to Ukrainian sources, created significant barriers to accessing critical local information. Moreover, this disconnect with local media could also be linked to the participants' perception that they were not truly wanted in Hungary, which further reinforced their reluctance to engage with the country's media landscape. Many participants expressed the belief that Hungary only "tolerated" their presence, contributing to a feeling of temporary displacement rather than long-term settlement. This perception, coupled with the hope that they would return home soon, diminished the need for them to fully invest in local media or seek out information on Hungarian society and politics. As one 34-year-old participant noted:

"I am not familiar at all with Hungarian news. I'm also not sure if it would be any help for us. They seem to tolerate us but don’t really want us here."

This sentiment captures the complex relationship between digital literacy and information integration: despite their technical ability to access information, the participants' emotional and cultural ties to Ukraine, coupled with their distrust of local institutions and the lack of sufficient on-the-ground support, left them disconnected from critical local knowledge.

This selective disengagement from Hungarian news not only hindered their ability to stay informed about local developments but also limited their potential to integrate effectively into their new environment. Thus, this study reveals that information precarity in refugee contexts is not only about access to digital tools but is also deeply influenced by cultural attachments, trust issues, and the ability to navigate the information landscape of the host society. One could argue that, the participants' heavy reliance on transnational media illustrates how refugees, even when digitally literate, can remain isolated from the critical knowledge needed for successful integration, reinforcing their social and informational exclusion from their host communities.

*The Limits of Digital Literacy: Social Support and Cultural Isolation in Refugee Integration*

Despite their digital skills, participants consistently faced barriers in housing, education, language acquisition, and employment. This highlights the limitations of relying on digital solutions without comprehensive institutional support, particularly in complex bureaucratic systems. While digital tools aided in communication and provide access to selective information, their effectiveness was limited without human guidance in formal contexts. Although previous studies (Berg, 2021, 2022) linked poor internet access to barriers in obtaining vital information, this study found a different issue. Despite participants having digital access and literacy, the lack of support networks and institutional assistance still hindered their integration. This shows that while digital tools are useful, they cannot replace the essential need for strong social and institutional support that provided aid in understanding bureaucracy and important resources for these women. Méndez-Domínguez et al. (2023) argue that digital inclusion is most effective when integrated with socio-technical systems tailored to meet the needs of marginalized populations, such as refugees.

Furthermore, major issue that emerged was the temporary nature of the participants' accommodation. Many of the women reported that they could only stay in hostels provided by charitable organizations for one to two years, after which they faced an uncertain future. The recent government decree, issued in June 2024, exacerbates this housing precarity by limiting state-funded shelter access to refugees from specific war-torn regions, leaving thousands, including many of the women in this study, at risk of homelessness (Human Rights Watch, 2024). One participant expressed this anxiety:

"We are reaching the maximum time we can stay at the hostel as a family. I really do not know where we could go next. We came to Hungary because it is close to our hometown. My elderly parents stayed behind, and I always feel better being closer to them."

In addition to housing precarity, securing education for their children posed significant challenges. While tools like Google Translate and Telegram helped with communication and accessing information, they were insufficient for navigating bureaucratic processes such as securing housing, enrolling children in school, or accessing language courses. Many participants struggled to find space in local schools and were unsure of what to do if space was unavailable.

"I want my child to enroll in a local school, but apparently, the one near our accommodation is full. I don’t think there are other options available other than for my son to continue attending school in Ukraine remotely."

This difficulty with the bureaucratic system was a recurring theme. Despite high levels of digital literacy, participants often felt overwhelmed by the complexity of administrative procedures. Another participant reflected:

"Most of us are really good at using our phones to help ourselves with daily tasks, but when it comes to dealing with paperwork and applications, it's just too much."

Participants in this study expressed extreme struggle with bureaucratic processes, language learning, and emotional support. The absence of such guidance hindered their successful integration and mobility. Despite their strong desire to work and learn Hungarian, many women in the study found it nearly impossible to access these opportunities without formal assistance. One participant explained:

"I've been trying to find a job and enroll in a language course, but it is so difficult to get people to contact you back when you write in English."

These barriers were worsened by the participants' cultural isolation. Their limited interactions with Hungarian locals, aside from hostel staff, deepened their disconnection from society. Lacking local support networks, they relied heavily on informal volunteer organizations and personal contacts. As one participant described:

"I don't know anyone from Hungary other than the staff that works at the hostel. Maybe that might change when I learn the language and find a job."

Participants' reliance on digital platforms like Telegram helped maintain vital connections, but it also reinforced their cultural isolation. As Udwan et al. (2020) note, while social media can foster resilience and support, it can also deepen emotional disconnect from the host society, a pattern evident in this study. This isolation not only limited opportunities for integration but also perpetuated a cycle of exclusion. Even with translation apps, participants often felt alienated in public spaces. One woman recounted:

"Even when I use Google Translate, people don't always have the patience to wait while I type or speak into the app. Sometimes, they just walk away, and it makes me feel even more alone."

Or as this this 28-year-old woman points out, having digital literacy and internet access is not always enough to navigate the complexities of bureaucratic systems.

“It is very difficult to find the right help online. I can use Google and translation tools, but I feel there is still not enough information available. Most of the resources I find are from charities, but not from government bodies.”

These findings show that while digital literacy provides useful tools for refugees, it cannot replace the need for formal social support systems that provide aid and guidance in accessing essential services like education, employment, and housing (IOM, 2023). Without such support, refugees are likely to remain isolated and struggle to fully integrate, regardless of their digital proficiency. The challenges faced by the women in this study illustrate that digital tools alone are unable make up for the lack of institutional support and the cultural isolation they experience. While digital literacy helps navigate everyday challenges, the absence of strong social and institutional support creates insurmountable barriers. As Tsatsou (2022) notes, without integrating digital literacy with broader support structures, digital tools alone cannot address the socio-economic inequalities that hinder refugee integration.

**Conclusion and Discussion**

This study reveals the paradox faced by Ukrainian refugee women in Hungary, where digital literacy and access to tools like smartphones do not fully address the challenges of integration. While digital proficiency allows communication and access to transnational networks, the absence of institutional and social support significantly hinders meaningful integration. Their reliance on Ukrainian networks rather than local resources reinforces isolation from Hungarian society. Digital skills alone are inadequate for overcoming barriers in housing, education, and employment. Participants, despite high digital competence, struggled due to a lack of systemic support, underscoring the need for socio-technical systems that integrate digital tools with comprehensive social support (Méndez-Domínguez et al., 2023; Lloyd et al., 2013). Moreover, participants' emotional and cultural ties to Ukraine, coupled with distrust of the Hungarian media landscape, shaped their information-seeking behaviors and limited their engagement with the host society. This reinforces Wall et al. (2017)’s observation that information precarity persists even with digital access. The study highlights the critical role of social support in refugee integration, showing that limited institutional aid and weak local connections deepen cultural isolation. This finding aligns with prior research on the importance of social capital in navigating bureaucratic systems and accessing essential resources (Kosyakova & Kogan, 2022; Stewart, 2014). The implications for policymakers are clear: digital literacy initiatives alone are insufficient. Efforts to promote digital inclusion must be paired with strong, culturally sensitive social support systems. For instance, digital literacy programs could be combined with mentorship and community-building initiatives, ensuring refugees not only develop technical skills but also form meaningful social connections that facilitate engagement with their host society. Establishing community hubs that offer both technological resources and in-person guidance could bridge the gap between digital inclusion and real-world integration. By focusing on Ukrainian refugee women in Hungary, this research offers a different perspective on refugee integration, which often focuses on refugees from the Global South in European contexts (Hartmann, 2017; Owino & Weber, 2020). This study highlights the experiences of European refugees within Europe, providing valuable insights into how digital literacy and socio-cultural disconnection affect integration in this specific context. Finally, while digital literacy is essential, this study has shown that it must be complemented by robust social support to address the complex barriers refugees face. Comprehensive programs that integrate digital skills with social support systems are necessary for meaningful integration. Future research should explore how these dynamics unfold across different refugee groups and contexts, with particular attention to gender dynamics and the unique experiences of women refugees.

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