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UNDESIRABLE REVERSE REMITTANCES: THE CASE OF YOUNG UKRAINIAN STUDENTS IN CZECHIA

Luděk Jirka¹

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ABSTRACT

Undesirable Reverse Remittances: The Case of Young Ukrainian Students in Czechia

This article explores the interplay between instrumental migration aspirations and reverse remittances within transnational families. Based on semi-structured interviews with young Ukrainian migrants who moved to Czechia at ages 15–16, the article suggests that, after an initial phase of settling in and adapting, participants show a desire for financial independence from their non-migrating parents. Thus, their aspiration for independence is grounded in a deliberate rejection of transnational financial dependence on their families. This sheds light on how family financial support may be perceived as undesirable for individual migration aspirations.

KEYWORDS: student migration, instrumental migration aspirations, transnational family, independence, reverse remittances

IZVLEČEK

Nežželena povratna denarna nakazila: primer mladih ukrajinskih študentov na Češkem

Avtor v prispevku raziskuje povezavo med t. i. instrumentalnimi migracijskimi težnjami (željami po selitvi zaradi izobraževanja) in povratnimi denarnimi nakazili v transnacionalnih družinah. Na podlagi podatkov iz polstrukturiranih intervjujev z mladimi ukrajinskimi migranti in migrantkami, ki so se na Češko preselili v starosti 15–16 let, ugotavlja, da si sogovorniki, ki so se preselili, po začetni fazi prihoda in prilagajanja želijo postati finančno neodvisni od svojih staršev, ki niso odšli v tujino. Prizadevajo si torej za neodvisnost, ki temelji na zavestnem zavračanju transnacionalne finančne odvisnosti od svojih družin. S tem avtor pokaže, kako je lahko v okviru individualnih migracijskih ambicij finančna podpora družine dojeta kot nežželena.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: migracije študentov, instrumentalne migracijske težnje, transnacionalna družina, neodvisnost, povratna denarna nakazila

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INTRODUCTION

Since 2022, Ukrainians in migration studies have been primarily associated with temporary protection. However, Ukrainian student migration to the European Union (EU) prior to the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine is also relevant for scholarly attention, particularly in the context of the global growth of student migration. In the Czech context, the migration of Ukrainian students to Czechia is a part of broader Ukrainian migration to the country. Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, independent Ukraine experienced a rather unsuccessful transition from a centrally planned to a market-oriented economy, whereas Czechia underwent a comparatively successful transformation. Due to its economic attractiveness and cultural and linguistic proximity, Czechia became a destination country for Ukrainian immigration (Drbohlav, 2010). During the 1990s, Ukrainians migrated primarily for economic reasons, and Czechia's *laissez-faire* migration policy enabled their entry. However, in 1999, due to the harmonization of migration policy with the European Union, Czechia introduced visa restrictions. At the same time, student migration from Ukraine to Czechia began to increase, and Ukrainian students were required to obtain a long-term study visa (Jirka, 2021).

The number of foreign students enrolled in Czech secondary schools increased steadily from 6,317 in the 2007/2008 school year to 21,227 in the 2024/2025 school year. In 2024/2025, the percentage of foreign students among all students at Czech secondary schools was 4.1% (Czech Statistical Office, 2025b). The majority of foreign students in 2016/2017 were enrolled in high schools, and Ukrainians constituted the largest group of third-country nationals (73.3%). Together with students from Vietnam and Russia, they accounted for 59% of all foreign students in Czech secondary education (Czech Statistical Office, 2017). In 2024/2025, Ukrainians accounted for 60.4% of foreign students at secondary schools, followed by Slovaks (11.9%) and Vietnamese (11.1%) (Czech Statistical Office, 2025a). Ukrainian students typically studied in the Czech language due to linguistic proximity. Most originated from Western Ukraine owing to the region's geopolitical orientation toward the European Union. However, after the outbreak of the war in Eastern Ukraine in 2014, students from other Ukrainian regions also began to arrive (Drbohlav & Jaroszewicz, 2016).

Despite the relevance of foreign students in Czech secondary education, scholarly attention has primarily focused on Ukrainian students enrolled at universities in Czechia (Leontiyeva & Kopecká, 2018; Velychko & Yaremenko, 2020). This student migration is often driven by the political and economic situation in their home country, while simultaneously perceiving Czechia as an economically developed state where they can obtain an education and a diploma that facilitate employment within the European Union. At the same time, they also value the more favorable environment of Czech educational institutions (Leontiyeva & Kopecká, 2018). Nevertheless, this article departs from the predominant focus on Ukrainian university students by examining their counterparts in secondary schools. While this phenomenon is rarely

studied in the Czech context, scholars in other European countries have focused on it (see Fog Olwig, 2007).

This research focuses specifically on Ukrainian students from the Rivne and Zhytomyr Regions who migrated at the age of 15–16 to attend secondary schools in Uničov, a small town in the Olomouc Region of Czechia. The preconditions for the arrival of Ukrainian students in Uničov date back to the 1990s, when short-term curative summer stays in Czechia were organized for descendants of the Czech diaspora living in Ukraine. These stays were part of humanitarian assistance provided to members of Czech diasporic communities from areas affected by the Chernobyl disaster in 1986. However, many participants in these stays were Ukrainians without Czech ancestry, yet they still attended through membership in Czech diasporic associations (which do not require Czech origin). Moreover, many descendants of the Czech diaspora had gradually lost a Czech ethnic identity and identified as Ukrainians. In 2011, a teacher from the high school in Uničov who co-organized the summer stays began offering prospective participants the opportunity to study at her school, primarily in response to the declining number of Czech students in Uničov. Together with colleagues from the local high school and the secondary technical school, she also sought to recruit additional Ukrainian students during subsequent visits to Czech diasporic associations and educational institutions in the Rivne and Zhytomyr Regions. Detailed data on the number of foreign students studying in Uničov is not available in official statistics. However, according to the author's own estimates, the number reached approximately 40 Ukrainian students. Most originated from Western Ukraine, with five students from Odesa (Southern Ukraine) and three from Kyiv (Central Ukraine).

It should be noted that the migration route for these students was not straightforward. At the Czech Embassy in Lviv, their parents had to apply for a long-term study visa, demonstrate sufficient financial means, and arrange accommodation in Uničov. Only families with adequate financial resources—typically middle class or higher—were able to take this opportunity. There may also be a strategic rationale behind this migration trajectory related to the possibility of obtaining permanent residence (Leontiyeva & Kopecká, 2018). A long-term study visa can lead to permanent residence in Czechia after ten years of study, which usually exceeds the time students spend in secondary school (typically four years) and later at university (typically five years). Consequently, the common strategy for Ukrainian students is to transition from student status to employment or entrepreneurship to secure a residence permit (Leontiyeva & Kopecká, 2018). Before 2019, this transition was often stressful, as students needed to secure employment or start a business rapidly to avoid losing both their student/employment status and residence permit. In 2019, however, the Czech government introduced the long-term residence permit for the purpose of seeking employment or starting a business start-up, which allows graduates to remain in the country for up to nine months while searching for employment.

Participants for this research were selected from the students studying in Uničov. It is worth noting that while some participants were encouraged by their parents to migrate,¹ others made the decision voluntarily with an instrumental means-to-end perspective. By instrumental perspective, we mean a desire to migrate in order to achieve specific goals, such as education or improved welfare (De Haas, 2021), and this article focuses on participants with such objectives. Although their migration pathways differed, all participants (except one²) were the first members of their families to migrate from Ukraine. Parents typically remained in Ukraine and provided transnational support to their children. An exception was five parents who resided in other European countries or Moscow, though they also supported their children from a distance.

Participants expressed aspirational goals that were primarily individualistic, yet they continued to receive transnational financial support from their parents through reverse remittances. These remittances function not only as financial resources but also carry a social dimension of care within transnational families. Therefore, the main research questions are: (1) how participants express instrumental migration aspirations and (2) how these migration aspirations intersect with reverse remittances. The sub-question is: (1) how participants (un)accept this parental care and support. The following sections present the theoretical framework, methodology, and findings.

THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

Traditional migration theories (push and pull factors, the neoclassical theory of migration, and historical-structural approaches) tend to depict migrants as actors pushed by external forces (Carling & Collins, 2018). While these theories emphasize economic reasoning and adopt a conventional or state-centered perspective, they also reduce migrants' decision-making to deterministic logic (Carling & Collins, 2018; De Haas, 2021). Consequently, they overlook bottom-up perspectives, fail to recognize migrants' self-representations, and are unable to capture migrants' realities.

Scholars call for studying migration from a bottom-up perspective as a social and human-centered process. The notion of migration aspirations aligns with this approach. Migration aspirations, in a broad sense, can be defined as subjective preferences regarding life and opportunities elsewhere (De Haas, 2021). Aspirations differ from capabilities, which refer to migrants' ability to realize their migration ambitions (Carling, 2014). Thus, aspirations represent desires or plans to migrate, whereas capabilities denote the practical ability to do so (Carling, 2025). Migration

1 Hein De Haas used the term "forced." Although this term is appropriate in some contexts, given the recent war in Ukraine, it could be misleading; therefore, "encouraged" is a more suitable choice.

2 One participant already had a brother living in the Czech Republic.

aspirations, as part of people's broader and flexible life aspirations (Carling, 2014), are shaped by various objectives, expectations, or possible achievements (Van Hear et al., 2018). They are also embedded in specific social contexts, which influence both individuals' ambitions and their capabilities to act (Collins, 2018; Carling & Schewel, 2018; De Haas, 2021; Van Mol et al., 2018).

Migration aspirations encompass both instrumental and intrinsic dimensions (Carling, 2025). The instrumental dimension refers to a means-to-end orientation, in which migrants may consider and plan actions to achieve their personal goals (Carling & Schewel, 2018), such as improving their standard of living, attaining education, or securing better income, as part of their self-realization (De Haas, 2021). The intrinsic dimension, by contrast, concerns migration motivated by personal fulfillment, curiosity, or the desire to explore new horizons (Carling, 2025). In this research, participants (though not all) primarily show the instrumental dimension of migration aspirations (see Table 1). In this sense, migration aspirations are closely linked to articulated desires, and migrants should be encouraged to speak for themselves (Ghorashi et al., 2018), thereby providing their own self-representations through narratives.

The family unit plays a significant role in shaping migration aspirations and achievements. Family members may mediate migration decisions and trajectories (Collins, 2018), but the family's social and economic conditions also influence or trigger migration goals (Van Hear et al., 2018). However, the influence of the family on migration aspirations is often discussed negatively. Some scholars argue that family dynamics may negatively affect individual migration aspirations (De Haas & Fokkema, 2010; Mata-Codesal, 2018; Vezzoli, 2023), as personal ambitions often have to contend with restrictive family expectations (Rodriguez-Pena, 2022; 2024). Accordingly, family influence may be understood as a "limitation" on the pursuit of personal goals. At the same time, other authors discussed that individuals may altruistically fulfill family expectations (Müller-Funk et al., 2023; Vezzoli, 2023) or report satisfaction with these expectations (Schiefer et al., 2023). In that regard, this article focuses on this interplay between the family unit and participants' migration aspirations.

Migration aspirations are commonly studied in the pre-migration phase; therefore, the notion of "family as limitation" is typically associated with familial influence prior to departure. In contrast, this article emphasizes the development and transformation of migration aspirations throughout the migration process (Boccagni, 2017; Van Helsum, 2017), as well as their implications for transnational family support. Migration aspirations are dynamic and continuously evolving—an insight that is central to this study.

The term transnational family is a part of the broader discussion of transnational ties in migration studies. The concept of transnationalism originally emerged as a response to methodological nationalism, the tendency to analyze migrants through the lens of their inclusion into the receiving state. However, migrants cannot be

studied solely in terms of their inclusion in the host country, as they often maintain economic, political, social, and cultural ties to their country of origin. These cross-border connections have been conceptualized as a *transnational social field* (Basch et al., 2003) or a *transnational social space* (Faist, 2000), among other related terms. Despite certain methodological shortcomings identified in the literature (Waldinger & FitzGerald, 2004), transnational ties remain a central concept in migration studies.

Transnational ties take various forms. Political transnational ties involve efforts to influence political developments in the country of origin, either at the national or local level (Lacroix et al., 2016); cultural ties concern changes of traditional values within the society in country of origin (Goździak & Main, 2020; Krofl, 2017); economic ties typically refer to sending remittances back to the country of origin (Carling & Hoelscher, 2013; Morad & Gombač, 2015); while social ties encompass migrants' connections and bonds with family members or the broader community in the country of origin (White & Grabowska, 2018). The political, cultural, and social impacts on the country of origin are also referred to as *social remittances* (Levitt, 2001; 2015; White & Grabowska, 2018). Furthermore, these forms of transnational ties are not isolated, as they are interrelated. For example, economic ties are often linked to social ties, as financial support reflects family and community relations.

A transnational family consists of family members residing in two countries—the country of origin and the country of destination. The term is commonly used to describe situations in which migrants provide financial support (remittances) or material goods (such as gifts) to family members who remain in the country of origin. The social connections maintained through phone calls, visits, social media, and other forms of communication are also important. These ties also underpin transnational care arrangements between those who migrate and those who stay behind (Sørensen & Vammen, 2014).

For the purpose of this article, reverse remittances, as part of economic transnational ties, are of particular interest. Unlike traditional remittances, which are sent from the country of destination to the country of origin, reverse remittances move in the opposite direction. They are often associated with financial support for students studying abroad (UI Abdin, 2025) or with securing investments (Mazzucato, 2011). Beyond their economic function, reverse remittances also have a social function (Carling & Hoelscher, 2013). For instance, paid childcare services can be interpreted as investments in children (Mazzucato, 2011). In this sense, reverse remittances are not only financial contributions but also carry social significance. To sum up, this article examines family care in the form of reverse remittances and explores how they relate to participants' migration aspirations.

METHODOLOGY

The interviewees were young Ukrainians, aged 15–16 at the time of migration, who moved unaccompanied to Uničov. Participants were selected based on two criteria: first, they study at either the high school or the secondary technical school in Uničov; and second, their parents either remained in Ukraine or did not reside and work in Czechia. Saturating the research sample required a long time, as Ukrainian students were gradually enrolled in secondary schools in Uničov over several years. In total, 19 interviews were conducted between 2014 and 2021. All participants were born in the Rivne and Zhytomyr Regions.

The majority of interviews were conducted while participants were still enrolled in secondary schools in Uničov. Two interviews took place after participants had begun their university studies. Furthermore, one interview was conducted prior to a participant's enrollment in high school. All interviews were conducted in Czech, as the participants had either learned the language during their secondary education in Czechia or had studied Czech prior to their enrollment. It should be noted, however, that their level of proficiency varied.

Meetings were arranged in Czechia and Ukraine (see Table 1). In Ukraine, six interviews were conducted during the summer holidays in participants' hometowns. This provided an opportunity not only to speak with participants' parents in person but also to gain insight into the living conditions and household or hometown circumstances of the participants. In Czechia, most interviews took place in Uničov, while one interview was conducted in Olomouc and another in Brno during participants' university studies.

The war in Eastern Ukraine, which began in 2014, influenced participants' perspectives. Many expressed stronger nationalistic views and anti-Russian attitudes, attributing responsibility for the conflict to Russia. The full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine occurred in 2022, but all interviews were conducted before that date.

A qualitative methodology was employed, using semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection method. This method is well-suited to research on migration aspirations, as it allows exploration of subjective attitudes, personal values, life trajectories, and individuals' interpretations of migration. Therefore, semi-structured interviews are a suitable method for examining participants' migration ambitions (Carling & Schewel, 2018).

The same core set of specific interview questions was used for each participant, with additional questions asked during each interview. The purpose of these questions was to explore participants' migration aspirations regarding staying in Czechia, their perceptions of student status, their experiences in both Ukrainian and Czech environments, their interpretations of the migration pathway, and the influence of the transnational family on their lives. Only a few questions focused on participants' backgrounds prior to migration. In this regard, participants were asked about their parents and their parents' occupations, parental migration aspirations, and family

living conditions before leaving Ukraine. Additionally, the author’s encounters with parents during visits in Ukraine provided further insight into participants’ lives before migration. Following data collection, the author employed thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns. Coding and categorization were conducted manually, without using software.

Table 1 shows that twelve participants migrated instrumentally, while seven were deliberately encouraged by their parents to migrate. Participants who migrated instrumentally often persuaded their parents of the appropriateness of their migration, whereas those who were encouraged migrated largely due to parental influence.

In accordance with ethical guidelines, parents were informed about the study and asked to provide consent for their children’s participation. For participants under 18 years of age at the time of the interview, parents signed informed consent on their behalf. Participants who were over 18 at the time of the interview signed their own informed consents. This complies with Czech legislation. Participants were assured of their anonymity in the study, and fictitious names were used throughout the article. Interviews were transcribed and stored in the author’s personal archive and at the University of Hradec Králové. Observations and unrecorded notes from informal conversations with participants were documented in a field diary. Additionally, the author spent one month in Uničov to become familiar with the local social and economic environment. The author’s fluency in Ukrainian further reduced the possibility of misunderstandings during the interviews.

Participant	Encouraged by parents (E), Instrumentally (I)	Country of interview
Lera	I	Ukraine
Julja	I	Ukraine
Valeria	I	Ukraine
Albina	I	Czechia
Elena	E	Czechia
Nikolaj	E	Ukraine
Alexander	I	Czechia
Viktoria	E	Czechia
Anna	E	Czechia
Ivan	E	Czechia
Jana	I	Czechia
Lara	I	Czechia
Evdokia	I	Czechia
Vasyl	I	Czechia

Denis	E	Ukraine
Olena	I	Ukraine
Vladyslav	E	Czechia
Jaroslava	I	Czechia
Emma	I	Czechia

Table 1: Division of participants by migration aspirations and location of interview

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Why Did Most Participants Migrate Instrumentally?

Participants resettled in Czechia, while their parents typically remained in Ukraine. According to participants’ interpretations, their parents’ motives for staying were generally reasonable. They held stable jobs or ran businesses, cared for their own parents, or were accustomed to local living standards. Thus, unlike the participants, parents were described as having non-migration aspirations, reflecting generational differences regarding migration from Ukraine (Roberts, 2009). Family reunification in Czechia was not pursued—at least at the time of the research. Although the majority of parents remained in Ukraine, five resided in France, Great Britain, or Moscow, where they were employed in low-skilled jobs. In terms of social class, most parents may be described as middle class within the Ukrainian context (such as accountants, teachers, truck drivers); some belonged to the upper-middle class (such as doctors or entrepreneurs), while others earned income from low-skilled employment abroad. However, the sample also included one participant whose parents were divorced; her father was not involved in her upbringing, and her mother worked as a postal worker. For this participant, securing sufficient financial resources was more challenging. Nevertheless, her grandfather, who was employed abroad, decided to provide financial support. Otherwise, participants did not report significant financial problems.

Participants were also asked about their living conditions prior to migration. While some were satisfied with their lives in Ukraine, others cited difficult living conditions that led them to migrate. Their answers were associated with social insecurity, unemployment, poverty or corruption, factors recognized as persistent problems in Ukraine (Walker & Stephenson, 2010; Ivashchenko, 2021). For instance, the father of one participant worked as a doctor in a public healthcare institution but became seriously ill. Due to the state’s limited social support, the family experienced significant financial problems. As the participant stated, this experience led her to the conviction that Ukraine would “never be a normal state.” Experiences from curative short-term stays in Czechia also influenced participants’ desire to migrate as they observed living standards of their peers in Europe (see Nikolayenko, 2011). They often compared their hometowns with Czech localities. One participant, for

example, noted that there was no swimming pool in Dubno, while she appreciated the modern swimming pools available in Czechia.

Aside from the above-mentioned factors, participants who migrated instrumentally typically justified their decision by referring to a perceived “no future” in Ukraine, a desire to distance themselves from parental rules and norms (it should be noted that they were still adolescents at the time of migration), a wish to obtain a diploma within the European Union and live in a country with higher living standards. The last two factors do not distinguish their perceptions from those of Ukrainian students studying at Czech universities (Leontiyeva & Kopecká, 2018). Regarding the war in Ukraine, which began in 2014, participants noted that it was an important factor shaping their parents’ attitudes toward the participants’ potential migration. During small talks, parents also mentioned that the political and economic situation in Ukraine had been deteriorating since the 1990s.

Upon arrival in Uničov, participants who migrated instrumentally expressed interest in educational or work opportunities and in opportunities for self-realization. In contrast, participants who were encouraged by their parents to migrate often preferred to remain in their place of birth in Ukraine but did so under parental pressure. The following findings refer to participants who migrated instrumentally, as those who were encouraged experienced their migration trajectories differently.

Reverse Remittances as a Limitation for Instrumental Acting

Participants’ studies were possible primarily through parental reverse remittances—that is, money sent from Ukraine to their descendants in Czechia—amounting to approximately €200 per month.³ It should be noted that this amount increased for students who arrived between 2019 and 2021. For these students, parental financial support amounted to approximately €300–350 per month. As education in secondary schools in Czechia is free, this money covered basic expenses such as accommodation and food, and was particularly useful in the first months after migration (Ul Abdin, 2025). Most participants resided in a dormitory owned by the secondary technical school, while the parents of three participants could afford private apartments for them. However, living in private accommodation was even more demanding, as these participants, for example, had to prepare their own meals. In contrast, those residing in the dormitory had access to meals provided by the canteen. Nevertheless, all participants were required to navigate daily life in Czechia agentically without their parents’ physical presence. This situation fostered the development of agency, resilience, confidence, and independence. As one student explained:

3 Parents typically provided some additional money for travel between Ukraine and the Czech Republic. The specific amount varied, but averaged approximately €200 per month.

I have to look after myself, solve everything, some documents, some signatures from school, buy something, everything I should do only by myself, everything. Here [in Uničov] it is different. If I was in Ukraine ... it would be different there. Here you have to be independent even if you are not even 18 years old. You have to deal with it. (Lara)

Independence was frequently associated with entering a “mature life,” as explained by another student:

I could cook alone; I have to take look after my health alone. And I have to go and buy something alone. No one from the family will buy me medicine and no one will say to me: “You have to drink this and that [when you are sick].” I have to do everything just on my own. And I also have to think in advance, prepare a snack for school. This is a more mature life than my classmates have. (Olena)

Although none of the participants reported experiencing serious illness during their stay in Uničov, they all had access to public health insurance. Those residing in the dormitory could also rely on support from dormitory staff. Therefore, despite their claims of resilience and independence, participants generally had access to external forms of support.

Participants explored their independence and capability to act, even though reverse remittances remained present. They generally perceived these remittances positively; however, later in their studies, many decided to earn their own income through part-time jobs, thereby diminishing the role of parental financial support. One participant who worked in a part-time job stated:

I talked to my parents about [getting] a job for me to be more independent. But I could not work full time at that time because I was told that I was not 18 years of age. So, I worked on a construction site in a part-time job. Now, the situation is different [after I turned 18]. I could earn more, but [my] parents still send me their money. (Vladyslav)

Only two participants were able to obtain a full-time job. One decided to work full-time because her mother, who was working in Great Britain at the time, was unable to save sufficient funds to support her. The other sought to relieve their parents of financial strain, as household income had significantly decreased due to the reverse remittances sent to the participant.

For some participants, after obtaining a job, parental financial support was no longer considered as decisive: “I have money [from my job] only for myself, to be independent of my mother’s finances. I can earn my own money to have a sustainable life here. I pay almost for everything” (Ivan). Therefore, after the initial phase of living in Uničov, participants’ new life trajectories increasingly came to be associated

with independence from full parental financial support. However, one participant highlighted the ambivalence of this situation: although she chose to work, doing so reduced the time available for studying, which negatively affected her school performance. This was a noteworthy point that was not mentioned by other participants.

With regard to the future, participants aspire to achieve full financial independence from their parents:

I want to use the opportunity [of being] in Czechia, and I want to adapt here only by myself. This means achieving something on my own, to work, to get money, and something else. Like... I do not want to use what others and my parents give me. I want to do something myself. Use the opportunity I have. In the future, I will take over this restaurant [in Dubno from my parents]. But before that, I will achieve something on my own [abroad]. (Denis)

This is primarily related to the participants' future. However, their future aspirations are significant because they frame them in terms of independence from parental financial support. These goals are relevant, as they shape participants' expectations regarding the future relationships with their parents: "I wanted to reach something on my own. Employment, my own life, family. Because, you know, you have to prepare yourself for your own life. You have to be prepared that there could be even more difficult situations than I have now. I cannot rely on someone else in my life. Parents should have their own lives too" (Jana). Another participant explained: "I have a different life here than in my hometown. I have the feeling that parents should keep their old life and I have to move forward. They should care about themselves, and I will somehow arrange my life here" (Lara). This aligns with findings among South Asian students in Finland and Sweden (Ul-Abdin, 2025). It should be noted, however, that physical separation was associated with more positive attitudes toward parents. Although participants initially wished to escape parental rules and norms prior to migration, they later came to appreciate parental support, recognized the extent of their parents' self-sacrifice, and maintained regular visits during summer and Christmas holidays. Parents were also frequently cited as the primary driver for visits due to a feeling of home (Karlová, 2014).

Therefore, participants, who were on average 17 years old at the time of the interviews, expressed aspirations for financial independence from their parents, which is atypical for their Czech peers. Participants noted that their classmates were still being cared for by their parents, which they interpreted as a sign of being less "mature." Three participants described experiencing a different mindset compared with their classmates, whom they perceived as still "childish." One participant even described feeling alone in her class because her peers were not "mature." This means that the participants' self-perception of "being more mature" is based more on everyday experience than on chronological age (Huijsmans, 2015).

Transnational families are typically understood in terms of the interpersonal circulation of finances and material or social resources, as well as the provision of care among family members. However, according to the participants, the role of reverse remittances—often assumed to be central to transnational family life (Fitz-Gerald, 2014)—is diminished because participants express autonomous personal development and their own independent pathway. Although family may trigger migration aspirations and family socioeconomic positions influence migrants' positionality (Collins, 2018; Van Hear et al., 2018), family influences are also discussed as limitations on migration aspirations (De Haas & Fokkema, 2010; Mata-Codesal, 2018; Rodriguez-Pena, 2022; 2024; Vezzoli, 2023). In line with these findings, our results show that families' reverse remittances are a limitation for participants' development. It is important to note that these results are based on participants' self-represented aspirations and that, at the time of the research, they continued to receive reverse remittances from their parents. Participants' migration aspirations are linked to valuing the principle of relying on their own efforts to achieve instrumental goals, even though parental financial support continues—and likely will continue in the near future—to sustain the success of their migration trajectories.

CONCLUSION

To address the research questions, the findings show that participants who migrated instrumentally assert independence from their parents and their reverse remittances. This independence is related to participants' personal development during their stay in Uničov, as they perceive parental financial support as "undesirable" because they would like to care for themselves autonomously. Participants' self-representations emphasize the value of self-reliance, highlighting that reverse remittances do not align with their personal migration aspirations. These findings also contribute to an understanding of another side of the relationship between family influence and participants, emphasizing that participants report increasingly positive attitudes toward their parents over time (they are more willing to visit and talk with them).

The notion of instrumental migration aspirations refers to the deliberate pursuit of specific individual goals (Carling & Collins, 2018; De Haas, 2021). However, instrumental migration aspirations are typically studied prior to migration. The same applies to the influence of family on these aspirations (Mata-Codesal, 2018; Rodriguez-Pena, 2022; 2024; Vezzoli, 2023). In contrast, this study examines how the migration aspirations of participants who have already settled in the host country are linked to reverse remittances provided by their families. Although reverse remittances have been discussed not only in relation to financial transfers but also as a form of transnational care arrangement (Mazzucato, 2011), the findings of this study suggest that the role of reverse remittances, as a form of transnational care, may be diminished due to participants' aspirations for personal development in the host

country. Although previous research has shown that transnational support (logically) tends to diminish over time as migrants spend longer periods in the host country (Ul Abdin, 2025), this article shows that participants often perceive reverse remittances as “undesirable” because they conflict with their personal desires and autonomy.

This research has several limitations. First, it should be noted that participants were still adolescents who, given their life course, would logically seek greater independence from parental rules and norms. Second, the study focused on only one subgroup of participants—those who migrated instrumentally—while participants who were encouraged by their parents to migrate may express their situation differently. Third, less reliance on parental support does not imply complete financial independence. Family support remains active, and participants continue to benefit from it. However, participants’ perspectives are decisive, as the findings show how the influence of parental reverse remittances is shaped by participants’ instrumental migration aspirations and how these two aspects intersect and induce changes over time.

RESEARCH DATA ACCESSIBILITY STATEMENT

The research data are stored at the Department of Studies in Culture and Religion of the Faculty of Education of the University of Hradec Králové and the author’s personal archive.

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POVZETEK

NEZAŽELENA POVRATNA DENARNA NAKAZILA: PRIMER MLADIH UKRAJINSKIH ŠTUDENTOV NA ČEŠKEM

Luděk Jirka

Avtor v prispevku preučuje migracijske težnje udeležencev, ki so se v starosti 15–16 let iz praktičnih razlogov preselili iz zahodne Ukrajine (natančneje iz regij Rivne in Žitomir) na Češko. Tam so v mestecu Uničov obiskovali gimnazijo in tehniško srednjo šolo, medtem ko so njihovi starši ostali v Ukrajini ali pa so se preselili drugam (v Francijo, Veliko Britanijo ali Rusijo) ter svoje otroke čezmejno podpirali z nakazili iz tujine. Študija temelji na kvalitativni metodologiji in polstrukturiranih intervjujih z devetnajstimi sogovorniki in sogovornicami. Intervjuji so bili opravljeni med letoma 2014 in 2021, saj so se sodelujoči v tem obdobju postopoma vpisovali v šole. Praktični oz. instrumentalni motivi udeležencev za selitev so bili povezani s pridobitvijo diplome v tujini, življenjem v državi z višjim življenjskim standardom ter pripravljenostjo, da ostanejo v tujini zaradi slabših življenjskih pogojev v matični državi. Sodelujoči so cenili transnacionalno podporo staršev v obliki povratnih nakazil, ki sodijo v okvir transnacionalne družinske podpore, a so hkrati iskali tudi zaposlitev za polovični (ali celo polni) delovni čas, ker so si želeli postati finančno neodvisni od staršev. Njihova želja po neodvisnosti je povezana z njihovim osebnim razvojem med bivanjem v Uničovu, finančno podporo staršev pa dojemajo kot nezaželeno, saj so raje avtonomni in skrbijo sami zase. Cenijo samostojnost oz. samozadostnost ter poudarjajo, da so lahko vezi znotraj transnacionalnih družin – ki se kažejo v obliki povratnih denarnih nakazil – nezaželeni, saj omejujejo neodvisnost sodelujočih in niso v skladu z njihovimi instrumentalnimi migracijskimi težnjami. Te ugotovitve kažejo, kako so lahko podpora družine in povratna nakazila v določenih kontekstih dojemani kot »nezaželeni« za posameznikove migracijske težnje. Čeprav so (povratna) nakazila pogosto obravnavana kot ključni del transnacionalnega družinskega življenja, udeleženci te študije ne izpostavljajo kolektivne družinske blaginje, temveč izražajo individualne ambicije pri odločanju o svojih migracijskih poteh.

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