Predictors of Quality of Life among Older Refugees Aging out of Place

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Abstract : Refugees flee from their home countries due to civil unrest, war, persecution and migrate to Western countries such as the United States in search of a safe haven. Transitioning into a new society and culture can be challenging, thereby affecting refugee's quality of life and well-being in the host communities. Moreover, as individuals age, they experience physical, cognitive and socioemotional changes that may impact their quality of life. However, little is known about the predictors of quality of life among aging refugees. It is not clear how quality of life varies by age, that is, between midlife refugees in comparison to their older counterparts. In addition to age, other sociodemographic factors such as gender, socioeconomic status, or country of origin are likely to have differential associations to quality of life, yet research on such variations among older refugees is sparse. Thus the present study seeks to explore factors associated with quality of life by asking the following research questions: 1) Do sociodemographic factors (such as age and gender) predict quality of life among older refugees, 2) Is there an association between social integration and quality of life, and 3) Is there an association between migratory related experiences (such as post migratory adjustments) and quality of life. The present study recruited 90 refugees (primarily originating from Bhutan, Somalia, Burundi, and Sudan) aged 50 or older living in the US. The participants completed a structured questionnaire which assessed factors such as participant's sociodemographic attributes (e.g., age, gender, length of residence in the US, country of origin, employment, level of education, and marital status), and validated measures of social integration, post-migration living difficulties, and quality of life. Preliminary results suggest sociodemographic variability in quality of life among these refugees. Further analyses will be conducted using hierarchical regression analyses to address the following hypotheses: first, it is hypothesized that quality of life will vary by age and gender such that younger refugees and men will report higher quality of life. Second, it is expected that refugees with greater levels of social integration will also report better quality of life. Finally, post-migration factors such as language barriers and family stress are hypothesized to predict poorer quality of life. Further results will be analyzed, including potential moderating effects of age and gender, and resulting findings will be interpreted and discussed. The findings from this study have potential implications for communities on how they can better support older refugees as well as develop social programs that can effectively cater to their well-being. Conclusions will be drawn and discussed in light of policies related to both aging and refugee migration within the context of the US.

Keywords : aging out of place, migration, older refugees, quality of life, social integration