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# “How Long Are You Gonna Stay?” Implications of Residents’ Perceptions of Refugees’ Occupational Future Time Perspective in Receiving Countries

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## Abstract

Occupational work is a cornerstone for refugees’ integration in a receiving country, and residents’ perceptions of refugees is a key factor in this process. As compared to migrants in general, refugee migrants have been *forced* to leave their home country, which should have multiple implications for their integration in receiving countries. In the current study, we investigated whether residents’ perception of migration forcedness affects their expectations about migrants’ occupational future time perspectives (OFTP) in the receiving country, which in turn should correspond to expectations about migrants’ occupational integration efforts. We tested our hypotheses in a preregistered online experiment with  $N = 190$  working adults in Germany (71% women; age:  $M = 50.26$ ,  $SD = 10.78$ ). The results confirmed the hypothesized negative relation between perceived migration forcedness and expected OFTP, the hypothesized positive relation between expected OFTP and expected occupational integration efforts, and the hypothesized mediation mechanism of expected OFTP. Overall, our results demonstrate that residents’ perception of migration forcedness and related OFTP are relevant processes that affect the integration of migrants into the labor market of receiving countries.

**Keywords** Forced migration · Immigrants · Receiving country residents · Occupational integration · Perceived occupational future time perspective · Socioemotional selectivity theory

The occupational integration of refugees is a challenging task for many countries around the world (Newman et al., 2018; OECD, 2016). The success of such integration depends not only on refugees but also on the residents of receiving

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countries (i.e., colleagues, supervisors, human resources professionals; e.g., Phillimore, 2021; Szkudlarek et al., 2019). For instance, employers in receiving countries have a key role in offering adequate employment to refugees (Lee et al., 2020). Remarkably, employment of refugees is not only related to financial resources, self-esteem, and social contacts for refugees (e.g., Fedrigo et al., 2023; Fleay et al., 2013; Phillimore et al., 2021) but offers also valuable resources for organizations, for instance, to address problems due to shortages of skilled labor (e.g., Kaabel, 2017; Münz et al., 2006). Yet, residents of receiving countries are often hesitant toward the employment of refugees (Brell et al., 2020).

Among the reasons for an initial skepticism about refugees' employment are language problems and lacking certificates of qualification (e.g., Khan-Gökkaya & Mösko, 2021; Lee et al., 2020; Phillimore & Goodson, 2006; Szkudlarek, 2019), which are usually a consequence of refugees' experience of being *forced* to leave their home country (e.g., Lee et al., 2020). In addition to external factors, however, *intrapersonal processes* within residents of receiving countries might also explain important parts of the barriers of refugees' occupational integration. We postulate that residents' expectation about migrants'<sup>1</sup> *occupational future time perspective* (OFTP), i.e., the perceived future in the context of employment (e.g., Rudolph et al., 2018) within the receiving country, might be a central mechanism linking residents' perception of migration forcedness and their expectation of migrants' integration-related behavior. Following *socioemotional selectivity theory* (e.g., Carstensen, 1991, 2006; Carstensen et al., 1999, 2003), a limited time perspective should lead to lower investments in future-related goals, and an increased focus on emotionally meaningful goals. Indeed, initial research has already shown that migrants' experience of migration forcedness limits their perceived OFTP in a receiving country, with negative effects on their occupational integration efforts (Niemann & Hertel, 2023). However, we do not know whether similar mechanisms might also be effective from the residents' perspective. While socioemotional selectivity theory and its applications consider future time perspectives exclusively from the subject perspective, we extend this theory by assuming that expectations of future time (in general and domain-specific) also play a role in the assessment of other persons. Specifically, we assumed that residents *expect* forced migrants to have a more limited OFTP as compared to unforced migrants, and that the expectation of a more limited OFTP is related to the expectation of lower integration efforts. Despite recognizing that this process is just a single element within a broader context, it allows an in-depth understanding of a psychological mechanism that might influence residents' responses to refugees' integration.

The present paper provides three major contributions to the evolving research on refugee integration. First, while previous research on refugees' integration largely focused on the perspective of refugees, we consider integration as two-way process (e.g., Bourhis et al., 1997; Phillimore, 2021) and focus on *residents'* perceptions and expectations in receiving countries. Second, we expand *socioemotional selectivity*

<sup>1</sup> In the present paper our notion of *migrants* includes both refugees (i.e., forced migrants) and non-refugee migrants (i.e., unforced migrants).

*theory* and the construct of OFTP by postulating that calculations of OFTP are also relevant for the perceptions of observers and affect observers' expectations of other targets' experience and behavior. Third, we use a *comparative* approach, examining residents' perceptions of both migrants who experienced high and low levels of migration forcedness. Fourth, our experimental design provides an initial *causal* test of whether residents' forcedness perceptions influence their expectations about migrants' OFTP. Such insights are valuable to derive practical recommendations that address the challenge of refugees' successful integration.

## Theoretical Background

### Residents' Perspective on Migrants' Occupational Integration

Considerable amount of research exists on the occupational integration of migrants in general and the role of residents' in receiving countries in this process (e.g., Black et al., 1991; Hajro et al., 2019; Kraimer et al., 2016). Yet, scholars increasingly note that residents' reactions may be different toward refugees who did not migrate voluntarily but were *forced* to leave their home country (e.g., Echterhoff et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2020). When migration is forced, severe external push factors, such as violent conflicts, human rights abuses, or environmental disasters, let individuals to leave their home country (International Organization for Migration, 2019). Severe external push factors imply an abrupt and perilous departure and few choices of where to go (e.g., Ottonelli & Torresi, 2013). As a result, refugees not only face threatening conditions before and (often) during their journey, but also additional handicaps and barriers toward integration after arrival in a receiving country, such as lacking local language skills and knowledge, lacking proofs of credentials, and being uncertain about the residence duration due to temporary visas and work permits, as well as still struggling with traumatic events experienced before and during their journey (Lee et al., 2020; Martín et al., 2016; Szkudlarek, 2019). In the occupational domain, residents (i.e., potential employers, supervisors and colleagues, HR professionals) are often aware of these handicaps, which might lead to compassion but also to skepticism about long-term employment. For example, potential employers and supervisors might worry about the evaluation of foreign education and qualifications as well as lacking language competencies (Khan-Gökkaya & Mösko, 2021; Phillimore & Goodson, 2006; Szkudlarek, 2019). Furthermore, temporary visas or work permits seem to discourage residents from investments into refugees' occupational integration (Szkudlarek, 2019). But what does this mean for intrapersonal processes (e.g., emotions, attitudes, expectations) of residents in receiving countries, and which effect might these processes have in turn for refugees' occupational integration?

### Residents' Perception of Migrants' Occupational Future Time Perspective

The OFTP construct has its origins in the more general concept of future time perspective, which is a core construct of socioemotional selectivity theory (e.g.,

Carstensen, 1991, 2006; Carstensen et al., 1999, 2003). According to socioemotional selectivity theory, individuals' motivation and goals are influenced by their perception of remaining life time, with longer or unlimited time horizons increasing individuals' priorities for the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and new social contacts, while shorter or limited time horizons should increase individuals' priorities for the experience of meaning and positive emotions in the here and now. Unlimited time perspectives thus are assumed to motivate individuals to develop new skills and social contacts, whereas limited time perspectives should deter individuals from making long-term investments and focus more on emotionally meaningful experiences with immediate payoffs. Whereas future time perspective refers to individuals' remaining life time more generally, OFTP describes individuals' anticipated time horizon in the context of occupational work (e.g., Rudolph et al., 2018; Zacher & Frese, 2009). While individuals' OFTP is highly related to individuals' chronological age, it can be also affected by factors such as individuals' health or the type of employment contract, or by experienced drastic life events (for reviews, see Henry et al., 2017; Rudolph et al., 2018). Previous research has shown that forcedness of migration indeed limits migrants OFTP in a receiving country (Niemann & Hertel, 2023).

In addition to such processes within migrants, however, we postulate that integration-related processes are also affected by forcedness of migration *as perceived by residents* in a receiving country. In so doing, we extend socioemotional selectivity theory by assuming that calculations of future time in general, and OFTP more specifically, are not only relevant for a person's own planning, but also for the perception and assessment of *other* persons. Recent theoretical work suggests that residents might feel that migrants lack personal interest in the receiving country and do not plan to stay for a long time, the more they were forced to migrate (Echterhoff et al., 2020). In addition, as outlined above, research findings indicate that residents are often aware of forced migrants' above presented handicaps to occupational integration (Khan-Gökkaya & Mösko, 2021; Lee et al., 2020; Phillimore & Goodson, 2006; Szkudlarek, 2019). Thus, given that residents usually lack more specific information about migrants (at least in the initial time after arrival), we suggest that residents form representations about migrants similar to their own (assumed) reactions in a specific situation. This suggestion is based on more general accounts on person perception (e.g., Davis et al., 1996; Epley & Kardas, 2021; Gilovich et al., 2000), describing assumed similarity as a heuristic strategy during which individuals project their own reactions to other targets (e.g., Marks & Miller, 1987). We assume that residents in a receiving country might anticipate similar own reactions to uncertainty of detention or lacking knowledge skills as experienced by migrants. Moreover, we assume that residents project such limitations of OFTP as well as related reactions to migrants confronted with these barriers. Building on this reasoning, we proposed that residents expect a lower OFTP in the receiving country for migrants when their migration is perceived as forced as compared to unforced. More formally, we hypothesized:

Hypothesis 1<sup>2</sup>: Residents' perception of migration forcedness is negatively related to residents' expectation about migrants' OFTP in the receiving country.

### **Consequences of Residents' Expectations About Migrants' Occupational Future Time Perspective**

Based on the reasoning of socioemotional selectivity theory, prior studies also investigated the consequences of individuals' OFTP. Consistent with the core assumptions of this theory, studies have shown that individuals are more likely to invest resources in work-related efforts when their OFTP is more open-ended. For example, researchers found relations of individuals' OFTP with multiple employment-related outcomes, such as self-efficacy perceptions, learning behaviors, organizational commitment, work engagement, retirement intentions, and work performance outcomes (for reviews, see Henry et al., 2017; Rudolph et al., 2018). Niemann and Hertel (2023) found positive correlations between migrants' OFTP and their motivation to develop career relevant skills as well as their work engagement, organizational commitment, and willingness to invest resources in new relationships with coworkers. Moreover, migrants' OFTP mediated the relation between experienced migration forcedness and these occupational integration efforts. However, no research so far has addressed such processes within residents in receiving countries.

In line with socioemotional selectivity theory, recent theoretical work suggests that residents' perception of migrants' time perspective in the receiving country is related to assumptions of migrants' motivation for integration-relevant activities, such as investing resources in language courses, job trainings, or further education (Echterhoff et al., 2020). We postulated that mechanisms of perspective taking and assumed similarity heuristics (e.g., Epley & Kardas, 2021; Gilovich et al., 2000; Marks & Miller, 1987) determine not only residents' expectations about migrants' OFTP but also residents' presumption of migrants' integration-relevant behavior at work. Given that residents themselves should be less motivated to invest resources into occupational efforts the more they perceive their own OFTP to be limited, they might project related reactions to migrants with a limited OFTP. Based on this reasoning, we argued that residents' expectations about migrants' OFTP relates to residents' expectations about these migrants' occupational integration efforts. More formally, we hypothesized:

Hypothesis 2: Residents' expectation about migrants' OFTP in the receiving country is positively related to residents' expectation about migrants' occupational integration efforts.

More specifically, we hypothesized that residents' expectations about migrants' OFTP in the receiving country relate to residents' expectations about migrants' (a) motivation to develop career-relevant skills, (b) work engagement, (c) organizational commitment, and (d) motivation to invest in relationships with coworkers from the

<sup>2</sup> Hypotheses were preregistered via AsPredicted (see [https://aspredicted.org/blind.php?x=Z7H\\_8D7](https://aspredicted.org/blind.php?x=Z7H_8D7) for an anonymized version).

receiving country. Socioemotional selectivity theory suggests that an open-ended time perspective fosters individuals' motives to learn and develop own skills, while a limited time perspective implies that long-term investments of resources might not pay off and thus hampers individuals' motivation to acquire new knowledge and skills. Again, we postulated that mechanisms of perspective taking and assumed similarity heuristics (e.g., Epley & Kardas, 2021; Gilovich et al., 2000; Marks & Miller, 1987) should lead residents to project such processes also to migrants. Specifically, we hypothesized that residents' expectations about migrants' OFTP in the receiving country are related to residents' expectations about migrants' motivation to develop career-relevant skills (Hypothesis 2a).

Employees with high levels of work engagement are willing to invest resources, such as time and energy, to achieve challenging long-term goals at work (Leiter & Bakker, 2010). Socioemotional selectivity theory suggests that individuals are more willing to invest such resources and to follow challenging goals the more open-ended their occupational future time perspective is and their investments might pay off. In line with our prior reasoning, we hypothesized that also residents' expectations about migrants' OFTP in the receiving country relate to residents' expectations about migrants' work engagement (Hypothesis 2b).

Affective organizational commitment describes an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Zacher and Yang (2016) suggest that individuals with an open-ended OFTP should experience higher affective organizational commitment as a longer time perspective enables them to pursue more attractive projects and career goals in an organization. Postulating mechanisms of perspective taking and assumed similarity heuristics (e.g., Epley & Kardas, 2021; Gilovich et al., 2000; Marks & Miller, 1987) as outlined above, we hypothesized that residents' expectations about migrants' OFTP in the receiving country relate to residents' expectations about migrants' affective organizational commitment (Hypothesis 2c).

According to socioemotional selectivity theory, also the expansion of one's social network is as an investment that potentially pays off in the future, for example, by achieving long-term goals. Accordingly, individuals with an open-ended perspective should be more likely to show exploratory social behavior, whereas individuals with a limited perspective should derive greater meaning from relationships with close and familiar persons (Carstensen et al., 2003). In line with our prior reasoning, we hypothesized that residents' expectations about migrants' OFTP in the receiving country relate to residents' expectations about migrants' motivation to invest in relationships with coworkers from the receiving country (Hypothesis 2d).

Finally, we connected our assumption that residents' forcedness perceptions influence residents' expectations about migrants' OFTP in the receiving country (Hypothesis 1) with our assumption that residents' expectations about migrants' OFTP relate to residents' expectations about migrants' occupational integration efforts (Hypothesis 2). Specifically, we postulated that residents' expectations about migrants' OFTP mediate the relation between residents' forcedness perceptions and residents' expectations about migrants' occupational integration efforts. Examining how the migration circumstances perceived by receiving countries residents are

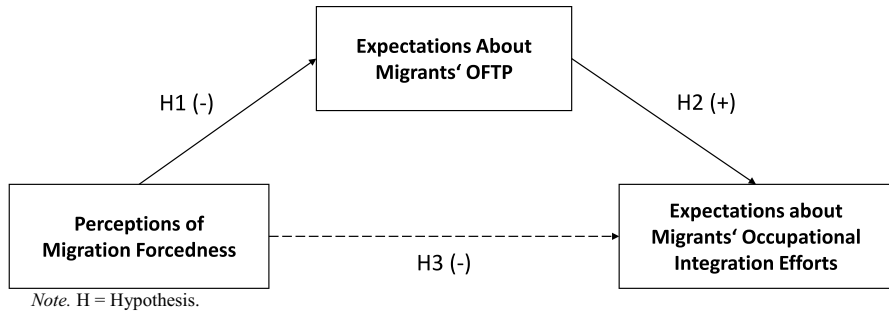


Fig. 1 Research model

reflected in specific intrapersonal psychological processes that, in turn, affect migrants' integration is of great importance to better understand and effectively support migrants' occupational integration. We predicted the following:

Hypothesis 3: Residents' expectations about migrants' OFTP in the receiving country mediate the relation between perceived migration forcedness and the expectations about migrants' occupational integration efforts.

The full research model is depicted in Fig. 1.

## Method

### Participants

Data were collected from January to April 2022 via the German online panel PsyWeb ([www.psyweb.uni-muenster.de](http://www.psyweb.uni-muenster.de)). To participate in the study, individuals had to be German speakers of legal age ( $\geq 18$  years) who were currently employed or employed in the past. The final sample consisted of  $N = 190$  participants (71% women; age:  $M = 50.26$ ,  $SD = 10.78$ ). All demographics are reported in the Electronic Supplementary Material (see ESM 1 at <https://osf.io/h289j>).

### Design

To address our hypotheses, we conducted a cross-sectional experimental vignette study. We used a within-subjects design to uncover intrapersonal effects of perceived migration forcedness on residents' reactions toward migrants (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014; Charness et al., 2012). Following the suggestions for designing vignettes by Wason et al. (2002), we used short self-developed case vignettes (see ESM 2 at <https://osf.io/h289j>) to manipulate migration forcedness (i.e., high vs. low levels of migration forcedness). Both vignettes describe a 39-year-old man who immigrated to Germany from his home country and has been living in Germany for 2 months. The age of 39 years corresponds to the average working age in Germany (Federal Statistical Office Germany, 2022). The residence time of 2 months was selected



because forcedness effects on migrants' OFTP are particularly pronounced shortly after arrival in a receiving country (Niemann & Hertel, 2023). The target person of the vignette was male to avoid possible confounders such as maternity myths (Verniers & Vala, 2018). We did not use a name, as a name by itself or a culture or religion associated with it could already be a confounding variable (Abramitzky et al., 2020). Both vignettes were identical except for the respective experimental manipulation. In accordance with recent conceptualizations of migration forcedness (Echterhoff et al., 2020; Niemann & Hertel, 2022), we manipulated migration forcedness by systematically varying the descriptions of the migrant's (a) conditions in the home country, (b) emotional state in the home country and motives for migration, (c) travel planning and conditions during the journey, and (d) choice of Germany as destination country. We included a measure on migration forcedness as perceived by residents of receiving countries to check the manipulation of migration forcedness (see below for details).

## Measures and Procedure

Participation in the online survey was anonymous and voluntary. Participants started the online survey via an access link and answered all questionnaires for the two experimental vignettes (presented in randomized order). Then, participants answered questions on their demographic data. Unless specified otherwise, all items were assessed on fully verbalized 7-point Likert scales (1 = strongly, disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = rather disagree, 4 = neutral, 5 = somewhat agree, 6 = agree, 7 = strongly agree) with denial option (no response). Since the survey was conducted in German, some scales had to be translated. All translations are reported in ESM 3 (see at <https://osf.io/h289j>). All participants were asked to provide informed consent for the use of their data.

## Perceived Migration Forcedness

Perceived migration forcedness was assessed using the German version of the PMF-Res (Niemann & Hertel, 2022), which includes 10 items. To adapt the ten items to the vignette, minor changes were made to the tense and the term refugee. Each item was introduced with "I feel that." A sample item is "I feel that it was beyond Mr. X's [Mr. A's] control to leave his home country." Internal consistency was  $\alpha = .72$  for the high migration forcedness vignette and  $\alpha = .75$  for the low migration forcedness vignette.

## Expected Occupational Future Time Perspective (OFTP)

We measured participants' expected OFTP of the target person with a scale by Zacher and Frese (2009). Following recent suggestions (Zacher, 2013), we included only eight of the original ten items corresponding to the three subscales *remaining time*, *focus on opportunities*, and *focus on constraints*. We introduced the items with "I assume that" and adapted it to the context of our study (e.g., "I assume that Mr.

X's [Mr. A's] occupational future is filled with possibilities"). In this study, the scale yielded  $\alpha = .82$  in the high migration forcedness vignette and  $\alpha = .77$  in the low migration forcedness vignette.

### Expected Occupational Integration Efforts

We measured participants' *expected motivation of the target person to develop career-relevant skills* with an 8-item scale by Maurer et al. (2003). Again, we adapted the items to the context of our study. A sample item is "I assume that Mr. X [Mr. A] is very motivated to participate in career-related learning activities." In the present study, internal consistencies were  $\alpha = .94$  for the high migration forcedness and  $\alpha = .96$  for low migration forcedness migration vignette.

*Expected work engagement* was measured using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9; Schaufeli et al., 2006), which contains 3 items each for the subscales vigor, engagement, and absorption. A sample item of the present study is "I assume that Mr. X [Mr. A] is enthusiastic about his work." Participants could grade their responses from 1 "never" to 7 "always." In the present sample, internal consistencies were  $\alpha = .94$  in the high and  $\alpha = .95$  in the low migration forcedness vignette.

*Expected affective organizational commitment* was measured using an 8-item scale by Allen and Meyer (1990). An example item of the present study is "I assume that the organization has a great deal of personal meaning to Mr. X [Mr. A]". Internal consistencies were  $\alpha = .89$  for the high migration forcedness and  $\alpha = .87$  for the low migration forcedness vignette.

The participants' *expected motivation to invest in coworker relationships* was measured using three items from the Global Item Investment Size Scale (Rusbult et al., 1998). We adapted these items to relationships with coworkers from the receiving country (Germany). Again, the items were introduced by "I assume that." A sample item is "I assume that Mr. X [Mr. A] invests a lot in his relationships with his German colleagues compared to other people he knows." Internal consistencies were  $\alpha = .91$  for the high migration forcedness and  $\alpha = .90$  for the low migration forcedness vignette.

### Statistical Analyses

Data were analyzed using R, version 4.1.3. We used a multilevel modeling approach considering the within-person design of the study (data from the same participants across both vignettes should be highly correlated). In this context, Bayesian as compared to frequentist methods has several advantages. For instance, they enable researchers to incorporate prior information into their mediation analysis (e.g., Bürkner, 2017; Yuan & MacKinnon, 2009). Moreover, they allow a conceptually simpler multilevel mediation analysis given that parameters are considered random variables (e.g., Yuan & MacKinnon, 2009). Accordingly, a Bayesian estimation of multilevel models was performed using the R package "brms" (Bürkner, 2017). In this way, the effect of perceived migration forcedness on expected OFTP as well

as the effect of OFTP on expected occupational integration efforts were tested. To establish whether the effect of perceived forcedness on expected occupational integration efforts was mediated by expected OFTP, we used the R package “bmlm” which allows for Bayesian estimation of multilevel mediation (e.g., Vuorre & Bolger, 2018). All models were estimated in Stan with uninformative priors, a total of four Markov chain Monte Carlo (MCMC) chains and 20,000 iterations each. Predictor variables were grand mean centered before analyses.

## Results

### Descriptive Results

Descriptives and bivariate correlations are displayed in Table 1. The pattern of bivariate correlations was in line with predictions. Expected OFTP correlated positively with expected motivation to develop career-relevant skills, work engagement, organizational commitment, and motivation to invest in coworker relationships. Means and standard deviations of all outcome variables across vignettes are depicted in Fig. 2.

### Bayesian Multilevel Regression Analyses

To examine the effect of perceived forced migration on expectations of OFTP, a multilevel model was conducted with participants as random and forcedness as fixed effects. Similarly, the effect of expected OFTP on expected occupational integration efforts of migrants was tested using multilevel modeling, with participants as random, and expected OFTP as fixed effects. A summary of the models' parameters is displayed in Table 2. Perceived migration forcedness had a credible effect on OFTP ( $M_{\text{posterior}} = -1.13$ , 95%-CrI [-1.31; -0.95]), with expected OFTP being lower for high as compared to low levels of perceived migration forcedness. Thus, the results support Hypothesis 1. Expected OFTP was a credible predictor for expected motivation to develop career-relevant skills ( $M_{\text{posterior}} = 0.55$ , 95%-CrI [0.42; 0.68]), work engagement ( $M_{\text{posterior}} = 0.52$ , 95%-CrI [0.40; 0.65]), organizational commitment ( $M_{\text{posterior}} = 0.42$ , 95%-CrI [0.30; 0.54]), and investment in coworker relationships ( $M_{\text{posterior}} = 0.51$ , 95%-CrI [0.36; 0.66]). In each model, higher ratings of OFTP were associated with higher ratings of the outcome variable. These results support Hypothesis 2.

### Bayesian Multilevel Mediation Analyses

#### Effect of Forcedness on Motivation to Develop Career-Relevant Skills via OFTP

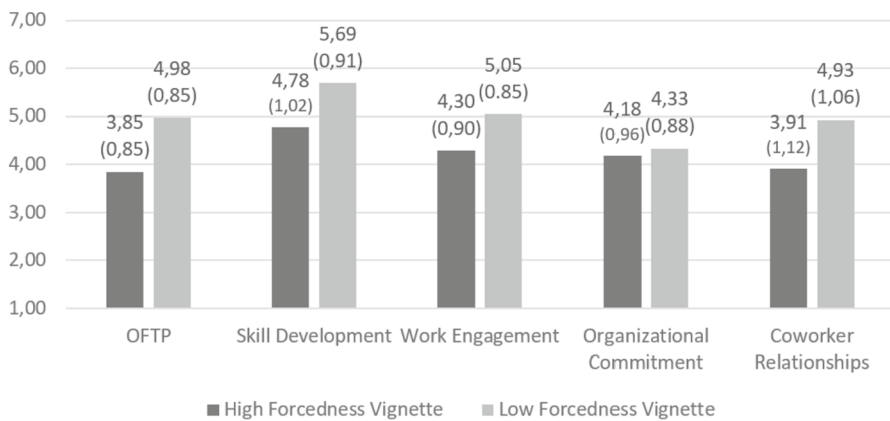
We observed a credible indirect effect of perceived forcedness on motivation to develop career-relevant skills through OFTP (path ab:  $M_{\text{posterior}} = -0.64$ , 95%-CrI [-0.86; -0.43]). Expected OFTP predicted expectations of motivation (Total effect:  $M_{\text{posterior}} =$

**Table 1** Descriptives and bivariate correlations

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1 Age	50.34	10.76	—								
2 Sex <sup>n</sup>	1.71	0.45	-.14	—							
3 Education <sup>o</sup>	7.70	1.76	-.04	.01	—						
4 Income <sup>o</sup>	4.91	1.36	-.03	-.24*	.23*	—					
5 Forcedness	4.85	0.71	.03	.16*	.03	-.02	—				
6 OFTP	4.43	0.63	-.12	-.11	.08	.16 <sup>†</sup>	.13	—			
7 Skill development	5.23	0.70	.05	.02	-.04	-.03	.10	.48***	—		
8 Work engagement	4.67	0.72	.06	.03	-.16 <sup>†</sup>	-.02	.16 <sup>†</sup>	.43***	.67***	—	
9 Organizational commitment	4.26	0.72	-.03	-.01	-.03	-.11	.16*	.42***	.54***	.68***	—
10 Coworker relationships	4.41	0.85	.02	.00	-.04	-.06	.22*	.37***	.45***	.59***	.61***

*Note.* *N* = 190. Means (*M*), standard deviations (*SD*), and correlations. <sup>n</sup>Nominal scaled variables. <sup>o</sup>Ordinal scaled variables. Sex: 1 = male, 2 = female. Education: 1 = no qualification, 2 = secondary school leaving certificate without vocational training, 3 = secondary school diploma and vocational training, 4 = secondary school diploma without vocational training, 5 = secondary school diploma and vocational training, 6 = high school diploma without vocational training, 7 = high school diploma with vocational training, 8 = university of applied sciences diploma, 9 = university diploma, 10 = doctorate degree. Income: 1 = below €500, 2 = €500–€1000, 3 = €1000–€1500, 4 = €1500–€2000, 5 = €2000–€3000, 6 = €3000–€4000, 7 = €4000 and above. Spearman's correlation coefficient for relationships between interval-scaled variables. Kendall's tau-b for relationships between interval-scaled and ordinal-scaled variables. Rank-biserial correlation for relationships between naturally dichotomous and ordinal variables

<sup>†</sup>*p* < .10; \**p* < .05; \*\**p* < .01; \*\*\**p* < .001 (two-sided)



Note. Standard deviations are given in parentheses. All outcome variables were assessed on 7-point Likert scales.

**Fig. 2** Means and standard deviations of outcome variables across vignettes

**Table 2** Results of the Bayesian multilevel regression analyses

Parameter	Estimate	95% CrI	Rhat
<i>Effect of forcedness on OFTP (n = 169)</i>			
Intercept	4.98	[4.84; 5.11]	1.00
Migration forcedness	-1.13	[-1.31; -0.95]	1.00
<i>Effect of OFTP on motivation to develop career-relevant skills (n = 168)</i>			
Intercept	5.25	[5.14; 5.36]	1.00
OFTP	0.55	[0.42; 0.68]	1.00
<i>Effect of OFTP on work engagement (n = 150)</i>			
Intercept	4.71	[4.60; 4.82]	1.00
OFTP	0.52	[0.40; 0.65]	1.00
<i>Effect of OFTP on organizational commitment (n = 158)</i>			
Intercept	4.27	[4.16; 4.38]	1.00
OFTP	0.42	[0.30; 0.54]	1.00
<i>Effect of OFTP on investment in coworker relationships (n = 163)</i>			
Intercept	4.43	[4.30; 4.56]	1.00
OFTP	0.51	[0.36; 0.66]	1.00

Note. Estimates are posterior means. 95% credible intervals (CrI) are based on 20,000 MCMC simulations. Estimates in bold are credible. Migration forcedness was coded as 0 = low, 1 = high. OFTP, motivation to develop career relevant skills, organizational commitment, and investment in coworker relationships were coded as 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = rather disagree, 4 = neutral, 5 = rather agree, 6 = agree, 7 = strongly agree. Work engagement was coded as 1 = never, 2 = almost never, 3 = rarely, 4 = sometimes, 5 = often, 6 = very often, 7 = always

−0.93, 95%-CrI [−1.14; −0.72]). This effect was mitigated when controlling for OFTP ratings (path c':  $M_{posterior} = -0.29$ , 95%-CrI [−0.54; −0.03]). Perceived forcedness predicted expectations about OFTP (path a:  $M_{posterior} = -1.14$ , 95%-CrI [−1.33; −0.96]); higher levels of forcedness were associated with lower expectations of OFTP. Expectations of OFTP, in turn, predicted expectations of motivation (path b:  $M_{posterior} = 0.55$ , 95%-CrI [0.37; 0.72]); higher expectations of OFTP were associated with higher expectations of motivation.

### Effect of Forcedness on Work Engagement via OFTP

Perceived forcedness had a credible indirect effect on work engagement through OFTP (path ab:  $M_{posterior} = -0.67$ , 95%-CrI [−0.90; −0.44]). Expected OFTP predicted expectations of work engagement (total effect:  $M_{posterior} = -0.74$ , 95%-CrI [−0.93; −0.56]). Perceived forcedness predicted expectations about OFTP (path a:  $M_{posterior} = -1.21$ , 95%-CrI [−1.41; −1.01]); higher levels of forcedness were associated with lower expectations of OFTP. Expectations of OFTP in turn predicted expectations of work engagement (path b:  $M_{posterior} = 0.55$ , 95%-CrI [0.35; 0.71]); higher expectations of OFTP were associated with higher expectations of work engagement.

### Effect of Forcedness on Organizational Commitment via OFTP

We found a credible indirect effect of perceived forcedness on organizational commitment through OFTP (path ab:  $M_{posterior} = -0.46$ , 95%-CrI [−0.68; −0.24]). Perceived forcedness predicted expectations about OFTP (path a:  $M_{posterior} = -1.19$ , 95%-CrI [−1.37; −1.01]); higher levels of forcedness were associated with lower expectations of OFTP. Expectations of OFTP in turn predicted expectations of organizational commitment (path b:  $M_{posterior} = 0.38$ , 95%-CrI [0.19; 0.56]); higher expectations of OFTP were associated with higher expectations of organizational commitment.

### Effect of Forcedness on Investment in Coworker Relationships via OFTP

Perceived forcedness had a credible indirect effect on investment in coworker relationships through OFTP (path ab:  $M_{posterior} = -0.57$ , 95%-CrI [−0.79; −0.36]). Expected OFTP predicted expectations of investment in coworker relationships (total effect:  $M_{posterior} = -0.95$ , 95%-CrI [−1.17; −0.72]). This effect was mitigated when controlling for OFTP ratings (path c':  $M_{posterior} = -0.38$ , 95%-CrI [−0.67; −0.10]). Perceived forcedness predicted expectations about OFTP (path a:  $M_{posterior} = -1.15$ , 95%-CrI [−1.34; −0.96]); higher levels of forcedness were associated with lower expectations of OFTP. Expectations of OFTP in turn predicted expectations of investment in coworker relationships (path b:  $M_{posterior} = 0.49$ , 95%-CrI [0.32; 0.66]); higher expectations of OFTP were associated with higher expectations of investment in coworker relationships. A summary of all multilevel mediation analyses is provided in Table 3.

**Table 3** Results of the Bayesian multilevel mediation analyses

Path	Estimate	95% CrI	Rhat
<i>Effect of forcedness on motivation to develop career-relevant skills via OFTP (n = 168)</i>			
a	<b>-1.14</b>	[-1.33; -0.96]	1.00
b	<b>0.55</b>	[0.37; 0.72]	1.01
c <sup>+</sup>	<b>-0.29</b>	[-0.54; -0.03]	1.00
ab	<b>-0.64</b>	[-0.86; -0.43]	1.01
c	<b>-0.93</b>	[-1.137; -0.719]	1.00
<i>Effect of forcedness on work engagement via OFTP (n = 150)</i>			
a	<b>-1.21</b>	[-1.41; -1.01]	1.00
b	<b>0.55</b>	[0.35; 0.71]	1.00
c <sup>+</sup>	-0.07	[-0.33; 0.17]	1.00
ab	<b>-0.67</b>	[-0.90; -0.44]	1.00
c	<b>-0.74</b>	[-0.93; -0.56]	1.00
<i>Effect of forcedness on organizational commitment via OFTP (n = 158)</i>			
a	<b>-1.19</b>	[-1.37; -1.01]	1.01
b	<b>0.38</b>	[0.19; 0.56]	1.01
c <sup>+</sup>	0.27	[-0.02; 0.54]	1.00
ab	<b>-0.46</b>	[-0.68; -0.24]	1.01
c	-0.19	[-0.39; 0.01]	1.01
<i>Effect of forcedness on investment in coworker relationships via OFTP (n = 163)</i>			
a	<b>-1.15</b>	[-1.34; -0.96]	1.00
b	<b>0.49</b>	[0.32; 0.66]	1.00
c <sup>+</sup>	<b>-0.38</b>	[-0.67; -0.10]	1.00
ab	<b>-0.57</b>	[-0.79; -0.36]	1.00
c	<b>-0.95</b>	[-1.17; -0.72]	1.00

*Note.* X = predictor. Y = outcome. M = mediator. The small letters describe the paths of the mediation analysis (c = total; c<sup>+</sup> = direct; ab = indirect effect). Estimates are posterior means. 95% credible intervals (CrI) are based on 20,000 MCMC simulations. Estimates in bold are credible. Migration forcedness was coded as 0 = low, 1 = high. OFTP, motivation to develop career relevant skills, organizational commitment and investment in coworker relationships were coded as 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = rather disagree, 4 = neutral, 5 = rather agree, 6 = agree, 7 = strongly agree. Work engagement was coded as 1 = never, 2 = almost never, 3 = rarely, 4 = sometimes, 5 = often, 6 = very often, 7 = always

## General Discussion

The current study investigated whether the perception of migration to be forced affects residents' expectations about migrants' OFTP, and in turn residents' expectations about migrants' occupational integration efforts. Indeed, we found that residents expected a more limited OFTP for the forced as compared to the unforced

target person. Residents' expectations about forced migrants' limited OFTP, in turn, related to residents' expectations about forced migrants' occupational integration efforts. Specifically, results were consistent with the assumed mediation effect of expected OFTP on the relation between perceived migration forcedness and residents' expectations about migrants' (a) motivation to develop career-relevant skills, (b) work engagement, (c) organizational commitment, and (d) investment in coworker relationships.

## Theoretical Implications

Our findings have various theoretical implications. First, our experimental design provides initial causal evidence that residents' forcedness perceptions influence their expectations about migrants' OFTP. Accordingly, we extend past research on the consequences of forced migration on individuals' OFTP (Niemann & Hertel, 2023), by considering the perspective of the residents' in receiving countries and thus address the two-way process of integration (Phillimore, 2021). Various reasons are conceivable for the negative relation between forcedness perceptions and expected OFTP. For example, residents may assume that forced migrants lack personal interest in the receiving country and do not plan to stay long (Echterhoff et al., 2020; Szkudlarek, 2019). Furthermore, residents should be aware of the barriers that forced migrants' experience toward occupational integration, such as their lacking language skills and missing proofs of credentials (Khan-Gökkaya & Mösko, 2021; Lee et al., 2020; Phillimore & Goodson, 2006), and might therefore expect a more limited OFTP. Such reactions might be explained with more general accounts on person perception (e.g., Davis et al., 1996; Epley & Kardas, 2021; Gilovich et al., 2000), i.e., heuristic mechanisms of assumed similarity, such that observers project their own OFTP-related attitudes and behaviors to other targets, especially if no other information about the targets is available. Specifically, residents seem to (a) anticipate specific own reactions to uncertainty of detention or lacking knowledge skills as experienced by migrants and (b) project resulting limitations of OFTP to migrants confronted with these barriers.

Second, we expanded prior research on OFTP and socioemotional selectivity theory by finding that, in turn, perceiving migrants' OFTP as limited reduced residents' expectations about migrants' occupational integration efforts. The results of our study showed that not only individuals' self-perceived OFTP influences central work-related outcomes, but that also the OFTP that individuals expect from others affects individuals' expectation about others' work-related motivations, attitudes, and behaviors. The more residents perceived migrants' perspective as open-ended, the more they expected migrants to invest motivational, attitudinal, and behavioral resources into the future-oriented goal of occupational integration. In contrast, the more residents expected migrants' perspective to be limited, the less they expected migrants to show investments into occupational integration efforts. The central assumptions of socioemotional selectivity theory thus seem to be transferable to the perception of other persons. A limited time



perspective should impede residents' own investments in future-related goals. Mechanisms of perspective taking and heuristics of assumed similarity (e.g., Davis et al., 1996; Epley & Kardas, 2021; Gilovich et al., 2000; Marks & Miller, 1987) may have contributed to residents' expectations of similar responses in migrants. These expectations might be a starting point for dynamic interactions or even cycles of self-fulfilling prophecies, such that residents' expectations influence migrants' integration efforts, which in turn influence residents' expectations (Echterhoff et al., 2020).

Third, our study revealed residents' expected OFTP as a mediating mechanism between forcedness perceptions and expected occupational integration efforts. This way, we contribute to a deeper understanding of how perceived migration forcedness translates into intrapersonal psychological processes in residents of receiving countries, i.e., residents' expected OFTP, that might explain specific barriers of refugees' occupational integration, i.e., by expecting low levels of learning motivation, work engagement, and organizational commitment, as well as few interactions with local colleagues. Therefore, the current study complements earlier work by demonstrating that not only migrants' consideration of time in the receiving country affects integration-related processes, but also residents' consideration of the time they expect migrants to stay in the receiving country. Notably, however, the construct of OFTP (both from the migrant and the resident perspective) is derived from and embedded in a larger theoretical framework (Echterhoff et al., 2020) that considers also multiple other influences on refugee integration.

## Practical Implications

Our results have several practical implications. A key finding of our research is that residents show more positive reactions to migrants' integration when they perceive migrants' OFTP as rather open-ended. From a practical perspective, first, it thus would be helpful that residents perceive migrants' OFTP as rather open-ended than restricted. One way to support this, of course, is to develop policies that migrants indeed can have a long-term time horizon in the receiving country. For example, the contextual factors that are likely to limit forced migrants' OFTP, such as lacking language proficiency, missing proofs of credentials, and temporary visas and work permits (e.g., Khan-Gökkaya & Mösko, 2021; Lee et al., 2020; Phillimore & Goodson, 2006; Szkudlarek, 2019), should be addressed by means of early access to language courses and efficient asylum and qualification recognition procedures.

Second, we think it would be advisable that migrants' OFTP is considered and communicated not merely based on generalized stereotypes but in a valid and differentiated way, so that residents can assess migrants' OFTP realistically. For example, Echterhoff et al. (2020) pointed out that residents might feel that forced migrants lack personal interest in the receiving society and do not plan to stay long. Yet, many refugees stay in the receiving country for a long time or even forever (e.g., Brell et al., 2020) and bring a variety of qualifications of skills with them (e.g., Edele et al., 2021).

## Limitations and Future Research

The present study has various limitations that highlight directions for future research. First, the experimental vignette methodology used in the present study offers a lean initial test out of causal assumptions with high internal validity; however, the methodology asks participants to imagine specific target persons rather than observing real interactions. It is important to note that the vignettes in this study only depicted male target persons because we wanted to avoid moderating gender effects. However, the absence of female characters in our study material is certainly a limitation and should be addressed in future research. Indeed, research has shown that perceptions and reactions to female refugees may differ from those of male refugees due to various societal and gender-specific factors (Knappert et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2020). Furthermore, the presence or absence of children might be another qualifying factor as parenthood of forced migrants might change residents' expectations of migrants' motivation to stay and integrate. Thus, future research might include scenarios that also depict families with children to examine how this factor impacts residents' responses.

Future studies are desirable to examine if our findings can be replicated in everyday interactions between migrants and residents, and for target persons with different characteristics, e.g., with female gender, with or without children, from specific countries, or with different age. In addition, we only manipulated migration forcedness and, therefore, cannot draw causal inferences about the relation between residents' expected OFTP and the expected integration efforts. Future studies with experimental manipulations are needed to fully validate the assumed mediation model (Pirlott & MacKinnon, 2016).

Second, the cross-sectional research design limits conclusions about temporal developments. Yet, time might be an important moderator variable because factors that initially limit migrants' OFTP might change over time. For example, residents' expectations about migrants' OFTP might change when they perceive that migrants obtain residence permits or improve their language skills. Similarly, over time, residents might realize that refugees are often unable to return to their home country, in turn broadening the perspective in host country (Cortes, 2004). However, it is also conceivable that residents' expectation about migrants' OFTP is rather stable over time or changes only slowly. Accordingly, future studies should benefit from longitudinal designs, to initially replicate our findings and then examine developments over time including potential influences of specific events, e.g., when migrants receive residence permits. In addition, longitudinal studies could combine the perspectives of migrants and residents and explore whether interactive dynamics exist that may even reinforce each other. Following the theory of self-fulfilling prophecies (Merton, 1948), residents' low expectations toward forced migrants' OFTP and integration efforts might inhibit forced migrants' actual integration activities and, in turn, strengthen residents' low expectations.

A third limitation is that we examined residents' expectations about migrants' integration efforts as outcome variable. While researchers assume that such expectations will be reflected in corresponding behaviors (Echterhoff et al., 2020), additional research is desirable, connecting residents' perceptions of migrants' forcedness and OFTP with actual integration-relevant behaviors of residents. Finally, given that our study sample included predominantly well-educated, prosperous, and politically left-wing participants from Germany, follow-up studies are desirable including more heterogeneous samples to

test the generalizability of our approach. For instance, residents' perceptions of refugees' OFTP and occupational integration efforts might vary depending on the economic, political, and socio-cultural conditions of the receiving country. Additionally, residents' personal characteristics, such as their level of empathy, political attitudes, ideological attitudes, and contact experiences with refugees, can further shape their perceptions and expectations. For instance, ideological attitudes such as social dominance orientation or right-wing authoritarianism are strong predictors of prejudice and might lead to racially biased perceptions (Billig & Cramer, 1990; Sibley & Duckitt, 2008). While our study did not investigate racism, it is important to acknowledge that racism and related beliefs are pervasive issues in Germany and many other countries, with the potential to significantly influence residents' perceptions of refugees. Indeed, racism can be considered an overarching societal factor that permeates both public discourse and individual perceptions. Considering these complexities, our findings should be interpreted within the specific context of our study. Future research should build upon our findings and investigate how the above-mentioned perceiver characteristics might moderate our results. Moreover, exploring the impact of the broader economic (e.g., unemployment rates), political (e.g., labor laws), and socio-cultural context (e.g., societal openness to diversity) is a valuable avenue for future investigation. Such research can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics involved in refugee integration and how they are influenced by both individual and societal factors. Addressing these issues will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of refugee integration dynamics and the broader societal and individual factors at play.

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**Data Availability** The anonymized data of this study are available on request from the first author.

## Declarations

**Conflict of Interest** The authors declare no competing interests

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