Syrian Refugees' Stability and Opportunity in Canada and Implications on Mental Health: A Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

Abstract: The Syrian conflict is a significant humanitarian crisis. An estimated 6.5 million Syrians have been forced to flee the Syrian Arab Republic since 2011. In 2015, the Canadian federal government promised to welcome 25,000 Syrian refugees, and expanded the number to 40,000 in 2017. Since 2015, Canada's intake of Syrian refugees has exceeded 50,000, representing the largest number of refugees admitted in Canada since the Immigration Act of 1978. This paper reviews and analyzes the literature corresponding to Syrian refugees' experiences as they transition to Canada by exploring key topics including sponsorship streams, employment, housing affordability, language acquisition, and educational opportunities. It examines obstacles in Syrian refugees' successful integration into the aforementioned community and social services and underscores the importance of providing financial and material support for language acquisition and education opportunities to improve Syrian refugees' acculturation process. The findings reveal two key themes in the literature—financial stability, and language and education—which are discussed in the context of their implications on Syrian refugees' mental health. The paper discusses how the challenges of integrating into a host country can significantly undermine refugees' ability to transition successfully. The review points to the importance of providing Syrian refugees with the necessary financial and material stability so as not to compound the stress and anxiety being experienced during the transition. The importance of language acquisition and education programs are also discussed in the literature review in the context of better facilitating Syrian refugees' acculturation and contributing to positive mental health outcomes.

Background

An estimated 6.5 million Syrians have been forced to flee the Syrian Arab Republic since the outset of the country's civil war in 2011 (Filler et al., 2021). The Syrian conflict is multifaceted, with various complex causes of civil unrest (Oudshoorn et al., 2020; Podraza, 2018; Sen, 2016; Tyyskä et al., 2017). Chief among such causes are the residual consequences of colonial rule in Syria, as well as the Arab Spring uprisings in the early 2010s (Sen, 2016), described as the "mass movement of revolutions and protests" against governmental misconduct throughout Syria and other Arab countries (Hove & Mutanda, 2015, p. 560). Sirin and Rogers-Sirin (2015) note that the Syrian conflict more directly is the result of anti-government protests that began on March 15, 2011, in response to years of governmental corruption and political repression (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2015). The demonstrators opposed the regime of Bashar al-Assad, the Syrian president since 2000, and called for his resignation and the termination of his long-lasting rule (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2015;

Citation: Cherubini, Anthony Lorenzo. (2023) "Syrian Refugees' Stability and Opportunity in Canada and Implications on Mental Health: A Literature Review." *Spectrum*, Issue No. 11
doi: 10.29173/spectrum201

Received: February 2023
Accepted: May 2023
Published: July 2023

Hove & Mutanda, 2015; Sen, 2016; Sirin & Rogers-Sirin, 2015). According to Spyer (2012), the Assad regime has a "legitimacy deficit" (p. 43) given the suspicions of widespread corruption and a lack of transparency (Borshchevskaya, 2010). The Assads governed Syria for over four decades (Hove & Mutanda, 2015), as Bashar al-Assad succeeded his father Hafez in 2000 (Sirin & Rogers-Sirin, 2015). Hafez al-Assad appointed himself to power in 1971 and remained in this position until his death in 2000 (Sirin & Rogers-Sirin, 2015). The ensuing accusations of corruption and illegitimate governance directed towards the Syrian government are associated with the prolonged Assad regime.

It is significant to note that although Syrian anti-government protests began as non-violent appeals for reform (Sen, 2016), the Assad-led government imposed military force to suppress such demonstrations (Sirin & Rogers-Sirin, 2015; Spyer, 2012). As a result, there was a marked increase in beatings, arrests, snipers, and the use of "barrel bombs and chlorine gas on areas viewed as anti-regime strongholds" (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2015, p. 3). The use of military force "made the situation much worse" (Sen, 2016, p. 6) and, as Spyer (2012) concludes, "clearly failed" to suppress these revolts (p. 43). In sum, the Assad regime's violent response transformed the initial peaceful protests "into a brutal conflict with devastating results for the country" (Sen, 2016, p. 1; see also Ahmad et al., 2021; UNHCR, 2021).

The ensuing civil war resulted in the internal displacement of over 6.5 million Syrians (Khan & Hamilton, 2019; Podraza, 2018; Sen, 2016; Sirin & Rogers-Sirin, 2015; UNHCR, 2021), a combined internal/external displacement of more than 11 million citizens (Filler et al., 2021), and approximately 13 million Syrians needing humanitarian aid (Oudshoorn et al., 2020). The Syrian crisis "trigger[ed] the worst humanitarian disaster since the second world war" (Podraza, 2018, p. 69) and is among the most pressing emergencies in recent history (Khan & Hamilton, 2019; Oda et al., 2017). It also marked the world's second-largest recorded refugee population (Sirin & Rogers-Sirin, 2015). Contributing to the severity of the conflict is the prevalence of war crimes, as "citizens are deliberately starved and untreated for illness due to denial of food and medical supplies" (Khan & Hamilton, 2019, p. 1). The "torture, disappearances, rape and murder" at the hands of the Assad government became increasingly prominent (Sirin & Rogers-Sirin, 2015, p. 4; see also Ahmad et al., 2021). The "unspeakable atrocities during [the] war" (Wofford & Tibi, 2018, p. 182) resulted in unsafe living conditions for civilians, thereby contributing to the large number of refugees fleeing the country (Khan & Hamilton, 2019; Oudshoorn et al., 2020).

In response, Canada declared its willingness to accept Syrian refugees (Rabiah-Mohammed et al., 2022). While the federal government is responsible for the selection of refugees, the respective provincial governments cater to immigrants' language training, education, and social welfare (McGrath & McGrath, 2013). In 2015, the Canadian federal government promised to welcome 25,000 refugees (Agroam, 2021; Oudshoorn et al., 2020). By the end of 2017, Canada expanded the initial intake and accepted more than 40,000 refugees (Agroam, 2021; Drolet & Moorthi, 2018; Filler et al., 2021; Hanley et al., 2018; Tuck et al., 2019; Yohani et al., 2019), while other sources indicate Canada's intake of Syrian refugees has exceeded 50,000 since 2015 (Guo et al., 2019; Hynie et al., 2019). The Canadian government prioritized the acceptance of refugees determined to be most vulnerable, including women, children, families, and members of the LGBTQ+ community (Tyyskä et al., 2017). Moreover, the Government of Canada (2019) identified that of the nearly 40,000 Syrian refugees admitted by 2016, half were above the age of 18 while 51% of all refugees were males. Guo et al. (2019) reported that (as of August 2019) nearly 47% of the 58,600 refugees accepted into Canada were children younger than or equal to 17 years of age. All told, the unprecedented number of refugees entering Canada (Yohani et al., 2019) represented the most refugees admitted since the implementation of Canada's Immigration Act of 1978 (Khan & Hamilton, 2019).

doi: 10.29173/spectrum201

The most popular resettlement destinations for Syrian refugees in Canada are Ontario, Quebec, and Alberta (Drolet & Moorthi, 2018). Syrian asylum seekers settled in more than 350 different communities throughout the country (Walker & Zuberi, 2020). Given the large number of newcomers, great demand was placed both on settlement agencies and broader communities as they were forced to "rapidly expand or strengthen their capacity" to support the refugees (Drolet & Moorthi, 2018, p. 102), often without the resources and necessary means to adequately service them (Vatanparast et al., 2020).

This literature review, therefore, analyzes Syrian refugees' experiences as they transition to Canada. The review examines obstacles in Syrian refugees' successful integration and underscores the importance of providing the necessary financial and material supports to establish language acquisition and education opportunities to improve Syrian refugees' acculturation process. Findings from the review are discussed according to two key themes: (a) financial stability and (b) language and education. Equally important, the review discusses these findings in the context of implications on Syrian refugees' mental health.

It is important to note, as background, that the respective governments in Canada play a significant role in addressing the psychological well-being of Syrian refugees by providing necessary housing, access to employment and education, and social support in order to position refugees in more advantageous circumstances that, in turn, might lessen their levels of anxiety and stress. Government agencies and service providers are commissioned to implement programs and services tailored to refugees' strengths and needs in order to best facilitate their transition into Canada (Cleveland & Rousseau, 2013). A strength-based approach seems particularly beneficial to fostering refugees' mental health. According to Rousseau et al. (2013) and Anderson et al. (2015) respectively, refugee children experience heightened issues related to mental health while refugees are at a greater risk of psychosis. It is not surprising that some Syrian refugees experience profound mental health challenges given the traumatic experiences of their forced migration that may have subjected them to countless acts of violence (Omar, 2022).

Findings and Discussion

Financial Stability: Implications on Mental Health

Issues related to Syrian refugees' financial stability in Canada are discussed extensively in the literature. The research underscores that financial and material instability are preventative factors in Syrian refugees' successful integration in a new host country (Cheyne-Hazineh, 2020; Oudshoorn et al., 2020). Additionally, Syrian refugees' awareness of their lower financial standing inhibits their well-being and emotional health (Al-Kharabsheh et al., 2020), which in turn contributes to an increased likelihood of stress, depression, and anxiety (Sharif-Esfahani et al., 2022; see also Fazel et al., 2012). Many do not have the necessary financial means to meet basic needs in their resettlement (including food, housing, and other personal expenses) because of the high cost of living (Agroam, 2021). Housing stability represents a particularly significant barrier. Unsafe housing, including physical and social well-being, is an outcome of the rising costs of housing across the country (Oudshoorn et al., 2020). Social assistance rates, for Syrian Government Assisted Refugees (GARs) in particular, are a pressing challenge in balancing housing insufficiency and needs. Table 1 illustrates the disparity between social assistance and rental rates in Ontario:

Family Size	Ontario Works Income	Average Market Rent: (1 bed)	Average Market Rent: (2 bed)	Average Market Rent: (3 bed)
5	$1,309	$807	$1,013	$1,170
6	$1,338			
7	$1,338			

Table 1: Social Assistance and Average Rent in Ontario (Oudshoorn et al., 2020)

For those refugees who lack financial self-sufficiency, even the smallest increase in their expenses contributes to economic hardship (Rabiah-Mohammed et al., 2022) and adversely impacts their mental health, given that one's perception of self-sufficiency is an important predictor of mental health (Bridekirk & Hynie, 2021; Cheyne-Hazineh, 2020).

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It is essential to note that Syrian refugees migrating to Canada are offered governmental supports, including financial assistance, to improve integration outcomes (Mahajan et al., 2022). Canada offers two main sponsorship streams for Syrian refugees: government assisted refugees (GAR) and privately sponsored refugees (PSR; Rabiah-Mohammed et al., 2022). The literature suggests that both settlement streams have a direct impact upon Syrian refugees' financial security and integration in Canada. For context, the GAR program subjects prospective refugees to a series of medical and security checks as a process of selection. Significant to the selection process is the fact that GARs are specifically referred to Canadian authorities by the United Nations Refugee Agency based on their need for protection (Government of Canada, 2019). Once arriving in Canada, a refugee service provider assists with their immediate needs and training opportunities (Citizen & Immigration Canada, 2014). As of 2018, there were 26,240 GARs settled in Canada (representing 48.1% of the total population of refugees), compared to 23,495 PSR refugees (Foley et al., 2018). The PSR program, conversely, permits groups of five or more Canadian citizens, community sponsors and/or cosponsors to provide a refugee with funding for up to one year (Citizenship Canada, 2017). The private sponsors welcome the refugee to Canada and provide the necessary financial and emotional support (Refugee Sponsorship Training Program, 2017).

Specifically, Syrian GARs receive monthly financial support from the government for 1 year after resettlement, while PSRs receive support from sponsors for typically 1 year as well (Agroam, 2021; Hynie et al., 2019). According to Foley et al. (2018), the financial support offered to Syrian refugees is typically insufficient since they have profound difficulty securing employment during the first year of their resettlement due to language and health barriers. In contrast to the PSR stream of settlement, which is distinguished for its ability to provide a unique and beneficial form of assistance for Syrian refugees (Hynie et al., 2019), the GAR stream is criticized because "poorer economic integration has been observed among GARs as compared to PSRs" (Al-Kharabsheh et al., 2020, p. 210). This may be the result of the various material and emotional supports that are offered through the PSR settlement stream (Edmonds & Flahault, 2021). The estimated cost to assist one refugee (including living expenses) is approximately $13,500 (Refugee Sponsorship Training Program, 2017). The economic imbalance between the two settlement streams may also be the result of PSRs' access to social capital through their private sponsors, which often is unavailable to GARs (Hynie et al., 2019). It is worth noting here that the monthly support received by GARs in their first year of settlement in Canada is considered insufficient to support Syrian refugees' integration in Canada, especially considering that the majority of GARs lack the social capital necessary for employment and financial self-sufficiency (Agroam, 2021; Al-Kharabsheh et al., 2020; Bridekirk & Hynie, 2021). It is estimated between 50 to 90% of Syrian refugees will transition from receiving the twelve-month resettlement assistance funds to public welfare within the thirteenth month (Foley et al., 2018). It is also important to consider how the literature discusses employment in the context of Syrian refugees' integration outcomes in Canada. Employment rates among Syrian refugees in Canada are generally low (Agroam, 2021) because they lack adequate employment opportunities (Bridekirk & Hynie, 2021). Agroam (2021) cites a 2016 Canadian census that revealed only 9% of female Syrian refugees across the country are employed; the employment rate among male Syrian refugees is 24% (it is important to note that the census accounts for only the first wave of Syrian refugees in Canada). Hanley et al.'s (2018) more recent investigation concluded that a mere 30% (189 of 626 sample participants) of refugees in Quebec were employed. In 2018, it was estimated that 57% of Syrian refugees in Canada were able to find employment within 2 to 3 years post-migration (Bridekirk & Hynie, 2021). Researchers attribute the low rates of employment to a combination of Syrian refugees' lack of English/French proficiency and education (Agroam, 2021; Bridekirk & Hynie, 2021).

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It is also interesting to consider how these rates of employment differ according to Syrian refugees' settlement stream. Hynie et al. (2019) compared the rates of employment between Syrian GAR and PSR resettlements in British Columbia, Ontario, and Quebec and found that 11.4% and 33.8% of GARs and PSRs, respectively, were employed in Canada. The stark contrast in employment rate is attributed to PSRs' greater access to social capital, which may be an outcome of their securing employment through social connections (Hanley et al., 2018). Hynie et al. (2019) highlight the importance of social networks and employment opportunities, as Syrian refugees with co-ethnic friends are more likely to secure employment. As well, Hanley et al. (2018) state that, "social networks are key sources of information and advice about acquiring refugee status; housing; [and] employment" as they can offer "bonding, bridging and/or linking contacts" (p. 124). The support received from Syrian PSRs' private sponsors leads to more employment opportunities, thereby contributing to PSRs' financial independence and an improvement in integration outcomes in comparison to GARs (Edmonds & Flahault, 2021).

It is important to consider too that the majority of employed Syrian refugees typically have temporary and low-income jobs (Rabiah-Mohammed et al., 2022). This outcome is also consistent for Syrian refugees who have higher education credentials prior to their resettlement in Canada; although they "were more likely to be employed, only half of those with a university education were making more than minimum wage" (Bridekirk & Hynie, 2021, p. 295). These individuals believe they are overqualified for their current employment, resulting in higher levels of stress, a lower perceived sense of control, and negative mental health outcomes (Bridekirk & Hynie, 2021). Researchers emphasize that viable employment opportunities for Syrian refugees are limited, as the vast majority of jobs are inadequate to support the high cost of living in Canada (Cheyne-Hazineh, 2020; Rabiah-Mohammed et al., 2022), and Syrian refugees are aware that most employment opportunities are unsustainable sources of income that stifle their career development (Bridekirk & Hynie, 2021). Due to the lack of secure employment and financial stability, many Syrian refugees decide to remain unemployed because they believe that the financial assistance offered by the government is more than what they would earn in unfavourable jobs (Agroam, 2021). Yet, as noted by Al-Kharabsheh et al. (2020), a reliance on social support has adverse implications on the mental health of Syrian refugees, especially males.

Male Syrian refugees who rely on social assistance may perceive themselves as failing to meet the cultural expectation to be breadwinners for their families, contributing to a sense of emasculation that mitigates both their self-esteem and integration outcomes in Canada (Agroam, 2021; Al-Kharabsheh et al., 2020). The high cost of living in Canada places additional pressure on wives and children to find employment, thereby contributing to further adverse mental health outcomes for men (Agroam, 2021; Cheyne-Hazineh, 2020; Hanley et al., 2018; Rabiah-Mohammed et al., 2022; Vatanparast et al., 2020). It is interesting to consider that, despite conflicting with traditional cultural norms, women associated their employment in Canada with an improved quality of life, independence, and social integration (Agroam, 2021).

In addition, Hansen and Huston (2016) and Sharif-Esfahani et al. (2022) examine the relationship between financial insecurity and the lack of affordable housing for Syrian refugees, many of whom struggle to obtain secure housing during their resettlement in Canada. For Syrian refugees, as suggested by Oudshoorn et al. (2020), "one of the most common challenges in the resettlement experience is housing instability" and finding affordable and quality housing in safe and welcoming neighbourhoods (p. 895). For Syrian refugees, secure, stable, and safe living conditions not only lead to more favourable mental health outcomes, but also facilitate social integration into the community (Ahmad et al., 2021). However, it is clear that adequate and secure housing for Syrian refugees in Canada is uncommon given their lack of social capital and financial

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stability (Hanley et al., 2018; Rabiah-Mohammed et al., 2022). Syrian refugees in Canada have limited housing options and resettle in neighbourhoods with a high prevalence of drug use, poor infrastructure, and unsanitary living conditions (Agroam, 2021; Oudshoorn et al., 2020). Consequently, such unfavourable circumstances can contribute to negative mental health outcomes for Syrian refugees (Agroam, 2021) given that they "are living in conditions that are not encouraging for resettlement" (p. 16).

Syrian refugees' financial instability also negatively influences their food security. Limited food consumption is a prevalent issue, especially among Syrian GARs (Agroam, 2021; Vatanparast et al., 2020). Syrian refugees' financial instability may constrain their food selection and consumption (Vatanparst et al., 2020), which is aligned with Men et al.'s (2021) finding that individuals with a lower socio-economic status are more likely to experience food insecurity. Al-Kaharabsheh et al. (2020) similarly found that:

> The risk of household food insecurity was about four times higher for household with an income of $40,000 or less compared to those whose annual income was above $40,000 [and that there is] a substantially higher rate of food insecurity among recent Syrian refugees. (p. 208)

Food insecurity is a risk factor for nutrient inadequacy, impaired brain development, stress, and anxiety (Men et al., 2021). The negative mental health outcomes associated with food and financial insecurity thus contribute to adverse implications for the resettlement of Syrian refugees in Canada (Al-Kharabsheh et al., 2020).

Language and Education: Implications on Mental Health

The research suggests that language acquisition and educational advancement can improve Syrian refugees' integration in Canada. Targeted and comprehensive language and education programs contribute to positive integration outcomes for Syrian refugees (Cheyne-Hazineh, 2020; Hansen & Huston, 2016). Several researchers identify how overcoming the language differences in Canada is one of the most significant and challenging barriers associated with Syrian refugees' migration (Almoshmosh et al., 2019; Chuang, 2010; Walker & Zuberi, 2020). Many Syrian refugees are incapable of speaking English and/or French upon their migration and are forced to learn the language(s) with no prior exposure (Cameron et al., 2021). Proficiency in English and/or French is considered a form of social capital (Beiser & Hou, 2016) that promotes integration (Hansen & Huston, 2016). Overcoming the language barrier allows migrants to communicate with the broader population (Chuang, 2010), thereby expanding their social networks (Hanley et al., 2018) and increasing their sense of belonging in their new communities (Hynie et al., 2019).

Sharif-Esfahani et al. (2022) assert that learning the dominant language advances Syrian refugees' well-being in Canada, as their "stress, anxiety and depression levels decreased significantly … as language level improved" (p. 5). It is suggested that "achievement of competence in the host country's language can be associated with a reduced likelihood of depressive symptoms" for migrants (Fazel et al., 2012, p. 277). Language differences profoundly affect Syrian refugees' daily life in Canada and may prevent them from accessing food sources (Al-Kharabsheh et al., 2020) and health treatments, including psychiatric care (Tuck et al., 2019), which may worsen existing mental health concerns and further challenge their integration (Agroam, 2021; Ahmad et al., 2021). Syrian refugees' proficiency in the dominant language is necessary to navigate Canadian culture during their resettlement (Edmonds & Flahault, 2021). Improving language skills, according to a Syrian refugee participant in Cheyne-Hazineh's (2020) study, is essential in preventing mistreatment within a system "that treats you kind of like you are voiceless or have some kind of learning disability because you can't communicate" (p. 123). Learning the dominant language also improves refugees' employment opportunities, contributing to a decreased (and perhaps discouraging) reliance on social support and assistance (Khan & Hamilton, 2019; Oudhsoorn et al., 2020). Syrian refugees experience a sense of autonomy and self-reliance as a result of becoming more proficient dominant-language speakers, which is beneficial for their mental well-being and

doi: 10.29173/spectrum201

integration in Canada (Al-Kharabsheh et al., 2020; Hynie et al., 2019; Sharif-Esfahani et al., 2022).

To address the barriers related to language acquisition, Canada offers an English Literacy Development (ELD) program for Syrian refugees that "is intended to provide specialized support" for those with "limited opportunities to develop language and literacy skills in their first language, and who have both literacy and numeracy gaps" (Cheyne-Hazineh, 2020, p. 124). However, following the large influx of Syrian refugees into Canada in such a compressed time period (Khan & Hamilton, 2019), the program struggled to provide adequate support and resources to support Syrian refugees' language acquisition (Al-Kharabsheh et al., 2020; Cheyne-Hazineh, 2020; Walker & Zuberi, 2020). Given that many of the refugees in the ELD program had no prior knowledge of English (Bridekirk & Hynie, 2021; Cameron et al., 2021; Oudhsoorn et al., 2020), the inaccessibility of the program was even more detrimental for their integration, as many were left without any means to learn English (Agroam, 2021). Without access to the ELD program, many Syrian refugees did not learn English within the 1-year Refugee Assistance Program expected time frame (Fang et al., 2018; Mahajan et al., 2022; Oudhsoorn et al., 2020). The literature is critical of the unrealistic 1-year time frame, given that the pre-migration trauma experienced by Syrian refugees can impede the process of language acquisition (Agroam, 2021; Cheyne-Hazineh, 2020). It is estimated that refugee children may take up to 5 years to become proficient in English—and for adult refugees, even longer (Cheyne-Hazineh, 2020; Edmonds & Flahault, 2021). The pressure placed on Syrian refugees is harmful across "emotional, linguistic [and] academic domains" and can reduce their ability to speak and write both in English and their native Arabic language (Guo et al., 2019, p. 92).

In addition, the ELD program is also criticized for its inadequacy to teach the necessary conversational English skills to facilitate Syrian refugees' integration (Oudshoorn et al., 2020). The English learned in the ELD program "doesn't translate into academic language and literary skills" (Walker & Zuberi, 2020, p. 405), thereby accentuating existing language barriers that have adverse implications for Syrian refugees' integration in Canada (Clarke et al., 2021; Wofford & Tibi, 2018). Cheyne-Hazineh (2020) flags the need to provide additional support and funding related to these language development services for Syrian refugees. It is also suggested that having a greater number of representatives who speak Arabic would be beneficial in supporting the integration of these refugees, as it would help address language-related concerns (Yohani et al., 2019).

Of equal significance to this review is how the research identifies language differences as particularly important in the context of refugees' education—particularly for children (Chuang, 2010). In addition to the discriminatory practices and experiences that mitigate the academic success of Syrian refugee children (Chuang, 2010; Guo et al., 2019; Mahajan et al., 2022; Walker & Zuberi, 2020), their experiences in formal education become additionally complicated given the adverse implications that language differences have on their learning. Syrian refugee children enter the Canadian school system often without any prior exposure to the English language and Western culture (Cheyne-Hazineh, 2020; Guo et al., 2019). Many Syrian refugee children have gaps in their education caused by a disruption to their formal schooling during the Syrian crisis (Wofford & Tibi, 2018). Combined with language differences (see Chuang, 2010), these gaps contribute to an increased likelihood of poor academic achievement (Cheyne-Hazineh, 2020; Sirin & Rogers-Sirin, 2015). Research suggests that these gaps in Syrian refugees' formal education contribute to additional complications with respect to language acquisition, engagement in education, and resettlement, and "interrupt critical development windows for language and literacy learning" (Wofford & Tibi, 2018, p. 183; see also Cheyne-Hazineh, 2020). In this way, these students must "overcome learning gaps resulting from interrupted access to education" and thus are "catching up to their peers' academic levels" (Edmonds & Flahault, 2021, p. 8). Note also that the research indicates these youths represent "higher rates of referral to special education services and many repeated grades" (Wofford & Tibi,

doi: 10.29173/spectrum201

2018, p. 183). As well, Guo et al. (2019) state that for Syrian refugee children, prior traumatic experiences elicit mental distress that further undermines their academic performance, a point raised by Sirin and Rogers-Sirin (2015) as well. Similarly, Walker and Zuberi (2020) posit that past traumatic experiences for Syrian refugee children are associated with impaired cognitive function that have adverse implications on their resettlement.

As well, Syrian male refugees are distinguished as being more likely to drop out of school during their integration into the host country (Cheyne-Hazineh, 2020). The high prevalence of Syrian refugee males dropping out of school in Canada may reflect the inability of formal education systems to address the trauma experienced by and the unique mental health needs of Syrian refugee students (Wofford & Tibi, 2018). Additionally, the immense pressure experienced by Syrian refugee students (particularly males) to find employment and provide financial assistance for their families may adversely effect their academic success (Walker & Zuberi, 2020), and also contribute to high dropout rates (Cheyne-Hazineh, 2020). Given that education is "one of the most vital aspects of settlement and integration" (Guo et al., 2019, p. 89), its discontinuation has adverse impacts on refugees' integration in Canada. Without the necessary academic credentials, Syrian refugees are challenged to gain social and economic capital (Mahajan et al., 2022), which severely limits their employment opportunities (Agroam, 2021). As discussed in the previous theme, unemployment has adverse implications on both the mental health and integration of Syrian refugees in Canada (Almoshmosh, 2019; Drolet & Moorthi, 2018; Mahajan et al., 2022; Sirin & Rogers-Sirin, 2015), which in turn may contribute to an increased dependence on social assistance (Rabiah-Mohammed et al., 2022).

To promote Syrian refugees' academic achievement and successful integration, it may be necessary to provide additional educational supports (Cheyne-Hazineh, 2020; Wofford & Tibi, 2018). The literature suggests that integrating more Arabic language in provincial curriculums may increase Syrian refugee students' sense of engagement and academic success (Chuang, 2010; Wofford & Tibi, 2018). Additionally, "trauma-informed teachers and administrators, and effective teaching strategies and mental health supports can mitigate the risks of pre-migration trauma and post-migration discrimination and promote improved psychological wellbeing and academic achievement for school-aged Syrian refugees" in Canada (Walker & Zubier, 2020, p. 408).

It is clear from the literature that the respective implications related to refugees' financial and education and language realities are in fact aligned. While there are certainly some significant distinctions among these themes, it is useful to consider the related factors closely. A discussion of the broader understandings of these themes is, thus, useful when considered in a post-migration context. For example, the scarcity of employment opportunities for Syrian refugees is accentuated by their lack of proficiency in English/French and generally low education credentials (Agroma, 2022; Bridekirk & Hynie, 2021). As a result, the relatively few Syrian refugees that find employment are often relegated to lower paying positions (Rabiah-Mohammed, 2022) that, according to Bridekirk and Hynie (2021), represent unsustainable employment positions that do not support career development nor financial stability. The close association between the financial and related mental health challenges experienced by Syrian refugees is especially evident given Cheyne-Hazineh's (2020) claim that English/French proficiency is essential to decrease the likelihood of their becoming further marginalized during their resettlement in Canada. Further underscoring the relationship between the two respective themes, Khan and Hamilton (2019) identify that employment opportunities increase as refugees take advantage of available education-related programs and learn the dominant language. In gaining proficiency in the dominant language and furthering their education, refugees experience more favourable integration outcomes (Hynie et al., 2019). Specifically, refugees become less reliant on social and governmental assistance (Khan & Hamilton, 2019) and have a heightened perception of self-autonomy and agency during their integration in

doi: 10.29173/spectrum201

Canada (Al-Kharabsheh et al., 2020). In these ways, the commonalities across the themes under discussion cannot go unnoticed.

Conclusion

This paper's literature review examines Syrian refugees' experiences in relation to their integration in Canada and the corresponding implications on their mental health. The research identifies that the challenges of integrating into a host country can significantly undermine refugees' ability to transition successfully. The review points to the importance of providing Syrian refugees with the necessary financial and material stability so as not to compound any of the stress and anxiety already being experienced during the transition. The importance of language acquisition and education programs are also discussed in the context of better facilitating Syrian refugees' acculturation and contributing to positive mental health outcomes.

Undeniably, swift action is required by government and social service agencies to improve refugees' mental health outcomes. For instance, targeted interventions can be implemented in public schools across each province and territory to address the mental health of children and youth as they transition into school communities. Service agencies might partner with school boards to deliver professional development to educators so that they might better recognize and serve the unique mental health needs of refugee children and youth. Relatedly, community health providers could reach out to family physicians to provide complementary community-based supports and services to Syrian women and mothers. Perhaps similar outreach programs might be facilitated between community agencies and those employers that tend to hire male refugees. In the same light, social service agencies that cater to the distinct requirements of racialized and marginalized peoples can also play a pivotal role in not only heightening the awareness of mainstream communities but in properly serving refugees that are victims of Islamophobic acts of violence and violations of their fundamental human rights. It is imperative that all Syrian refugees have access to supports and services that recognize the trauma they endure in the process of their forced relocation and, hence, develop a curriculum that addresses the unique challenges they experience in a supportive context. In this way, refugees can feel better integrated into the community and more authentically engaged.

Based on the findings of the literature review, federal, provincial, and municipal governments might create more relevant and culturally appropriate responses to the various barriers discussed in this analysis to promote a greater sense of social inclusion for refugees in Canada. In doing so, the review points to the development of practices to improve refugees' social, cultural, economic, professional, and political status by providing the necessary resources and equitable opportunities to encourage and foster their inclusion in Canada and be responsive to their mental health needs.

This literature review is particularly significant to inform current policies seeking to better facilitate Syrian refugees' transition to Canada. As well, a deeper understanding of Syrian refugees' experiences in Canada can also contribute to more targeted responses to the recent arrival of Afghani and Ukrainian refugees. With a greater sense of appreciation for the financial struggles and language and education barriers that complicate refugees' acculturation in Canada, governments and social services may be better positioned to establish the relevant and necessary support systems that address these challenges and promote positive mental health outcomes. Ultimately, the literature review contributes to the growing research intended to improve the refugee experience in Canada.

Acknowledgements

The research project was funded by the McMaster University Undergraduate Student Research Award. I want to acknowledge my appreciation of Professor M. Savelli's mentorship and guidance throughout the research project.

doi: 10.29173/spectrum201

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