Mental Health and Wellbeing Impacts of Societal Attitudes Towards Forcibly Displaced Young People: A Scoping Review Protocol

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ABSTRACT

Background: In less time than it takes to read this sentence, someone, somewhere in the world will be forcibly displaced. With exponential increases in displacement likely to continue, research into the resettlement experiences and mental health of forcibly displaced people is essential. There is an abundance of research pertaining to the mental health and wellbeing of refugee populations including societal attitudes towards refugees. However, there is a little research on the impacts of societal attitudes on the mental health and wellbeing of those from a refugee-like background, particularly young people.

Methods/Design: The search strategy consists of synonyms for the four basic constructs (youth, displaced people, mental health, attitudes). Six scholarly databases and grey literature will be searched. To be included in the Review, papers must study the affective component of attitudes in host countries, as well as report on the mental health impacts on young people from a refugee-like background. Results will be thematically analysed using NVivo.

Discussion: This scoping review will systematically explore the academic and grey literature around both positive and negative societal attitudes in host countries, and the subsequent positive and negative impacts on young people from a refugee-like background. Findings and implications will be discussed in the full Scoping Review.

Keywords: refugee, displaced people, youth, mental health, wellbeing, attitudes, scoping review protocol

1. Background

In less time than it takes to read this sentence, someone somewhere in the world will be forcibly displaced (USA for UNHCR, 2020). War and conflict leading to human rights' deprivation, are among the main causes of involuntary displacement (Grandi, 2021; McCormack & Tapp, 2019). These situations have precipitated exponential increases of refugees in recent years, with trends likely to continue (Esses et al., 2017; Grandi, 2021; Simeon, 2020). According to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR, 2020), there are approximately 30 million refugee and asylum seekers globally, over half of whom are under 18 years of age. However, there is a paucity of research shedding light on the ways in which displaced people, particularly young people, experience resettlement in their new communities,

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the attitudes they encounter, and the implications for refugee mental health and wellbeing. This scoping review seeks to present an overview of a diverse body of literature pertaining to societal attitudes in host countries, and their impact on the mental health and wellbeing of young people with a refugee-like background.

For the purposes of this study, the term "refugee-like" describes people who are considered refugees under the United Nations Refugee Convention, as well as those who have experienced situations similar to refugees, including asylum seekers, internally displaced people and those who are stateless. "Refugee-like" acknowledges that people may have had a refugee experience without possessing formal refugee status.

Much of the mental health literature concerning refugees focuses on pre-migration trauma (Hynie, 2018), however, post-migration experiences of discrimination during resettlement can be as, or more impactful, on long-term mental health (e.g., Bogic et al. 2012; Correa-Velez et al., 2015). People from refugee-like situations undoubtedly risk experiencing discrimination post-migration (see Correa-Velez et al., 2015; Ziersch et al., 2020), which can be detrimental to health (Krieger, 2014; Ziersch et al., 2020). Since there is evidence of an association between negative attitudes towards minority groups and discrimination (Carlsson & Eriksson, 2017; Ziegert & Hanges, 2005) it is important to explore these relationships within the host community of resettlement. Recent studies have investigated the extent to which positive and negative attitudes are expressed towards people from a refugee-like background in the media, social media and in political commentary (e.g., Bosilkov & Drakaki, 2018; De Coninck et al., 2019; Dempster & Hargrave, 2017; Kovàr, 2020; March, 2020; Peterie, 2016). However, there is little knowledge on the positive and negative mental health impacts of these publicly expressed attitudes. Further to this, experiences of resettlement can be different for children and young people as compared to older family members (Morranz et al. 2011) and yet, the voices of young refugees are rarely sought (Oh, 2012). Therefore, this review will focus on the lived experiences of refugee children and young people to reveal how their mental health and wellbeing is impacted positively or negatively by societal attitudes.

A scoping review is suitable for examining this topic as it explores the breadth and depth of information available as well as identifying knowledge gaps (Peters et al., 2020). As with systematic reviews, scoping reviews are used to systematically search and screen literature, though a quality appraisal is not required in a scoping review as it provides an overview of the literature rather than informing clinical guidelines or practice (Peters et al., 2020). Therefore, this scoping study aims to explore societal attitudes, both positive and negative, towards forcibly displaced people and how those attitudes are perceived to impact the mental health and wellbeing of young people from a refugee-like background.

2. Methods/Design

2.1 Inclusion criteria

Participants

Studies describing research with people who have a lived experience of forced or involuntary displacement will be considered for inclusion, for example, refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced people, and those who are stateless. Though there are differences in the experiences of each of these groups, they share a common experience of being forced to flee their homes due to fear of, or actual, persecution, exposure to violence through war or inter-territorial disputes, political instability, natural disasters, statelessness, and are seeking protection and safety elsewhere. The purpose of the review is to explore the attitudes of the host communities in which displaced people find themselves. In addition, host community members do not always know the differences between the distinct groups of displaced people and therefore exploring attitudes towards all displaced peoples is important. Specifically, the

review will focus on young people from a refugee-like background, which, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2021), includes ages 10 – 24 years.

Concept

There are three components to attitudes: cognitive, affective, and behavioural (Breckler, 1984; Hilgard, 1980). Cognitive refers to knowledge; affective refers to thoughts and feelings; whilst behavioural refers to the resulting actions and behaviours. Due to the differences between each of the three components, it is important to clarify which of the three is being researched specifically (Breckler, 1984). Hence, for the purposes of this review, the term 'attitudes' refers to the affective component only. Articles that specifically study the affective component of attitudes will be included. If a study includes cognitive or behavioural components also, it will be considered for inclusion providing separate reporting occurs on thoughts, feelings, or beliefs about displaced people. Both positive and negative attitudes will be included.

Context

Diverse cultures refer to mental health and wellbeing using various terminology. This review will therefore include articles that refer specifically to mental health or wellbeing, as well as those that refer holistically to social and emotional health and other non-Western perspectives. It is a broad and inclusive context that aims to capture the impacts of attitudes on a person's overall quality of life. Both positive and negative aspects of mental health and wellbeing will be included. For example, the review may include references to negative outcomes such as mental illness and trauma, as well as positive outcomes such as resilience and happiness.

Evidence sources/types of studies

Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods studies published in peer reviewed journals about affective attitudes towards people who have experienced involuntary displacement, conducted anywhere in the world, will be considered for inclusion. Primary studies and other original research such as systematic reviews and scoping reviews may be included. Editorials, commentary, and opinion pieces will be excluded. The rationale for excluding editorials and opinion pieces is that the researchers are interested in documenting empirical evidence and research rather than individual's opinions on matters. The reference lists of all included items will be manually searched. The Analysis and Policy Observatory, OpenGrey and Google Scholar will be searched for relevant grey literature. Government reports and prominent non-government agency reports, for example, UNHCR and Refugee Council of Australia, will be considered for inclusion.

Initially, articles will not be excluded based on language, however, if after further investigation, an article cannot be found in English and there are no means to translate the article, studies will be excluded due to the primary language of the research term being English. The search will be limited to human studies only and will be included if they were published from 2001. The inclusion timeframe aims to capture attitudes post-9/11 attacks in the US, due to the significance that this event has had on attitudes towards refugees and asylum seekers (March, 2020; Simeon, 2020).

Exclusion

Articles will be excluded on the basis that they: focus on voluntary migration; focus on mental health without incorporating attitudes; or do not separately report on the mental health and wellbeing outcomes of young people (up to and including age 24 years).

2.2 Search terms and strategy

Electronic databases were pre-screened for coverage of the topic and the most relevant databases were chosen:

- PsychINFO
- Medline
- Embase
- Social Science Journals (ProQuest)
- Sociological Abstracts
- PsychARTICLES

A preliminary search was conducted to compile a comprehensive list of synonyms for each of the four constructs (displaced people, attitudes, mental health, youth) based on titles, abstracts, and index terms of relevant articles (see Appendix I for the full list of terms). A Boolean search with truncations and wildcards will be used for the scoping review, for example, refugee* OR asylum seeker* AND youth OR adolescen*. See Appendix II for the PsychINFO full-search algorithm.

In addition to searching the databases listed, expert researchers and organisations in the field will be contacted for recommendations of relevant articles. The reference lists of all articles included after full-text screening will be manually searched to check for any potential missing articles. These additional hand-searched and recommended articles will be screened for inclusion as per the PRISMA flowchart.

2.3 Screening process / study selection

This scoping review will use the PRISMA extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR) tool. The Joanna Briggs Institute Manual for Evidence Synthesis (Peters et al., 2020) will also be consulted for guidance. A quality assessment will not be conducted as the aim of this review is to report the breadth of research and to identify knowledge gaps to inform further research, rather than informing clinical guidelines or interventions, which would require quality assessment. Rather, it will provide a descriptive synopsis of the reviewed material without critically evaluating individual studies or integrating evidence from different studies (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Brien et al., 2010).

On completion of the database searches and gathering of additional expert recommendations, references will be exported to Covidence. Duplicates will be removed before screening begins. Titles and abstracts will be independently screened by the first and second author. For the purposes of quality and consistency in screening, the reviewers will initially screen the titles and abstracts of 25 randomly selected articles. Any differences in opinion will be discussed and the inclusion and exclusion criteria may be amended, as necessary. The reviewers will begin screening once there is at least 75% agreement. Following the title and abstract review, all remaining articles will undergo full-text screening by the first author, with a proportion of randomly selected articles undergoing review by the second author to ensure inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied appropriately. A rationale for excluding articles after full-text screening will be provided in an Appendix in the final report. Two additional reviewers will be available to assess conflicts at any stage of the screening process.

2.4 Data extraction

For quality assurance purposes, authors will pilot a customised data extraction template (see Appendix III) by independently reviewing five randomly selected studies. The researchers will reconvene to discuss any discrepancies and reach consensus. This process will be repeated if

necessary, revising the data extraction template as necessary based on the pilot. NH will contact authors of primary research and reviews for further information, if needed. Data will be extracted on the following:

- author, year, title
- study type
- country of origin
- study aims, objectives or purpose
- population (including age) and sample size
- method
- measures
- attitudes – positive/negative/mixed
- mental health outcome(s)
- results (quantitative or qualitative)

3. Data synthesis

The narrative synthesis will present the findings by theme, using NVivo, to code overall categories. In addition to this descriptive narrative, presentation may include tables and figures, for example, a bubble chart indicating the number of articles that refer to the positive and negative impacts of societal attitudes on the mental health and wellbeing of young refugees over time. The data and significance of the findings will be discussed in the final report.

Declarations

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Full list of search terms and synonyms for each of the four research constructs.

Displaced people	Mental health and wellbeing
Refugee* Humanitarian migrant* Unaccompanied Asylum* ADJ3 seek* Displace* ADJ3 (forc* OR internal* OR people OR person*) Queue jumper* Boat people Diaspora Undocumented Stateless	Mental* ADJ3 (health OR disorder* OR ill*) Wellbeing or well being Psychosocial or psycho-social Stress OR distress Psychological ADJ3 (symptom* OR function* OR dysfunction*) Psychiatric ADJ3 (disorder OR condition OR illness) Psychopathology Social functioning Resilien* Traumatic event* Social-emotional Self-esteem Coping Hope Gratitude Positive affect
Attitudes	Young people
Opinion* attitud* Stigma* Prejudic* Xenophobi* Belief* Supremac* Ethnocentri* Fram* (NOT framework*) Attitude* toward* Racis* Stereotyp* Bias ADJ3 (implicit OR explicit OR racial OR in-group OR out-group OR intergroup) Worldview or world view	Young adult Young ADJ3 (people* OR person*) Youth Adolescen* Child* Minor* Teen*

Appendix II. Full search strategy for PsychINFO.

Population (displaced young people)
exp Refugees/ or refugee*.mp. or exp Asylum Seeking/ or humanitarian migrant*.mp. or unaccompanied.mp. or (asylum* adj3 seek*).mp. or. (displace* adj3 (forc* or internal* or person* or people)).mp. or queue jumper*.mp. or boat people.mp. or diaspora.mp. or undocumented.mp. or stateless.mp.
AND

young adult*.mp. or (young adj3 (people* or person*)).mp. or youth.mp. or adolescen*.mp. or child*.mp. or minor*.mp. or teen*.mp.
AND

Concept (affective attitudes)
Public Opinion/ or opinion*.mp. or attitud*.mp. or stigma*.mp. or Stigma/ or prejudic*.mp. or Ingroup Outgroup/ or Prejudice/ or xenophobi*.mp. or Attitudes/ or belief*.mp. or supremac*.mp. Or ethnocentri*.mp. or (fram* not framework).mp. or attitude* toward*.mp. or racis*.mp. or exp Stereotyped Attitudes/ or stereotyp*.mp. or (Bias adj3 (implicit or explicit or racial or in-group or out-group or intergroup)).mp. or exp World View/ or worldview.mp. or world view.mp.
AND

Context (mental health and wellbeing)
(mental* adj3 (health or disorder* or ill*)).mp. or Mental Health/ or exp Well Being/ or well being.mp. or wellbeing.mp. or (stress* or distress*).mp. or (psychological adj3 (symptom* or function* or dysfunction*)).mp. or (psychiatric adj3 (disorder or condition or illness)).mp. or psychopathology.mp. or Psychopathology or social functioning.mp. or exp Social Functioning/ or exp "Resilience (Psychological)"/ or resilience.mp. or Trauma/ or traumatic event*.mp. or social-emotional.mp. or self-esteem.mp. or exp Self-Esteem/ or coping.mp. or exp Coping Behavior/ or hope.mp. or exp Hope/ or gratitude.mp. or exp Gratitude/ or optimism/ or positive emotions/ or positive psychology/ or positive affect.mp. or (psychosocial or psycho-social).mp.
Limiters
Years 2001 – 2021; human studies only.

Appendix III. Data extraction tool.

Author, year, title	
Country of origin	
Study type	
Study aims, objectives or purpose	
Population (including age) and sample size	
Method	
Measures	
Attitudes – positive/negative/mixed	
Mental health outcome(s)	
Results (quantitative or qualitative)	
Author recommendation for future studies	