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Family Educational Strategies and School Choice under Conditions of Uncertainty in Wartime Ukraine

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Abstract

The full-scale war in Ukraine has profoundly disrupted families' educational trajectories and reshaped parental decision-making regarding schooling under conditions of prolonged uncertainty. This study examines how parents construct educational strategies for their children during wartime and how private schools respond institutionally to these challenges. The analysis is based on a mixed-methods research design integrating quantitative and qualitative data from structured online surveys of private schools and parents.

The study captures school-level adaptations, including infrastructure safety measures, diversification of learning formats, and changes in organizational and communication practices, alongside parental perspectives on mobility, school-choice priorities, and the alignment between expectations and school practices. Quantitative findings are complemented by thematic analysis of open-ended responses.

The findings indicate that parental school choice under uncertainty follows a structured and multidimensional logic rather than a purely reactive one. Beyond academic quality, parents prioritize psychosocial climate, safety, trust, and schools' capacity to ensure stability and continuity. After an initial phase of displacement and heightened mobility, families' educational strategies increasingly converge around offline schooling and institutional continuity within Ukraine. While parental evaluations suggest generally high satisfaction with schools' responses, institutional adaptations remain largely situational and school-driven.

The study identifies a critical gap: the absence of structured, system-level social support mechanisms to assist families in educational decision-making under uncertainty, and highlights the potential role of social work in crisis contexts.

Keywords: Educational Strategies, School Choice, Parental Decision-Making, Uncertainty, Wartime Education, Ukraine