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Transition in Occupations of Refugees During Resettlement

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**INTRODUCTION**

Background: Limited research has been conducted in the United States focusing on the refugee experience; furthermore, there is a significant gap in research regarding the impact of the refugee experience on the occupations of refugees as they transition to living in the U.S. One of the only occupational science studies in the U.S. focused on weaving as a meaningful occupation for Karen refugees. (Smith, Stephenson & Gibson-Satterthwaite, 2013)

Purpose: This study seeks to capture the experience of refugees & the impact of country transition on a broad array of occupations. Second, this study’s purpose is to add to the occupational science literature regarding the occupational impact of the refugee experience, as well as to aid in addressing issues of occupational justice. (Townsend & Wilcock, 2004)

Research Question: How do people who are refugees experience their occupations through transition to the U.S.?

**RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODS**

Methods: This research is a qualitative-descriptive study which utilized semi-structured interviews. Questions were guided by the Person-Environment-Occupation (PEO) model, addressing personal & cultural values, environments, & occupational patterns to identify changes in meaningful occupations due to the refugee process. Two participants were recruited as a result of researcher attendance at a nonprofit fundraising event for a coffee company in the San Francisco Bay Area that trains & employs refugees.

**FINDINGS & DISCUSSION**

"P: It’s different from here, here people live separate from their parents, yeah? In Afghanistan people live with their parents. So I would see them every day." [Int 1]

"P: But when you are in Indonesia … I’m just really regret of those times. When you are there, you can, for example, do some online courses or things, but when you are there in that situation … you just cannot focus on anything. Yeah, you just … ah, I have some friends who suicide themselves because of the stress." [Int 2]

Limitations: Study limitations include that large organizations in the U.S. that aid refugees do not generally partner with researchers; therefore, recruiting participants was difficult. The number of participants is much lower than the ideal. One interview is not sufficient to build rapport with participants; a follow-up interview may have been helpful.

**IMPLICATIONS**

This study aims to add to occupational science knowledge. Findings can potentially better inform occupational therapy interventions for future refugees experiencing issues of occupational transition.

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**REFERENCES**


Law, et al., 1996; Braun & Clarke, 2006

*Participants chose their own pseudonym.*

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