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FACTORS, DETERMINANTS, AND CONSEQUENCES OF THE EMERGENCE OF THE CATEGORY “CHILDREN OF INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS” IN UKRAINE

У статті здійснено комплексний теоретико-аналітичний розгляд чинників, факторів та наслідків появи й інституціоналізації категорії «діти внутрішньо переміщених осіб» в Україні в умовах тривалої збройної агресії та масштабного внутрішнього переміщення населення. Актуалізовано соціально-психологічний вимір проблеми, що визначає особливості адаптації, інтеграції та відновлення життєвого потенціалу дітей ВПО в умовах вимушеного переселення та полікультурного середовища. Обґрунтовано авторське розуміння поняття «діти внутрішньо переміщених осіб» як особливої соціально-демографічної та соціально-психологічної категорії, що поєднує правову визначеність статусу з підвищеним рівнем соціальної та психологічної вразливості. Проаналізовано сукупність чинників і факторів макро-, мезо- та мікрорівнів, які зумовлюють формування цієї категорії, зокрема воєнно-політичні, соціально-економічні, правові та інституційні, соціально-психологічні, освітньо-культурні, демографічні й сімейні. Систематизовано наслідки появи категорії «діти ВПО» на різних рівнях соціальної організації: індивідуальному (психоемоційний стан, посттравматичні реакції, особливості соціалізації та навчальної мотивації), сімейному (трансформація ролей, зростання психосоціального навантаження, ризики дезадаптації), інституційному (освіта, система соціального захисту, охорона психічного здоров'я), громадському та загальнодержавному (навантаження на інфраструктуру, потреба в міжсекторальній взаємодії та вдосконаленні державної політики). Доведено, що наслідки внутрішнього переміщення дітей мають системний і довготривалий характер, поєднуючи ризики соціальної маргіналізації з потенціалом розвитку за умови цілеспрямованої, комплексної та міждисциплінарної підтримки.

Ключові слова: діти внутрішньо переміщених осіб, чинники, фактори, наслідки, соціально-психологічний вимір, захист дітей.

The article provides a comprehensive theoretical and analytical examination of the factors, determinants, and consequences of the emergence and institutionalization of the category “children of internally displaced persons” in Ukraine under conditions of prolonged armed aggression and large-scale internal displacement of the population. The socio-psychological dimension of the problem is emphasized, as it determines the specific features of adaptation, integration, and restoration of the life potential of IDP children in the context of forced displacement and a multicultural environment. The author’s understanding of the concept “children of internally displaced persons” is substantiated as a distinct socio-demographic and socio-psychological category that combines legal certainty of status with an increased level of social and psychological vulnerability. A set of macro-, meso-, and micro-level factors and determinants shaping this category is analyzed, including military-political, socio-economic, legal and institutional, socio-psychological, educational and cultural, demographic, and family-related ones. The consequences of the emergence of the category “IDP children” are systematized at different levels of social organization: individual (psycho-emotional state, post-traumatic reactions, features of socialization and learning motivation), family (role transformations, increased psychosocial burden, risks of maladaptation), institutional (education, social protection system, mental health care), community and national (pressure on infrastructure, the need for intersectoral interaction and improvement of state policy). It is proven that the consequences of children’s internal displacement are systemic and long-term in nature, combining risks of social marginalization with development potential provided that targeted, comprehensive, and interdisciplinary support is ensured.

Keywords: *children of internally displaced persons, factors, determinants, consequences, socio-psychological dimension, child protection.*

Problem statement. The full-scale armed aggression against Ukraine, which began in 2014 and intensified significantly in 2022, has led to large-scale processes of internal displacement and the formation of new socially vulnerable groups. One of the most sensitive and socially significant categories within the structure of internally displaced persons is children who, as a result of the war, were forced to leave their permanent place of residence together with their families or independently. The emergence and institutionalization of the category “children of internally displaced persons” (IDP children) is a complex social phenomenon that significantly transforms children’s life trajectories, disrupts habitual conditions of socialization, education, and development, and is accompanied by the loss of a sense of security, stability, and predictability of the future. Experiences of war, evacuation, loss of home, disruption of social ties, and prolonged exposure to stress create increased risks of psychological traumatization, social maladaptation, and marginalization of IDP children. At the same time, this category of children acquires a specific social status that combines legal certainty with a high level of social and psychological vulnerability.

Analysis of recent research and publications. In contemporary academic discourse, the issue of IDP children is considered mainly within separate sectoral approaches – social-legal, socio-pedagogical, or psychological – in the works of recent years by Sylkina S. (2022), Braichenko T., Yakukhina N. (2023), Bulkovska V. (2023), Vitko V. (2023), Rohovska O., Babachanakh S. (2024), Kalinina Ye., Kharchenko L. (2025), and others.

However, a comprehensive understanding of the factors, determinants, and consequences of the emergence of this category, taking into account their interaction at different levels of social organization – from the individual to the national level – remains insufficiently systematized. The relevance of studying the factors, determinants, and consequences of the emergence of the category “children of internally displaced persons” in Ukraine is primarily driven by the scale and duration of internal displacement processes, which have a systemic impact on all spheres of social life. Particular attention should be paid to the socio-psychological dimension of the problem, as it determines the quality of adaptation, integration, and restoration of children’s life potential under conditions of forced displacement.

The purpose of the article is to analyze and substantiate the factors, determinants, and consequences of the emergence of the category “children of internally displaced persons” in Ukraine from the perspective of the socio-psychological dimension of the problem.

Presentation of the main research findings. It should be emphasized that the conducted scholarly inquiry allows us to state the following: a certain number of academic works are devoted to problematic issues related to children of internally displaced persons. However, the analyzed studies almost do not present a terminological and substantive elaboration of the concept “children of internally displaced persons”; the factors and determinants that condition the emergence of this concept are considered only partially; and the consequences of the social category “children of internally displaced persons” are virtually not outlined from the perspective of a multi-level structural approach.

Under these circumstances, and in order to ensure an adequate scientific foundation for further research within the declared problem field, it is deemed appropriate to clarify and conceptualize the content of the concept “children of internally displaced persons.” This concept is understood as minors – children and adolescents under the age of 18 – who, as a result of armed confrontation, temporary occupation of territories, mass manifestations of violence, systemic violations of human rights, emergency situations, or other security threats, were forced, together with their parents or legal guardians or independently, to leave their permanent place of residence and relocate within the territory of the state without crossing an internationally recognized border, thereby acquiring the status of internally displaced persons.

The emergence and subsequent institutionalization of the category “children of internally displaced persons” (hereinafter – IDP children) are conditioned by the combined influence of factors and determinants at the macro-, meso-, and micro-levels, which develop under conditions of armed conflicts, socio-political instability, and transformations of the security environment. In the Ukrainian context, the actualization of this category is directly related to prolonged military events, the temporary occupation of certain territories, and, as a consequence, large-scale processes of forced internal displacement of the population.

Sharing the position of A. Holotenko, it should be noted that the leading factors causing forced displacement and posing threats to citizens’ safety include: social conflicts accompanied by violence (physical assaults, threats, various forms of discrimination and persecution); persecution on national, political, religious, or other grounds manifested in restricted access to employment, education, and social protection; changes in the political situation or state system, including armed conflicts, political repression,

or persecution; as well as natural and man-made disasters [4, p. 8]. At the same time, given the specificity of the problem of psychologists' professional activity with IDP children in a multicultural environment, it is necessary to single out factors and determinants characteristic precisely of the studied context.

Military-political factors are fundamental and decisive in the process of forming the category of IDP children. Armed conflict acts as a systemic source of threats to the civilian population: active hostilities, shelling of populated areas, and constant danger to the lives and health of children and their family members necessitate forced departure from places of permanent residence. This group of factors also includes the temporary occupation of territories, militarization of civilian space, and violations of international humanitarian law, which destroy the basic conditions of a safe childhood and lead to mass internal displacement.

Socio-economic factors play an equally significant role. Military actions and the related crisis phenomena lead to a substantial deterioration in living conditions for families with children: destruction or damage to housing, loss of employment by parents, decline in income levels, and degradation of educational, healthcare, and social protection infrastructure deprive children of a stable environment for development. The inability to meet basic needs at the previous place of residence becomes a significant determinant in the decision to relocate, as a result of which children acquire IDP status.

Legal and institutional factors also have a substantial impact on the formation of the category "IDP children." The introduction of an appropriate legal status, registration mechanisms, and social protection systems contributes to the objective identification of children as a specific socio-demographic group requiring particular guarantees, protective mechanisms, and intersectoral support. At the same time, imperfections in certain legal procedures, fragmentation in the implementation of state policy, and unequal access to social services in host communities increase the vulnerability of IDP children and underscore the need for their separate scholarly and practical consideration.

Socio-psychological factors constitute an important dimension of the emergence and differentiation of this category. Forced displacement is accompanied by children's traumatic experiences of losing their home, separation from loved ones, and disruption of their habitual way of life, which negatively affects their emotional state, behavioral reactions, and processes of social adaptation. Increased levels of anxiety, fear, and uncertainty about the future, combined with the need to integrate into a new social environment, shape the specific needs of this group, distinguishing it from other categories of children.

Educational and cultural factors are associated with disruptions in educational trajectories and socialization processes. The closure or destruction of educational institutions, forced changes of schools, and transitions to distance or blended learning complicate the educational process and interpersonal interaction. In addition, regional cultural differences, new social norms, and living conditions, and within the scope of this study – a multicultural environment, may cause adaptation difficulties, feelings of alienation or stigmatization, thereby increasing the social vulnerability of IDP children.

Demographic and family factors are also of considerable importance. The family, as a basic institution of socialization, determines a child's life circumstances in conditions of displacement. Forced relocation of the entire family or its partial fragmentation (separation from one parent, loss of relatives) directly affects the child's social status and psycho-emotional state. The presence of large families, families with children with disabilities, or experiences of orphanhood increases the risks of marginalization and contributes to identifying IDP children as a special social group with heightened needs.

Summarizing the above, it can be stated that the emergence of the category "IDP children" is the result of a complex interaction of military-political, socio-economic, legal, socio-psychological, educational and cultural, demographic, and family-related factors and determinants. Their combination forms a specific social status of children that is simultaneously characterized by legal certainty and increased social vulnerability.

As emphasized above, children who, as a result of the armed conflict in Ukraine, have acquired the status of internally displaced persons find themselves in a situation of multidimensional social, psychological, and educational challenges that significantly complicate the process of their full-fledged life, socialization, and development. Loss of home, forced rupture with the familiar social environment, educational space, and everyday practices deprive such children of a sense of stability, security, and predictability of the future. Unstable housing conditions, frequent relocations, and the need to adapt to new communities increase the risks of social maladaptation, isolation, and marginalization. According to S. Sylkina, as a result of military actions, IDP children experience a sharp change in their habitual living environment and social circles, and during evacuation from combat zones most children undergo negative emotional experiences and remain in a state of stress. At the same time, upon arriving at a new place of residence, they face difficulties in social adaptation: they are disoriented and experience fear and

uncertainty [8, p. 75]. IDP children often encounter numerous psychological and social problems that can significantly affect educational outcomes and the process of adaptation to a new environment [6, p. 59], particularly within a multicultural context, which constitutes the focus of the stated problem.

It should be emphasized that within the socio-psychological, socio-pedagogical, and human rights discourse, IDP children are regarded as a distinct socially vulnerable population group. This group is characterized by increased risks of violations of the rights to safety, education, healthcare, family upbringing, and harmonious development and therefore requires comprehensive state, social, psychological, and pedagogical protection, support, and assistance aimed at ensuring their adaptation, integration, and restoration of life potential under conditions of forced displacement. At the same time, the Law of Ukraine On Child Protection (Article 1) enshrines the principle of “the best interests of the child,” understood as actions and decisions aimed at meeting the individual needs of a child in accordance with their age, gender, health status, developmental characteristics, life experience, family, cultural, and ethnic background, while also taking into account the child’s views if they have reached an age and level of development sufficient to express them [5]. However, contemporary realities indicate that IDP children often have limited or impeded access to quality education, medical and rehabilitation services, psychological assistance, and systems of social guarantees. This adversely affects their physical and mental health, educational achievements, and the formation of life prospects. A particularly high level of vulnerability is inherent in preschool and primary school-age children, for whom disruptions in educational and socialization trajectories may have delayed and long-term consequences.

At the individual level, acquiring IDP child status is accompanied by significant changes in psycho-emotional condition, behavioral manifestations, and socialization processes. Experiences of forced displacement, loss of a sense of safety, home, and stability often lead to increased anxiety, fear, emotional tension, sleep disturbances, difficulties with concentration, and decreased learning motivation. For some children, post-traumatic reactions are characteristic; these may manifest with a delay and influence the formation of personal identity, self-esteem, and trust in the social environment. At the same time, in certain cases forced displacement activates the development of adaptive strategies, resilience, and the ability to cope with crisis situations, which, given appropriate support, may become a resource for personal growth.

At the family level, the emergence of a child with IDP status brings to the fore a complex set of socio-economic and psychosocial problems. Loss of housing, employment, and parents’ social ties, as well as changes in roles and responsibilities within the family, intensify the emotional burden on children. Often, the child becomes a witness to or participant in family crises caused by material instability, psychological exhaustion of adults, and a decline in the family’s educational potential. At the same time, increased interdependence and cohesion may form within such families, when joint overcoming of difficulties acts as a factor of consolidation of family relations. However, in the absence of systematic support from social services, the risks of maladaptation and intergenerational conflicts increase significantly.

At the institutional level, the education system undergoes particularly noticeable transformations, facing the need for rapid integration of IDP children into new educational environments. Preschool, general secondary, and extracurricular educational institutions are forced to operate under conditions of overload, shortages of teaching staff, varying levels of children’s preparedness, and learning gaps caused by interruptions in the educational process. Educational institutions increasingly require expanded psychological and pedagogical support, inclusive practices, and programs of social adaptation and assistance, since changes of schools, differences in curricula, and difficulties of linguistic, cultural, and social integration affect academic achievement and social inclusion. Institutional consequences include the need to implement adaptation programs, inclusive and compensatory educational models, as well as to enhance teachers’ psychological and pedagogical competence in working with children who have experienced trauma, loss, and forced displacement.

The healthcare system is also facing significant challenges, particularly in the field of children’s mental health. Military events, forced displacement, and the destruction of social ties contribute to an increase in psycho-emotional disorders, anxiety disorders, and manifestations of post-traumatic stress. Accordingly, an institutional consequence is the need to develop psychological services, multidisciplinary support teams, and to integrate psychosocial services into medical and educational infrastructures. For the socio-psychological sphere, this means an expansion of target groups, increased complexity of support cases, and a growing need for interdisciplinary cooperation among professionals.

The role of civil society and charitable organizations becomes particularly important, as they complement or partially compensate for the limited resources of state institutions. They provide humanitarian, psychological, educational, and legal assistance to IDP children, act as intermediaries

between families and state structures, and initiate innovative programs of social adaptation and integration, thereby contributing to the development of partnership models between the state and civil society.

At the level of host territorial communities, the arrival of IDP children affects demographic structures and increases the burden on infrastructure and social services, bringing to the forefront the issue of communities' resource capacity. The need for additional funding of educational and healthcare institutions, development of social housing, child-friendly infrastructure, safe spaces, and inclusive environments increases. In the absence of adequate resource provision, this may provoke social tension and competition for limited resources. At the same time, under conditions of effective integration, IDP children become an important resource for community development, contributing to cultural diversity, social renewal, and the formation of practices of solidarity and mutual assistance.

At the national level, the emergence of the category of IDP children necessitates the revision and improvement of state policy in the fields of child rights protection, social protection, education, and healthcare. There is a need to develop specialized support programs, long-term strategies for integration and reintegration, and to strengthen interagency coordination. In the societal dimension, this category serves as an indicator of the depth of social transformations caused by war and, at the same time, as a moral and humanitarian challenge. Society's attitude toward IDP children reflects the level of social maturity, solidarity, and the capacity to restore social cohesion under conditions of prolonged conflict. In the context of a protracted war, the national response to the needs of IDP children must be comprehensive, intersectoral, and aimed not only at overcoming the consequences of the crisis but also at ensuring sustainable development, social integration, and the protection of children's rights as a key value of a democratic society.

Overall, the consequences of the emergence of the category "children of internally displaced persons" as a specific social group in Ukraine are systemic in nature and manifest at all levels of social organization – from the personal to the national. They combine risks of social vulnerability with development potential, provided that targeted, comprehensive, and interdisciplinary support is ensured.

Conclusions. Thus, the study of the factors, determinants, and consequences of the emergence of the category "children of internally displaced persons" in Ukraine is timely and socially significant. It is aimed at deepening the scholarly understanding of this complex socio-psychological phenomenon and provides a foundation for the development of effective models of socio-psychological support, adaptation, and integration of IDP children in the context of Ukraine's wartime and post-war development.

Prospects for further research. Recognition of the multifactorial nature of this phenomenon and the multilevel character of its consequences serves, on the one hand, as a methodological prerequisite for the development of effective state policies and practices, and, on the other hand, as a necessary basis for designing efficient socio-psychological strategies, programs, and interdisciplinary models of support for IDP children, aimed at ensuring their protection, adaptation in a multicultural environment, and full-fledged development under conditions of Ukraine's wartime and post-war progress.

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