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Challenges regarding integration and well-being of African Ukrainian war refugees in Germany: a qualitative exploration

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The study explores the integration challenges of African refugees who fled the war in Ukraine and sought asylum in Germany amid the global refugee crisis. The research delves into language barriers, discriminatory encounters, administrative hurdles, and professional development complexities within the broader context of the war-induced displacement of individuals with a third-state status. Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews with five African refugees aged 23–27 in Germany. Analysing the data through qualitative content analysis, four main categories emerged: integration challenges, physical and mental health, quality of life, and factors influencing well-being. The findings highlight multifaceted integration challenges, encompassing language barriers, discrimination, administrative complexities, and professional development difficulties. Participants reported stress from simultaneous language learning and employment, social isolation, and fear of returning home. Although physical health was generally rated as good, mental health challenges arose, linked to the dual burden of integration and professional advancement. Unsatisfactory quality of life stemmed from unmet basic needs, including employment, housing, and travel to visit family. Despite significant challenges, participants displayed resilience and optimism. The study emphasises the need for targeted interventions and support systems tailored to the unique struggles of African refugees from the Ukrainian war in Germany. Policymakers, refugee-support organisations, and community-based groups can use these findings to develop programs enhancing integration and well-being for this population.

KEYWORDS

African refugees, war in Ukraine, integration challenges, displacement, mental health, qualitative research, discrimination, language barriers

Background

At the end of 2022, 108.4 million people were displaced globally, marking a new record for the global number of refugees. Reasons for displacement include armed conflicts, persecution, violence, and human rights violations. Among the 108.4 million refugees globally, 52% fled from Syria, Afghanistan, and Ukraine (UNHCR-The UN Refugee Agency, 2023). The Russian Federation's war on Ukraine resulted in one of the most significant refugee movements since World War II. In the initial days of the conflict, more than 200,000 individuals from

Ukraine sought refuge daily in neighbouring countries (UNHCR-The UN Refugee Agency, 2023). By October 2023, over a million Ukrainian refugees were registered in Germany, making Germany the country that has accepted the most refugees from Ukraine (Statista, 2023).

During their journey to their destination countries, refugees may experience traumatising situations, and even upon reaching their destination country, many individuals still suffer from the consequences of war and displacement experiences (Peconga and Høgh Thøgersen, 2020). According to a study conducted by Buchcik et al. (2023) among refugees from Ukraine to Germany, over half of the female participants ($n = 235$) and 20% of the male participants ($n = 69$) suffered from severe mental distress. In this sample, 45% of females and 26% of males reported moderate to severe depression and anxiety symptoms (Buchcik et al., 2023). However, mental and physical health is also influenced by experiences before the migration process, as well as the integration process in Germany itself. Factors such as residency status, learning a new language, and bureaucracy can be additional stressors that impact mental health (Walther et al., 2021).

The reception of Ukrainian refugees in Germany has been characterised by a discernibly favourable disposition, reflective of the principled adherence to humanitarian tenets. Under §24 of the Residence Act, individuals with Ukrainian nationality are allowed to undergo a formal application process for a temporally delimited yet substantial residence permit (Bundesministerium der Justiz, 2004; Pro Asyl, 2022). This implies that Ukrainians can continue to work in Germany and are members of the statutory health insurance (Bundesministerium für Gesundheit, 2023). This approach facilitates the immediate welfare needs of Ukrainian refugees and establishes a conducive environment for socio-cultural integration that may reduce the burden of fleeing war.

However, not all people displaced from Ukraine were treated equally. A sharp divide emerged between Ukrainian citizens and individuals with so-called third-state status—individuals who lived in Ukraine on temporary or permanent permits before the war, such as African international students or migrant workers. Unlike Ukrainian nationals, most individuals with so-called third-state status were not automatically covered by §24 of the Residence Act in Germany. Unless they could demonstrate that returning to their country of origin was unsafe or that their safety could not be guaranteed, they were only allowed to stay in Germany for 90 days (Pro Asyl, 2022). During this time, they were advised to create “conditions” to obtain a residence permit, e.g., enrolling in studies or vocational training. While they could apply for basic health and social support under the Asylum Seekers Benefits Act (AsylbLG), they were excluded from the labour market and statutory health and pension systems, leaving them with highly restricted healthcare and precarious legal status.

African students fleeing from the war in Ukraine

Before Russia's invasion, Ukraine was a preferred destination for African students seeking advanced education. These international students were drawn to the perceived academic excellence of Ukrainian institutions, coupled with comparatively lower tuition and living expenses in contrast to Western Europe and North America (Mospan and Slipchuk, 2020). In 2020, Africans accounted for over 20% of

Ukraine's foreign student population, primarily pursuing medicine, engineering, or business degrees (UIS Statistics, 2023). However, the eruption of the conflict ushered in a distinct and challenging chapter for African students in Ukraine. As detailed in a report by Tardzenyuy Thomas in 2022, many individuals from racial minorities, such as Africans, found themselves trapped within Ukrainian borders as the conflict started (Tardzenyuy Thomas, 2022). Reports indicated instances where they encountered issues at border crossings, hindering their attempts to leave Ukraine, and neighbouring countries reportedly turned them away (Tardzenyuy Thomas, 2022). While (white) Ukrainian citizens were welcomed with extensive rights, (black) African refugees were faced with restrictive legal regulations that limited their access to protection, healthcare, and integration opportunities. However, the different experiences may not be explained solely by their legal status, but also through an intersectional lens by overlapping effects of class, nationality, racial discrimination, and institutional racism reflected in current migration and refugee policies and other legal frameworks (Tardzenyuy Thomas, 2022; Karakayali and Kron, 2023).

The current study

The peculiarity of African migrants can be attributed to their distinct experiences, marked by discrimination and the unique challenges associated with fleeing the war in Ukraine. These factors may contribute to diverse challenges that could impact their integration process. The intersection of discrimination and the singular ordeal of escaping the conflict in Ukraine creates a nuanced dynamic that necessitates careful consideration in understanding the multifaceted experiences of African migrants in their journey and settlement process.

The primary objective of the present study is to delve into the challenges encountered by African refugees who have fled the war in Ukraine, with a specific focus on their experiences related to integration and the resulting health outcomes. This research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the unique obstacles faced by this population, shedding light on the intricate dynamics that influence their integration processes and, consequently, the impact on their overall health and well-being. Through a qualitative exploration of these dimensions, the study aims to contribute valuable insights to the existing body of knowledge, informing policies and interventions to enhance the support systems for African refugees from the war in Ukraine.

Method

Study design

This study uses a qualitative approach to explore the challenges regarding the integration and well-being of African migrants fleeing from Ukraine to Germany. Five in-depth interviews were conducted in October 2023. The flexibility and adaptability of in-depth interviews allow for subjective evaluation of individual experiences and their implications for health and well-being. The interviews were conducted in Hamburg, Northern Germany.

Participants were recruited using a convenience sampling technique—a non-probability sampling method (Marshall, 1996). Information about the study and its objectives was disseminated through personal contacts and social media (e.g., Facebook and

WhatsApp). The five African Ukrainian war refugees who participated in the interview were between 23 and 27 (mean = 24.6, SD = 1.5). Three of the participants were females, while the remaining 2 were males. All of them were students. The majority of them were studying health-related subjects ($n = 4$) (Nursing, medicine), while one person was studying engineering in Ukraine before the invasion. The average length of residence in Ukraine was 3 years (SD = 1.2).

Procedure

The guided semi-structured interview included questions that covered the living situations in Ukraine before the war, their reactions and experiences to the war outbreak, their journey out of Ukraine and arrival in Germany, subjective integration in Germany, well-being and health outcomes as well as challenges and plans for the future. The interviews lasted, on average, 30 min. The interview took place in a neutral, closed-up location that allowed participants to express their thoughts freely. With the consent of the participants, all interviews were audio-recorded. The interviews were conducted by AA. All study participants gave their verbal and written consent to participate.

Data analysis

The recorded interviews were transcribed using the intelligent verbatim technique. After that, the interviews were analysed using the content-structuring qualitative content analysis by Kuckartz and Rädiker (2022), with support from the MAXQDA analysis software. A deductive-inductive approach was chosen for data analysis and the development of main and sub-categories. Main categories were initially established based on the interview guide (deductive). Subsequently, the main categories were expanded through further primary and sub-categories based on the transcripts (inductive). In total, 14 main categories and 33 sub-categories were developed. The categories were listed in a coding guide and checked for distinctiveness. Subsequently, the interviews were recoded based on the final coding guide. Data analysis was conducted by SK and TF (coders) in close consultation with AA and SHR (reviewers). Study participants did not provide feedback on the results. The coder and reviewers are trained in social, health and humanitarian sciences with extensive experience in qualitative research, including the development of interview guides, conducting interviews, and analyzing them using qualitative content analysis approaches.

Results

Four categories with several sub-categories were identified: Challenges regarding integration in Germany, physical and mental health, and quality of life.

Challenges regarding integration in Germany

Challenges regarding integration in Germany were reported in language, discriminatory experiences, administrative and immigration authorities and professional development.

Language

All participants highlighted difficulties with the German language while emphasising its significance in the integration process. For example, two participants explained it as the first step, “*Number one for [me] to be integrated into German society, [I] have to have a good knowledge of the language, which is the first step.*” (P4) and “*Yeah, I think. I have done a good work for myself. Like I’m writing B1 next month, ... because I think the number one thing for Germany is just the language. When you get the language, I think every other thing will fall into place. So, I have to focus on the language and integrating me.*” (P1). Despite this awareness, it was reported that it was difficult to enrol in a language school due to high demand, limited available slots and their so-called “third state” status in Germany, as described by P4: “*At the beginning, it was challenging to find a language course in Germany since they were already occupied by Ukrainians, leaving no spots available.*”

Discriminatory experiences

Two of the participants reported experiencing violence and (racial) discrimination or being treated differently from the Ukrainian refugees. This perceived differential treatment may influence their adaptation and inclusion in Germany, as reported by P4: “*I was treated differently. And I am still being treated differently because I am African. Because first of all, when I arrived from Ukraine, I was not given any rights to stay at all in Germany, and the Ukrainians, yeah, the Ukrainians were given two years.*” Another participant narrated experiencing violence in Germany. The interviewee described an attack by a security guard at the immigration authorities, who thought the participant had filmed him. The participant described this incident as traumatising: “*I was on a call with my mom. I was telling her, oh, look at what this [person] is doing; they do not give me the passport. And then this [person] literally dragged me. And then, when he noticed I was on a video call with my mom, he thought I was videoing him. He pushed me onto the floor, bent my hand, and bent my leg like he was literally attacking me. Then the other guy secured me, saying, ‘Stand up from her, stand up from her.’ No one was standing up for me. It was really, really a lot. ... I am going to say my first experience was actually very, very bad.*” (P3).

Administrative and immigration authorities

Furthermore, all participants reported some challenges with the administrative or immigration authorities. These challenges ranged from recognising documents from Ukraine to issuing or clarifying residence status. Three out of five interviewees highlighted immigration authorities as one of their main challenges in Germany. One of the participants studying human medicine in Ukraine narrated the challenge they faced: “*I want to study in Germany. I have to get my transcript from my school, which is actually very, very difficult right now [because of the war].*” (P3). However, the narrative from the participants suggested that settling in Germany remains difficult even after the documentation was provided: “*I cannot be given the right to study in Germany because I did not provide proof that I was a student in Ukraine. And I was surprised because that is what those were, the first set of documents I submitted to the immigration office on my arrival in Germany. So they still kept on insisting [...] till now that I have to leave the country.*” (P4).

Professional development

Regarding admission for studies or professional development, four out of five interviewees reported that they either could not

continue their studies in Germany because they did not meet the admission criteria or that they had to work in a job that was below their qualifications. The participants lamented language and administrative hurdles as barriers to professional advancement. One participant expressed their thoughts on this as follows: *“Right now, I [do not have] C1 (authors’ note: advanced German language skill usually required for higher education study) right now. So, it is like I will have to start all over again from the first year because next year, if there was no war, that [next year] would have been my 6th year ... But right now, it is like I have to go back all the way to 1st year again.”* (P2).

Regarding the work situation, interviewees appreciate that Germany offers many well-paid jobs. All participants emphasised in the interviews that a good job is crucial for their future. However, they express that the long and challenging integration process may hinder them from continuing their previously learned professions in Germany. One person described it as follows: *“I mean, I would love to [be integrated] because the fact that they have like proper jobs whereby you can earn a good amount of money, that is one thing, right?”* (P3).

Physical and mental health and quality of life in Germany

Based on the interview data, three main categories were formed: Physical Health, Mental Health, and Quality of Life. The mental health category includes three sub-categories: Stress due to the dual burden of professional advancement and integration, social isolation and fear of returning to their home country.

Physical health

The results suggested that participants generally rated their physical health as good. Additionally, three individuals stated that they take care of their physical health, for example, by engaging in regular exercise. One person described it as follows: *“My physical health? Yeah. I am very, very, very intentional about it. I am a gym person. So I go to the gym. I eat well, I sleep. I make sure I sleep because of the nature of job that I have. So I have to give it everything, go physically, emotionally because I cannot be sad and working.”* (P1). Three participants reported experiencing physical pain, with two of them attributing it to the nature of their work. One person worked as a nursing assistant, and the other in logistics. Three individuals engaged in physical activities to improve or maintain their physical health. One person shared: *“It is just an issue of maybe just stress, stress and sometimes somebody pains because of my work, and I leave early in the morning. I leave as early as 5:30 in the morning every day to work.”* (P2).

Mental health

All participants reported mentally challenging situations in Germany. The subsequent subcodes provide insight into the themes mentioned by the interviewees.

Stress due to the dual burden of professional advancement and integration

All participants reported feeling stressed in Germany. These stresses were generally attributed to the dual burden of professional advancement and simultaneously integrating into the German system. *“I am learning the language Deutsch, and I am working at the same time, which is stressful”* (P1).

Social isolation

Feelings of loneliness and being left to fend for themselves were described as major challenges in Germany. One participant mentioned in the interview that they had to do most things independently because they did not know anyone here: *“When I came in initially last year, it felt like I just did not really know what to do. [...] I mostly did everything on my own because I knew nobody here. I only knew one person here. And the person was in Bremen, and I did not get enough information from the person, so most of the things I did all by myself. So, I am by myself.”* (P2). One interviewee expressed feelings of loneliness due to a lack of community and support system: *“I still feel it [alone] a lot, and it is sometimes can really be difficult because if you do not have your community around, you will just be all by yourself, and it is a very difficult thing to deal with. It is a very difficult situation. There is nothing as difficult as being just all by yourself and not having any form of support system.”* (P4). When support systems or communities are mentioned, they were mostly religious organisations or African communities: *“I have met a lot of wonderful people here in Germany, and the support system I have gotten from them, especially from my fellow and Nigerian, African community, and I feel that is one of the things that actually even kept me going, even though I have been facing hurdles for a while.”* (P4).

Fear of having to return to home country

Furthermore, the interviewees expressed a profound despair and fear of returning to their home country. This fear can lead to perceived depression, as described by one interviewee: *“But I have had like a burnout before, [...] and then I will be depressed [...] a breakdown I had when like when you are expecting something in life, and then it is not turning out the way you are expecting it. It was just it was early this year, just during the immigration. They were just, they just said to me later I have to leave Germany. Like the fear of going back home. Like the reality of living in my fear was what I said, like struggling with both.”* (P5). Limited freedom is also perceived as a burden. For instance, one participant mentioned that it is very stressful coping with *“not to be allowed to work”* and to be *“just in one place”* (P4).

Quality of life

All interviewees, except one participant, who did not comment on the quality of life, rated their quality of life as unsatisfactory. This poor rating was attributed to unmet basic needs. For example, one interviewee described it: *“My quality of life right now is poor, I am not getting what I actually want, [it] will be better when I have a job, I have a roof over my head, and I can move around. I can; if I want to travel to Africa, I can travel to Africa. If I want to visit my friend, I can visit my friend”* (P1). The quality of life does not meet the expectations that the interviewees had for Germany, as reported by another participant: *“I would still say it is so far like it is below my expectations, and I was believing and expecting better, but it is not meeting up to my expectations.”* (P4).

Despite the obstacles and disappointment about their current life situation, the interviews reveal that all interviewed individuals are optimistic about the future. For example, one interviewee sees immigration, despite the challenges, as a process: *“But I believe it is a process, and I am just enjoying the process. So, I will say as long as I can afford what I want and my needs, I think I am fine. Yeah, because I am able to work as a nurse assistant here, even if I am, like, recognising my documents, my diploma from Ukraine.”* (P5). Another participant

also sees immigration as a journey they are taking step by step: *“I see my future is going to be bright, blessed, successful. Yeah. Because the journey of a thousand miles begins with one step. And I am sure I am taking those steps right now, and I believe that everything is going to be fine; this is not the end, [...]. So, definitely, things are going to become good. They are going to become beautiful.”* (P2).

Discussion

In the current study, five African students fleeing Ukraine due to the war, were interviewed about their physical and mental well-being and the challenges they experienced regarding the integration process in Germany.

This study explored the experiences of five African students displaced from Ukraine by the war, focusing on their physical and mental well-being and their challenges with integration in Germany. The findings reveal that integration difficulties are multifaceted and deeply shaped by intersections of race, legal status, and socio-economic position. Beyond individual struggles, participants' narratives illustrate how structural and institutional frameworks produce unequal opportunities for integration and well-being.

The centrality of language proficiency for successful integration aligns with previous findings (Aoki and Santiago, 2018; Morrice et al., 2021). Participants in this study described both a strong desire to learn German as well as systemic obstacles to doing so, including limited availability of courses. This reflects what Morrice et al. (2021) call a “mismatch” between refugee aspirations and institutional capacity (Morrice et al., 2021). The consequences of limited language proficiency, however, go far beyond mere communication. Previous research found that limited proficiency in the national language(s) of the country of residency is associated with mental health issues (Montemitro et al., 2021). At the same time, it is one of the main barriers to accessing (mental) healthcare services (Samkange-Zeeb et al., 2020).

The participants in this study expressed that they felt being treated differently compared to White Ukrainian refugees (Costello and Foster, 2022). The (racial) discriminatory experiences reported in this study highlight the importance of addressing issues related to racial and ethnic prejudice. Instances of perceived differential treatment contribute to feelings of social exclusion and hinder the integration of migrants in their countries of residency. In line with this study's findings, previous research (Aribot et al., 2022; Oyebamiji et al., 2022) reported on racial profiling at borders and structural racism in public services and institutions for Black Ukrainian refugees—such as denied access to trains and buses—which highlights the vulnerability and intersectional experiences of African Ukrainian refugees. So far, the racial discriminatory experiences of the African refugees fleeing the Ukraine war remain mostly unabated in Germany, demonstrating how humanitarian policies can reproduce structural racism by privileging some refugee groups over others. Some of the participants spent weeks in refugee camps without adequate official attention. In several states in Germany, many African migrants, like other so-called third-country nationals who had fled the war in Ukraine, were denied the right to temporary protection, and their social benefits stopped abruptly. The resultant effect of this migration experience may further compound the traumatic experiences of these refugees fleeing war (Aribot et al., 2022). The differential experiences may be determining

the well-being performance and therefore require a new practical approach that facilitates non-discrimination of refugees (Heschl, 2023).

In addition, challenges with the administrative and immigration authorities further complicated the study participants' integration process. The difficulties in obtaining recognition of documents and residence status and administrative barriers in pursuing education and professional development reflect issues on a systematic and institutional level and may require political changes. For instance, refugees who secured admission to further or restart their studies in Germany require about € 11,000 in a blocked account before obtaining the residence permit to study. Although this has been the norm for international students in Germany, such requirements illustrate how policies designed for international students become nearly impossible to meet for displaced populations who have lost livelihoods. Despite acknowledging the availability of well-paid jobs in Germany, participants expressed concerns about the lengthy and challenging integration process hindering them from utilising or expanding their professional skills and qualifications. The lengthy process of recognition or non-recognition of foreign educational or professional qualifications is one of the main obstacles to successful integration for first-generation migrants in the host country, especially if migration is not primarily due to education or work reasons (Sommer, 2021).

The reliance on religious organisations and African communities for support rather than state institutions emphasises structural gaps in the existing support systems for migrants in Germany. The preference for community-related support aligns with previous findings, showing that community-based organisations play a critical role in the social, cultural and economic integration of migrants and refugees (Adedeji, 2019; Cordero-Guzmán, 2007; Laverack, 2018). People with similar cultures and experiences quickly build the trust and confidence needed to become receptive to the new socio-cultural environment. Mahoney and Siyambalapitiya (2017) highlighted the crucial factors that underscore the importance of community-based organisations in the integration of refugees, including communication in the language of the refugees, which enhances openness and communication skills, organisation of cultural programs to promote parental and family connections, peer to peer mentoring between the older members of the community and newcomers of similar cultural or national identities which help to build a sense of safety amongst the refugees (Mahoney and Siyambalapitiya, 2017). Participants in this study also agree with this assertion to some extent. Civil and religious organisations support most of them, which are led and populated mainly by people of similar nationality.

Participants in this study generally rated their physical health as good. However, reports of physical discomfort, illness, and stress related to the dual burden of professional advancement and integration indicate the need for holistic support systems. Social isolation and feelings of loneliness further contribute to the emotional stress experienced by participants, highlighting the importance of addressing social integration alongside professional and linguistic integration. The prevalence of mental disorders among migrants across Europe is well documented (Bulla et al., 2018). Migrants are more vulnerable to worsened mental health than non-migrants (Adedeji and Metzner, 2021; Solà-Sales et al., 2021). The quality-of-life assessments provided by participants reveal a low socio-economic status and pervasive dissatisfaction, primarily attributed to unmet basic needs such as employment, housing, and travel to visit family members. These are factors that promote the social defeat of migrants (Selten and

Cantor-Graae, 2005). Despite the numerous challenges outlined in the results, participants expressed optimism about the future, which shows their high resilience. The ability to withstand or recover quickly from difficult conditions is primary for successful integration. Nonetheless, the participants' determination to weather the storm may be born from their home countries bedevilled with severe economic challenges. Europe is perceived as the last hope for survival.

Taken together, these findings highlight the need to view the integration of African third-country nationals from Ukraine through an explicitly intersectional and structural lens. Their experiences are not simply a matter of individual adaptation but reflect the overlapping effects of racialisation, precarious legal status, and socio-economic marginalisation within the German migration regime. From a postcolonial perspective, the differential treatment of African refugees reveals enduring hierarchies of mobility that privilege some groups over others, reproducing global power asymmetries. To address these systemic barriers, German institutions could adopt more inclusive policies: universities should expand admission pathways and offer bridging programs that recognise interrupted studies and prior learning; immigration authorities could simplify and harmonise documentation requirements for third-country nationals fleeing war zones; and health systems should integrate culturally responsive mental health services to mitigate the psychosocial impact of displacement and discrimination. Such measures would not only promote equity but also foster the social and economic participation of this group, aligning with Germany's broader commitment to humanitarian protection and social inclusion.

Strengths and limitations of the study

This study attempts to highlight the barriers limiting the integration of African-Ukrainian war refugees in Germany. The outcome of the investigation aligns with literature studies regarding the integration of migrants globally. The study further acknowledges several limitations affecting the generalisability and depth of its findings. The sample size of five participants, selected through convenience sampling, may not fully represent the diverse range of refugee experiences and limits the diversity of perspectives. Moreover, all participants were young adults, most of them students in health-related fields. The perspectives of older individuals or those with different socio-economic backgrounds were not included in this study. Thus, the findings cannot be generalized but are instead exploratory. The study's limited cultural and linguistic scope may not capture the nuances within different refugee communities, and potential interviewer bias introduces subjectivity into the data.

Additionally, the single-point-in-time perspective overlooks the dynamic nature of migration experiences. The interviews were kept as short as possible to protect participants from additional stress. While many aspects were mentioned, the interviews may not have been long enough to capture the complexity of individuals' experiences. Future studies could build on these first insights. Longitudinal or mixed-methods approaches are recommended to assess changes in integration and well-being over time.

Despite these limitations, the study offers valuable qualitative insights into the complexities of refugees' lives, providing a foundation for future research to address these constraints and enhance our understanding of the refugee experience.

Conclusion

This study aimed to evaluate the challenges impacting the integration of African refugees who fled the Ukraine war in Germany. Subjective and semi-structured interviews were conducted to evaluate individual experiences and their impact on health and well-being. The study results are highlighted as follows: (i) Understanding German is critical to integrating into German society; (ii) The discriminatory experiences faced by the participants while fleeing the war in Ukraine remain unabated in Germany. Participants revealed that administrative and immigration authorities represent obstacles to their residence and survival in Germany; (iii). While academic and professional development opportunities abound in the country, the lengthy and bureaucratic process of recognising foreign qualifications is challenging; (iv). Supports and helpful interventions were mostly received from religious organisations and African communities; (v) Owing to stress, unmet basic needs, social exclusion and future uncertainties, the participants were unsatisfied with their overall quality of life.

These results might be of great interest to policymakers, civil organisations, community-based organisations and especially organisations supporting refugees, to implement more intervention programs to promote the integration of the African victims of the war in Ukraine in Germany.

Data availability statement

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

Ethics statement

The studies involving humans were approved by Hamburg University of Applied Sciences, Ethics Commission. The studies were conducted in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements. The participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

Author contributions

AA: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Resources, Software, Supervision, Validation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing, Project administration, Visualization. SK: Formal analysis, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. JB: Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. TF: Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. SH-R: Formal analysis, Investigation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Generative AI statement

The authors declare that Gen AI was used in the creation of this manuscript. Generative AI was used to finetune sentence structure.

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