

Loss and Protracted Family Separations among Refugee Children and Youth: Examining Post-Migration Impacts and Service Needs



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Research Partners:

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OVERVIEW

This study combines findings from a ‘scoping review’ with experiential data from refugee youth and service providers to summarize evidence about the impacts of family loss and separation on refugee youth. Researchers developed a resource list for refugee youth and a practitioner toolkit for conducting research with refugee youth. They also developed a policy statement document for advocacy. This project is funded by the Children and Youth Refugee Research Coalition (CYRRC) SSHRC 895-2017-1009.

OBJECTIVE

The research team aims to explore how the experience of loss or family separation affects the mental and social wellbeing of refugee youth.

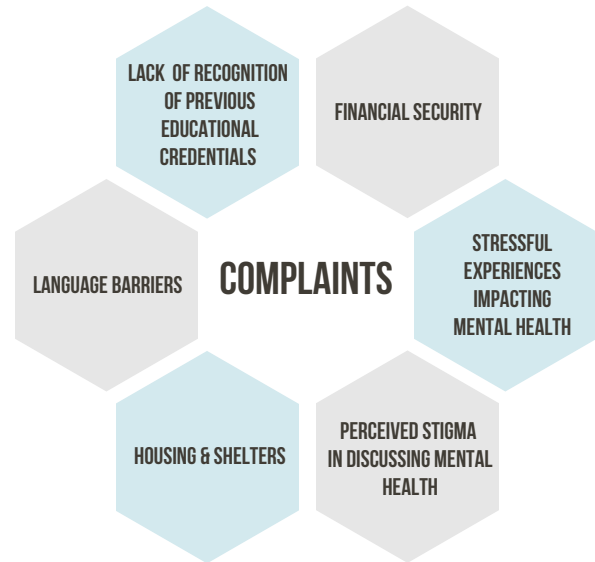
METHODOLOGY

The research team conducted a multi-phase sequential approach started with a scoping review of peer-reviewed articles from three high-impact databases and open-source journals. Articles were collected using a snowball sampling technique; the PRISMA-ScR approach was used to narrow down the sample size. Reflexive thematic analysis of data was conducted using the NVivo software. The team then collected firsthand data through five focus group discussions with service providers and refugee youth who had experienced family loss or separation. A collaborative data analysis model, including trained peer-researchers, was practiced to triangulate data from the three data sources. This project was registered with the Open Source Framework (OSF) and was approved by the Community Research Ethics Office (CREO) for conducting research with human subject.

FINDINGS

1

EXPERIENCE OF SEPARATED REFUGEE YOUTH FOR A HEALTHY SETTLEMENT



2

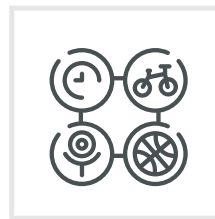
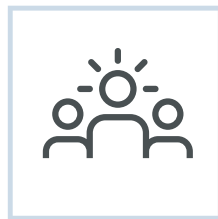
HELPFUL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES PROMOTING THEIR HEALTHY SETTLEMENT

Financial and social support programs with housing, obtaining warm clothes, dealing with the court for claims, social assistance, and filing taxes, etc.



Services also include leadership and mentorship programs, mental health programs, psychological stress management programs.

The role of family, friends, peers, and spirituality were also vital support systems to cope with negative emotions and feelings.



Recreational activities and art-based programs were found to help refugee youth cope with mental health problems.

3

HELPFUL ADVOCACY AND POLICES REQUIRING THEIR HEALTHY SETTLEMENT

Update and amend relevant policies and practices on:

- Current Canadian policies on reunification
- Access to healthcare particularly mental healthcare by refugee youth
- Waiting time to hear the verdict from the court.

Include all stakeholders in the advocacy process

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Services and service providers need to be accessible (in terms of cost, availability, and language) and use trauma-informed approaches.
- 2 Policies should be implemented to reduce the wait time for claimant decisions in the settlement process, expedite family reunification, and allow youth to access services in their preferred language.
- 3 Refugee youth need access to affordable housing and education regardless of their claimant status.
- 4 Policies aimed at protecting refugee youth from exploitation in the workplace must be strengthened and enforced.
- 5 A greater emphasis must be placed on the social determinants of health in order to improve quality-of-life outcomes of refugee youth.
- 6 Creating a 'Community of Practice' for sharing and supporting the separated refugee youth, where Access Alliance can play a lead role.
- 7 Adopting a strengths-based approach to capacity-building and social inclusion would recognize the resiliency of refugee populations and allow refugees themselves to become key stakeholders in decision-making processes.