



Predictors, Barriers, and Facilitators to Refugee Women's Employment and Economic Inclusion: A Mixed Methods Systematic Review

Authors: Areej Al-Hamad, Yasin Yasin, Kateryna Metersky
Toronto Metropolitan University
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

Employment and economic inclusion for women of refugee status is a social and political phenomenon of rising concern. Individually, refugee women benefit from employment as it fosters integration, autonomy, and personal and familial well-being. Economically, many refugee women are eager to contribute to their new host country's labor market. Yet, despite these known advantages, refugee women face a host of barriers to securing any kind of work, never mind work that is reliable, well compensated, and safe.

Objective

This Mixed Methods Systematic Review and Meta Analysis seeks to outline the barriers, predictors, and facilitators of refugee women's employment and economic inclusion. By evaluating findings from quantitative and qualitative research, we have been able to provide a unique and comprehensive outlook of common and critical factors that facilitate and diminish refugee women's economic involvement.

This review provides a way to harmonize the perspectives offered by refugee women regarding their perceived meaning behind employment, the layered challenges experienced in seeking employment, and facilitators to employment.

By assessing key strengths and weaknesses of the existing employment landscape for refugee women, this review can be used to inform future employment models and policy and practice implementation. We suggest that programs with core values of inclusivity and gender specificity can offer effective employment and entrepreneurial strategies for refugee women.

Results

The systematic review revealed that refugee women's employment rates, averaging 31.1%, varied significantly across countries like Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Australia, Sweden, the USA, and South Korea, influenced by host country, demographic characteristics, and well-being factors. Older age and poor health perception were constraints, while marital status and higher education levels generally facilitated employment, although utilizing education remained challenging.

Employment opportunities were also shaped by societal and cultural factors, including region of origin, cultural background, and local geographical location, with work experience in the host country and language proficiency being beneficial. Both government support and nongovernmental resources like associations and media engagement played a role in improving employment outcomes.

Qualitatively, employment was crucial for health, well-being, autonomy, and cultural integration, despite barriers like language, credential recognition, xenophobia, and work-life balance issues. Refugee women employed various strategies such as part-time work, traditional roles, entrepreneurship, and networking to overcome these challenges.

Key Messages

1. **Enhanced Language and Educational Integration:**
Implement tailored language-training programs for refugee women to improve their employment opportunities and establish efficient

processes for credential recognition to ensure their qualifications are valued in the host country's job market.

2. **Holistic Support Initiatives:** Develop comprehensive support programs addressing barriers such as childcare, transportation, and housing. Collaborate with governmental and non-governmental entities to provide extended case management, access to employment agencies, and skill-development tailored to refugee women's needs.
3. **Promotion of Safe and Inclusive Work Environments:** Enforce policies that protect refugee women from xenophobia, discrimination, and gender-based violence in the workplace. Educate employers, communities, and service providers about gender equality, cultural sensitivity, and the valuable contributions of refugee women.

Methodology

This systematic review, adhering to the Joanna Briggs Institute's guidelines for Mixed Methods Systematic Reviews and Sandelowski's segregated approach, involved separate syntheses of quantitative and qualitative data from literature addressing refugee women's employment and economic inclusion. An initial search confirmed the uniqueness of this review topic.

Extensive searches were conducted across several databases. The following databases were searched with the assistance of an academic librarian: MEDLINE, PROSPERO, the Cochrane Database of

Systematic Reviews, and the JBI Database of Systematic Reviews and Implementation Reports. (Pilot protocol published in PROSPERO, Registration ID: CRD42023413388). Using specific criteria and Boolean operators. English language empirical studies from peer-reviewed journals published between January 2011 and March 2023 were included, focusing on events impacting Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Ukraine.

Studies were appraised using the Joanna Briggs Institute critical appraisal checklists, with any discrepancies resolved through discussion or a third reviewer. In total, 31 studies (11 quantitative, 19 qualitative, and 1 mixed methods) were selected.

Data extraction was conducted by a reviewer and a research assistant, with synthesis following Sandelowski's approach, leading to a meta-integration that revealed complex relationships between the quantitative and qualitative findings.

The quantitative findings were summarized and converted into narrative language. The qualitative findings were assessed for similarities and recurring themes were articulated. Once the separated syntheses were completed, a meta-integration was performed. Using a matrix approach to establish similarities and differences, we found complex relationships existed between the quantitative and qualitative data.

BACKGROUND

In 2022, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees recognized over 29 million refugees under their mandate and over 5 million asylum-seekers (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2023). Many of these displaced individuals are women, and they carry unique burdens unknown to even migrant women and refugee men (Datta et al., 2020). These include gender constraints and the legal implications of refugee status (Adeeko & Treanor, 2022; Al-Dajani, 2022; Datta et al., 2020; Ozoemena, 2018) along with limiting public and personal perceptions of the refugee label (Datta et al., 2020; Duran, 2018). In addition, refugee women often experience greater difficulties in finding employment and entrepreneurial opportunities than do refugee men (Adeeko & Treanor, 2022). Considering these vulnerabilities, policymakers are finding the employment and economic integration of refugee women to be of increasing importance. Not only is employment highly beneficial to refugee women (Due et al., 2021), but it is also valuable to labour market outcomes (Datta et al., 2020; Liebig & Tronstad, 2018).

Some of the documented struggles refugee women face in securing employment and economic inclusion include the experience of language barriers in their new host country, navigating novel institutional expectations, balancing childcare responsibilities (Adeeko & Treanor, 2022), potential alienation for adhering to “traditional” gender roles (Carlbaum, 2022), meeting educational requirements and the marketplace invalidation of existing skill sets and certifications. Not to mention the difficulties set by a lack of documentation, a realistic plight many refugees experience when fleeing their home countries. Many refugee women

desire to contribute to their household and to take on working responsibilities, but often do not have the required resources, connections, and capital to launch their economic development.

Research Gaps

Due to the unique obstacles experienced by refugee women and the opportunity cost of their economic exclusion, it would be useful to gain a better understanding of factors that contribute to and detract from the materialization of their economic involvement. This research fills a gap in the literature as there is no previous or ongoing systematic review investigating the predictors, barriers, and facilitators of refugee women’s employment and economic inclusion in their new host country, while also considering the experiences and perspectives of refugee women. The goal of this Mixed Methods Systematic Review (MMSR) is to guide future practice interventions and research.

Research Questions

What are the rates and predictors of refugee women's employment and economic inclusion in their new host country? (Quantitative Question)

How do refugee women describe their experiences of employment and economic inclusion, employment barriers and facilitators, and the impact on their health and well-being in their new host country? (Qualitative Question)

What can be inferred from the qualitative synthesis to explain predictors, barriers, and facilitators that affect refugee women's employment, economic inclusion, and the impact on their health and well-being in their new host country? (Mixed methods question)

METHODS

Framework

This review was guided by the Joanna Briggs Institute's (JBI) Mixed Methods Systematic Reviews (Joanna Briggs Institute, 2014), specifically the *segregated approach* developed by Sandelowski (2006). This approach involves taking separate syntheses of the quantitative and the qualitative data derived from relevant literature addressing the area of interest. When a review's synthesized data is compared and/or contrasted, the findings may offer new and actionable insights that can help inform decision making processes (Sandelowski et al., 2013).

Search Methods and Criteria

A preliminary search was conducted to survey any existing relevant literature reviews. It was determined that no reviews explored the predictors, facilitators, and barriers to refugee women's employment, economic inclusion, and the impact of their social, cultural, political and/or personal identities on their experiences. The following databases were searched with the assistance of an academic librarian: MEDLINE, PROSPERO, the Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews, and the JBI Database of Systematic Reviews and Implementation Reports. (Priori protocol published in PROSPERO, Registration ID: CRD42023413388).

Our next steps were to conduct an extensive search using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses guidelines (Page et al., 2021) and the Joanna Briggs Institute methodology for mixed methods systematic reviews (Lizarondo et al., 2020).

Databases searched: (1) Academic Source Complete, (2) Business Source Elite, (3)

Business Source Complete, (4) Family and Society Studies Worldwide, (5) PsycINFO, and (6) Scopus.

Boolean operators AND/OR were utilized.

Key Terms:

(*refugees* or *asylum seekers*)

AND

(*women* or *female* or *woman* or *females*)

AND

(*employment* or *jobs* or *work* or *career*).

Inclusion Criteria:

- English language publication
- Empirical studies in peer reviewed journals
- Publication Dates: January 2011 to March 31, 2023 (The rationale for dates is to encompass data from events such as invasions, wars, and international conflicts involving Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Ukraine).

Exclusion Criteria:

- non-English language publications.
- Discussion papers, literature reviews, case reports, study protocols, and participant focus outside of refugee women
- Publication dates prior to 2011

Search results were gathered and then entered into Endnote (V.20) bibliographic software.

Study Selection Process

Two reviewers (AA and KM) separately input the chosen search terms into databases and independently screened titles and abstracts to determine if they fit the eligibility criteria. After passing the first wave of assessment, articles were read in depth and further screened for eligibility. Two reviewers (AA and YY) then independently appraised the final studies with the Joanna Briggs Institute critical appraisal checklist for analytical cross-sectional studies (Moola et al., 2020) and qualitative research (Lockwood et al., 2015) (See appendix 1 for critical appraisal results). Any discrepancies in the appraisal of study suitability were discussed by AA and YY and if the matter was unresolved, a third reviewer (KM) helped to settle disagreements which served to reduce the change of bias. In total, 31 studies (11 quantitative, 19 qualitative, and 1 mixed methods) were selected for study inclusion.

Data Extraction and Synthesis

A reviewer (AA) and a research assistant conducted data extraction. The extraction work was verified by a second reviewer (YY). Supplementary File 1 summarizes the data extracted from the included studies. In accordance with the Sandelowski (2006) segregated mixed methods synthesis approach, quantitative and qualitative extracted data were analyzed and synthesized independently and then using a matrix approach were compared to evaluate for convergence. Members from the research team routinely validated the data extraction tools to evaluate appropriateness.

Synthesis and Meta-Integration

The quantitative findings were summarized and converted into narrative language. The qualitative findings were assessed for similarities and recurring themes were

articulated. Once the separated syntheses were completed, a meta-integration was performed. Using a matrix approach to establish similarities and differences, we found complex relationships existed between the quantitative and qualitative data (Frantzen & Fettes, 2016).



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RESULTS

QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

Employment Rates of Refugee Women

The average rate of employment calculated across seven of the quantitative studies was 31.1% (95% confidence interval ranging from 30.4%-31.8%). Employment rates were either clearly defined in the studies or were deduced by our research team.

A notable finding is that employment rates varied considerably depending on geographical location (the host country and the region within the host country) ranging from as little as 6% up to 57% employment.

Figure 1 depicts employment rates by various host countries.

Country	Employment Rate
Turkey	6-8.2%
Lebanon	24%
Australia	24.9%
Sweden	32%
USA	46-47.5%
South Korea	57%
Pooled Data	31.1% (95% CI: 30.4-31.8%)

Figure 1. Employment Rate per Country

Demographic and well-Being Factors

Individual Factors

Age: Having higher age is associated with poorer employment outcomes (Darawsheh et al., 2022; Demirci & Kırdar, 2023; Ortlieb et al., 2020; Shaw et al., 2022; Vijaya, 2020), along with years associated with fertility (Grönlund & Nordlund, 2022). Parenthood at age 30 is seen to have a lower association with employment (Grönlund & Nordlund, 2022).

Health: Higher levels of physical and mental health are employment strengthening factors (Cheung & Phillimore, 2017; Stempel & Alemi, 2021).

Education: Higher levels of education achieved are associated with greater employment prospects.

However, many refugee women find that their education credentials are not recognized in their new host country. This can result in a “downgrading” of skills where a refugee woman will take up work that does not fulfill her qualifications and is often lower paying than work related to her credentials (Khutso et al., 2022; Smit & Rugunanan, 2014). The lack of education transferability and lack of opportunities to convert education to meet requirements of the host country poses additional challenges in obtaining economic capital and employment opportunities (Stempel and Alemi, 2021).

Household Factors

Household characteristics have a meaningful impact on employment for refugee women. Generally, the more individuals that refugee women will be involved in caring for, the less likely employment becomes viable. Some barriers to employment pertaining to household include:

- Larger household size (numbers of individuals in the household)
- Greater number of children (Ortlieb et al., 2020; Cheung and Phillimore, 2017).
- Having dependent children (children with young age) (Vijaya, 2020; Yu et al., 2012).

A facilitator to employment within the household is the presence of marriage (Grönlund & Nordlund, 2022; Shaw et al., 2022). Having additional support financially and in the domestic and familial care domains allows more room for refugee women to seek employment.

Societal and Cultural Factors

Origins: The originating place and cultural background of refugee women will have an effect on how they are received by and integrated into their new host countries thereby affecting their employment opportunities (Grönlund & Nordlund, 2022; Ortlieb et al., 2020; Stempel & Alemi, 2021).

Host Country & Region: Work opportunities that are available to refugee women can vary based on which country they are relocated to. The region within the new host country is also a significant factor as job availability and marketplace demands may differ depending on location (Darawsheh et al., 2022; Demirci & Kirdar, 2023; Ortlieb et al., 2020; Shaw et al., 2022).

Host Country Attitudes: How a host country collectively views refugee women within the context of their society, such as the rights refugee women are entitled to as well as the role refugee women play in their new setting, is important to employment and is often a constraining factor (Baranik, 2021).

Host Country Work Experience: Pre-existing work history within the host country

is positively associated with future employment (Ortlieb et al., 2020).

Length of Stay in Host Country: Greater amounts of time living in the host country is positively associated with employment (Darawsheh et al., 2022; Grönlund & Nordlund, 2022; Stempel & Alemi, 2021; Vijaya, 2020).

Language Proficiency: The higher the level of language proficiency in the host country's/region's language, the greater the connection to employment. (Cheung & Phillimore, 2017; Demirci & Kirdar, 2023; Shaw et al., 2022; Stempel & Alemi, 2021; Vijaya, 2020).

Network: Relationships with individuals established in the host country (outside of the home), particularly in the same local region as the refugee woman is a beneficial factor for employment (Yu et al., 2012).

Governmental Resources

The presence of government funded programming in support of refugee women is a meaningful predictor and facilitator for employment. Case management programs (Shaw et al., 2022) and public employment agencies in particular are positively connected to gaining employment. Another example of government funded operations include, “work-first” policies, where individuals with refugee status are rapidly assigned to work in a position after arriving in the new host country. On-the-job training is provided and opportunities for education, such as language training, may follow (Arendt, 2022; Ortlieb et al., 2020). The receipt of financial support from the government, on the other hand, may reduce the intensity behind job-seeking behaviors for refugee women (Yu et al., 2022).

Nongovernmental Resources

Membership with associations within the host country (Demirci & Kirdar, 2023) and interaction with mass media can help to increase employment for refugee women. Engagement with mass media can alert refugee women of potential job openings (Yu et al., 2012) and networking events.

Qualitative Findings

Nineteen primary source qualitative studies and one mixed methods study were analyzed. Fundamental elements were drawn from narratives shared by refugee women and then were aggregated and synthesized to determine if there were common themes. Three key findings were established that paint a unifying picture of the experience of refugee women surrounding employment:

1. The meaning and significance of employment
2. Barriers to employment
3. Facilitators and coping for employment.

The Meaning of Employment:

The presence of employment appears to be linked to several benefits for refugee women. The sphere of work can also be accompanied by feelings of alienation (Ghorashi, 2021) and the experience of having one's skills and market potential be largely overlooked, which can inhibit assimilation into the host country. As refugee women are often occupied with critical survival activities, many are unable to focus on advanced career development. Despite the difficulties described, when employment is possible, it has been found to bolster well-being, health, and autonomy for refugee women (Ćatibušić et al., 2021; Thorne, 2021; Wong et al., 2020). Having satisfaction in work promotes a sense of dignity and can nurture personal growth

(Ćatibušić et al., 2021). Refugee women report feeling empowered by employment and through acquiring financial independence (Almakhamreh et al., 2022). Entrepreneurial endeavors taken by refugee women can highlight valuable attributes such as resilience and ability for self-reinvention. Involvement in the workforce can help to overcome language barriers and to improve language acquisition (Bradley et al., 2022). Employment can enhance opportunities for networking and offer a better understanding of social norms through interactions with local community members (Wong et al., 2020). By contributing to the household income, refugee women may experience shifts in traditional gender roles (Culcasi, 2019). Acquiring a driver's license can increase agency by facilitating travel for every day needs and social engagement while also improving possibilities around employment (Carlbaum, 2022).

Barriers to Employment

Language barriers, including insufficient interpretation services and credential devaluation by the host country, were described in several studies as key barriers to employment (Ćatibušić et al., 2021; Darawsheh et al., 2022; Huq & Venugopal, 2021; Kikulwe et al., 2021; Senthana et al., 2021; Smit & Rugunanan, 2014). Despite some refugee women having advanced credentials, in many instances it is often more practical to shift to a new form of work that may have lesser recognition in the new host country. This experience can present a psychological barrier for refugee women to access employment and "start again" (Spehar, 2021). Systemic barriers including disruptive allocation policies and disorganized resettlement agency processes further aggravate difficulties in the employment process (Darawsheh et al., 2022).

Refugee women face a variety of obstacles within society such as discriminatory practices (Darawsheh et al., 2022; Smith & Rugunanan, 2014) xenophobia, violence and sexism (Nyabvudzi & Chinyamurindi, 2019). In addition, refugee women may have to contend with difficulties in accessing essential documentation. Gender expectations can result in challenges finding work-life balance as refugee women manage responsibilities both in the home and in the workplace (Nyabvudzi & Chinyamurindi, 2019). Additional constraints include experiencing limited support, having social isolation and separation from family, as well as reliance on public benefits (Darawsheh et al., 2022).

Cultural and structural factors such as patriarchal frameworks inform gender-based norms that influence the way refugee women are expected to behave and interact with the labor market. This can manifest as community expectations for refugee women to engage in the care sector and to exhibit caring attitudes (Carlbaum, 2022). The Covid-19 pandemic intensified this dynamic as shrinking job opportunities could pigeonhole refugee women in arrangements dictated in part by gender and race (Hamedanian, 2022). Lastly, the experience of domestic violence serves as a major impediment to employment (Caspersz et al, 2022).

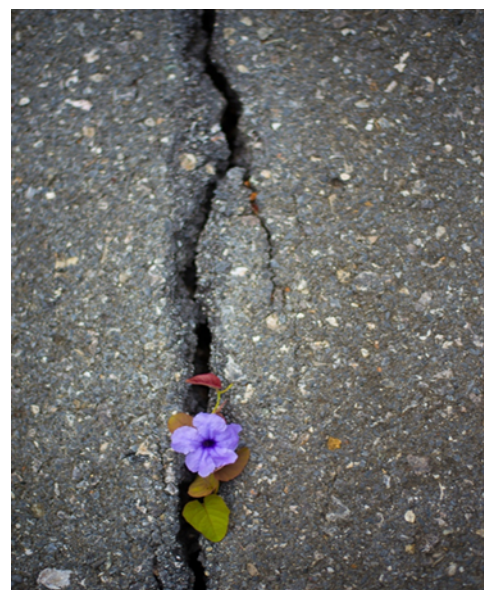
Facilitators and Coping for Employment

Refugee women demonstrate an array of adaptive qualities to facilitate the navigation of labor markets. A convergent finding across studies was an emphasis on the resilience refugee women possess and when successful, wield to generate creative economic solutions. Refugee women demonstrate resourcefulness by tapping into their personal assets such as by launching entrepreneurial initiatives and maximizing

existing skill sets to compete in the workforce (Khutso et al., 2022).

Networking and leaning into social connections show up as a facilitator to employment (Almakhamreh et al., 2022). Access to opportunities for advancing economic value in areas such as language proficiency, digital literacy, and skills development facilitate employment (Bradley et al., 2022; Verwiebe et al., 2019). Pre-existing language skills, education, and work experience are advantages in the labor market (Senthanar et a., 2021). Acquiring a driver's license and access to transportation can expand employment opportunities.

In response to employment obstacles, refugee women employ many strategies to meet their economic needs. This includes adopting traditionally feminine work such as hospitality, retail, and menial task work (Khutso et al., 2022; Koyama 2015). Work may be accessed on a part-time or sporadic basis (Smit & Rugunanan, 2014). Finally, undergoing adaptive cognitive and behavioral processes after sustaining domestic violence can increase employment prospects (Caspersz et al., 2022).



Discussion

This systematic review and meta-analysis provides a unique look at the economic landscape and the resulting internal experiences refugee women encounter related to employment on an international scale. The following discussion compares the findings from our appraisal of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods literature highlighting the predictors, barriers, and facilitators to refugee women's employment. This exercise reveals notable similarities across the research, indicating unifying themes in the employment experiences of refugee women.

The quantitative analysis revealed an average employment rate of 31.1%. Employment rates can vary greatly across countries depending on the refugee women's demographic and origin contexts and the geo-socio-political factors within the new host country. These employment rates align with the description of refugee women facing a myriad of employment obstacles that inhibit full integration (Hamedanian, 2022; Khutso et al., 2022; Kikulwe et al., 2021). Some contributing factors to employment rate differences observed may include limiting policy and institutional practices, support offered to refugees (Fakih, 2017), gender ideology, and the prevailing economic trends and market demands (Michaela et al., 2021).

Some key demographic variables identified in the quantitative analysis as related to employment includes language proficiency, level of education, age, familial structure, and health factors. These variables align with critical factors expressed in the qualitative analyses. Higher age for example, is seen in both quantitative and qualitative analyses as a hindrance to employment.

The imperativeness of language proficiency is evidenced in both quantitative (Demirci & Kırdar, 2023; Grönlund & Nordlund, 2022) and qualitative (Darawsheh et al., 2022; Kikulwe et al., 2021; Senthana et al., 2021) studies, echoing what previous research has stated about the critical link between language and employment in general (Brücker et al., 2019; Campion, 2018; De Vroome & Van Tubergen, 2010).

Educational accomplishments are seen in both quantitative (Demirci & Kırdar, 2023; Stempel & Alemi, 2021) and qualitative studies as of high importance, and yet, both also acknowledge the contradictory fate of having academic achievements be underrecognized in the new host country (Stempel & Alemi, 2021) (Ćatibušić et al., 2021; Kikulwe et al., 2021; Smit & Rugunanan, 2014). These findings are corroborated by research that depicts the hurdles refugee women face in light of their legal status and overlooked education (Creese & Wiebe, 2012; Guo, 2013; Jackson & Bauder, 2014; Thomas, 2021).

Interestingly, by synthesizing quantitative and qualitative results, we find a reciprocal relationship between economic inclusion for refugee women and their health, well-being, and their sense of autonomy. Quantitative studies relay that good health improves employment prospects (Cheung & Phillimore, 2017; Stempel & Alemi, 2021), while the qualitative studies illustrate the way employment gives back to refugee women's health, wellness, and empowerment (Bradley et al., 2022; Ćatibušić et al., 2021; Thorne, 2021; Wong et al., 2020).

The quantitative and qualitative results complement one another in terms of barriers to employment. The quantitative findings suggest that having fewer similarities between region of origin and new host

country, such as in societal and cultural norms, can create barriers (Grönlund & Nordlund, 2022; Ortlieb et al., 2020; Stempel & Alemi, 2021). This may account for how longer time in the host country can improve employment prospects, as increased immersion may be related to assimilation and adaptation to new norms and labor market mechanics. This is reflected in the way that the qualitative results demonstrate how incompatibility of language and education/credentials in the new host country serve as vital barriers to the employment of refugee women (Kikulwe et al., 2021; Senthana et al., 2021; Smit & Rugunanan, 2014). A major common thread shared by both findings is the interpretation that the structure and cultural practices of a society, including patriarchal functions, as well as discrimination and societal expectations play major roles in confining employment for refugee women (Carlbaum, 2022; Darawsheh et al., 2022; Smit & Rugunanan, 2014). Fuller and Martin (2012) speak to the relationship between immigrant employment outlooks and their level of human capital as well as household contexts. Their assertions align with our review's findings on the importance of structural, contextual and discriminatory practices in establishing employment for refugee women.

Similarities in cultural and social facilitators to employment are seen in the quantitative and qualitative syntheses. Language proficiency is highlighted in quantitative (Cheung & Phillimore, 2017; Demirci & Kirdar, 2023) and qualitative (Bradley et al., 2022; Huq & Venugopal, 2021; Smit & Rugunanan, 2014) studies as imperative. Personal connections in the new host country also improve employment prospects (Almakhamreh et al., 2022; Yu et al., 2012). These findings echo what previous research (Kanas et al., 2011) has described on the

importance of personal contacts on immigrant employment.

Other critical facilitators and coping for employment found in both analyses were the importance of resources available in support of refugee women. The quantitative findings indicate the presence of governmental resources is connected to securing employment (Shaw et al., 2022). This is congruent with the qualitative findings which suggest an absence of support such as inefficient resettlement agencies serve as profound hurdles to employment (Darawsheh et al., 2022). These combined findings corroborate previous studies that describe how collaboration with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) can augment human capital and therefore enhance employment potential (Avdin, 2021; Liebig & Tronstad, 2018).

The quantitative synthesis emphasizes the utility of language proficiency, relationships with locals, and work history in the host country in securing employment (Darawsheh et al., 2022; Shaw et al., 2022; Yu et al., 2012). This is compatible with the qualitative findings that demonstrate refugee women's resourcefulness as they strengthen their skillsets, nurture interpersonal connections, and pursue entrepreneurship to increase their economic inclusion. These findings provide support to studies showcasing refugee women's resilience as they traverse the intricacies of their new social and political territories and surmount obstacles that threaten their employment and well-being (Newman et al., 2018; Shishehgar et al., 2017).

A major takeaway that is consistent between the quantitative and qualitative findings is that refugee women's employment is affected by many intersecting and complex variables. These findings illustrate the multifaceted experiences refugee women

have in relation to the challenges and achievements surrounding employment. These findings highlight the resilience and adaptiveness of refugee women and the ways in which they cope with adverse events in this domain. Lastly, these findings demonstrate the ability of employment to empower refugee women. This systematic review and meta-analysis has covered predictors, barriers, and facilitators to the employment of refugee women and establishes a need for tailored interventions to best support employment success and economic inclusion.

Review Implications

This systematic review and meta-analysis yields profound insights with significant ramifications in the realms of policy and administration, practical application, education, and research concerning the employment of refugee women.

The evidence from this study underscores the pressing need for policy and administrative measures that are not only responsive but also meticulously crafted to address the distinct challenges faced by refugee women in the labor market. This involves the development and implementation of policies that are sensitive to gender-specific issues and inclusive in nature, facilitating the integration of refugee women into the workforce. One of the primary areas of focus should be the recognition and validation of foreign qualifications. Many refugee women come with skills and professional backgrounds that are often not recognized in their host countries. Policies should therefore streamline processes for evaluating and accrediting these qualifications in a manner that respects their validity and relevance. This approach not only

benefits the individuals but also enriches the host country's labor pool with diverse skills and experiences.

Another crucial aspect is language acquisition. For refugee women to effectively navigate the job market and workplace environments, it is essential that they have access to comprehensive language training programs. These programs should be accessible, considering the diverse schedules and responsibilities of refugee women, and should aim to equip them with both general and job-specific language skills. In addition, skill development programs tailored to the demands of the local labor market are essential. These programs should go beyond basic employment skills and offer training in areas that have a high demand for workers, thus improving the chances of refugee women securing meaningful and sustainable employment. Administrative frameworks must also be cognizant of the intersectional challenges that refugee women face. This requires intersectoral cooperation and collaboration among various government departments and community organizations to provide comprehensive support that addresses not just employment, but also factors such as healthcare, education, childcare, and legal assistance. Importantly, host nations need to establish and enforce policies that actively combat xenophobia, discrimination, and violence against refugee women. This includes stringent workplace regulations and legal frameworks that protect refugee women from discrimination and abuse, ensuring their safety and well-being in the workplace.

Finally, raising awareness and providing training to employers, communities, and service providers is vital. These programs should focus on gender

equality, cultural sensitivity, and the recognition of the rights and contributions of refugee women. By educating these key stakeholders, governments can foster a more inclusive and supportive environment for refugee women seeking employment. The practical applications of these research findings highlight the pivotal role of health and social service professionals in understanding and addressing the unique barriers and facilitators affecting refugee women's employment. These professionals, often the first point of contact for refugees, play a critical role in guiding and supporting these women through their integration journey.

Service organizations dedicated to assisting refugees must adopt a proactive and comprehensive approach to provide support. This involves not just reactive services in response to immediate needs, but also strategic, long-term support tailored to the specific challenges faced by refugee women. Such an approach requires a deep understanding of the multifaceted barriers these women face, including cultural, linguistic, educational, and psychological challenges.

Key areas of support include:

1. Language Training: Proficiency in the local language is a fundamental enabler for employment. Organizations should offer language training programs specifically designed for refugee women, considering their unique needs and circumstances. These programs should go beyond basic language skills and encompass vocational language training relevant to specific job sectors. Additionally, these programs must be flexible and accessible, accommodating the often-complex schedules of refugee women who

may have caregiving responsibilities.

2. Credential Recognition Assistance:

Many refugee women arrive with qualifications and professional experience from their home countries, which are frequently unrecognized in host countries. Service organizations should help in navigating the process of credential evaluation and recognition. This may involve helping with the preparation and submission of documents, offering guidance on fulfilling additional requirements, or even advocating for more inclusive and flexible recognition policies.

3. Career Counseling and Guidance:

Providing career counseling tailored to the needs and backgrounds of refugee women is crucial. This includes guidance on local labor market opportunities, resume building, interview preparation, and networking strategies. Career counselors should also be aware of the cultural and psychological aspects that might influence these women's job search and career choices.

4. Streamlined Processes for Credential Recognition: Simplifying and expediting the

process of recognizing foreign educational credentials and professional experience is essential. This could involve collaboration with educational and professional bodies to develop clear, fair, and efficient processes that respect the qualifications of refugee women while meeting local standards.

5. Support Networks and Mentoring:

Establishing support networks and mentoring programs can significantly aid refugee women in their employment journey. This includes connecting them with professionals in their field, peer support groups, and

mentors who can provide guidance, share experiences, and offer encouragement. The educational implications of the evidence gathered from this research are substantial and multifaceted. They suggest the need for a dual approach in educational initiatives, targeting both refugee women directly and the broader community in which they reside. For refugee women, the focus should be on creating and implementing comprehensive vocational training and upskilling programs. These programs should be meticulously designed to align with the specific demands of the local labor market. This alignment is crucial as it ensures that the skills and knowledge imparted are directly applicable and valuable in securing employment within their host communities. These educational initiatives could range from technical and vocational training in sought-after industries to soft skills development, such as communication and teamwork, which are universally valuable across various job sectors. Additionally, digital literacy and technology-based skills training could significantly enhance their employability in increasingly digital economies. Moreover, these programs need to be accessible and considerate of the unique circumstances of refugee women. This could involve offering flexible learning schedules to accommodate those with caregiving responsibilities, providing language support for non-native speakers, and creating a culturally sensitive learning environment. Such tailored approaches can help overcome barriers to participation and ensure that these educational opportunities are truly inclusive and effective. Regarding the wider community, educational efforts should be oriented towards cultivating a deeper understanding and empathy for the challenges faced by refugee women. This could involve community education programs, workshops, and public awareness campaigns that highlight the

cultural, social, and economic barriers refugee women encounter. By educating the broader community, these initiatives aim to dismantle stereotypes and prejudices, fostering a more inclusive and supportive societal environment. Additionally, involving local businesses, educational institutions, and community leaders in these efforts can amplify the impact and reach of these messages, promoting a culture of inclusivity and mutual respect. These educational initiatives, both targeted at refugee women and the broader community, play a pivotal role in facilitating the integration and empowerment of refugee women in their host countries. By addressing the specific needs of these women and enhancing societal understanding and support, such educational efforts lay the foundation for a more inclusive and equitable society.

From a research perspective, this review signals a clear mandate for a more in-depth exploration into the intricate factors influencing the employment of refugee women. There is a pressing need for future research to delve into the complexities of these factors, unraveling the nuanced layers that impact their employment prospects. Such research should not only identify but also critically analyze the various elements that either facilitate or hinder refugee women's integration into the workforce. A key area of focus should be the evaluation of different employment interventions. This involves assessing the efficacy of various programs and strategies currently in place to support refugee women in finding and maintaining employment. It is crucial that these evaluations employ comprehensive methodologies, which are inclusive of a wide range of geographical and demographic contexts. By doing so, the research can capture a broad spectrum of experiences and conditions,

ensuring that the findings are relevant and applicable to diverse groups of refugee women across different settings. Moreover, there is a significant need for longitudinal research in this field. Longitudinal studies have the advantage of tracking changes and developments over time, providing a dynamic view of the employment trajectories of refugee women. Such studies can yield invaluable insights into the long-term effectiveness of employment interventions and policies. They can also shed light on the evolving nature of the barriers and facilitators to employment that refugee women encounter, as well as the long-term outcomes of their economic integration efforts. Persistent and rigorous inquiry in this domain is not just an academic exercise; it is vital for the formulation of informed, evidence-based strategies and policies. The knowledge gained from such research can guide policymakers, practitioners, and service organizations in developing more effective approaches to improve employment opportunities for refugee women. Ultimately, this research is pivotal in shaping interventions that not only address the immediate employment needs of refugee women but also support their long-term economic empowerment and integration into their host societies.

Review Limitations

Our mixed-method systematic review, grounded in Sandelowski's (2006) segregated approach, offers distinctive perspectives on the employment of refugee women but is not without inherent limitations. The exclusive incorporation of English-language studies and literature published post-2011 may have led to the inadvertent exclusion of pertinent research. This selection criterion particularly risks omitting critical insights from non-English-

speaking regions where refugee issues are prevalent. Additionally, our review's comprehensiveness may be compromised by publication bias, a phenomenon where studies with significant findings are preferentially published and thus more likely to be included in our analysis. Moreover, while meta-integration serves as a robust tool for uncovering intricate interrelations, its efficacy is contingent upon the quality and pertinence of the underlying quantitative and qualitative syntheses. This dependency highlights the importance of rigorous methodological standards in both quantitative and qualitative research to ensure the validity and reliability of the review's conclusions.

Conclusion

This mixed-method systematic review and meta-analysis provides a nuanced examination of the barriers, enablers, and determinants influencing the employment and economic integration of refugee women. Given the diverse experiences of refugee women in varying contextual and sociopolitical environments of host nations, this research illuminates the distinct obstacles they encounter in employment and economic participation. Furthermore, this study enhances our understanding of the myriad factors impacting refugee women's employment and economic inclusion, thereby informing the development of future employment frameworks, policy initiatives, and practice implementations. The insights derived from this review contribute to a deeper comprehension of the characteristics, design, and contextual applicability of programs and models that are inclusive, gender-specific, and effective in facilitating employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for refugee women. The

findings suggest potential best practice guidelines for employment organizations serving refugee populations. These insights can be translated into actionable practices, policy recommendations, and theoretical constructs that could significantly improve outcomes for refugee women's employment and economic integration, while also fostering their identity and opportunities in their new host countries. By continually refining our understanding of the complex factors that shape the employment

experiences of refugee women, we can significantly contribute to the creation of more inclusive and equitable societies. This research underscores the importance of considering the unique challenges faced by refugee women in employment and economic inclusion efforts, advocating for tailored approaches that recognize and address these specific needs.

Knowledge Mobilization Activities

A comprehensive and interdisciplinary community forum was conducted to disseminate findings from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Knowledge Synthesis Grant on "Predictors, Barriers, and Facilitators to Refugee Women's Employment and Economic Inclusion: A Mixed Methods Systematic Review". This event successfully convened 45 stakeholders, encompassing a diverse array of sectors including representatives from refugee communities, non-profit organizations, and academic circles. The forum served as a vibrant confluence of research and practical implementation, fostering in-depth discussions that delved into the multifaceted challenges and enablers associated with the employment of refugee women.

A key focal point of the forum was the emphasis on identifying and exploring potential pathways for enhancing refugee women's entrepreneurship. This aspect was crucial in broadening the scope of discussion beyond traditional employment barriers to include self-employment and entrepreneurial opportunities as viable pathways for economic inclusion.

The dissemination of the study's findings was not limited to the community forum but extended through the publication of three manuscripts. These included a comprehensive systematic review detailing



the predictors, barriers, and facilitators to refugee women's employment and economic inclusion, submitted to the Humanities and Social Sciences Communications Journal, a (JBI) scoping review was submitted to the Journal of Enterprising Communities: People and Places in the Global Economy that examined the socioeconomic and wellbeing impacts of refugee women's entrepreneurship, and a concept analysis was submitted to Nursing Forum Journal focused on refugee women's entrepreneurship. These academic publications contributed significantly to the body of knowledge on this subject, offering nuanced insights and recommendations. Furthermore, the project culminated in the creation of a Knowledge Synthesis Report and an Evidence Brief, both of which distilled the research findings into accessible formats for wider dissemination. The findings were also presented at prominent national and international conferences, notably at the International Conference on Holistic Nursing and Nursing Practice held

in Amman, Jordan on July 24, 2023, and are scheduled to be presented at the 8th World Conference on Qualitative Research in Portugal from January 23 to 25, 2024. These presentations allowed for the sharing of insights and the sparking of global discussions on the subject.

An Executive Summary Report was specifically prepared and shared with organizations actively engaged with refugee groups, ensuring that the findings reached those directly involved in supporting refugee women's employment and entrepreneurship. Moreover, to maximize accessibility and public reach, the complete report, along with the evidence brief, will be made available on the TMU repository. This approach underscores a commitment to ensuring that the research findings are not only academically rigorous but also practically applicable and accessible to a broad audience, including policymakers, practitioners, and the refugee communities themselves.

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Appendices:

Table 1: Critical Appraisal of Eligible Analytical Cross-Sectional Study

Citation	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Rating
Baranik LE. 2021.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	100
Demirci M, Kırdar MG. 2023.	Y	Y	U	Y	Y	Y	U	Y	75
Ortlieb R, Eggenhofer-Rehart, P, Leitner S, Hosner R, Landesmann M. 2020.	Y	Y	U	Y	Y	Y	U	Y	75
Stempel C, Alemi Q. 2021.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	U	Y	87.5
Vijaya R. 2020.	Y	Y	U	Y	Y	Y	U	Y	75
Yu S-E, Kim B-Y, Jeon W-T, Jung S-H. 2012.	Y	Y	U	Y	Y	Y	U	Y	75

Y=Yes, N= No, U= Unclear, NA=Not applicable

Q1. Were the criteria for inclusion in the sample clearly defined?

Q2. Were the study subjects and the setting described in detail?

Q3. Was the exposure measured in a valid and reliable way?

Q4. Were objective, standard criteria used for measurement of the condition?

Q5. Were confounding factors identified?

Q6. Were strategies to deal with confounding factors stated?

Q7. Were the outcomes measured in a valid and reliable way?

Q8. Was appropriate statistical analysis used?

Table 2: Critical Appraisal of Eligible Cohort Study

Citation	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Rating
Arendt JN. 2022.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	U	U	Y	81
Cheung SY, Phillimore J. 2017.	Y	Y	U	Y	Y	Y	U	Y	N	Y	Y	72
Grönlund A, Nordlund M. 2022.	Y	Y	U	Y	Y	Y	U	Y	U	U	Y	63.6
Manhica H, Berg L, Almquist YB, Rostila M, Hjern A. 2019.	Y	Y	U	Y	Y	Y	U	Y	N/A	N/A	Y	63.6
Shaw SA, Rodgers G, Poulin P, Robinson J. 2022.	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N/A	Y	72.7

Y=Yes, N= No, U= Unclear, NA=Not applicable

Q1. Were the two groups similar and recruited from the same population?

Q2. Were the exposures measured similarly to assign people to both exposed and unexposed groups?

Q3. Was the exposure measured in a valid and reliable way?

Q4. Were confounding factors identified?

Q5. Were strategies to deal with confounding factors stated?

Q6. Were the groups/participants free of the outcome at the start of the study (or at the moment of exposure)?

Q7. Were the outcomes measured in a valid and reliable way?

Q8. Was the follow up time reported and sufficient to be long enough for outcomes to occur?

Q9. Was follow up complete, and if not, were the reasons to loss to follow up described and explored?

Q10. Were strategies to address incomplete follow up utilized?

Q11. Was appropriate statistical analysis used?

Table 3: Critical Appraisal of Eligible Qualitative Research

Citation	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Rating
Almakhamreh S, Asfour HZ, Hutchinson A. 2022.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	90
Bradley L, Bahous R, Albasha A. 2022.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	U	U	Y	Y	Y	80
Carlbaum S. 2022.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	U	U	Y	U	Y	70
Caspersz D, Casado R, Kaplanian C, Fozdar F, Baldassar L. 2022.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	U	U	Y	U	Y	70
Ćatibušić, B, Gallagher F, Karazi S. 2021.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	U	U	Y	Y	Y	80
Culcasi K. 2019.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	U	U	Y	U	Y	70
Ghorashi H. 2021.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	U	U	Y	N/A	Y	70
Hamedanian F. 2022.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	U	U	N	Y	Y	70
Huq A, Venugopal V. 2021.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	U	U	Y	Y	Y	80
Khutso M, Frank RS, Justin RD. 2022.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	U	U	Y	Y	Y	80

Kikulwe D, Massing C, Ghadi N, Giesbrecht CJ, Halabuza D. 2021.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	U	U	Y	Y	Y	80
Koyama J. 2015.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	U	U	Y	Y	Y	80
Nyabvudzi T, Chinyamurindi WT. 2019.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	U	U	Y	Y	Y	80
Senthanar S, MacEachen E, Premji S, Bigelow P. 2021.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	U	U	Y	Y	Y	80
Smit R, Rugunanan P. 2014.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	U	U	U	Y	Y	70
Spehar A. 2021.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	U	U	Y	Y	Y	80
Thorne A. 2021.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	U	U	Y	Y	Y	80
Verwiebe R, Kittel B, Dellinger F, Liebhart C, Schiestl D, Haindorfer R, et al. 2019.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	U	U	Y	Y	Y	80
Wong CK, White C, Thay B, Lassemillante ACM. 2020.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	U	U	Y	Y	Y	80

Y=Yes, N= No, U= Unclear, NA=Not applicable

Q1. Congruity between the stated philosophical perspective and the research methodology

Q2. Congruity between the research methodology and the research question or objectives

Q3. Congruity between the research methodology and the methods used to collect data

Q4. Congruity between the research methodology and the representation and analysis of data

Q5. There is congruence between the research methodology and the interpretation of results

Q6. Locating the researcher culturally or theoretically

Q7. Influence of the researcher on the research, and vice-versa, is addressed

Q8. Representation of participants and their voices

Q9. Ethical approval by an appropriate body

Q10. Relationship of conclusions to analysis, or interpretation of the data

Table 4: Critical Appraisal of Eligible Mixed Method Studies

Citation	Appraisal of Quantitative Arm								Appraisal of Qualitative Arm										Rating
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	
Darawsheh WB, Bewernitz M, Tabbaa S, Justiss M. 2022.	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	77

Y=Yes, N= No, U= Unclear, NA=Not applicable

Appraisal of Quantitative Arm

Q1. Were the criteria for inclusion in the sample clearly defined?

Q2. Were the study subjects and the setting described in detail?

Q3. Was the exposure measured in a valid and reliable way?

Q4. Were objective, standard criteria used for measurement of the condition?

Q5. Were confounding factors identified?

Q6. Were strategies to deal with confounding factors stated?

Q7. Were the outcomes measured in a valid and reliable way?

Q8. Was appropriate statistical analysis used?

Appraisal of Qualitative Arm

Q1. Congruity between the stated philosophical perspective and the research methodology

- Q2. Congruity between the research methodology and the research question or objectives
- Q3. Congruity between the research methodology and the methods used to collect data
- Q4. Congruity between the research methodology and the representation and analysis of data
- Q5. There is congruence between the research methodology and the interpretation of results
- Q6. Locating the researcher culturally or theoretically
- Q7. Influence of the researcher on the research, and vice-versa, is addressed
- Q8. Representation of participants and their voices
- Q9. Ethical approval by an appropriate body
- Q10. Relationship of conclusions to analysis, or interpretation of the data