

Leadership in the Face of Trauma: A Qualitative Study of Forced Ukrainian Christian Migrants

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Abstract: This article delves into the leadership experiences of Ukrainian Christian forced migrants amidst the ongoing aggressive war against Ukraine. Drawing from theoretical frameworks related to trauma and forced migration, as well as leadership models, this research seeks to comprehend the intricacies of leadership exhibited by Ukrainian displaced individuals. Based on qualitative data from 130 participants, the study identifies key themes concerning leadership during wartime. It contributes to the development of a trauma-sensitive theology of leadership and offers insights into the leadership development requirements of Ukrainians post-war. The insights gathered from these refugees reveal that wartime leadership is dynamic and multifaceted. It encompasses values, adaptability, compassion, and Christian spirituality, extending beyond traditional models to prioritize the well-being of individuals and communities. The experiences and perspectives of these refugees offer valuable lessons for understanding leadership in the most challenging of circumstances, emphasizing the enduring importance of empathy, resilience, and faith in guiding individuals and communities through times of war.

Keywords: leadership, trauma, forced migration, multifaceted leadership, values, adaptability, compassion, Christian spirituality, empathy, resilience, faith, war.

Introduction

The term “forced migrants” refers to individuals who fled or were forced to leave their homes or permanent places of residence due to events that threatened their lives or personal safety. These forced migrants encompass both internally displaced people (IDPs) and those who have crossed international borders in search of safety and well-being.¹

Forced migration arises from various triggers and manifests in different forms. Oppressions, disasters, or other challenging circumstances compel people to leave their original locations and seek relocation. In this publication, the terms “forced migrants” and “refugees” will be used interchangeably to denote individuals compelled to leave Ukraine due to the war, seeking safety and protection in other countries.

Măcelaru rightly says that Christian researchers and practitioners are interested in the issues of displacement, migration, and refugee movements, yet they do not develop these themes in detailed and systematic ways.² In our analysis of the literature, we observe that Christian scholars and researchers pay no attention on how forced migrants or war refugees perceive and demonstrate leadership amidst their traumatic displacement experiences.

This article aims to fill this gap and analyze how Ukrainian forced displaced Christians sense and exhibit leadership within the context of war.

The structure of this article is straightforward. Following a concise literature review to establish the key discussion areas, we will delve into the specifics and discussion on the leadership of forced Ukrainian Christian migrants.

The Ukrainian Context

The Ukrainians have faced the challenges of war-related trauma and forced migration since 2014 when Russia annexed Crimea and occupied parts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions. The last decade was tumultuous, leading to millions of Ukrainians becoming the IDPs, and struggling with multifaceted socio-economic and psychological challenges.

The Russian Federation’s all-out invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, caused a new wave of trauma, forcing millions of Ukrainians to be disconnected from their families and abandon their homes and communities. Notably, women and children make up the majority of those who have fled the country during the war.

Researchers in psychology, neuroscience, and medicine emphasize the traumatic nature of the aggressive Russian war against Ukraine. In their opinion, Ukraine will lead

¹ E. Fiddian-Qasbiyeh et al., *The Oxford Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

² M. V. Măcelaru, “Christianity and the Refugee Crisis,” *Transformation*, 35 no. 2 (2018): 69-76, doi: 10.1177/0265378818802699.

to severe and enduring consequences on Ukrainians' physical and psychological well-being.³

Ukrainian displaced Christians compelled to flee their homes and country grapple with complex traumas stemming from various factors. Contemporary communication technologies have exacerbated the effects of war-related trauma on these individuals, continuously spreading war-related news and images through media and social media platforms, intensifying their trauma experiences.⁴

Wars, Forced Migration and Trauma

International wars are one of the primary triggers for forced displacement. The presence of foreign troops in a country leads to a mass exodus and as the war zone expands, the number of evacuees increases accordingly.⁵

In times of war, citizens of the invaded country often flee their homeland in large numbers when circumstances permit and when they choose to cross international borders. Traditionally, if it possible, the war refugees are escaping to developed and democratic nations.⁶

The forced migration is a major disruption at the international level. Forced migrants and asylum-seekers bring limited risks to host states. Still, they also contribute positively to the social, cultural, and economic aspects of life within local communities, benefiting the host countries.⁷

The violence and trauma experienced during war have enduring effects on forced migrants. The individuals who flee from war and violence face many difficulties and challenges. They often experience physical, emotional, and spiritual vulnerability. Upon reaching their destinations, they grapple with cultural dissimilarities and structural constraints, leading to heightened anxiety and weariness in their lives.⁸

³ A. Jawaid, M. Gomolka and A. Timmer, "Neuroscience of trauma and the Russian invasion of Ukraine," *Nat Hum Behav*, 6 (2022): 748-749, doi:10.1038/s41562-022-01344-4; Arash Javanbakht, "Addressing war trauma in Ukrainian refugees before it is too late," *European Journal of Psychotraumatology*, 13 no. 2 (2022), doi: 10.1080/20008066.2022.2104009; Lyla Schwartz *at al.*, "Addressing the Mental Health Needs and Burdens of Children Fleeing War: A Field Update from Ongoing Mental Health And Psychosocial Support Efforts at the Ukrainian Border," *European Journal of Psychotraumatology*, 13 no. (2022), doi:10.1080/20008198.2022.2101759.

⁴ Zhaohui Su *et al.*, "Media-Induced War Trauma Amid Conflicts in Ukraine," *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 18 no. 4 (2023): 908-911, doi:10.1177/17456916221109609.

⁵ R. Cohen and Francis M. Deng, *Masses in Flight* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2012); Aristide R. Zolberg, "Managing a World on the Move," *Population and Development Review*, 32 (2006): 222-53, doi:10.1111/j.1728-4457.2006.tb00009.x.

⁶ W. H. Moore and S. M. Shellman, "Refugee or Internally Displaced Person?: To Where Should One Flee?" *Comparative Political Studies*, 39 no. 5 (2006): 599-622, doi:10.1177/0010414005276457.

⁷ Hemda Ben-Yehuda and Rami Goldstein, "Forced Migration Magnitude and Violence in International Crises: 1945-2015," *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 33 no. 2 (2020): 335, doi:10.1093/jrs/feaa039; I. Salehyan, "Conclusion: What academia can contribute to refugee policy," *Journal of Peace Research*, 56 no. 1 (2019): 146-151, doi:10.1177/0022343318812975.

⁸ E. Fontanari, *Lives in Transit: An Ethnographic Study of Refugees' Subjectivity Across European Borders* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2019).

Forced migration negatively impacts physical health, mental well-being, development, and education.⁹

Trauma is often associated with the experience of terror, loss of control, and utter helplessness during a stressful event that threatens one's physical and/or psychological integrity and well-being. The research shows that forced migrants of all ages encounter heightened mental and spiritual vulnerability resulting from stressors experienced before departure, the relocation process itself, and post-migration factors, such as separation from family members, social isolation, and assimilation in a new environment.¹⁰ The stresses and life changes associated with migration can even elevate the mortality risk.¹¹

Vamık Volkan, a prominent Turkish Cypriot psychiatrist, argues that the trauma experienced by refugees is highly complex and is linked to three key concepts: perennial mourning, third individuation, and linking objects.¹² Perennial mourning represents an enduring process of grieving that lacks quick closure. This protracted grief stems from unexpected and sudden losses, including loved ones, homeland, familiar surroundings, and security, among others. Third individuation is linked to the trauma of intricate reconfiguration of identity. The concept of linking objects focuses on the constant relation of objects and experiences in a foreign land to those in one's homeland. These associations (similar supermarket brands, familiar foods, vehicles, plants, etc.) evoke painful nostalgia.

War, genocide, ecocide and refugee experiences are intertwined with cultural trauma.¹³ The displacement triggers feelings of alienation, cultural discontinuity, and a sense of identity loss. The displacement contributes to erasing traditional practices, language, and cultural norms, resulting in a cultural void and ultimately in a cultural trauma. This type of trauma as the collective psychological and emotional wounds can be transmitted across generations.

Toward a Trauma-Sensitive Theology

Christian theologians have revisited the concept of suffering and trauma in the aftermath of the Second World War and the Holocaust. Jürgen Moltmann, for instance, proposed the idea of a Crucified God who does not permit suffering for our benefit and is not indifferent to our pain.¹⁴

⁹ The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health, "Children: Innocent Victims of War in Ukraine," *The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health* 6 no. 5 (2022): 279-279, doi:10.1016/S2352-4642(22)00102-X; J. Santa Barbara, "Impact of War on Children and Imperative to End War," *Croatian Medical Journal*, 47 no. 6 (2006): 891-94.

¹⁰ D. Silove, P. Ventevogel and S. Rees, "The contemporary refugee crisis: an overview of mental health challenges," *World Psychiatry*, 16 no. 2 (2017): 130-139; J. S. Murray, "War and conflict: addressing the psychosocial needs of child refugees," *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*, 40 no. 1 (2019): 3-18.

¹¹ Jari Haukka et al., "The Impact of Forced Migration on Mortality," *Epidemiology*, 28 no. 4 (2017): 587-593.

¹² V. D. Volkan, *Immigrants and Refugees: Trauma, Perennial Mourning, Prejudice, and Border Psychology* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2017); V. D. Volkan, *Enemies on the Couch: A Psychopolitical Journey Through War and Peace* (Durham, NC: Pitchstone Publishing, 2013).

¹³ J. C. Alexander, *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004).

¹⁴ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1974).

In addressing modern global challenges Alex Wendel highlights the significance of “theologically informed trauma”¹⁵. This approach interprets trauma through a theocentric theological lens, enabling traumatized individuals to find solace in the triune God. By recognizing God’s presence amid suffering and trauma, individuals can experience profound comfort and empowerment needed for their holistic healing process.

From a theological perspective, the suffering and resurrection of Jesus Christ hold deep meaning for Christians experiencing trauma. The narrative of Jesus’ betrayal and crucifixion presents for them a Holy Saturday theology that emphasizes God’s full embrace of suffering and death.¹⁶ Jones, a prominent authority on trauma and theology, wisely underscores the significance of Christ’s resurrection. She argues that Jesus’s resurrection as the ultimate demonstration of God’s interrupting power and grace, arrives amidst suffering, violence, and loss, remains unwavering. Through His crucifixion and resurrection, Christ establishes a profound connection with the multifaceted experiences of trauma and recovery. Jesus’s resurrection establishes a new narrative of hope and future.¹⁷

Baldwin argues that in the current age of multifaceted traumas, the Church must refine a trauma-sensitive theology that stresses four vital dimensions: the significance of bodily human experience, the acceptance of trauma narratives of victims, the reality of human psychological multiplicity, and confidence in the robust resiliency of trauma survivors.¹⁸ Baldwin argues that trauma is mainly somatic rather than intellectual. Therefore, those addressing trauma should focus on the body, emotions, and flesh instead of healing the mind and rationality. Furthermore, a trauma-sensitive theology centers on compassionate and trustful acceptance of survivors’ trauma narratives. It embraces human psychological multiplicity and complexity, acknowledging that under trauma, individuals may express themselves unevenly, contradictorily, or awkwardly. The fourth facet of a trauma-sensitive theology is the belief that traumatized people possess intrinsic (as well as extrinsic) resources and capabilities for recovery and resiliency.

Appropriate Leadership Frameworks

The examination of leadership perceptions and practices among Ukrainian Christian forced migrants necessitates the utilization of appropriate conceptual frameworks. In our view, two such frameworks that are highly compatible are the Spiritual

¹⁵ Alex Wendel, “Trauma-Informed Theology or Theologically Informed Trauma?” *Journal of Reformed Theology*, 16 no. 1-2 (2022): 3-26, doi:10.1163/15697312-bja10022.

¹⁶ See Alwyn Lau Wing Wang, “Saved by Trauma: A Psychoanalytical Reading of the Atonement,” *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 55 no. 3 (2016): 273-81, doi:10.1111/dial.12263.

¹⁷ Serene Jones, *Trauma and Grace: Theology in a Ruptured World*. 2nd ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2019).

¹⁸ J. Baldwin, *Trauma Sensitive Theology: Thinking Theologically in the Era of Trauma* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock/Cascade Books, 2018).

Leadership Theory (SLT)¹⁹, and the complexity and adaptive leadership models.²⁰ The first theory seamlessly integrates leadership and spirituality, while the second conceptual framework primarily concentrates on enabling and adapting leadership elements, especially within the context of chaos, crisis, and complexity. In addition to these two theories, it is imperative to outline certain aspects of the theology of leadership.

Spiritual Leadership Theory

The SLT, developed by Prof. Jody Fry, aims to align spirituality with personal and organizational leadership.²¹ This theory is based on a model of intrinsic motivation and spiritual well-being. Spiritual leadership comprises three interrelated qualities: vision, altruistic love, and hope/faith.²² Fry described spiritual leadership as creating a vision through which individuals experience a sense of meaning and feel that their lives can make a positive difference in their social environment. Personal spiritual leadership requires having a vision of serving others through altruistic love. Altruistic love, according to Fry, is characterized by several values (virtues): patience, kindness, lack of envy, forgiveness, humility, selflessness, self-control, trust, loyalty, honesty, and truthfulness. Its outcomes include joy, peace, serenity, and hope. Faith adds belief, conviction, trust, and action toward the common good. Leading with hope and faith means having determination and perseverance.²³ Fry's SLT stresses the importance of pro-social human behavior. Through love, group members move from being ego-centered to being other-centered.²⁴ Sweeney and Fry argue that different spiritual practices are critical for developing the core ethical values and the self-identity necessary to serve others genuinely.²⁵

Although Spiritual Leadership Theory (SLT) doesn't explicitly center on refugee leadership, its concepts, which encompass vision, altruistic love, hope, spiritual practices, inner life, resilience, pro-social behavior and sustainability²⁶, are highly relevant for discussing leadership within the context of Ukrainian war refugees.

¹⁹ L. Fry, "Toward a Theory of Spiritual Leadership," *The Leadership Quarterly* 14 no. 6 (2003): 693-727.

²⁰ B. B. Lichtenstein and D. A. Plowman, "The leadership of emergence: A complex systems leadership theory of emergence at successive organizational levels," *The Leadership Quarterly* 20 no. 4 (2009): 617-630; M. Uhl-Bien, R. Marion and B. McKelvey, "Complexity leadership theory: Shifting leadership from the industrial age to the knowledge era," *The Leadership Quarterly*, 18 no. 4 (2007): 298-318; D. DeRue, "Adaptive Leadership Theory: Leading and Following as a Complex Adaptive Process," *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 31 (2011): 125-150.

²¹ L. Fry, "Toward a Theory of Spiritual Leadership"; L. Fry, "Spiritual Leadership: State-of-the-Art and Future Directions for Theory, Research, and Practice," in J. Biberman & L. Tishman (eds.), *Spirituality in Business: Theory, Practice, and Future Directions* (New York: Palgrave, 2008), 106-124.

²² L. Fry and M. S. Nisiewicz, *Maximizing the Triple Bottom Line through Spiritual Leadership* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013).

²³ L. Fry, "Toward a Theory of Spiritual Leadership."

²⁴ L. Fry and M. Kriger, "Towards a Theory of Being-Centered Leadership: Multiple Levels of Being as Context for Effective Leadership," *Human Relations*, 62 no. 11 (2009): 1667-1696.

²⁵ P. J. Sweeney and L.W. Fry, "Character Development through Spiritual Leadership," *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 64 no. 2 (2012): 89-107.

²⁶ L. Fry and Eleftheria Egel, "Global Leadership for Sustainability," *Sustainability* 13 no. 11 (2021): 6360, doi:10.3390/su13116360.

Personal leadership is closely tied to self-awareness, individual convictions, and intrinsic motivations. Personal leadership of Ukrainian Christian forced migrants can be understood as the act of assuming control over oneself and skillfully influencing one's thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. It entails self-guidance, self-motivation, and self-control.

Complexity and Adaptive Leadership Models

In recent decades, the ideas of adaptive leadership have been suggested to resonate with the context of permanent and serious crises in families, communities, and organizations.²⁷ Adaptive leadership theory²⁸ and complexity leadership theory²⁹ are well-suited for discussing evolving leadership in chaotic or destructive times related to war.

The complexity leadership model recognizes that "leadership is too complex to be described as only the act of an individual or individuals; rather, it is a complex interplay of many interacting forces".³⁰ It is proposed that adaptive leadership is needed not only to survive in conflict-ridden and aggressive environments but also to succeed or to prevail. The concept of adaptive leadership goes beyond the notion of simply adapting to something new. DeRue contends that adoptive leadership represents a departure from the traditional hierarchical and paternalistic approach, replacing it with a model of shared responsibility.³¹ He advocates for a transition away from the idea of imposing a shared mission or goals onto individuals, towards a form of leadership that naturally emerges or evolves within the dynamic of leading-following processes, even in the absence of formal leadership power or positions.

In our opinion, within the context of forced migration, the concepts of complexity and adaptability intersect in a manner where individuals demonstrate leadership by actively pursuing cooperation, embracing mutuality in taking initiative, and assuming responsibility.

Briefly on Theology of Leadership

Trinitarian theology plays a crucial role in shaping the Christian theology of leadership. From a theological point of view, the comprehension of leadership in the first place revolves around the mission and leadership of God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, respectively. An effective biblical theology of leadership draws inspiration from

²⁷ Ronald A. Heifetz et al., *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business Press, 2009).

²⁸ B. B. Lichtenstein and D. A. Plowman, "The leadership of emergence."

²⁹ M. Uhl-Bien, R. Marion and B. McKelvey, "Complexity leadership theory."

³⁰ M. Uhl-Bien, R. Marion and B. McKelvey, "Complexity leadership theory."

³¹ D. DeRue, "Adaptive Leadership Theory," 126.

the person and work of Christ, how God's Spirit empowered His people, and the nature and activity of the Trinity.³²

General Christian theology postulates that following Jesus involves reflecting His character and behavior, seeking a spiritual relationship with God, and serving others with Christ-like love. Christian leadership is about exhibiting qualities that reflect God's character, such as wisdom, courage, humility, compassion, empathy, patience, and selflessness.³³

Bekker conducted a thorough analysis of biblical studies on Christian leadership and concluded that it is mimetic, concerned with a correct understanding of power, follower-centered, and ultimately Christological.³⁴

Commonly used metaphors for Christian leadership include shepherding, stewardship, and servanthood. Christian leadership is about proper attitudes toward God and people rather than just skills or status.³⁵ Christian leaders are encouraged to lead with a follower's heart, showing humility and servant-heartedness.³⁶

It is rightly suggested that Christian leadership must be framed as doxological (directed toward the glory of God).³⁷ Christian spiritual leadership is the expression of Godly love, faith and hope on earth. This includes not only social responsibility but also care for God's creation (i.e. environmental leadership).³⁸

However, if Christians demonstrate self-aggrandizing charismatic leadership, characterized by self-seduction and pursuit of power, wealth, and status, this type of leadership becomes idolatrous and toxic.³⁹

Research Methodology and Participants' Characteristics

Introduction and Data Collection Period

The data collection period spanned from April 26, 2022, to August 26, 2022. Participants were asked to answer open-ended questions about leadership in

³² B. Ledbetter, R. Banks and D. Greenhalgh, *Reviewing leadership: A Christian Evaluation of Current Approaches*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2016), 90.

³³ David Huffstutler, *Spiritual Leadership: A Biblical Theology of the Role of the Spirit in the Leadership of God's People* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016); B. Ledbetter, R. Banks and D. Greenhalgh, *Reviewing Leadership*.

³⁴ C. Bekker, "Towards a Theoretical Model of Christian Leadership," *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership*, 2 no. 2 (2009): 142-152.

³⁵ S. R. Rodin, *The Steward Leader* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010); O. Phelps, *The Catholic Vision for Leading Like Jesus: The Catholic Vision for Leading Like Jesus: Introducing S3 Leadership – Servant, Steward, Shepherd* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2009).

³⁶ M. Hanna, "What Is 'Christian' About Christian Leadership?" *The Journal of Applied Christian Leadership*, 1 no. 2 (2006): 21-31; J. M. Kouzes, B. Z. Posner and J. C. Maxwell, *Christian Reflections on the Leadership Challenge* (New York, NY: Wiley, 2009).

³⁷ K. I. Tangen, "Leadership as Participation in the Hospitality of God. A Reading of Luke-Acts," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, 27 no. 2 (2018): 284-306.

³⁸ J. Moltmann, *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993); D. Moo and J. Moo, *Creation Care: A Biblical Theology of the Natural World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018); A. Negrov and A. Malov, "Eco-Theology and Environmental Leadership in Orthodox and Evangelical Perspectives in Russia and Ukraine," *Religions* 12 (2021), 305, doi:10.3390/rel12050305.

³⁹ K. I. Tangen, "Leadership as Idolatry. The case of Stalinism and beyond," *Scandinavian Journal of Leadership and Theology*, 5 no. 1 (2018), doi:10.53311/sjlt.v4.24.

the context of war in their own words by using SurveyMonkey, an online survey software.

The participants were granted anonymity. Basic demographic data, including age, gender, education, Christian self-identification, and pre-force migration employment/life activity, were requested from the participants. The target population for this research comprised Ukrainians aged 20 to 60 who had been compelled to leave Ukraine due to the ongoing war. The snowball sampling method was employed to recruit respondents.

The online survey collected around 150 responses. However, 20 responses were excluded from the study analysis. This exclusion occurred because some participants indicated that they were living outside Ukraine as economic migrants (rather than as individuals forced to displace) or because they did not identify themselves as Christians.

Participant Characteristics and Self-Perceptions

Among the 130 respondents included in this study, 117 (90%) were female, and 13 (10%) were male. The participants demonstrated diverse educational backgrounds, with 7.7% completing high school, 14.6% completing technical school programs, and 77.7% obtaining higher education degrees. In terms of occupations, 46.9% identified as workers in commercial companies or small business owners, 25.3% had previous employment in governmental organizations, 10% in non-profit organizations, 9.23% were affiliated with religious institutions, 5.38% were housewives or on maternity leave, and 3.8% were full-time students.

All participants identified themselves as war refugees and/or forced migrants, and they were in 24 different countries at the time of the survey. The participants were situated in various countries on the day of the interview, with Germany (34) and the USA (32) having the highest representation, followed by Poland (18), and smaller numbers from other countries. Nearly 80% of them had been forced to stay outside of Ukraine for more than 2 months, with 88 respondents staying between 2 and 5 months, and 14 respondents staying for more than 6 months. Some participants expressed that while they had been forced to leave Ukraine, they preferred to consider themselves not refugees but temporarily displaced individuals who expected to return to Ukraine soon.

All 130 participants identified themselves as Christians. The study did not require the participants to disclose their specific Christian tradition, the length of time they had considered themselves Christians, their involvement in church activities, or their understanding of Christian spirituality and spiritual leadership.

Interview Questions

The study included four open-ended questions posed to all participants:

1. What does leadership mean to you in the context of the war in Ukraine?

2. As a leader, what do you do during the war? In what ways are you showing leadership during the war, in your circumstances, wherever you are?
3. How are other Ukrainians who are currently refugees and outside of Ukraine, whom you know, showing their leadership?
4. What kind of leadership will Ukrainians need after the war is over?

Coding

The authors independently analyzed each response and assigned them to relevant categories. Subsequently, they held discussions to resolve any discrepancies and reached a consensus on the final categories for analysis.

Findings and Results

In our research process, we analyzed responses from 130 participants who provided their insights through four open-ended questions, aiming to understand leadership in the context of war. We then coded the responses by categorizing and grouping similar ideas together. This approach allowed us to gain a comprehensive understanding of the emerging themes from the participants’ responses, identifying patterns, trends, and unique insights that shed light on the various perspectives expressed.

Table 1 presents the coded responses from online narrative answers to the first question regarding wartime leadership. 130 participants shared 28 distinct ideas (with a total of 290 insights). The table includes the top 10 most common ones, while the remaining 18 insights provide valuable additional perspectives, and they will also be mentioned below.

<i>Table 1</i>	
<i>Coding results for Question #1: What does leadership mean to you in the context of the war in Ukraine?</i>	
<i>Codes (operational categories)</i>	<i>Frequency (total 290)</i>
Help, protect & support people	45
Take initiative & responsibility	26
Encourage people	22
Religious aspects (or Believing in God and practicing religion)*	22
Love and serve country (express patriotism)	19
Voice truth/clarity	14

“Believing in God and Practicing Religion” is an apt and concise name for the code that encompasses participants’ indications of leadership being linked to their faith in God, religious beliefs, and engagement in religious practices. This name effectively captures the core aspects of the theme while remaining clear and straightforward.

Care for family and relatives	14
Stay calm & keep calm others	11
Be strong, resilient and optimistic	10

In the responses received, several ideas were expressed by less than 10 participants, yet they remain significant. These ideas include organizing people for a positive goal, making decisions, displaying courage, developing and maintaining relationships, leading, developing, and supporting teams and followers, being authentic, practicing self-denial and self-sacrifice, taking a stand and expressing positions, caring for Ukrainians in Ukraine, being present and attentive to people, understanding oneself, embracing self-leadership and governance, setting an example, exercising discernment, and acknowledging uncertainty. Furthermore, participants also emphasized the importance of thinking and acting toward a vision for the future, demonstrating adaptability and flexibility, acting wisely, assessing and understanding situations, and motivating and inspiring others. While these ideas were less frequently mentioned, they contribute valuable perspectives to our research findings.

Table 2 presents the most frequent coded responses to the question regarding how the participants were demonstrating leadership. In response to this question, 130 participants shared 23 distinct ideas (with a total of 310 insights). The table includes the top 10 most common ones, while the remaining 11 insights are less frequent, and they will also be mentioned below.

<i>Table 2</i>	
<i>Coding results for Question #2: As a leader, what do you do during the war? In what ways are you showing leadership during the war, in your circumstances, wherever you are?</i>	
<i>Codes (operational categories)</i>	<i>Frequency (total 310)</i>
Help/Serve refugees and displaced	41
Religious aspects, focus on spiritual practices	36
Care for Family	36
Outward communicating and informing	22
Help, protect & support people	22
Encouraging people	21
Love/serve country	17
Care for Ukrainians	16
Organize people for good goal	14
Develop/maintain contacts and relationships	14
Taking initiative and responsibility	13
Be authentic	10

Out of 130 participants, only two indicated that they do not demonstrate leadership or do not consider themselves as leaders. Among 310 different responses, certain ideas were expressed by a smaller number of participants, but they hold significant importance. These ideas include practicing self-governing (mentioned by 7 participants), finding and supplying resources (6), adapting to a new country or place (5), actively listening and showing compassion (5), engaging in inward communication and informing (5), not considering oneself a leader (4), setting an example (4), leading, developing, and supporting teams and followers (4), motivating and inspiring others (3), maintaining calmness and promoting calmness in others (3), choosing not to answer or indicating no leadership role (2), and responding to the situation (2). Though less frequently mentioned, these ideas offer valuable insights and perspectives for our research.

The third question asked about how other Ukrainian refugees were demonstrating leadership, and these coded responses are in Table 3. Regarding this question, the responses from 130 participants revealed a diverse set of 21 distinct ideas (yielding a total of 260 insights). The table displays the top 10 most prevalent ideas, while the remaining 11 insights are less frequently mentioned and will be included below.

<i>Table 3</i>	
<i>Coding results for Question #3: How are other Ukrainians who are currently refugees and outside of Ukraine, whom you know, showing their leadership?</i>	
<i>Codes (operational categories)</i>	<i>Frequency (total 260)</i>
Help/ serve, support people	40
Help refugees/displaced	32
Religious aspects	24
Outward communicating (informing, correcting false info)	19
I do not know, not observe others	19
Finding/supplying resources	16
Organize people for good goal	16
Help our people in Ukraine	12
Encouraging people	11
Taking initiative and responsibility (including work)	10

In the responses provided, several ideas were expressed by a smaller number of participants, yet they remain significant. These ideas include expressing love and service for one's country (mentioned by 9 participants), practicing self-governing (9), adapting to new circumstances (9), caring for family (8), identifying and addressing bad leadership (7), establishing and developing relationships (5), engaging in inward communication (4), promoting peer mentoring and mutual assistance (3), highlighting the importance of resilience, empowerment, and determination (3), motivating and

inspiring others (3), creating a positive image of Ukrainians (2), and emphasizing the significance of training and learning (2). While less frequently mentioned, these ideas contribute valuable insights to our research.

The fourth question in our research was about the type of leadership that Ukrainians will need after the war. To this inquiry, insights were provided by 130 participants, encompassing a variety of 26 distinct ideas (resulting in a total of 231 insights). The table showcases the top 10 most prevalent concepts, while the remaining 18 insights, although less frequent, will also be presented below. (Please note that 11 people could not answer this question and indicated that they do not know).

<i>Codes (operational categories)</i>	<i>Frequency (total 231)</i>
Caring for traumatized	46
Restoring the city/country	32
Help, support people (various)	24
Religious aspects / God-inspired leadership	24
Spiritual leadership	12
Emotional skills	12
Visionary leadership	10
Build country with new mentality	10

Although some ideas were expressed by less than 10 participants, they are still highly significant. Among the less frequently mentioned ideas are building the country with a new mentality, motivating and inspiring others, unifying the country and society, implementing servant leadership, promoting and reinforcing values, and returning to Ukraine as a leadership approach. Other valuable ideas include active listening, personal leadership, organizing people for a common goal, recognizing the importance of expert leadership, avoiding populism, acting wisely, emphasizing leadership in families and fostering their well-being, informal training, setting an example, developing young leaders, remaining faithful and not forsaking the people, embracing strategic leadership, and taking initiative and responsibility. These ideas contribute diverse and important perspectives to our research findings.

Main Discussion

Examining the answers provided by our participants across the four questions reveals several general insights. First, we observe common themes and practices. Recurring themes of support, initiative, responsibility, resilience, and compassionate care underline the vital significance of these attributes in wartime leadership.

Second, the perspectives offered by Ukrainian refugees underscore the diverse range of ideas expressed, emphasizing the personalized and individual nature of leadership interpretations and practices amid the challenges of wartime.

Third, the consistent mentions of religious aspects (beliefs and practices) illuminate the profound influence of faith on shaping leadership mindset and performances. The recurrent references to religious practices (prayer, attending church services, etc.) indicate that individuals draw profound inspiration from their spiritual beliefs, infusing their leadership approach with purpose, morality, and a resolute commitment to serving others. Particularly significant is the connection to God, practicing prayer, relying on Biblical texts, and Christian teachings, which serve as sources of spiritual strength and guidance in the search for what is needed and meaningful.

Multidimensional Nature of Leadership

The insights offered by Ukrainian Christian refugees in the context of war highlight the multidimensional nature of leadership. Understanding leadership as a multi-faceted phenomenon enriches our comprehension of how individuals navigate the challenges of war and displacement while also fostering resilience, unity, hope and spiritual well-being within their communities.

The participants in our study highlighted various facets of leadership strategies and behaviors. Amidst the backdrop of war, some of our respondents have embarked on endeavors previously unexplored – such as blogging, fundraising, coordinating people, and embracing volunteer roles outside their prior experience. This shift extends to forging new connections and collaborations with individuals from diverse networks and cultures. This underscores a compelling observation: leadership during and post-war is infused with a spontaneous and communal paradigm, indicative of an organic evolution towards shared activities and objectives.

Our study shows that the Ukrainian forced migrants understand and practice leadership as responsible networking. This means that in times of difficulties or change it is important to tap into a vast community of like-minded or similarly disturbed individuals. This allows for the pooling of resources, knowledge, and collective efforts that can yield a substantial impact. Concerning networking processes, Gladwell argues that any small group of individuals is intricately connected to the broader population in just a few steps.⁴⁰ Thus, leadership doesn't solely reside within a handful of highly qualified individuals who hold the power to influence the world; instead, it thrives on the collaborative efforts of a network. When networking is perceived as leadership, fragile social connections can be recognized, repaired, or replaced, ultimately enabling a small group of people to effect significant outcomes.

⁴⁰ Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*. (Boston, MA: Little, Brown), 2006.

As observed by Vashchenko, Russian propaganda distresses the souls of Ukrainians, for it manipulates information, perceptions, and facts.⁴¹ This manipulation also contributes to cultural trauma by distorting identity, eroding trust, fueling psychological tensions, and causing a loss of cultural heritage.

In this context it is very important to note that Ukrainians forced migrants showed leadership by acting against the propaganda of the aggressor. Our respondents highlighted their demonstration of leadership outside of Ukraine through the following expressions:

“I consistently share fact-based information about events in Ukraine, actively expressing my stance on social media, and keeping people informed about ongoing developments.”

“I engage in conversations with anyone interested in the situation in Ukraine, providing brief interviews to correct propaganda narratives.”

In response to question number two, participants described witnessing leadership among other displaced Ukrainians, demonstrated through the following actions:

“They participate in the information war, publicizing the crimes committed by Russia.”

“They post current and verified information.”

“They tell the truth about events in Ukraine, manage social media, and communicate with other Ukrainians.”

Virtuous Leadership

According to Havard, virtuous leadership is defined in terms of essential virtues, which encompass virtues such as magnanimity, humility, prudence, courage, self-control, and justice.⁴² These virtues facilitate personal transformation and the achievement of self-fulfillment. The significance of Christian virtues like faith, hope, and love are also essential components of virtuous leadership.

Ukrainian displaced people demonstrate virtuous leadership through a combination of compassionate actions such as helping, protecting, and supporting others, influenced by their faith and spirituality. They take initiative and responsibility while also caring deeply for their families and their country. Additionally, they encourage and promote calmness, displaying strength, resilience, and optimism. These traits collectively reflect virtuous leadership qualities and values in their challenging circumstances.

⁴¹ N. Vashchenko, “The Main Narratives of Russian Propaganda as Impact-Generating Issues in Terms of Consciential War of Russia Against Ukraine,” *Scientific Notes of the Institute of Journalism*, 1 no. 76 (2020): 180-202, doi.org/10.17721/2522-1272.2020.76.15.

⁴² Alexandre Havard, *Virtuous Leadership: An Agenda for Personal Excellence*. 2nd ed. (Scepter Publishers) 2017.

Many respondents (45) emphasized the importance of helping, protecting, and supporting people, reflecting a key aspect of virtuous leadership where individuals demonstrate care and compassion in challenging circumstances. A notable number of respondents (14) mentioned caring for family and relatives, while another group (19) expressed their love and service for their country. A substantial number of respondents (22 for encouraging and 11 for staying calm) emphasized the importance of prudence and self-control. Our respondents emphasized the importance of being strong, resilient, and optimistic, qualities that virtuous leaders possess as they face adversity with strength and maintain a positive outlook.

Transformative Leadership and Hospitality

Christian theology of leadership suggests that the transformative power is embedded in love. Love is the greatest and most influential because it serves as the basis in which all other Christian virtues are rooted. "Love is an avenue of spiritual influence".⁴³ Anacker and Shoup suggest that the essence of the metaphor for Christian leadership is transformational service in an alien context.⁴⁴ The transformation potential of Christian leadership is ultimately connected to the understanding of God's presence revealed to human beings through the love of God and the restoration of the relationship between God and humankind through the death of Jesus Christ (cf. Rom. 5:10-11; Col 1:20-22).

Our study reveals that Ukrainian Christian refugees perceive leadership and demonstrate it by focusing on personal transformation and their efforts to influence others. This includes staying calm and helping to calm others, encouraging those who are dispirited, correcting misinformation, organizing disorganized people, and assisting those who are helpless. In a broader context, this represents a transformational process occurring in the context of chaos, in an unacquainted territory and under challenging circumstances.

The success or failure of Christian leadership, mission, and ministry hinges on how hospitality and compassion are extended to those in need, especially to refugees, given their vulnerability, marginalization, and displacement.

Our study also shows that Ukrainian Christian refugees are not solely the recipients of hospitality and humanitarian aid outside of Ukraine; they also become active participants and subjects. Their leadership is exemplified by their determination to seek ways to assist others despite their own challenges. Their resilience and willingness to contribute to the well-being of fellow Ukrainian refugees and their home and host communities demonstrate a form of leadership rooted in empathy, solidarity, and the recognition of shared humanity.

⁴³ R. Gill and A. Negrov, "Love as an influence for good in leadership," *Theology of Leadership*, 4 no. 1 (2021): 35.

⁴⁴ G. J. Anacker and J. R. Shoup, "Leadership in the Context of Christian Worldview," in Burns, Jack, Shoup, John R, and Simmons Jr, Donald C. (eds), *Organizational Leadership* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 35-64.

Regarding hospitality as leadership, the refugees can be both the guests and hosts. Langmead says, “All migrant communities assist each other, but it is especially evident amongst those who know what it is to be crushed and in fear—hospitality, solidarity and generosity are features of refugee communities in their adopted countries.”⁴⁵ This behavior of refugees challenges the traditional understanding of leadership as solely transactional, hierarchical and top-down, illustrating that leadership can emerge from the grassroots, driven by the collective efforts of those who understand the value of mutual support and compassion.

Responsible and Patriotic Leadership

Participants’ perspectives on taking the initiative align with the adaptive leadership model’s emphasis on proactivity in facing challenges. This theme underscores the concept of enabling leadership, where individuals step up to navigate changes and pressures, guiding their communities toward challenges and new tasks. The participants’ recognition of their responsibility to be involved is connected to mobilizing resources to address complex situations.

The participants’ emphasis on helping others and remaining resilient echoes the literature’s findings that trauma can shape leadership qualities, fostering adaptability and empathy. The participants’ willingness to serve and protect their country even in times of war resonates with the idea of leadership that extends beyond individual interests and contributes to the greater good.

Patriotic leadership embodies a profound dedication to one’s country and the welfare of one’s people. This commitment to love and serve the nation reflects a sense of duty and loyalty. Another integral aspect is the practice of voicing truth and clarity about the war realities. This is to any affective that communicates clear discourse and strategic narrative.

Here is how our participants describe their leadership and the leadership of other displaced Ukrainian women:

“At one moment, I realized that being abroad, I could serve Ukraine. Through employment, I am able to financially support my Ukrainian friends and fundraise for the Armed Forces of Ukraine.”

“We are organizing volunteer activities to collect aid for Ukrainian civilians and military personnel.”

“I am also assisting other Ukrainian refugees with documents and providing financial aid to Ukraine.”

“Some displaced Ukrainians are organizing visits to wounded soldiers being treated in European hospitals. They attend rallies to raise awareness about the needs in Ukraine and gather financial support to Ukraine among local people and among other Ukrainians.”

⁴⁵ R. Langmead, “Refugees as Guests and Hosts: Towards a Theology of Mission Among Refugees and Asylum Seekers,” *Exchange*, 43 no. 1 (2014): 41.

“Ukrainian mothers abroad are shouldering the responsibility for their children, conversing with them in Ukrainian, reading bedtime stories in Ukrainian, and selecting cartoons not in English (to accelerate language learning) but in Ukrainian.”

It is important to note that in the past, the Ukrainian war refugees have shown cultural strength, resilience and effectiveness in their leadership. Marta Dyczok's book *“The Grand Alliance and Ukrainian Refugees”* provides evidence that over three million Ukrainian war refugees during 1941–1945 showed remarkable unity, resilience, and foresight in negotiations with Western governments and the Ukrainian diaspora.⁴⁶ Ukrainian refugees faced numerous challenges during World War II, including prolonged displacement, temporary living conditions, and negative perception. These hardships were further intensified by negative portrayals and poor living conditions, leading to psychological trauma and despair. Dyczok argues that during World War II the Ukrainian refugees demonstrated leadership as follow: successfully established autonomous communities through self-help initiatives, and fostered unity based on shared Ukrainian national identity. On a macrolevel, they influenced Western policy reforms by opposing collective group approaches to refugee repatriation and advocating for individual asylum seeker approaches.

Adaptable Leadership

When individuals or families become refugees due to war or other crises, they often find themselves in complex and challenging situations. Leadership within refugee communities emerges from this complex interplay of various forces, including personal resilience and community networks. Adaptability is crucial for refugees to creatively address challenges, learn from experiences, and find ways to endure and integrate into their new communities.

Considering the participants' status as war refugees and forced migrants, their responses also reflect the impact of displacement on their leadership roles. Adaptive leadership is demonstrated by the Ukrainian refugee when they take the initiative and support others amidst displacement. This underscores the resilience of Ukrainians and ability to adapt to challenging situations.

The responses, as evidenced in our study here, hold particular significance within the cultural context and context of war. They distinctly illustrate that, according to Ukrainian refugees, leadership during times of war should not be conflated with conventional monocratic models. Amid the backdrop of war, leadership should, first and foremost, embrace adaptable, participatory, and emergent approaches. In stark contrast to the other models, such as authoritarian or charismatic leadership, which are respectively characterized by a strong centralization of power or the personal charisma and magnetism of the leader, the Ukrainian refugees offer insights that portray leadership during times of war as more complex, holistic, and compassionate in nature.

⁴⁶ M. Dyczok, *The Grand Alliance and Ukrainian Refugees* (New York: St. Martin's Press / St. Antony's College, Oxford, 2000).

Faith in God and Spiritual Leadership

Our study reveals that Ukrainian Christian refugee, amid the suffering of displacement, place their faith in God and they continue their bond with God. Why? Perhaps, because, as Moltmann points out, God understands the nature of suffering.⁴⁷ Christians believe that God is not separated from war victims and those who have been displaced. Moltmann highlights that God remained faithful to the children of Israel when they lacked a dwelling place and wandered through foreign lands, enduring contempt and without a homeland. Moltmann states, "Whatever happens to the people also happens to the divine Shekinah that is among them."⁴⁸

The themes that emerged from participants' responses to all 4 questions reveal a profound connection between their understanding of leadership and spirituality. The prominence of religious practices (prayer, reading Scripture, evangelism) echoes the importance of nurturing inner life highlighted in Fry's spiritual leadership theory. Faith, belief in God, and various religious practices are the sources of inspiration and guidance in leadership based on altruistic love. The idea of serving others and contributing to their well-being, even amid war, reflects the essence of spiritual leadership's focus on selfless service and empathy.

Further studies can go beyond our research and analyze how Ukrainian war refugees coped with trauma and grew through it. It is interesting to study what forced displaced Ukrainians learned about themselves amidst these tragic circumstances. Such a study would be important because, as Margaret Benefiel rightly argues, every crisis presents an opportunity to dive deep into spiritual practices, use persistent discernment and attentive listening for emergent guidance.⁴⁹ In difficult times, spiritual people tend to focus on the meaning of calling or mission instead of being attached to merely a strategy of self-preservation. Benefiel suggests that crisis leadership means asking how one can better serve others and how to embrace the unknown for self-discovery, creativity, transformation, partnership, and growth.

Leadership as Nurturing Mental and Emotional Well-being

Many participants have articulated their understanding of leadership within the context of war as encompassing the provision of emotional and psychological support, as well as the cultivation of emotional strength and resilience.

In the specific context of war, trauma can exert profound and far-reaching effects on individuals, impacting them emotionally, psychologically, and even physically. Individuals who assume the role of encouragers offer a counterbalance to the negative sensations that trauma can evoke. Encouragement plays a pivotal role in helping individuals regain a sense of agency and control over their circumstances.

⁴⁷ Jürgen Moltmann, *Science and Wisdom* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003).

⁴⁸ Jürgen Moltmann, *Science and Wisdom*, 121.

⁴⁹ Margaret Benefiel, *Crisis Leadership* (New York: Morehouse Publishing, 2021).

Furthermore, those who possess the ability to maintain a calm and composed demeanor, while simultaneously aiding others in preserving their own composure, contribute to the establishment of a safe and stabilizing environment. Effective leadership in the war-torn landscape entails more than just coordinating or managing; it involves serving as a model of resilience. The potential to ignite a spark of inspiration within survivors of trauma, enables them to tap into their innate reservoirs of inner strength and foster the belief in the possibility of recovery.

Conclusion

Leadership during war extends beyond the traditional command-and-control paradigm. It encompasses a deeply human and service-oriented ethos. Leading becomes intertwined with nurturing, supporting, and preserving the collective spirit and well-being of family members and others. This form of leadership not only guides actions and decisions but also fosters an environment of trust, unity, and mutual care – attributes that are crucial for both survival and eventual recovery in the aftermath of war.

In war, people experience natural and physical disorders such as a shortage of food and clothing, loss of homes, etc. War brings tension in interpersonal relationships, including conflicts between and alienation from family, friends, colleagues, and communities. In war, people may lose confidence in their beliefs and values as belief systems can change and individuals might reconsider what they think or believe. However, faith in God, and Christian spirituality have remedial power even amidst war. Christian spirituality allows people to persevere, serve, and grow despite the gravity of circumstances.

We can conclude that Christian Ukrainian forced migrants are demonstrating spiritual, adoptive, and exemplary leadership. Our study has shown that Ukrainian forced migrants demonstrated leadership by keeping their faith, taking responsibility for themselves and what they have been assigned to by the circumstances of forced displacement, etc. The insights gathered from the Ukrainian Christian refugees reveal that wartime leadership is dynamic and multifaceted. It encompasses values, adaptability, compassion, and spirituality, and it extends beyond traditional models to prioritize the well-being of individuals and communities. The experiences and perspectives of these refugees offer valuable lessons for understanding leadership in the most challenging of circumstances, emphasizing the enduring importance of empathy, resilience, and faith in guiding individuals and communities through times of crisis.

Further research into the leadership of Ukrainian war refugees promises to provide even greater insights into their remarkable capacity for adaptability, compassion, and service in the face of adversity.

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Лідерство перед обличчям травми: якісне дослідження українських вимушених мігрантів-християн

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Анотація: Ця стаття заглиблюється у досвід лідерства українських вимушених мігрантів-християн посеред агресивної війни проти України, що триває. Спираючись на теорії, що розглядають травму та вимушену міграцію, а також на моделі лідерства, це дослідження прагне з'ясувати особливості лідерства, яке демонструють українські біженці. На основі якісних даних, отриманих від 130 респондентів, це дослідження визначає ключові теми, що стосуються лідерства під час війни. Дослідження робить внесок у розвиток чутливого до травми богослов'я лідерства, а також пропонує ідеї щодо розвитку лідерства українців у повоєнний період. Відповіді опитаних біженців вказують на те, що лідерство під час війни є динамічним та багатограним. Воно включає у себе цінності, адаптивність, співчуття та християнську духовність, тим самим виходячи за межі традиційних моделей лідерства і пріоритизуючи благополуччя окремих людей та спільнот. Досвід та міркування цих біженців пропонують цінні уроки для розуміння лідерства в найскладніших обставинах, наголошуючи на неминущій важливості емпатії, стійкості та віри для спрямування людей та спільнот крізь часи війни.

Ключові слова: лідерство, травма, вимушена міграція, багатогранне лідерство, цінності, адаптивність, співчуття, християнська духовність, емпатія, стійкість, віра, війна.

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