

Exploring Coping Mechanisms in Sudanese and Congolese Refugee Women Through Life Story Interviews

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Abstract : An authoritative literature review of peer-reviewed journals and edited books on East African refugees' coping strategies identifies the four most common coping skills among this group as the following: (1) relying on faith, religion, or another belief system, (2) turning to communities or social supports, (3) cognitive reframing--in other words, finding meaning in one's traumas or hardships--and (4) finding hope for the future, especially through education. However, this review recognizes that there are gaps in knowledge in this field and that the validity of these general findings must be further investigated in East African refugees who are women, have not been resettled in Western countries, and belong to specific nationality groups. This review also suggests studies that build on the current body of research begin to use qualitative methods of data collection and analysis. This paper aims to bridge part of that gap in understanding using a qualitative methodology. Specifically, it provides a more holistic view of East African refugees' psychological coping mechanisms through its analysis of trends observed across life story interviews from two participant groups: Sudanese refugee women in Cairo's informal settlements, Egypt and Congolese refugee women in Rwanda's Mahama camp.

Keywords : Congolese refugees, coping mechanisms, refugee women, Sudanese refugees

Conference Title : ICDUSHRA 2021 : International Conference on Development, Urban Space, and Human Rights in Africa

Conference Location : Cape Town, South Africa

Conference Dates : November 04-05, 2021