

Refugee Job Seeking Opportunities: It's Not What You Know, It's Who You Know

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Abstract : Although there is a wealth of information about refugees and Asylum seekers, Refugee job opportunities continue to be one of the most hotly contested areas and less researched within the social sciences. Refugees are a vital asset in the society due to their experiences, skills, and competences. However, society perceives them differently, and as such, their prior lived experiences are often underutilised. This research study gleans from the work conducted during the Refugee Employment Support Clinic delivered for 12 weeks within a University setting in the North West of England. The study is conducted using three perspectives, refugees, students, and researchers, allowing for identification of the challenges encountered by the refugees concerning job opportunities. Through the utilisation of the qualitative research method, the study has found that refugees experience a wide range of issues unrelated to their skills, prior experience, and education but rather due to the red tapes connected to their legal identity labelling. Refugees struggle to build reliable employment networks that appreciate and acknowledge their capabilities and talents, impacting their ability to navigate the labour market and classism. Notably, refugees are misunderstood within their new societies, and little care is taken to understand the unique struggles they face with respect to securing paid work in their industry or field of work due to their lack of experience in the UK. Unlike other European countries, it is evident that the UK has no strategic approach to enhancing the chances of paid or voluntary work for refugees. A clinic like this provided lenses for comprehending how refugees can be better supported with employment related opportunities. By creating a safe and conducive platform for honest and open discussion about employment and through collaborative approaches with local community agencies, doors were opened for social and professional networks to be built. The study concluded that there is a need for local communities and education establishments to be more aware of the prevailing challenges and in a position to support at all stages of their asylum claim in order for the perceptions of distrust and uncertainty around refugees to be minimised.

Keywords : refugees, employment, community, classism, education

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