

The Impact of Resettlement Challenges in Seeking Employment on the Mental Health and Well-Being of African Refugee Youth in South Australia

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Abstract : While the number of African refugees settling in Australia has significantly increased since the mid-1990s, the marginalisation and exclusion of young people from refugee backgrounds in employment remain a critical challenge. Unemployment or underemployment can negatively impact refugees in multiple areas, such as income, housing, life satisfaction, and social status. Higher rates of unemployment among refugees are linked in part to the intersection of pre-migration and daily challenges like trauma, racism, gender identity, and English language competency, all of which generate multiple employability disadvantages. However, the intersection of gender, race, social class, and age in impacting African refugee youth's access to employment has received less attention. Using a qualitative case study approach, the presentation will explore how gender, race, social class, and age influence African refugee youth graduates' access to employment in South Australia. The intersectionality theory and capability approach to social justice is used to explore intersecting factors impacting African refugee youth's access to employment in South Australia. Participants were 16 African refugee graduates aged 18-30 living in South Australia who took part in the study for one year. Based on the trends in the data, the results suggest that long-term unemployment and underemployment, coupled with ongoing racism and marginalisation, have the potential to make refugees more vulnerable to several mental disorders such as depression, hopelessness, and suicidal thoughts. The analysis also reveals that resettlement challenges may limit refugees' ability to recover from pre-migration trauma. The impact of resettlement challenges on refugee mental health highlights the need for comprehensive policy interventions to address the barriers refugees face in finding employment in resettlement communities. With African refugees constituting such an important part of Australian society, they should have equal access to meaningful employment, as decent work promotes good mental health, successful resettlement, hope, and self-sufficiency.

Keywords : African refugees, employment, mental health, Australia, underemployment

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