

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

About the Project

This mixed-method systematic review and meta-analysis offers a comprehensive perspective on the barriers, facilitators, and predictors of refugee women's employment and economic inclusion. This knowledge-synthesis project has the potential to offer a more complete synthesis of the available evidence from quantitative and qualitative studies through comparison and complementarity between both strands of findings and therefore contribute to the current body of knowledge regarding refugee women's employment and economic inclusion in their host countries. Because refugee women's experiences of employment and economic inclusion greatly vary depending on the context and sociopolitical aspects of the host countries, this study sheds new light on the unique challenges that refugee women face with employment and economic inclusion. Also, the study offers a better understanding of the factors that affect refugee women's employment and economic inclusion to inform future employment models and policy and practice implementation. The review findings draw inferences about the programs/models' design, features, and implementation contexts that are inclusive, gender specific, and conducive to offer effective refugee women's employment and entrepreneurship programs/models. The results point toward potential best practice guidelines for employment organizations working with refugee populations. The findings can be translated into a set of practice outcomes and policy recommendations for refugee women's employment and economic inclusion. They can also promote refugee women's identities and opportunities in their new host country and refine our understanding of the complex factors shaping refugee women's employment experiences. In this way we can contribute to the creation of more inclusive, equitable societies.

Key Findings

Quantitative Results

- Refugee women's employment rates vary significantly depending on their host country and the women's demographic characteristics.
- The average employment rate across the studies was found to be 31.1 percent.
- Employment rates for refugee women varied across countries: Turkey (6–8.2%), Lebanon and Jordan (24%), Australia (24.9%), Sweden (32%), USA (46–47.5%), and South Korea (57%).

Demographic and Well-being Factors

- Older age and poor health perception were identified as constraints to employment.
- Marital status was found to facilitate employment, while larger household sizes and having more children posed barriers.
- Higher levels of education were positively correlated with improved employment prospects for refugee women. However, challenges in capitalizing on education were reported.

Societal and Cultural Factors

- Region of origin, cultural background, and geographical location within the host country influenced employment opportunities for refugee women.
- Work experience in the host country and longer duration of stay enhanced employment prospects.

- Language proficiency and building personal contacts, especially with locals, facilitated employment.

Availability of Government and Nongovernmental Resources

- Governmental support, such as extended case management and public employment agencies, played a significant role in facilitating employment.
- Nongovernmental resources, such as membership in associations and engagement with mass media, positively impacted employment outcomes.

Qualitative Findings

- Employment had significant meaning and significance for refugee women's health, well-being, autonomy, and personal growth. It facilitated cultural integration, language acquisition, and understanding of social norms.
- Language barriers, lack of recognized credentials, systemic obstacles, xenophobia, violence, and issues with work-life balance were identified as barriers to employment.
- Refugee women demonstrated resourcefulness by leveraging personal and social assets, engaging in entrepreneurship, networking, and developing postmigration human capital.
- Livelihood strategies included part-time work, employment in traditional female roles, and adaptation to overcome barriers.

Policy Implications

1. Targeted Language Training and Credential Recognition

- Develop language-training programs specifically tailored to the needs of refugee women, focusing on improving their language proficiency to facilitate employment opportunities.
- Establish streamlined processes for recognizing and validating the educational credentials of refugee women, ensuring that their qualifications are acknowledged and utilized in the host country's job market.

2. Comprehensive Support Programs

- Implement comprehensive support programs that address the specific barriers that refugee women face, including access to childcare, transportation, and affordable housing, which can alleviate the burden and enable them to seek and maintain employment.
- Collaborate with both governmental and nongovernmental organizations to provide extended case management, employment agencies, and skill-development programs that support the unique needs of refugee women.

3. Combatting Discrimination and Gender-Based Violence

- Enact and enforce policies that combat xenophobia, discrimination, and violence against refugee women to ensure their safety and protection in the workplace.
- Raise awareness and provide training to employers, communities, and service providers on gender equality, cultural sensitivity, and the rights and contributions of refugee women.

Authors' Information

1. **Areej Al-Hamad**, Assistant professor
Toronto Metropolitan University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
Email: areej.hamad@torontomu.ca
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6400-0750>
2. **Yasin Yasin**, Assistant professor
University of Doha for Science and Technology, Doha, Qatar
Email: yasin.yasin@udst.edu.qa
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0599-7180>
3. **Kateryna Metersky**, Assistant professor
Toronto Metropolitan University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
Email: kateryna.metersky@torontomu.ca
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2738-0256>

Link to the final report.