

Parenting Interventions for Refugee Families: A Systematic Scoping Review

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Abstract : Background: Children of refugee or asylum-seeking background have multiple, complex needs (e.g. trauma, mental health concerns, separation, relocation, poverty, etc.) that places them at an increased risk for developing learning problems. Families encounter challenges accessing support during resettlement, preventing children from achieving their full developmental potential. There are very few studies in literature that examine the unique parenting challenges refugee families' face. Providing appropriate support services and educational resources that address these distinctive concerns of refugee parents, will alleviate these challenges allowing for a better developmental outcome for children. Objective: To identify the characteristics of effective parenting interventions that address the unique needs of refugee families. Methods: English-language articles published from 1997 onwards were included if they described or evaluated programmes or interventions for parents of refugee or asylum-seeking background, globally. Data were extracted and analyzed according to Arksey and O'Malley's descriptive analysis model for scoping reviews. Results: Seven studies met criteria and were included, primarily studying families settled in high-income countries. Refugee parents identified parenting to be a major concern, citing they experienced: alienation/unwelcoming services, language barriers, and lack of familiarity with school and early years services. Services that focused on building the resilience of parents, parent education, or provided services in the family's native language, and offered families safe spaces to promote parent-child interactions were most successful. Home-visit and family-centered programs showed particular success, minimizing barriers such as transportation and inflexible work schedules, while allowing caregivers to receive feedback from facilitators. The vast majority of studies evaluated programs implementing existing curricula and frameworks. Interventions were designed in a prescriptive manner, without direct participation by family members and not directly addressing accessibility barriers. The studies also did not employ evaluation measures of parenting practices or the caregiving environment, or child development outcomes, primarily focusing on parental perceptions. Conclusion: There is scarce literature describing parenting interventions for refugee families. Successful interventions focused on building parenting resilience and capacity in their native language. To date, there are no studies that employ a participatory approach to program design to tailor content or accessibility, and few that employ parenting, developmental, behavioural, or environmental outcome measures.

Keywords : asylum-seekers, developmental pediatrics, parenting interventions, refugee families

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