Author: Zina Ousama Karadsheh

Supervisor: Dr. Miguel Imas
OVERCOMING THE WORKING WOMEN TABOO: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF RESILIENCE BY SYRIAN REFUGEE WOMEN.
Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own independent investigation, expect where otherwise indicated by referencing, and the work presented has not been previously accepted in content for any degree nor being concurrently submitted in candidature for any other institution.
List of Abbreviations

**WWI**: World War One  
**WWII**: World War Two  
**UNHCR**: United Nations High Commissioner for refugees  
**Inshallah**: In God’s Will  
**Qur’an**: The Holy Book of Islam  
**Hamdullelah**: Thank God, the Great.  
**Haram**: Refers to the act that is prohibited by the religious text of Qur’an.
Abstract

• Refugee women encounter many trials prior to arriving in Jordan and face ongoing challenges associated with resettlement.

• Despite the hardship and continued victimisation refugees face, they continuously demonstrate enormous strength and resilience that help facilitate their resettlement process and attain financial stability with disregard to their cultural restrictions.

• This research suggests that practitioners working with refugees tend to focus on the trauma story and neglect the stories of their strengths.
Abstract

• The interviews also identify elements that may impede resilience including: racism, patriarchal institution of thought, language.. This research is directed to empower refugee women and women from the Middle East, whom are bounded by the patriarchal institution of thought to enhance their conditions economically, socially and emotionally.

Keywords: Syrian Refugees, women, resilience, obstructs, strength, patriarchal, Middle East.
Introduction

• Throughout history, armed conflict and uprisings often signify benchmarks for social change. They are therefore crucial moments to be looking at women.

• Revolutions and civil wars provide women with an opportunity to adopt new roles and their handling often redefines their status.

• it is important to analyse how refugee women were able to rise above the dreadful circumstances, overcome societal restrictions of patriarchy, to work and achieve resilience and financial stability.

• The more specific aim of the research is to grasp a deeper understanding of the factors that deem necessary to build or impede resilience.
Introduction

Feminist theories are able to analyse the background and culture of refugee women, and their position in society. The goal of a feminist theory is to end oppression against women and to attain social equity for them, especially women from Middle Eastern countries. Women are not a homogenous group. Women face different realities, experiences and undergo different roles, therefore, it is necessary to understand why certain women take on particular functions; which women are mobilised and which women face limitations and why.
What is being researched?

Firstly, what are the identifiable factors that built or impeded resiliency in refugee working women?

Second, what deplorable factors women face in host societies?
A lot more attention in the literature is being given to the complex nature of forced displacement and the complexity of forced migration. This research aims to investigate aspects of strength and resilience that pertain to refugee women and their deconditioning from a patriarchal culture.
The Refugee Status:

According to the UNHCR, the term Refugee is used to describe the status of a displaced person forced to resettle in a foreign country due to a number of complex, interwoven reasons (UNHCR, 2013).
The Refugee Status:

Refugee women managed to turn their situation around despite the societal and cultural restrictions, to gain control of the situation. However, according to Papadopoulos (2001), when addressing the refugee situation, therapists tend to focus on the difficulties and shortcomings of refugees, and overlook the positive attributes, of strength and endurance. Despite the turmoil, refugees display great strength and courage in adversity and conditions of extreme deprivation (Tiong, 2006, p. 8).
Feminism vs. Patriarchy

In order to explore the complexity of causes and experiences of forced migration, to focus particularly on aspects of strength and resilience that pertain to women and their deconditioning from the deep-seated patriarchy and internalised misogyny (Anglin, 1998). A foundational insight of the feminist theory is utilised to foreground experiences of women whilst enhancing their visibility as actors, and honouring their unique experiences and insights.
Feminist theories are able to analyse the background and culture of refugee women, and their position in society (Anglin, 1998). Thus, they are conscious of their social and political marginalisation, subjugation and repression, that has placed them at a grievous disadvantage in contrast to their male counterparts (Orme, 2017). The goal of a feminist theory is to end oppression against women and to attain social equity for them (Hodge, 1975).
Feminism vs. Patriarchy

Feminist theories are able to analyse the background and culture of refugee women, and their position in society (Anglin, 1998). Thus, they are conscious of their social and political marginalisation, subjugation and repression, that has placed them at a grievous disadvantage in contrast to their male counterparts (Orme, 2017). The goal of a feminist theory is to end oppression against women and to attain social equity for them (Hodge, 1975).
When addressing women from the East, an Eastern perspective must be utilised. The refugee situation in Jordan is used to demonstrate the salient nature highlighting these parallels. The parallels are the societal conditions, cultural norms and the way of life subjected to women of which reinforce and reproduce the gender roles in the region.
Instead of encouraging strengths and capabilities within individuals, professionals underpin the refugee experience of deprivation, distress and hardship in the terrain of psychopathology (American Psychology Association, 2009). As a result, the refugee experience is obstructed by the persuasive nature of the trauma narratives of their lives without understanding their previous roles in society (Papadopoulos, 2001).
Feminism vs. Patriarchy

Instead of encouraging strengths and capabilities within individuals, professionals underpin the refugee experience of deprivation, distress and hardship in the terrain of psychopathology (American Psychology Association, 2009). As a result, the refugee experience is obstructed by the persuasive nature of the trauma narratives of their lives without understanding their previous roles in society (Papadopoulos, 2001).
Feminism vs. Patriarchy

There is no argument about the importance of having sufficient knowledge about the psychological aspects of trauma; however, a western model may deny the resilience of survivors and the new roles they have adopted in contrast to their roles prerersetlement, and are often marked with the status of vulnerable and incapable, and more often with women and children (Marlowe, 2009). The experiences of forced migration are invariably marked by duress and trauma, instead of strength and resilience.
Although women are rarely on the front lines of battle, they carry disproportionate burden as a consequence of the war. Conflict situations often allow women a chance to take on new roles that challenge cultural norms and patriarchal notions of womanhood to prove they have other capabilities beyond cleaning and reproducing. It is therefore precipitating moments to be considering women. This research aims to better understand the ways in which women participated to challenge their submissive role in society. Limited research focuses on such refugee women and the factors that supports and encourages post-emigrational adjustment.
Sample Selected

Due to the difficulty of reaching women that accepted to be interviewed, the sample was small:

• The sample comprised of eight Syrian refugees between the ages of 30-51 years (M=34.13, SD=6.95).

• At the time of the interview, each of the participants have been residing in Jordan an average of 4 years (M=3.75, Range=2-8).
Sample Selected

Due to the difficulty of reaching women that accepted to be interviewed, the sample was small:

• Eight of the respondents were married, one recently got remarried.

• The participants had an average of 3 children (M=3.38, Range=2-6) seven of the eight participants had at least three children.

• Two of the participants attained a degree from their community college, five of the participants have finished secondary education and one did not obtain any educational qualification.
Sample Selected

• At the time of the study, four women have been working in domestic-acquired-skilled jobs, such as, cooking and tailoring, whilst one is a journalist working in Syria Direct and one works as a volunteer and participates in campaigns for raising awareness and relief for new refugee incomers, and finally, two of the participants teaches in a local kindergarten.

• All participants have identified themselves as Muslims. Two of the participants have reported speaking English, whilst six of the participants can only speak their native language, Arabic.
Table 1: Demographic profiles of the Participants. All the names used are pseudonyms.
Research Design

• The interviews were conducted using a narrative research design and data was later analysed using methods suggested by Mishler (1986) and Riessman (1993). This method involved two phases:

1. The first phase, necessitated re-transcribing sections of the audio recording that involved common structures of stories told in response to a specific question.

2. The second phase, in the analysis of the data involved recapitulating themes that were considered expressions of salient experiences and concerns of the respondent. The second step involved categorising statements, phrases and comments according to their content. The challenge was to maintain its subjectivity and capture the lived experience of women individually.
Anti-discriminatory Practices

Racism and discrimination directed towards resettled refugees in Jordan is often covert and subtle. One frequently encountered example throughout this research is discriminatory practices towards working refugee people. Employers stereotypically perceive refugees as more desirable workers than Jordanians, due to their vulnerability and lower cost of Employment. Employers exert on refugees higher working hours and lower pay.
Further research needs to be developed regarding the resilience of refugee women, by focusing on the strength and abilities that helped them overcome all societal and dichotomous ideologies, rather than emphasising on the pathology and refugee trauma narratives of their lives. Moreover, future research could be redirected on how refugee men perceive the roles women have adopted. Finally, the results obtained from this research could be directed to empower and strengthen refugee women and housewives in Jordan, whom are still entrapped under a patriarchal notion, to enhance their conditions economically, socially and emotionally.
the refugee women did not constitute extraordinary goals as identified by others, but they were meaningful aspects of resilience embedded in the mundane of the accomplishments of everyday lives. Major emerging internal and external themes contributing to refugee resilience have been identified: personal qualities, social support, religion and spirituality, and comparison to others. Whilst, other themes obstructed the construction of resilience, such as discrimination and racism, labelling the trauma story, lack of empowerment and support, and the culture.
Conclusion

The findings specify the many pathways refugees may utilise towards a paradigm that further develops the understanding and meaning of an often thinly portrayed concept of resilience that pertains to the individual as an innate trait alone (Yip, 2008). Contrary to belief, the review provides a broader understanding of resilience that can contribute to practice outcomes, and could assist resettlement and adaptation within refugees.
References are placed in the notes section and will be furnished upon request
Interview questions, sample interview transcription and any other annexes will be furnished upon request.

For full understanding of this research please read the full Dissertation and do not hesitate to reach me on zkaradshsheh@gmail.com