A Multidimensional Framework for Understanding Refugee Poverty in the United States

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A Multidimensional Framework for Understanding Refugee Poverty in the United States

Mitra Naseh
Background

• The abrupt and unplanned nature of forced displacement
• Interruption in access to education
• Structural barriers in host countries

Poverty among refugees

This study aimed to build a multidimensional poverty framework for adult refugees with a specific focus on their first five years in the U.S.
Conceptual framework

• Monetary approaches to poverty
• Capability approaches to poverty (education, health, standards of living)
• Ager and Strang’s (2008) refugee integration framework
• Social exclusion theory
• Kuhlman’s (1991) comprehensive theoretical model for economic integration of refugees
Figure 1. Ager and Strang’s (2008) Framework for Refugees’ Integration

Markers and Means

- Employment
- Housing
- Education
- Health

Social Connection

- Social Bridges
- Social Bonds
- Social Links

Facilitators

- Language and Cultural Knowledge
- Safety and Stability

Foundation

- Rights and Citizenship

Source: Ager and Strang (2008)
Figure 2. Adapted version of the Ager and Strang’s (2008) Framework for Refugees’ Integration
Methods

- A scoping review of literature,
- An inductive analysis of semi-structured interviews with key informants (n=10),
- A secondary analysis of the 2016 Annual Survey of Refugees national dataset (n=1,500)

Results of the systematic review

Qual & Quant data factors associated with poverty

Income poverty: comparing household income with national poverty lines
Multidimensional poverty: an adjusted version of the global Multidimensional Poverty Index (Alkire & Santos, 2010).
Results

• 1 in every 4 households was income poor
• More than half of the households were multidimensionally poor
• The systematic search found 779 studies (Table 1)
• Thematic analysis of the qualitative data (Table 1)
• Pearson’s chi-square tests of quantitative data (Table 1)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification of associated factors with poverty</th>
<th>Identified factors</th>
<th>Systematic literature review</th>
<th>Qualitative analyses</th>
<th>Quantitative analyses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demographic characteristics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>% (#) of key informants referring to the risk factor</td>
<td>Statistical significance of the bivariate analysis between income/ multidimensional poverty and the risk factor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being female</td>
<td>Alnaeemi (2018); Capps et al. (2015); Franz (2003); Gowayed (2019); Griffiths &amp; Loy (2019)</td>
<td>50% (5)</td>
<td>$\chi^2(1)= 4.68, p= 0.030$, Cramer’s V= 0.06/ Not significant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>Alnaeemi (2018); Capps et al., (2015); Kallick &amp; Mathema (2016)</td>
<td>50% (5)</td>
<td>$\chi^2(9)= 49.46, p= 0.000$, Cramer’s V= 0.18/ $\chi^2(9)= 84.89, p= 0.000$, Cramer’s V= 0.24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Host-related characteristics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>70% (7)</td>
<td>Not measured due to lack of data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of access to transportation</td>
<td>Alnaeemi (2018); M’zah et al. (2019); Swe (2009)</td>
<td>70% (7)</td>
<td>Not measured due to lack of data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination</td>
<td>Alnaeemi (2018); L. Anderson et al. (2014); Hadley &amp; Patil (2009)</td>
<td>30% (3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy characteristics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100% (10)</td>
<td>Not measured due to lack of data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resettlement policies</td>
<td>Bonet (2016); Chen &amp; Hulsbrink (2019); Gowayed (2019)</td>
<td>100% (10)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-economic aspects of adaptation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100% (10)</td>
<td>$\chi^2(1)= 7.36, p= 0.007$, Cramer’s V= 0.07/ $\chi^2(1)= 186.81, p= 0.000$, Cramer’s V= 0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of English language proficiency</td>
<td>Alnaeemi (2018); C. Anderson (2019); L. Anderson et al. (2014); Arafah (2016); Sienkiewicz et al. (2013); Al-Obaidi et al. (2015); Hadley &amp; Patil (2009); Lor et al. (2018);…</td>
<td>100% (10)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of social connections</td>
<td>Alshadood et al. (2018); Ao et al. (2016); Hagaman et al. (2016); Kingsbury et al. (2019); LeMaster et al. (2018); Rana et al. (2011); Wieland et al. (2015);…</td>
<td>100% (10)</td>
<td>Not measured due to lack of data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Associated factors with poverty
Figure 3. A Multidimensional Framework for Refugee Poverty

Income Poverty
- Employment

Multidimensional Poverty
- Education
- Health
- Housing

Legend:
- Outcome indicator
- Predictor indicator

Host-related characteristics
- Discrimination
- Access to transportation

Non-economic aspects of adaptation
- English Language Proficiency
- Social connections

Demographic characteristics
- Ethnicity
- Sex

Policy characteristics
- Resettlement policies
Conclusion

- Contributes to the limited literature
- Social workers are front-line service providers
- Propose a multidimensional framework mapping part of the trajectory of poverty among adult refugees
Limitations

- The ASR is the only available national dataset with data on refugees’ self-sufficiency
- Restricted quantitative analyses
- Results might not reflect the current situation
- Results of the scoping review were limited to the published studies
- Results of the scoping review and qualitative analyses of the study might suffer from bias caused by the lack of an independent review process
Thank you

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