Modelling social inclusion, self-esteem, loneliness, psychological distress, and psychological resilience of refugees: Does hospitableness matter?

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ABSTRACT

Despite a growing stream of research addressing hospitableness in destinations and hospitality settings, very little is known about the role of hospitableness in fostering favorable social outcomes for vulnerable individuals such as refugees. This omission is intriguing given the heated debate on how local communities in refugee hosting countries can contribute to tackling the refugee crisis. Drawing on data collected from Ukrainian refugees hosted by locals in Slovakia, this study proposes and tests a conceptual model linking hospitableness, social inclusion, self-esteem, loneliness, psychological distress, psychological resilience, and subjective well-being. Using SEM-PLS, the findings confirm that hospitableness can positively enhance social inclusion while mitigating loneliness. Contrary to our predication, however, our results fail to confirm the positive effect of hospitableness on subjective well-being both directly and indirectly mediated by self-esteem and social inclusion. Psychological resilience significantly moderates the relationship between hospitableness and social inclusion. The study makes significant theoretical contributions to the corpus of literature on the social outcomes of hospitableness and provides timely implications for policy makers to utilise "refugee hosting by locals" schemes and "private sponsorship of refugees" programmes as a viable solution to enhance refugees' social inclusion and foster their overall well-being.

1. Introduction

As these lines are being written (3 December 2022), there are over 89 million forcibly displaced people worldwide of whom around 27 million are refugees and 4.6 million are asylum seekers (UNHCR, 2022b). These figures indicate that the refugee crisis is a global challenge threatening the well-being and welfare of refugees while also imposing a significant burden on the welfare systems of hosting countries. After fleeing their home countries and refuging to new host countries, refugees are likely to suffer from a wide range of stressors that render their re-settlement experience a challenging one (Alrawadieh et al., 2019; Johnson et al., 2019; Schick et al., 2016). The trauma of leaving one's country coupled with inherent unfamiliarity with the social and service structure of hosting countries is likely to result in refugees feeling a sense of loneliness and psychological distress (Strijk et al., 2011). The stigma of being a "refugee" (Baranik et al., 2018) coupled with the inherent time-demanding process of accepting and being accepted by the new society (Shneikat & Alrawadieh, 2019) may also have strong implications

for how refugees develop self-esteem and feel socially included (Correa-Velez et al., 2015; Shneikat & Alrawadieh, 2019). Therefore, a key challenge for countries receiving refugees lies in their physical and, more importantly, social capacity to accommodate and host refugees while also addressing challenges that can hamper their quality of life and well-being as highly vulnerable individuals.

Previous research acknowledged interactions with hosts as a significant antecedent of refugee integration through helping them with social inclusion, reducing their loneliness, and enhancing their well-being (Ager & Strang, 2008; Alrawadieh et al., 2021; Sirriyeh, 2013). However, there appears to be little comprehensive research investigating how hospitableness, as demonstrated by hosts and perceived by refugees, can alleviate negative psychosocial outcomes (e.g., psychological distress and loneliness) and enhance positive psychosocial outcomes (e.g., social inclusion, self-esteem, and subjective well-being). This glaring gap is surprising given that "refugee hosting by locals" schemes have gained momentum in some European countries during the Ukrainian crisis as key approaches to accommodating refugees. Hosting refugees

by locals inherently implies some sort of hospitableness given the largely voluntary and humanitarian nature of these schemes (Monforte et al., 2021). However, the social outcomes of hospitableness for refugees are still unclear.

Hospitality research confirms the positive effects of hospitableness (Ariffin et al., 2013; Lashley, 2015; Mody et al., 2019; Altinay et al., 2023). However, this body of research understandably focuses on customers (i.e., travellers and hotel guests) while ignoring displaced individuals, such as refugees. Few would disagree that many refugees lack family ties and other social networks in their hosting countries, making them appreciate favourable interactions with hosts. From a refugee experience perspective, Boenigk et al. (2021) argue that hospitable service systems could contribute to promoting the well-being of refugees. This suggests that, the more hospitable a condition is to refugee settlement, the stronger the local support infrastructure for refugee settlement is (Nolasco & Braaten, 2021). This underscores the role of hospitableness as a crucial factor in accommodating refugees (Farahani, 2021; Finsterwalder et al., 2020; McIntosh & Cockburn-Wootten, 2019).

According to Telfer (2000: 76), "a host must try to cheer up a miserable guest, divert a bored one, care for a sick one". Therefore, although limited and largely fragmented, recent research seems to shift attention to more inclusive and hospitable service systems that satisfy the needs of vulnerable people, including refugees (Boenigk et al., 2021; Finsterwalder, et al., 2020; McIntosh & Cockburn-Wootten, 2019). Hospitableness is, therefore, a potential path to help refugees navigate societal challenges while also improving their social welfare and psychological well-being. Even though the concept of "hospitableness" has received considerable attention in some disciplines including tourism and hospitality (Mody et al., 2019; Tasci & Semrad, 2016) and refugee studies (Berg & Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2018; Boano & Astolfo, 2020; Brun, 2010; Finsterwalder et al., 2020; Nolasco & Braaten, 2021), a comprehensive modelling of the key social outcomes of hospitableness for refugees hosted through "locals hosting refugees" schemes is still lacking. Specifically, it is unclear how hospitableness offered by local hosts can contribute to mitigating negative societal issues including loneliness and psychological distress among refugees while also fostering positive societal outcomes such as self-esteem, social inclusion, and well-being. Moreover, the role of refugees' psychological resilience as a quality or trait that can potentially facilitate the favourable effects of hospitableness is yet to be investigated.

To address this gap, the present study draws on the bottom-up spillover theory to empirically test a conceptual model linking hospitableness, psychological distress, loneliness, social inclusion, self-esteem, and subjective well-being. The proposed framework suggests that hospitableness has a direct positive effect on social inclusion, self-esteem, and subjective well-being and a direct negative effect on psychological distress and loneliness. In addition, the conceptual model proposes psychological resilience as a potential moderator of the relationships between hospitableness, on the one hand, and psychological distress, loneliness, social inclusion, and subjective well-being, on the other hand. The model also depicts self-esteem and social inclusion as potential mediators between hospitableness and subjective well-being. By empirically evaluating these relationships, the study aims to provide refugee hosting countries' policy makers with insights into how to harness the social outcomes of hospitableness through "refugee hosting by locals" schemes as a key tool to enhance refugees' social inclusion and foster their overall well-being. Our study not only reflects the urgent need for more research on refugees and their quality of life (Boenigk et al., 2021; Alrawadieh et al., 2021) but also engages in a flourishing stream of research focusing one the social outcomes of hospitality (Altinay et al., 2019; Song et al., 2018).

The contributions of the study are twofold. *First*, extant hospitality research addressing hospitableness is largely biased towards commercial settings (e.g., destination, hospitality business) while also focusing primarily on instrumental outcomes including post-experience evaluations and behavioural intentions (Ariffin et al., 2013; Mody et al., 2019; Tasci

& Semrad, 2016). While some fragmented research in refugee and migrant body of literature examines the hospitality extended to refugees (Berg & Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2018; Boano & Astolfo, 2020; Brun, 2010; Finsterwalder et al., 2020; Nolasco & Braaten, 2021), most of these works are either qualitative or conceptual. Thus, there seems to be no comprehensive understanding of how hospitableness as perceived by refugees can mitigate societal stressors (e.g., loneliness and psychological distress) while also improving refugees' quality of life (e.g., social inclusion, self-esteem, and well-being). *Second*, the present study is perhaps the first comprehensive attempt to examine how hospitableness of local hosts can contribute to the social well-being of refugees as a highly vulnerable community. By doing so, the current study not only shifts attention to how hospitableness can contribute to enhancing social and subjective well-being of refugees but also lends empirical support that should direct policy efforts oriented towards harnessing the power of "refugee hosting by locals" schemes as a sensible and influential tool to address refugee-related societal challenges.

2. Literature review

2.1. Hospitableness and its outcomes

Hospitableness has been at the heart of growing research in various disciplines including tourism and hospitality (Mody et al., 2019; Tasci & Semrad, 2016; Altinay et al., 2023) and refugee studies (Berg & Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2018; Boano & Astolfo, 2020; Brun, 2010; Finsterwalder et al., 2020; Nolasco & Braaten, 2021). Extant literature shows that hospitableness is often discussed alongside hospitality, leading to some confusion between these two interconnected phenomena. Tasci and Semrad (2016, p. 33) suggested that "hospitableness is the abstract essential component of hospitality that literature assembles into a comprehensive definition". According to Telfer (2000), hospitableness is a personality trait that some individuals have more of than others. Akin to Telfer's definition of hospitableness as a personality trait, O'Connor (2005) indicated that hospitableness cannot be improved over time—yet it reflects our personality and character. Jacques Derrida's philosophy of hospitality also defines hospitality as inviting and welcoming the stranger either at the personal (human) level or at the country level (Derrida, 2000). Other scholars defined hospitableness as an attitude that gives the visitors a sense of being welcomed and secure (Lashley, 2015; Scholl-Grissemann et al., 2021). Hospitableness therefore involves "hosts presenting hospitality in a giving and generous way, without thought of repayment in kind or any other form of reciprocity" (Blain & Lashley, 2014, p. 2). Thus, hospitableness is the distinguishing facet of hospitality in its true sense—that is, taking care of strangers and guests who are away from their home (Tasci & Semrad, 2016).

Hospitableness has drawn considerable attention in the tourism and hospitality literature. For example, Cetin and Okumus (2018) suggested that hosts' sociability, care, helpfulness and generosity are important factors affecting visitors' experiences. Moreover, Lashley (2015) noted that hosts' features and their attitudes are fundamental determinants in how guests perceive the hospitableness of locals. In commercial settings, the positive role of hospitableness is widely acknowledged as a key driver of guests' satisfaction (Ariffin et al., 2013), loyalty, and positive word-of-mouth (Mody et al., 2019; Scholl-Grissemann et al., 2021). However, despite these valuable contributions, little attention has been paid so far to hospitableness in non-commercial contexts (Komter & Leer, 2012; Monforte et al., 2021; Sirriyeh, 2013; Pechlaner et al., 2016). The present study utilises bottom-up spillover theory in order to evaluate the social outcomes of hospitableness outside of the traditional contours of the "industry" it resides in.

2.2. The bottom-up spillover theory

According to the bottom-up spillover theory, overall life satisfaction is affected by a variety of life domain satisfaction measures and sub-

factors (Kim et al., 2018, 2021). Such psychological-oriented factors can be examined by adopting a bottom-up theory (Pagán, 2015), wherein one's well-being derives from cumulative delightful and un-delightful experiences in various life domains (Zheng et al., 2022). Individuals' perceptions of hospitableness, as demonstrated by others, can represent key driver influencing and shaping their positive (or negative) experiences (Cetin & Okumus (2018).

Perception of hospitableness is vital in fostering favourable evaluation of experiences (Lashley, 2015; Mody et al., 2019). Extant literature examining hospitableness (e.g., Ariffin et al., 2013; Qiu et al., 2022; Tasci & Semrad, 2016) tends to be biased toward one type of mobility—that is, leisure travelling—while ignoring forced displacement (i. e., refugees). Unlike travellers who may visit a destination for a wide range of motives, none of which is generally of life-or-death importance, refugees often flee their countries to survive and, thus, are likely to suffer from a wide range of unfavourable situations including social exclusion and alienation, loneliness, and psychological distress (Alrawadieh et al., 2019, 2021; Johnson et al., 2019; Schick et al., 2016). Past research shows that refugees who lack family ties and other social networks in a foreign country appreciate favourable interactions with local hosts, thus underscoring the role of hospitableness in host communities (Farahani, 2021; Finsterwalder et al., 2020; McIntosh & Cockburn-Wootten, 2019).

Considering the bottom-up spillover theory, we propose that local residents' hospitableness may improve refugees' social inclusion, self-esteem and, consequently, subjective well-being, and alleviate their psychological distress and loneliness by satisfying their resettlement needs. Peisker and Tilbury (2003) suggested that refugees' capacity to successfully tackle attitudinal, psychological, and emotional issues throughout the resettlement procedure relies on several determinants, such as refugees' own internal resources and the external support provided to them upon arrival in the host destination. Thus, we considered both internal and external predictors of refugees' social and psychological outcomes in our study model. In doing so, we treated *hospitableness* as a form of support provided by locals (i.e., external) and *psychological resilience* as an internal resource of refugees. We argue that it is through this internal resource that individuals use their adaptive capacity to stand in the face of adversity (Prayag, 2023). Thus, refugees with higher resilience are likely to be better (psychologically) equipped to stand in the face of aversity in their new host society in that they appreciate hospitableness by locals as a mean to start a new life. Therefore, we also propose that refugees' psychological resilience plays a moderating role in the hypothesised relationships.

3. Theoretical background and hypothesis development

3.1. Hospitableness, psychological distress, and loneliness

Although limited and largely fragmented, recent research seems to shift attention to more inclusive and hospitable service systems that satisfy the needs of vulnerable people, including refugees (Finsterwalder et al., 2020; Linge et al., 2020; Rosello, 2001). For instance, Finsterwalder et al. (2020) argued that refugees can suffer psychological issues (e.g., distress) through both the perceived risk of harm in their home countries and the unforeseen challenges that they face when fleeing to other countries. Refugees can also experience psychological distress when they feel unwelcomed by hosting societies (Alrawadieh et al., 2019). Thus, hospitableness can contribute to improving the cultural adjustment of refugees, hence reducing their psychological distress (Dressler et al., 2007). A hospitable refugee service system is an open, flexibly designed system that augment resources to minimise potential negative effects on refugees (Boenigk et al., 2020; Kuppelwieser & Finsterwalder, 2016). At the individual level, the hospitableness of locals can represent a source of assurance and comfort, thus contributing to reducing the psychological distress of their refugee guests. Hence, we propose the following hypothesis.

H1: Hospitableness of local hosts reduces the psychological distress of refugees.

As a sense created by the perceived lack of meaningful social associations (Dykstra & Fokkema, 2007), loneliness is a social challenge which significantly affects refugees during their resettlement and integration processes in their host countries (Alrawadieh et al., 2019; Schick et al., 2016; Stewart et al., 2015). One may safely assume that refugees are likely to enjoy limited social networks in the host country, which can fuel their sense of loneliness, particularly during the initial stages of resettlement Past research indicates that warm welcome, social support, and hospitableness that encourages close interaction can help alleviate the loneliness that guests feel while also contributing to a higher life satisfaction (Farmaki & Stergiou, 2019; Johnson et al., 2019; Song et al., 2018). Kim et al. (2005) found that a higher quality of social interactions alleviates loneliness. Thus, hospitableness should inherently be associated with the host's capability to cater for a refugee's need for emotional support, resulting in relieving loneliness. Hence, we propose the following hypothesis.

H2: Hospitableness of local hosts mitigates the loneliness of refugees.

3.2. Hospitableness, social inclusion, self-esteem, and subjective well-being

From an evolutionary standpoint, the need to belong is fundamental to human existence and society (Le et al., 2015). Baumeister and Leary (1995) suggested that frequent social interaction and emotions of connectivity are both necessary components of belongingness. Following this viewpoint, Malone et al. (2012) suggested that *inclusion* and *exclusion* are two key dimensions of belongingness. While inclusion highly predicts life satisfaction and happiness, exclusion strongly predicts depression. As a highly vulnerable segment of the society, refugees' social inclusion has always been a concern (Finsterwalder et al., 2020). Marci (2013) proposed that, in modern complex multi-ethnic societies, attention should be paid to the antecedents of the social inclusion of refugees from a diversity of cultural backgrounds.

Hospitableness can be vital in shaping how refugees integrate into their hosting community by feeling socially included (Alrawadieh et al., 2021; Pechlaner et al., 2016). Narli and Özaşçılar (2020) noted that refugee-friendly social contexts can positively enhance the social inclusion of refugees. Based on the bottom-up spillover theory, we argue that hospitableness can positively impact social inclusion of refugees. While to the best of our knowledge, no research has sought to empirically investigate whether the hospitableness of locals may contribute to refugees' social inclusion, existing theoretical assessments and qualitative inquiries (Pechlaner et al., 2016; Rottmann & Nimer, 2021) allude to such a positive association between hospitableness and social inclusion. Against this background, we propose the following hypothesis:

H3: Hospitableness of local hosts enhances the social inclusion of refugees.

A long-held premise in psychology is that interpersonal social interactions play an important role in shaping people's self-esteem (Rosenberg, 2015). As a favourable assessment of oneself or the community with whom one identifies (Wang & Xu, 2015), self-esteem can be affected by pleasant and unpleasant life experiences in contingency domains (e.g., Drake et al., 2008; Mouatsou & Koutra, 2023; Shimizu & Pelham, 2004). On the contrary, self-esteem is enhanced when individuals feel respected within their communities (Smith & Tyler, 1997). In particular, the self-esteem of vulnerable people, like refugees, fluctuates considerably in reaction to perceived acceptance (i.e., hospitality) or rejection (i.e., hostility) from others (Park et al., 2004). It is logical, therefore, to assume that when refugees feel welcome and that they are treated with respect by their hosts, they are likely to develop a sense of self-esteem. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H4: Hospitableness of local hosts enhances the self-esteem of refugees.

Refugees are among the most vulnerable populations and concern

over their well-being has led to extensive investigation both in refugee research (Johnson et al., 2019, Ryan et al., 2008) and, to a lesser extent, hospitality research (Alrawadieh et al., 2021). The spillover theory suggests that satisfaction in one life domain can affect satisfaction in another. Drawing on this theory, a favourable perception of hospitableness can satisfy emotional and social needs of refugees, thus positively influencing their well-being (Sirgy, 2019). Past research suggested that being hospitable through thoughtful social relationships with visitors enhances a visitor's well-being (Pizam, 2007). Hospitableness towards refugees promotes favourable relationships between hosts and refugees, thus improving perceptions of safety, belonging, and overall well-being (Elliott & Yusuf, 2014). On the contrary, Boenigk et al. (2021) noted that hostile refugee services promote hostility toward service receivers (i.e., refugees) and could have a negative impact on their well-being whereas hospitableness could enhance refugees' well-being. Thus, we assume that perceived hospitableness helps refugees restore their physical, social, and psychological resources after a traumatic experience of fleeing their countries, which results in enhanced subjective well-being. Based on this theorisation, the following hypothesis is developed:

H5: Hospitableness of local hosts fosters the subjective well-being of refugees.

As discussed above, among the key societal challenges facing refugees in their hosting countries are social exclusion and hampered self-esteem (Alrawadieh et al., 2019; Johnson et al., 2019; Schick et al., 2016). Socially included refugees are likely to feel less challenged in their resettlement and integration processes which can positively impact their quality of life and life satisfaction (Alrawadieh et al., 2021). Like social inclusion, self-esteem is of significant importance for refugees. People with high self-esteem consider themselves valuable and meaningful and tend to hold a positive self-image (Rosenberg., 1965). More specifically, people with high self-esteem are often those who have fulfilled their need for acceptance (Pierce et al., 2016). Self-esteem has long been acknowledged as an important resource since it helps to retain one's self-worth even in difficult times; thus, contributing to individuals' positive psychological needs (Kim et al., 2014). In sum, few would disagree that refugees' subjective well-being can be significantly enhanced when refugees achieve a greater sense of self-esteem while also feeling socially included in their host societies. Based on the aforementioned discussion, we propose the following hypotheses:

H6: Social inclusion enhances the subjective well-being of refugees.
H7: Self-esteem enhances the subjective well-being of refugees.

3.3. The mediating effects of social inclusion and self-esteem

As discussed above, hospitableness can be a significant tool to enhance the well-being of refugees who are likely to have had traumatic experiences in their home countries as well as challenging settlement experiences in their host communities (Boenigk et al., 2021; Elliott & Yusuf, 2014). We argue that hospitableness alone might not be enough and that, for it to positively influence refugees' well-being, refugees need to feel socially included while also developing a sense of self-esteem. As depicted in Fig. 1, social inclusion and self-esteem are postulated to mediate the relationship between hospitableness and subjective well-being. These two variables were treated as intervening mechanisms in some previous studies (e.g., Connolly & Sevä, 2021; Yu et al., 2016). For instance, Bajaj et al. (2016) examined self-esteem as a mediator of the relationship between mindfulness and well-being. In the specific context of refugees, we argue that for hospitableness to positively impact subjective well-being of refugees, it is crucial that refugees feel valuable and socially included. Social inclusion and self-esteem are, therefore, of paramount importance to well-being and thus they may serve as potential intervening variables to explain the role of hospitableness in enhancing the subjective well-being of refugees. Thus, we propose the following hypotheses:

H8: Social inclusion mediates the relationship between hospitableness and subjective well-being.
H9: Self-esteem mediates the relationship between hospitableness and subjective well-being.

3.4. Moderating effect of psychological resilience

Defined as the ability to 'bounce back' or recover from stress (Smith et al., 2008), resilience is widely acknowledged as an adaptive capacity that vulnerable individuals such as refugees need in order to navigate challenging circumstances (e.g., resettlement, integration) (Sleijpen
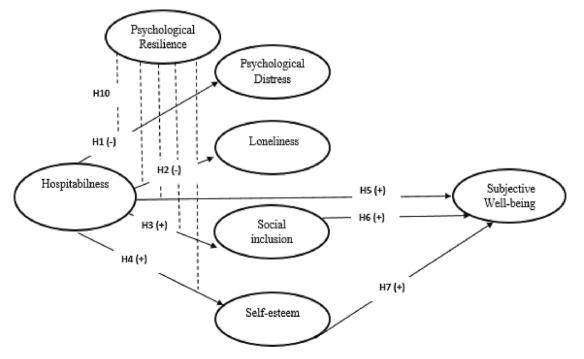

Fig. 1. Structural Model and hypothesised relationships.

et al., 2013; Hutchinson & Dorsett, 2012). Resilience is viewed as a personality trait that aids in the prevention of psychological disorders caused by terrifying incidents (e.g., fleeing one's country in times of wars) and helps individuals to 'bounce' back following safety-challenging experiences (Hutchinson & Dorsett, 2012, 2005; Smith et al., 2008). Resilience as a trait is particularly vital for individuals who are susceptible to major stressors—such as refugees (Hooberman et al., 2010; Krause & Schmidt, 2020; Shepherd et al., 2020).

Building on the bottom-up spillover theory, it can be argued that psychological resilience of refugees may ultimately moderate the effect of hospitableness on subjective well-being among Ukrainian refugees. More specifically, resilience provides refugees with the ability to take both proactive and reactive measures in the face of adversity (Youssef & Luthans, 2007) and helps them to recover and adapt (Martinez-Corts, 2015). When applied to our research, we view resilience as an internal resource through which individuals use their adaptive capacity to stand in the face of adversity (Prayag, 2023). Our argument is that refugees with low adaptive capacity (i.e., low resilience) are likely to face personal and social challenges that even the hospitableness shown by locals cannot help them overcome. Whereas refugees with higher adaptive capacity (i.e., high resilience), are likely to be better (psychologically) equipped to stand in the face of adversity in their new host society that they appreciate hospitableness by locals as a mean to start a new life. This implies that a hospitable service provided by hosts is more likely to result in enhanced positive outcomes for resilient refugees than for non-resilient ones. In other words, psychological resilience will spillover the positive effect of hospitableness on refugees. Hence, it is plausible to assume that the effect of hospitableness as perceived by refugees on their social and psychological responses (i.e., psychological distress, loneliness, social inclusion, and self-esteem) will be stronger when they are at a better position to bounce back from unexpected adversity and loss. We therefore posit that:

H10: Psychological resilience moderates the effect of hospitableness on (a) psychological distress, (b) loneliness, (c) social inclusion, (d) self-esteem, and (e) subjective well-being such that these relationships are stronger when refugees have greater psychological resilience.

4. Methods

4.1. Context: Ukrainian refugees in Slovakia

Compared to other countries such as Poland, Germany, and Czechia, Slovakia has so far received far fewer Ukrainian refugees—<101,500 refugees as per November 2022 (Statistia, 2022). In the early weeks of the crisis, the assistance to the Ukrainian refugees was selflessly provided by the residents, in the form of donations and housing. Some non-profit organisations also responded with similar aid efforts. However, it took some time for local authorities and the government to learn how to provide professionally organised assistance, also due to limited former experience with migrants (Malatinec et al., 2020). Yet, Slovakia has been relatively rapid in responding to the crisis by introducing a temporary protection scheme involving the provision of basic needs to refugees (e.g., accommodation, healthcare). The Slovakian government also provides an allowance to locals who provide accommodation free of charge to Ukrainian refugees who are entitled to temporary protection status.

4.2. Measures

Multiple-item scales were adapted from previous research to measure the seven constructs employed in the current investigation. *Hospitableness* was measured using four items adapted from Mody et al. (2019). Six items were used to measure *social inclusion*, as a subscale of the General Belongingness Scale (GBS) (Malone et al., 2012). *Self-esteem* was measured using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg., 1965). *Loneliness* was measured using six items adapted from Kim et al.

(2005). *Psychological resilience* was operationalised using six items from Smith et al. (2008). *Subjective well-being* was measured using five items from Diener et al. (1985). All the aforementioned items were measured using a 7-point scale anchored by 1 = Strongly Disagree to 7 = Strongly Agree. Finally, *psychological distress* was measured using the Kessler psychological distress scale (*K*10) (Andrews & Slade, 2001). Respondents were asked how often they felt a set of negative (e.g., nervous, hopeless, depressed) emotions in the past 30 days (1 = None of the time, 5 = All of the time). The questionnaire was initially prepared in English then translated into Ukrainian and Russian.

4.3. Sampling and data collection

To test the proposed model, data were collected from Ukrainian refugees hosted by locals in Slovakia. Data collection was conducted face-to-face using a self-completion survey. The survey was available in Ukrainian and Russian and refugees were given the freedom to choose their preferred language to complete the survey. This has resulted in around 52% preferring the Ukrainian version and 48% preferring the Russian version. Participation was sought on a voluntary basis and respondents were not offered any incentives. Ukrainian refugees living in the city of Košice (100 km from the Ukrainian border) and in eastern Slovakia were approached by Ukrainian trained volunteer interviewers. The survey was administered on Ukrainian refugees who were hosted by local people on a voluntary basis. Given the often-limited accessibility to participants from within refugee communities, a snowball sampling method was adapted (Alrawadieh et al., 2021; Gürlek, 2021) and respondents were asked to nominate one or two potential respondents. The use of the snowball method helped to overcome the hidden population problem (Atkinson & Flint, 2001). Data were collected by trained Ukrainian interviewers living in Slovakia, so that they were able to approach and interview the refugees in their native language. The response rate was notably high with over 90% of those approached agreeing to take the surveys. As a screening criterion, only Ukrainian refugees hosted by locals were recruited. Thus, respondents who lived in commercial accommodations (e.g., hotels/ hostels) or reception centres were not included. Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Technical University of Košice. The data were collected over a period of four months from mid-July to mid-November 2022. By the cut-off date for data collection, 135 valid surveys were obtained. The rule-of-thumb recommended by Cohen (1992) was adopted to assess the sampling adequacy. For a statistical power of 80% at the 5% level of significance, the sample size in the present study (n = 135) exceeds the minimum sample size required. The descriptive profile of respondents is presented in Table 1. It should be noted that the sample is dominated by female respondents, which is a natural reflection of the population rather than a sample bias. The vast majority of Ukrainian families arriving in Slovakia

Table 1
Descriptive profile of respondents.

Gender	N	%	Marital Status	N	%
Male	29	21.5	Single	28	20.7
Female	106	78.5	Married	85	63.0
Total	135	100.0	Other	22	16.3
			Total	135	100.0
Age					
16–24 years old	20	14.8	*Education*		
25–34 years old	26	19.3	High school graduate or less	17	12.6
35–44 years old	43	31.9	College graduate/ undergraduate	33	24.4
45–54 years old	24	17.8	Postgraduate	65	48.1
55 and above	22	16.2	Doctoral degree	3	2.2
Total	135	100.0	Professional	17	12.7
			Total	135	100.0

were women with children and to a lesser extent, elderly people. This is also in line with a large-scale survey undertaken by the UNHCR (2023) whereby 85% of the Ukrainian respondents in Slovakia were female. This may be due to the fact that men are only allowed to leave Ukraine in limited cases on the basis of age and health limitations.

4.4. Data analysis

To test the proposed model, Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) was employed. This technique works efficiently with small sample sizes and complex models involving mediation and moderation (Ali et al., 2018; Hair et al., 2017). PLS-SEM is a two-stage multivariate statistical analysis that involves the assessment of the measurement model followed by the assessment of the structural model (Ali et al., 2018). The model was estimated using SmartPLS 4.0 with bootstrapping of 10,000 draws.

5. Results

5.1. Measurement model assessment

The proposed model consists of seven reflective constructs. To assess the measurement model, the internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity were evaluated. After dropping six items (Lon4, PsyDis1, PsyDis10, SI5, SE2, SE8), all item loadings were above the acceptable threshold (Hair et al., 2017). Eight items < 0.07 and > 0.6 and two items < 0.06 and > 0.5 were retained as they did not affect the internal consistency reliability and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of their respective constructs (Hair et al., 2017). Internal consistency reliability was examined by assessing Cronbach's alpha (CA), Composite Reliability (CR), and rho_A. The results shown in Table 2 indicate that these values are all above the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Ali et al., 2018). Convergent validity is also established given that the AVE values of all constructs exceed the cut-off point of 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

The discriminant validity of the constructs was evaluated using the Heterotrait—Monotrait (HTMT) method (Henseler et al., 2015). As shown in Table 3, all HTMT values are lower than the threshold of 0.90, indicating that the discriminant validity is established.

5.2. Structural model assessment

To assess the structural model and test the hypothesised relationships, first, multicollinearity based on inner variance inflation factor (VIF) values was assessed; these were less than the threshold of 5. Second, R square, path estimates, and their corresponding t-values were calculated by employing a bootstrapping procedure with 10,000 sub-samples. Results indicate that the hypothesised negative effect of hospitableness on psychological distress is not significant; thus H1 was not supported. However, a significant and negative relationship was found between hospitableness and loneliness ($\beta = -0.257$, $t = 2.950$), supporting H2. A strong and positive relationship was found between hospitableness and social inclusion ($\beta = 0.341$, $t = 4.469$); thus supporting H3. However, no statistical evidence was found to support the proposed positive impact of hospitableness on self-esteem (H4) and subjective well-being (H5). These findings indicate that hospitableness can mitigate refugees' sense of loneliness and foster their sense of social inclusion but may not be sufficiently influential to help overcome their psychological distress and foster their self-esteem and subjective well-being. While no statistical evidence was found to support the proposed positive effect of social inclusion on subjective well-being (H6), a strong and significant relationship was found between self-esteem and subjective well-being ($\beta = 0.417$, $t = 4.794$), hence supporting H7 (see Table 4). Hospitableness explains 22.1% of the variance in social inclusion while hospitableness, social inclusion, and self-esteem explain 41.9% of subjective well-being. Finally, the Q^2 values of all five

Table 2
Assessment of measurement model.

Measurement items	Mean	λ	α	CR (rho_a)	CR (rho_c)	AVE
Hospitableness			0.936	0.939	0.954	0.839
Hosp1: I felt welcome at the host house	6.02	0.914				
Hosp2: The host was kind	6.05	0.914				
Hosp3: The host displayed a genuine desire to please	6.00	0.909				
Hosp4: The host treated me with respect	6.03	0.926				
Loneliness						
Lon1: I feel left out	3.00	0.828				
Lon2: I am unhappy being so withdrawn	3.01	0.760				
Lon3: My social relationships are superficial	3.51	0.752				
Lon5: There is no one I can turn to	2.03	0.612				
Lon6: I feel isolated from others	2.65	0.870				
Psychological Distress			0.881	0.889	0.905	0.544
PsyDis2: Felt nervous	2.76	0.696				
PsyDis3: Felt so nervous that nothing could calm you down	1.68	0.784				
PsyDis4: Felt hopeless	2.18	0.713				
PsyDis5: Felt restless or fidgety	2.10	0.735				
PsyDis6: Felt restless that you could not sit still	1.60	0.762				
PsyDis7: Felt depressed	2.15	0.656				
PsyDis8: Felt that everything was an effort	1.76	0.781				
PsyDis9: Felt so sad that nothing could cheer you up	1.77	0.767				
Psychological resilience			0.861	0.903	0.895	0.592
PsyR1: I tend to bounce back quickly after hard times	4.53	0.842				
PsyR2: I have a hard time making it through stressful events (R)	3.69	0.787				
PsyR3: It does not take me long to recover from a stressful event	4.10	0.743				
PsyR4: It is hard for me to snap back when something bad happens (R)	3.93	0.805				
PsyR5: I usually come through difficult times with little trouble	4.14	0.569				
PsyR6: I tend to take a long time to get over set-backs in my life (R)	4.38	0.836				
Social inclusion			0.790	0.806	0.858	0.554
SI1: When I am with other people, I feel included	5.03	0.793				

(*continued on next page*)

Table 2 (*continued*)

Measurement items	Mean	λ	α	CR (rho_a)	CR (rho_c)	AVE
SI2: I have close bonds with family and friends	5.96	0.540				
SI3: I feel accepted by others	4.94	0.828				
SI4: I have a sense of belonging	4.98	0.825				
SI6: I feel connected with others	5.87	0.693				
Self-esteem	0.868	0.878	0.896		0.520	
SE1: On the whole, I am satisfied with myself	5.25	0.704				
SE3: I feel that I have a number of good qualities	5.57	0.663				
SE4: I am able to do things as well as most other people	5.62	0.679				
SE5: I feel 1do not have much to be proud of $_{(R)}$	5.27	0.772				
SE6: I certainly feel useless at times $_{(R)}$	4.80	0.684				
SE7: I feel that I'm a person of worth	5.59	0.627				
SE9: All in all, I am inclined to think that I am a failure $_{(R)}$	5.77	0.777				
SE10: I take a positive attitude toward myself	5.82	0.838				
Subjective well-being			0.857	0.864	0.897	0.636
SW1: In most ways, my life is close to my ideal	4.28	0.793				
SW2: The conditions of my life are excellent	4.84	0.797				
SW3: I am satisfied with my life	4.51	0.850				
SW4: So far, I have gotten the important things I want in life	4.52	0.790				
SW5: If I could live my life over I would change almost nothing	3.77	0.756				

(R): Reverse-coded items.

Table 3
Discriminant Validity.

HTMT$_{90}$ Criterion							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Hospitableness							
Loneliness	0.262						
Psychological resilience	0.078	0.305					
Self-esteem	0.158	0.733	0.438				
Social inclusion	0.401	0.882	0.316	0.688			
Psychological distress	0.191	0.410	0.372	0.399	0.247		
Subjective well-being	0.259	0.620	0.389	0.625	0.524	0.384	

Table 4
Hypotheses Testing.

Structural paths	Beta	T value	P value	Supported?
H1: Hospitableness → Psychological distress	0.181	1,957	0.050	No
H2: Hospitableness → Loneliness	−0.257	2,950	0.003	Yes
H3: Hospitableness → Social inclusion	0.341	4,469	0.000	Yes
H4: Hospitableness → Self-esteem	0.140	1,733	0.083	No
H5: Hospitableness → Subjective well-being	0.140	1,632	0.103	No
H6: Social inclusion → Subjective well-being	0.098	0.943	0.346	No
H7: Self-esteem → Subjective well-being	0.417	4,794	0.000	Yes

endogenous constructs are positive and, therefore, indicative of the model's predictive relevance (Hair et al., 2017).

5.3. Mediating effects

Fig. 1 depicts social inclusion and self-esteem as potential mediators of the relationship between hospitableness and subjective well-being. The mediating effects were assessed using Zhao et al.'s (2010) method. According to them, the mediation effect is supported when the indirect effects are significant and the confidence interval does not include the value of zero. Our results indicate that neither social inclusion nor self-esteem acts as a mediator between hospitableness and subjective well-being. Thus, H8 and H9 were not supported.

5.4. Moderating effects

Our proposed model predicts psychological resilience to act as a moderator of the relationships between hospitableness on the one hand, and psychological distress, loneliness, social inclusion, and subjective well-being, on the other hand. Partially supporting *H*10, our results reveal that psychological resilience significantly moderates the relationship between hospitableness and social inclusion ($\beta = 0.167$, $t = 2,067$) but not the other relationships. This indicates that the positive effect of hospitableness on social inclusion is stronger when refugees are psychologically resilient. A simple slope analysis is presented in Fig. 2.

6. Discussion, implications, and conclusion

This study tested a conceptual model linking hospitableness, social inclusion, self-esteem, loneliness, psychological distress, psychological resilience, and subjective well-being. The findings confirm that hospitableness can positively enhance social inclusion. These findings are in line with the arguments of Boenigk et al. (2020) who state that hospitableness could contribute to social inclusion. Unlike these studies, however, our research did not identify how hospitableness could lead to social inclusion whether it is through cultural adjustment or through open and flexibly designed systems. Our study demonstrates that making the refugees sense that they are welcomed by the hosts and giving them a sense of security lead to social inclusion. Hospitableness could enhance the refugees' emotional ties and attachments with the hosts by creating a collective shared family culture leading to social inclusion. This is further supported by the finding of our study demonstrating that hospitableness mitigates the loneliness of refugees. This finding is in line with Telfer's (2000) arguments that the sense of belonging to a family and the positive interactions among the 'family members' could help to alleviate loneliness among the refugees.

Unlike the arguments of Boenigk et al. (2021), however, who advocated that hospitableness could enhance refugees' well-being, our results fail to confirm the positive effect of hospitableness on subjective well-being both directly and indirectly mediated by self-esteem and
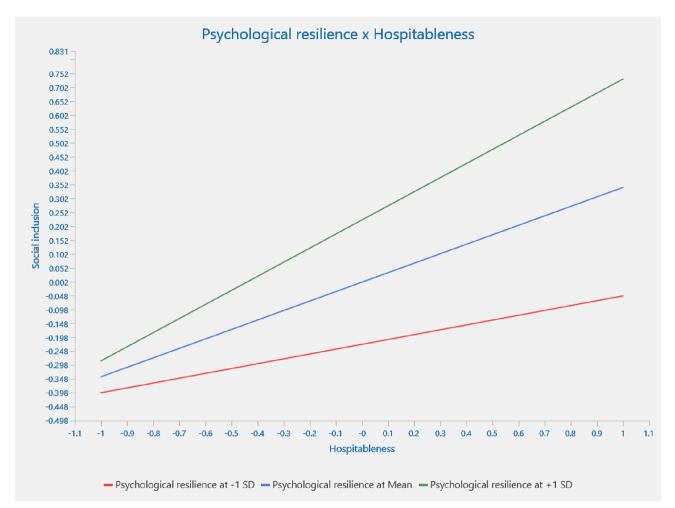
Fig. 2. Slope analysis.

social inclusion. This could be explained by the fact that subjective well-being is a broad and multifaceted concept and subject to change according to multiple factors. Both interactions with others in the family and how individuals relate to wider society socially and economically could affect the well-being of refugees.

Interestingly, our findings reveal that loneliness and social inclusion, which are more "social" in nature, were impacted by hospitableness whereas psychological distress, self-esteem, and subjective well-being, which one could argue are more "internal" rather than social, are not. This indicates that among the psycho-social component, hospitableness is a more socially influential construct. One possible explanation is that the *refugee experience* is likely to be so traumatic, at the personal level (Peconga & Høgh Thøgersen, 2020), that hospitableness of the local hosts contributes little to overcoming these personal challenges. This may also be due to the nature of the current sample whereby the majority of respondents were women with children who were likely to have left their spouses and immediate family members behind. Therefore, regardless of the warm welcome and hospitableness, the separation from their beloved ones might have added to the already deeply traumatising experience of fleeing their country. Despite the minimal impact of hospitableness on refugees' very *personal* well-being, it is plausible to assume that the extent to which refugees feel welcome in the host community contributes to their *social* well-being whereby refugees feel, to some extent, socially included (Alrawadieh et al., 2021) and develop a sense of togetherness within their host society.

On the other hand, our study demonstrated that self-esteem enhances the subjective well-being of refugees. This finding is in line with the findings of studies by Pierce et al. (2016) and Kim et al (2014) who

found that self-esteem is an important resource that contributes to people's positive psychological needs leading to people considering themselves valuable and meaningful. This could be particularly the case with those refugees who can be self-employed (formally or informally) and/or have jobs. Working and contributing to the social and economic fabric of the host community could give them a sense of achievement self-esteem and, thus, enhance their well-being.

The findings of the study also demonstrated that psychological resilience significantly moderates the relationship between hospitableness and social inclusion. In line with the arguments of Krause and Schmidt (2020) and Shepherd et al. (2020), our study showed that resilience is a psychological resource leading to positive outcomes. It is essential for refugees to bounce back from trauma, uncertainty, and stress, and recover from dramatic challenges in order to adapt to a new life. In the case of our study, it became apparent that the hospitableness of the host families has become even more influential in helping refugees with their social inclusion when refugees themselves demonstrated higher levels of resilience. Therefore, as stated by Hooberman et al. (2010) and Simich and Andermann (2014), refugees need to be more psychologically prepared and have high resilience in order to benefit from the hospitableness of the host families and thus achieve stronger social inclusion.

6.1. Conclusions and implications

Drawing on the bottom-up spillover theory, the present study examines the social outcomes of hospitableness as received and perceived by refugees hosted and accommodated by local communities. Our

findings highlight the positive role of hospitableness in enhancing social inclusion while mitigating loneliness. Our findings also confirm the moderation effect of psychological resilience suggesting that the positive effect of hospitableness on social inclusion is stronger for refugees who enjoy stronger psychological resilience. Interestingly, however, our results fail to confirm the positive effect of hospitableness on subjective well-being both directly and indirectly (via self-esteem and social inclusion). This may indicate that hospitableness is not a single magic wand solution but simply a tool within a much larger arsenal of hosting practice that is required to deal with the refugee crisis. The study makes significant theoretical contributions to the corpus of literature on the social outcomes of hospitableness and provides timely implications for policy makers to utilise "refugee hosting by locals" schemes as a viable solution to enhance refugees' social inclusion and foster their overall well-being.

6.1.1. Theoretical implications

By exploring the interface between hospitableness, social inclusion, self-esteem, loneliness, psychological distress, psychological resilience, and subjective well-being, the present study makes several theoretical contributions to existing literature. *First,* existing hospitality research focuses on hospitableness in commercial settings and examines its impact on customers (Ariffin et al., 2013; Mody et al., 2019; Tasci & Semrad, 2016) and employees (Gürlek, 2020, 2021) while overlooking non-commercial contexts and vulnerable individuals. Hence, the present study extends the hospitableness research by shifting attention to its potential social outcomes, thus contributing to addressing a major societal challenge (i.e., refugee crisis). *Second,* the present study adds to and extends the hospitality debate within the realms of refugee research (Berg & Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2018; Boano & Astolfo, 2020; Brun, 2010; Finsterwalder et al., 2020; Komter & Leer, 2012; Nolasco & Braaten, 2021). This stream of research tends to be either qualitative or conceptual. Hence, our study presents a comprehensive understanding of how hospitableness as perceived by refugees can mitigate societal stressors (e.g., loneliness and psychological distress) while also improving refugees' quality of life through promoting social inclusion, self-esteem, and well-being.

Third, previous research investigating the well-being of refugees tends to 'conceptualise, operationalise and investigate' within 'silos' with each discipline developing its specific strand of research in the subject area (Alrawadieh et al., 2021; Cetin et al., 2022). This study takes a more holistic perspective, starting with an interdisciplinary exploration of factors affecting hospitableness (hospitality and sociology), and then investigating the interface between hospitableness (sociology and hospitality), psychological distress and resilience (psychology), social belonging, and self-esteem (sociology and refugee studies) as societal issues affecting refugees' loneliness and well-being (psychology). By doing so, the current study responds to calls by Nasr and Fisk (2019) to engage in more interdisciplinary research oriented towards producing real-life solutions to contribute to alleviating challenges emerging from the refugee crisis.

6.1.2. Practical implications

The study findings have important implications for several stakeholders including governmental bodies dealing with refugees as well as individuals involved in refugee hosting schemes. Overall, while there is no evidence that hospitableness can enhance the subjective well-being of refugees, the results confirm its positive effect in promoting social inclusion and mitigating loneliness. Hence, hospitableness through refugee hosting schemes should be viewed as a tool to enhance a sense of social inclusion, which is a prerequisite to integration and well-being (Alrawadieh et al., 2021), and a tool to combat loneliness, a common social stressor affecting the very well-being and quality of life of refugees (Johnson et al., 2019). Findings from the current study should confirm the validity and usefulness of policy efforts oriented towards harnessing the power of "refugee hosting by locals" schemes as a sensible and

influential tool to address refugee-related societal challenges. Thus, further investment in refugee hosting schemes by communicating its benefits for refugees to potential hosts is crucial. Policy makers can also aim to understand the general profile of current hosts and their hospitableness practices in order to tailor and design strategies targeting the correct segment or market within the community that is most likely to be both willing and in a better position to display hospitableness.

For individuals participating in refugee hosting schemes, demonstrating hospitableness by treating refugees with respect and ensuring that they feel welcome at the host house is of crucial importance to reduce refugees' feeling of loneliness and foster their sense of social inclusion. Therefore, understanding how impactful hospitableness could be to such a vulnerable segment of the society should encourage a more sensitive approach when hosting refugees. Contrary to its positive *social* impact in promoting social inclusion and mitigating loneliness, hospitableness of local hosts seems to have a minimal impact on refugees' *personal* well-being (i.e., reducing stress, enhancing self-esteem, and improving subjective well-being). While these results should be approached with caution given the inherent characteristics of the current sample (i.e., predominately women respondents leaving behind spouses and family members), as they stand, there is little evidence as to whether healthcare services should consider "locals hosting refugees" schemes and "private sponsorship of refugees" programmes as a sensible path to addressing refugees' health issues such as stress and hampered psychological well-being.

6.1.3. Limitations and avenues for future research

Despite its contribution, this study has some important limitations. *First,* the proposed model only captures limited outcomes of hospitableness and can be further extended by modelling other variables including positive emotions, emotional well-being, optimism, and integration. It may also be worth examining, in a qualitative or mixed-method study, what drives and shapes refugees' perceptions of hospitableness (i.e., antecedents) to gain a better understanding of hospitableness and its outcomes. *Second,* our research data came from Ukrainian refugees (predominately women) hosted by locals in Slovakia. The hypothesised relationships might be investigated by collecting data from other countries where refugees dwell in large numbers, such as Poland, Germany, and Turkey to gain a greater understanding of the generalisability and limiting conditions of our suggested model. Future research might involve a cross-cultural comparison of the hypothesised relationships represented in the research model. *Third,* our study focuses only on refugees involved in hosted accommodation schemes, thus ignoring refugees staying in rented accommodation, collective sites, and reception centres. These groups may have different perceptions of hospitableness and, inherently, the outcomes might vary. Thus, there is an opportunity to validate and refine the current model by involving different types of refugee hosting. *Fourth,* our research has not empirically endorsed the significant effect of hospitableness on refugees' psychological distress. This can be justified by the fact that other factors can shape the relationship between these two variables. Our foregoing discussion may appear to imply that the causal link may be influenced by prejudice towards the out-group, which directly influences refugees' impression of hospitable services provided by locals (Kosic et al., 2005). Consequently, future researchers might devote themselves to investigating whether refugees with a strong prejudice against the hosts judge the hospitable services more adversely when compared with those with a low prejudice towards the hosts. *Fifth,* the non-significant relationship between hospitableness and well-being might also necessitate considering a potential moderator variable that moderates the effect of hospitableness on relevant constructs. Since the relationship between hosts and refugees relies on interpersonal communications, the acculturation strategy proposed by Berry (1997) may play a decisive role in this context. Gürlek (2020), for example, suggested that acculturation strategies, such as assimilation, separation, and integration, have significantly influenced the host-refugee relationship in a host country. When

applied to our research, Ukrainian refugees who either strictly maintain their cultural traditions or become a part of the host culture may probably have different perceptions about hospitable services offered by locals. Thus, the acculturation strategy adopted by Ukrainian refugees may play a moderating role in the effect of hospitableness on subjective well-being, and other related outcomes, which warrants further research. *Finally*, the current study focuses on how refugees perceive hospitableness. It might be important to examine how hospitable hosts perceive themselves and the outcomes of such perception. This opens up fruitful avenues for future research.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Levent Altinay: Conceptualization, Writing - original draft, Supervision. **Zaid Alrawadieh:** Conceptualization, Writing - original draft, Methodology, Formal analysis. **Oto Hudec:** Data curation. **Nataša Urbančíková:** Data curation. **Hasan Evrim Arici:** Writing - review & editing.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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