

The Social-Ecological Model Applied to Mental Health: The Refugees of Syria and South Sudan

Najwa Samantha Mohammad

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Camacho-Rivera

Background:

Refugees are subject to stressors which increase their risk of having mental health issues

Conflict related violence while crossing the borders of conflict zones.

The challenges of settling in strange lands and surviving severe living conditions

Objectives:

1. To describe the Socio-Ecological framework as it applies to mental health among refugees
2. To describe the South Sudanese refugee experience and its impact on mental health
3. To describe the Syrian refugee experience and its impact on mental health
4. To make recommendations for effective mental health management and prevention among refugees

Methods:

A literature review was conducted with the guide of terminology retrieved from the SEM

Search engines: Google Scholar, PubMed, CINAHL

Search words: refugee, refugee health, refugee mental health, violence, refugee women, refugee children.

The SEM Applied to Mental Health Among Syrian Refugees

At the Individual Level: Migration History and Experience

Migration to safety often involved loss of loved ones, fear of death, and mistreatment, which can negatively impact mental health

Study: 75% of all Syrian refugees are living with some form of PTSD. 1 out of 3 asylum seekers and refugees experience elevated rates of depression, anxiety, and PTSD

At the Interpersonal Level: Separation of Families

Study: Syrian children who experienced family separation are likely to develop symptoms of depression, anxiety, and PTSD

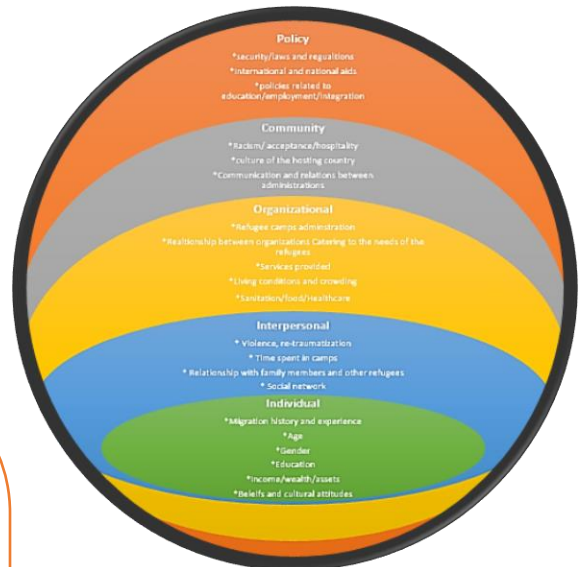
At the Organizational Level: Access to Healthcare

Syrian Refugees are often barred from accessing hospitals and clinics within their host country

Many Syrian refugees frequently avoid reporting to healthcare providers because they lack health insurance or the financial means

At the Community Level: Adaptation to a New Culture

"Culture shock" > depression, anxiety, and panic disorder.



The SEM Applied to Mental Health Among South Sudanese Refugees

At the Individual Level: Age

~ 20,000 children fled South Sudan as refugees
Potential interference with social and emotional development > psychiatric illnesses

At the Interpersonal Level: Violence

Sexual violence is linked to depression, PTSD, substance use disorder, anxiety, and eating disorders.

At the Organizational Level: Living Conditions and Crowding

Unstable living conditions place refugees at an increased risk of depression, anxiety, panic disorder, and even psychosis.

At the Community Level: Racism and Prejudice

Those who experienced racism are significantly more likely to develop depression, stress, emotional distress, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, and PTSD.