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# A Qualitative Needs Assessment of African Refugee Families Living in West Texas

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## ABSTRACT

Refugees bring with them their customs, religions, and languages, making economic, cultural, and scientific and mathematic contributions to the American society. However, the challenges they face create barriers that could limit how much contribution they make to the American society and how much they can benefit from what America has to offer them. This exploratory descriptive qualitative (EDQ) study attempts to describe, using a sample of 15 parents, the lived experiences of newcomer refugees having children within the Abilene Independent School District (AISD) system, to find answers to the questions: (1) What do refugee families say they need to help them settle down well and succeed in life? (2) What are some of the obstacles to settling down and integrating in their new home? The findings of this study show that the central theme of coming to America is to have a better life, either through better education, simpler life style, or good-paying jobs. It also shows that most refugees assume some primary obstacles, such as culture shocks, new environments, sources of income, loneliness, and other related effects of leaving one's native country.

A Qualitative Needs Assessment of African Refugee Families  
Living in West Texas

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of The School of Social Work

Abilene Christian University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science in Social Work

By

Benedict Emmanuel Olohunfemi Richards

May 2021

This thesis, directed and approved by the committee for the thesis candidate Benedict E. O. Richards, has been accepted by the Office of Graduate Programs of Abilene Christian University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

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This thesis is dedicated to my late parents: my father, Ben Emile Ernest Richards, and especially my mother, Gladys Elizabeth Taiwo Williams, who sacrificed so much to give me the foundation I needed for success. You are gone but not forgotten. May your gentle souls rest in perfect peace. I dedicate this thesis also to refugees all around the world, and particularly those living in Abilene, Texas, USA, and to all those contributing to making their lives in their new homes better.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Global unrest resulting from cultural conflicts, social and economic deprivation, and political and religious intolerance continues to displace tens of thousands of children and families around the world. As a result of this displacement, many families and children seek refuge in countries outside the borders of their country of origin. Often, through no fault of their own, these men, women and children are relocated to foreign places with uniquely different cultural, religious, and political practices that must be learned, while dealing with the personal trauma associated with a major life transition. For the adults and children who are uprooted and moved to new host countries, to be successful requires major adjustment, significant supportive resources, and high levels of resilience. Specifically, the experiences of school-age children who are relocated to a small urban city in the southern region of the United States are the focus of this research study. This chapter explains the background of the study, articulates a statement of the problem, provides the study's rationale, purpose, and proposed research questions related to newcomers and their families.

#### **Background of Study**

The experiences of newcomer/refugee students and their families within the local school system are not well-known. Data describing the experiences of newcomers within the school system are needed in order to highlight areas of need, adequacy of resources, and potential gaps in services being offered to newcomer and refugee children and their

families. The integration and full participation in the community by newcomers and their families, according to Shafer and Walsh (2018), is highly dependent on the support they receive from the school and community.

According to the U.S. Department of Education the term “newcomers” refers to students and their families born outside of the United States that have recently arrived in the country (National Center for English Language Acquisition, 2017). Newcomers include asylees, English learners (EL), foreign born, immigrant children and youth (Title III), new American, refugee, student with interrupted formal education (SIFE), and unaccompanied youth.

The reasons why people migrate can be grouped under two broad factors: those that push people away from their homes, and those that pull them or attract them to other countries. Push factors may include reasons such as fleeing crop failure, land and job shortages, famine and other natural disasters, political and religious persecution, and to escape conflict or war zones. Pull factors may include attraction to a better life and economic opportunity; higher quality education; marriage; better physical, political, and social environment; work; and reuniting with family/relatives. This list is by no means exhaustive. Whichever the reason, immigration is an inevitable process in the building and development of the American nation. Immigrants are mostly young and active and their contributions have made the country more productive, becoming more influential in the world stage. They come from different parts of the world with different cultures, thus increasing cultural diversity and richness (Griswold, 2002).

Regardless of the reasons why newcomers and their families reach American borders, the children and the families require community support, cultural sensitivity and

acceptance, and transitional skills. School-age newcomers may be better positioned than their non-school attending family members. While school presents a rich opportunity for linguistic, social, and communal support as well as vocational training opportunities, more information is needed to understand the experiences of newcomer students and their families who are situated in smaller urban communities. This proposed study is a small but deliberate step in this direction.

### **Problem Statement/Current Situation**

Immigrants face challenges that create barriers to settling down in their new home and succeeding in life. Foremost is the language barrier. In 2019, immigrants in the United States numbered 44.9. Less than 1 percent of these were under age 5. About half of those were not English proficient (Batalova et al., 2021). The most commonly spoken languages in the United States other than English were Spanish (62%), followed by Chinese (5%). Next is Tagalog with almost 3 percent, and Vietnamese, Arabic, French, and Korean follow with about 2 percent each (Batalova et al., 2021). Whether they are pushed away from their countries or attracted by what the United States of America has to offer, immigrants bring with them their customs, religions, and languages, making economic, cultural, and scientific and mathematic contributions to the American society. But the barriers they face could limit how much contribution they make to the American society and how much they can benefit from what America has to offer them. When the immigrant is a refugee, language is not the only barrier that should be considered.

By definition, a *refugee* is a person who has fled his or her country of origin because of past persecution or a fear of future persecution based upon race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group (U.S.

Citizenship and Immigration Services [USCIS], 2015a). These refugees endure treacherous journeys, in addition to wars, persecutions, and changes in their family's relational, social and cultural lives that result in traumatic experiences that must also be considered, if these newcomers are to succeed. The implications of these experiences have far-reaching implications and affect the mental life of the refugee and thus their organization and function (Luci, 2020).

In 2019, 7.7% of the students enrolled within the Abilene Independent School District (AISD) had limited English proficiency (Abilene Independent School District, n.d.). Refugee students fall within this category. In preparation for this research, I visited schools that host the newcomers within AISD to talk with teachers involved in the ESL program. The aim was to get a basic understanding from the perspective of those that meet with refugee students on a regular basis, what barriers and supports exists for refugee students and their families and the benefit they observe students and families receive from services offered by the school.

Apart from language, there were many other barriers that these teachers observed. Some of the refugee students have never attended school before coming to the United States, and neither have some parents. This resulting illiteracy means a big education gap when refugee students are placed in grade levels based on their chronological age rather than skill level. This illiteracy or low-level literacy, coupled with cultural differences, makes it difficult for students and their parents to get involved and participate in meaningful school social activities that could be of added benefit. Lack of parent involvement also means that they cannot advocate for their children when there is a legitimate need to do so. Refugee students and their parents struggle to understand the

American culture and school system. Lack of parental education affects the type of employment they can find and, therefore, their income levels. Low-paying jobs and inadequate finances mean that some refugee students have to work and attend school to help the family financially. These barriers, added to their traumatic past, lead to low self-esteem and lack of confidence, which serve as significant stumbling blocks to students' success. Shafer and Walsh (2018) identified the lasting impact of trauma on refugee students to be that they tend to be fearful of interacting with fellow students and teachers, have less academic knowledge than their U.S. peers, and struggle to learn English. While a significantly important factor, ESL programs alone seem not enough to help these newcomer students to learn the requisite cultural and social norms necessary to succeed in their new homes.

### **Purpose of Research**

The purpose of this exploratory descriptive qualitative (EDQ) study is to describe the lived experiences of newcomer refugees within the AISD system and explore the need for culturally sensitive trauma-informed services. Contemporary research in the area of newcomer services suggests that a trauma-informed services approach may help address barriers identified by refugees who have gone through traumatic experiences before arriving in the United States. Shafer and Walsh (2018) suggest that the school and community can help students and their families overcome trauma by moving beyond politics, making family support a priority, developing awareness and sensitivity training for staff and community members, educating for diversity, listening to immigrant children, pairing students with mentors who are of the same racial and ethnic background, and providing college and career planning.

### **Importance of This Research**

This study is an important initial step in gathering necessary information about the experiences of newcomer children and families and their engagement with AISD. The findings of this study may have implications for current and future AISD programming and staff training, as well as culturally sensitive, trauma-informed, and student-family centered practice strategies. The findings of this study are potentially far-reaching and may inform a need for such programs and services as AISD Student and Family Support Services and ESL. These findings may also foster future inter-agency collaborations with the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and local African American/Black civic, religious organizations, and youth groups.

### **Research Problem/Questions**

In describing the lived experiences of newcomer refugees within the AISD system, this research seeks to find answers to the questions: (1) What do refugee families say they need to help them settle down well and succeed in life? (2) What are some of the obstacles to settling down and integrating in their new home?

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

In modern times, immigration, as well as the change in its global dynamic, has been a highly crucial topic. There have been recent large-scale immigrations that have overwhelmed many different governments across the globe, particularly in Europe and North America. As a result, immigration, alongside security and the economy, has become one of the main topics of political campaigns in the U.S. and across Europe. The examination of the root causes driving individuals to immigrate has been crucial in fully understanding global migration. In the migration context, the pull factors are reasons why people would like to come to new countries while push factors cause individuals to flee their birth countries. Such pull and push factors in migration can be political, social, environmental, and/or economic.

There are numerous economic and non-economic factors that contribute to immigration. Some of those factors include better living standards, desire to obtain higher wage rates, better job opportunities, quality education and healthcare and/or escaping persecution, genocide, ethnic cleansing and war, political control, and natural disasters (Garrett, 2006). Immigration has become increasingly common across the globe throughout history due to improved technology and transportation. This literature review addresses these research questions: (1) What do refugee families say they need to help them settle down well and succeed in life? (2) What are some of the obstacles to settling down and integrating in their new home?

## **Categories of Immigrants**

People migrate to other countries or regions for many reasons, which can be addressed by looking at the categories of immigrants. The four main classifications are family-based immigrants, economic immigrants, humanitarian immigrants, and refugees.

### **Family-Based Immigration**

The United States immigration policies favor immigrants who have family connections to American citizen as opposed to skilled-based migrants (Gubernskaya & Dreby, 2017). Family-based immigration policies allow U.S. permanent residents and citizens to petition the government to permit immediate relatives to move to the United States. Family-based immigration (which includes family reunification), admission of persons with needed skills, refugee protection, and country-of-origin diversity, makes up two-thirds of all legal permanent immigration (Kandel, 2014). The resident or lawful permanent residents can support their adopted and biological child, spouse, partner, or any other qualified relative to be granted permanent resident status.

### **Economic or Employment-Based Immigration**

U.S. immigration law considers both temporary and permanent placements for foreign laborers. There are various visas accessible, depending upon the kind of work that the individual performs and other variables. For instance, there are various visas for ranch laborers, athletes, engineers, and numerous sorts of laborers. Immigrants are essential to enhancing the nation's influence in the world (Griswold, 2002). Foreigners who get a work visa are regularly supported by a particular employer, and a change in employment status could mean losing a visa. Additionally, foreign students wishing to attend a university in the U.S. should likewise get a visa to do so (USCIS, 2015b). After they have

graduated, it may be possible for them to convert the student visa into an employment-based visa. The term “economic immigrants” refers to skilled workers, those with sufficient work experience in specialized sectors, and those who qualify under one of the business categories.

### **Humanitarian and Compassionate Applicants**

Immigrants are allowed to seek refuge in the United States in the event that their country is too precarious to consider returning or if there is a fear of mistreatment upon return. This sort of immigration petition is generally recorded in another country. On the other hand, even though asylum is the same as refugee status, asylum is sought from people who are already within the United States (USCIS, 2015a). The immigration law requires such people to petition for shelter or asylum within a year of showing up in the United States; in any case, their request can be consequently dismissed. An attorney may help with drafting a request for refugee status or asylum.

### **Refugee Class**

The refugee class refers to a category that belongs to immigrants who should be given protection (USCIS, 2015b). Because of security reasons, they are afraid of returning and cannot go back to their nation of origin. As a result, they wish to settle within a foreign country. The permanent residents and citizens can support individuals from abroad who meet all requirements to go to their country as refugees or asylum seekers who are getting away from mistreatment, torment, or pitiless and unusual punishment.

## **Reasons for Migration**

Understanding the drivers behind immigration is crucial in finding out the specific reasons people immigrate. In general, individuals move for two reasons: to attain better living conditions and/or in response to troublesome conditions. The issue of push and pull factors, conditions that invigorate displacement and movement, assume a critical part in the decision-making process of relocation, as well as picking a destination (Justice for Immigrants, 2017).

Migration offers variety, multiculturalism, monetary freedoms, as well as saves lives (Birman et al., 2007). Movement can likewise change financial establishments and socioeconomics. It can clear the route for illegal exploitation and unregulated migration, bringing about worries about public personality and state sway. There is an immense number of reasons and motivations behind why people migrate. They can be gathered together in two classifications: willful movement and constrained migration (Ellis et al., 2020).

### **Economic Migration**

Here, people migrate for business and job opportunities (Justice for Immigrants, 2017). This type of migration is attributed to the movement of people to look for work in addition to following a specific career path. Besides, people move to offer more opportunities to their kids. They migrate with the hope and knowledge that they will have more opportunities in their specific fields in foreign countries than at home. However, some people move after they have received employment in foreign countries.

There are the individuals who need schooling for their kids who show up at the new land prepared to forfeit everything to accomplish this objective (Justice for

Immigrants, 2017). When they show up, they will land more than one position, send their kids to class (normally private), and nearly drive themselves to an early grave in their work to give this training. Parents often make hard decisions to move to other countries for their children to benefit from social amenities like plentiful job opportunities and superior education.

There are also adventurous students who decide to study overseas because of more superior instructive opportunities than in their nations of origin (Friedlander, 1991). Once they have finished their studies abroad, they enjoy the new places and decide to extend their stay permanently or indefinitely. However, there are people who migrate due to the thrill of living in new and exciting places.

### **Social Migration**

Individuals who move someplace to be nearer to loved ones or for superior personal satisfaction participate in social migration. People living in countries with limited access to healthcare are forced to move to others especially when they are suffering from serious health problems. Besides, people move to have a better quality of life. In the current globalized world, people engage in long-distance dating (Justice for Immigrants, 2017). However, for couples who are prepared to get married, it is significantly simpler on the wallet to relocate to be together. People who are in poor countries move to developed ones to get a higher standard of living in terms of money as well as healthier, cleaner, and better conditions.

### **Political Migration**

There are also other cases in which people move from their countries to escape war or political persecution. Besides, others migrate to avoid being subjected to the

persecution that the regime perpetrates on the ground of nationality, religion, race, and participation in specific political opinions or social groups (Justice for Immigrants, 2017).

### **Environmental Causes of Migration**

Migration of people can also be caused by environmental factors, including natural disasters like flooding. Cataclysmic events, disintegration, and different variables resulting from environmental change are genuine dangers that have disproportionate effects on people who live in neediness. Individuals and groups of people who belong to this group are regarded as climate refugees. Climate change has a responsibility for immigration as it forces people to move from their homes (Justice for Immigrants, 2017). Nature sometimes strikes back, rendering man helpless and homeless.

### **The Refugee's Journey to a New Home**

Migration refers to a tripartite procedure that consists of stressors experienced before they move (pre-migration), during the movement (in-journey), and after settling in other countries (post-migration) (Franco, 2018). Displaced people in any part of the world start excursion to their new home, with mixed sensations of satisfaction, bitterness, and excitement. The experience of being an immigrant and refugee can incorporate numerous misfortunes and potential injuries considering the three phases of the refugee journey. This section reviews the literature that describes the experiences of refugees at different stages of their journey.

### **Leaving the Home Country**

The refugee students and their families may experience the need to escape their homes, loss of close family and/or parent, loss of companions, exposure to war, or witness of brutality, torture, or other forms of violence (Wanna et al., 2019). Besides,

broader supports—such as more distant family, neighbors, or community supports—are frequently broken and inaccessible, which further worsen their situation. Caring grown-ups, who once may have had the option to offer reliable solace, become less accessible despite other survival threats which increases parent distress (Somo, 2020). Moreover, the refugees experience loss of feeling of security, commonality, trust in self as well as other people, deficiency of consistency and prosperity, unexpected changes in connection figures and connections, loss of sensation of having the option to make a change (Hussein, 1997). There is also an increased likelihood of developmental vulnerability to horrible encounters; for instance, young children are especially defenseless against war-related injury, given their restricted psychological structures (Seddio, 2017). The risk or vulnerability to the above misfortunes or injuries is reliant on the age, culture, intellectual ability, adapting techniques, and parental help of the student refugee.

### **Journey to New Home**

Faced with numerous challenges in their home countries, the individuals and families have to prepare to set out on a risky excursion to their new homes (Oztabak, 2020). In transit, they have to endure hazardous seas or border crossings. They may also have to brave beatings by police and harsh treatment by local residents. Also, they have to persevere through incalculable miles by walking day and nights exposed to the elements. In nations where there is no way to officially enroll or potentially apply for refugee status, individuals are considered to be living unlawfully by that government (Adelman & Taylor, 2008). This leaves numerous individuals without legitimate insurance, admittance to work, food, sufficient asylum, or clinical consideration. When this happens, individuals and families can be helpless against exploitation, abuse,

detainment, and capture (Luci, 2020). They can be compelled to get back to their nation of origin. Individuals looking for shelter in metropolitan zones regularly report segregation and provocation, lack of affordable housing and food, labor exploitation and/or sexual exploitation, sexual and gender-based harassment and violence, and limited or no access to education or medical care.

On the other hand, there is regularly a period of extra stressors, such as loss of a sense of place, long delays, accidental separation from family, and purposeful separation from family to keep the student refugee safe (Kia-Keating & Ellis, 2007). This might be in the hands of smugglers, to help improve refugee status, or in light of the fact that the family can only afford to send away one individual.

The refugees and those who are seeking asylum tend to undertake a very long and dangerous journey from their countries of birth to foreign ones. Asian countries, European countries, and some African nations as well as those in the Middle East have numerous land borders, which implies that those who are fleeing or seeking asylum can easily drive or walk to a nearby country. However, in some cases, streams as well as mountain ranges make a characteristic line (Dubow et al., 2009). Australia, in contrast to numerous different nations, has no land borders and is encircled by seas. In numerous spots throughout the world, individuals can cross a boundary without assistance from any other individual and at times even without documentation, such as a visa. However, in some places, individuals need assistance with transport to cross borders. If individuals looking for shelter are intercepted, they might be compelled to get back to their country of origin.

Various migrants have passed away attempting to go into different nations. Suffocating or freezing to death in a sealed truck, which can be chilled up to negative 25 degrees, is only one of the dangers that refugees and different immigrants face on their excursions towards nations where they desire to discover wellbeing, security, and respect (De Deckker, 2018).

There are hazards at each phase of the excursion. Displaced people and transients drown at sea; dehydrate during sea or desert crossings; fall victim to extortion and kidnapping, rape and torture; and are shot, beaten, and killed by border officials or criminals. How they move in each phase of the excursion turns into a tradeoff between hazard, chance experiences, and sheer luck (Alayarian, 2019). When confronted with a risky boundary crossing, they do not consider halting or returning because if one makes the initial step, they cannot return. Having spent a significant amount of energy, time, and money in addition to having already been through so much, immigrants and refugees cannot envision surrendering mid-way, even if one of their endeavors is failing miserably. So, they attempt what they think are the safest and most reliable routes and modes of transport, which regularly relies upon what they can bear to pay the smugglers.

With no lawful or safe courses accessible to them, immigrants and refugees acknowledge the dangers of other, more desperate endeavors to arrive at their destinations (Anagnostopoulos et al., 2006). Unfortunately, these unsafe circumstances are normal for those making hazardous excursions to new countries in search of better lives. They know the dangers; however, they are driven on by the desire for a life in dignity and safety that they have not been able to find at home or so far in their excursion.

## **Adjusting to Life in New Country**

After having endured the numerous dangers, the refugees are also faced with numerous stressors at this stage that can become secondary traumas that overwhelm the person's capacity to adapt (Vasserman, 2019). Refugee students may encounter struggles across wide components of family, school, social and individual scenes. Once in their new homes, the refugees have to confront more difficulties such as loneliness, absence of work, and vulnerability about whether they will have the option to get their family and friends out of the war-torn countries.

The encounters of misfortune frequently invade the journey undertaken by refugees. A study by Vromans et al. (2017) on the increased refugee resettlement across the globe has highlighted the mental effects of post-migration factors. Displaced women at risk are defenseless against maltreatment in the wake of having been resettled. Further, gender-based traumas for refugee women have both social and physical ramifications, like community exclusion and pregnancy (Attanayake et al., 2009). In addition to traumas experienced by women and girls with protection problems that are specific to their sexual role and the absence of successful protection that male family members usually provide, the women at risk are also powerless against sex-related basic freedoms infringement (Vromans et al., 2017). These traumatic encounters adversely affect the learning and academic achievement of girls. Consequences of hardships like poverty, the absence of parents from the scene, and depression may create numerous challenges that aggravate problems of illiteracy and educational mobility (Franco, 2018). Trauma-related symptoms manifest in the learning, concentration, and academic functioning of the students.

According to Hovring (2018), youth refugees experience numerous challenges in their new home, as they are seldom consulted and frequently overlooked. People who have migrated to other countries face difficulties obtaining personal documents and legal recognition as well as hardship in accessing quality education, learning, and skills-building opportunities (Umansky et al., 2018). By not being able to fully take part in decision-making, their energy, talents, and potential remain largely untapped.

### **Seeking Refuge**

People experience numerous challenges when they are seeking refuge. When refugees or asylum seekers initially escape the contention in their nation of origin or territory, they look for a place where they desire to shelter and find safety. If that includes crossing a border, the first country that an individual enters and seeks security subsequent to leaving their nation of origin is known as the “country of first asylum.” Most of the world’s displaced people live in a country that borders their own. Individuals normally look for asylum in either refugee camps or metropolitan regions. When people arrive in another nation after escaping from conflict, they frequently do not have identification and/or other official documentation. It could be hard to find shelter and safety, especially in the event that they do not communicate in the local language. Individuals often live for a long time in nations of refuge. Many are compelled to move between nations looking for asylum. Some live in protracted refugee situations, implying that displaced people live in a state of exile outside their nations of origin for a very long time without a drawn-out security plan or solution in sight.

Other refugees end up in refugee camps across the globe. Refugee camps are regularly located near the border of the adjoining nations. Even though camps are

intended to offer insurance and asylum, individuals living in camps usually remain in danger and at risk, as such camps are overcrowded (Bajwa et al., 2020). Refugees living in camps regularly report that people live in a steady condition of uncertainty and dread. Shelter, food, water, and clinical supplies are restricted and sometimes non-existent. Physical viciousness and misuse are boundless, and children have restricted admittance to schooling; they can be exposed to abuse, brutality and abducting, and many become orphaned.

Numerous refugees, particularly young refugees, have encountered injury associated with war or abuse that may influence their psychological and actual wellbeing long after the events have occurred (Brown et al., 2017). These awful incidents may take place while they are still in their country of birth, when they are relocating to foreign countries, or when they have been safely resettled in their new country. The refugee children have encountered horrendous accidents or difficulties while still in their respective countries such as savagery (as casualties, witnesses, or potentially culprits), war, hunger, dirty water, and lack of shelter; forced labor; physical injuries; being sexually assaulted; loss of a friend or family member; lack of medical care; disturbance in or absence of access to schooling; detention; traveling long distances by foot; loss of community; harassment by local authorities; uncertainty about the future; family separation; and living in refugee camps (Boyson & Short, 2003). During relocation, refugee children frequently face the same sorts of traumatic hardships or events that they were facing in their home country in addition to new experiences like detachment from family, loss of family, and detainment, among others.

## **Lived Experiences of Refugees**

Refugees and immigrants go through numerous traumatic events in their journey towards better lives for their families. As a result, they have both positive and negative lived experiences. This section reviews literature that describes factors that contribute to barriers or successes of refugees in their new home, including: refugee support and integration, settlement programs, mental health programs, language, housing issues, and employment among others.

### **Refugee Core Stressors**

After having been resettled in their new countries, the refugee youth might feel assuaged in their new homes. In any case, the troubles they face do not end when they arrive. When resettled in the new country, displaced people may confront stressors in four significant classifications: acculturation stress, isolation, resettlement stress, and traumatic stress (Betancourt et al., 2012). The traumatic stress classification happens when a youth encounters a serious occasion that undermines or causes harm to the physical and emotional wellbeing (Boyson & Short, 2003). Refugees can experience horrendous pressure identified with being displaced, oppression and war, migration and flight, being desolate, and community or family violence. Additionally, “resettlement stress” refers to the aggravation encountered by refugee families and children during their attempt to move to other countries and lead better lives. Some common examples are monetary stressors, transportation difficulties, lack of access to resources, loss of community support, difficulties finding employment, and hardships obtaining adequate housing.

On the other hand, “acculturation stress” refers to stressors experienced by immigrants and refugees during the process of attempting to explore the new culture and the original way of life (Blohm & Lapinsky, 2006). These stressors include clashes among kids and guardians over past and future social perspectives, conflicts with their counterparts identified with misunderstandings due to cultural differences, the need to be regular interpreters for their family members who do not understand English, issues faced while attempting to fit in their respective schools, and the inability to form an incorporated character such as components of the new culture and the past life. Finally, “isolation stress” includes stressors encountered by immigrants and refugees who are minorities within the new country (Alayarian, 2019). The main examples are discrimination, lack of strong social networks, being lonely, being harassed by peers, loss of social status, bad encounters with other people who do not trust them, and the inability to perfectly fit in with the peers.

### **Refugee Integration and Support**

Governments have a commitment to encourage the incorporation of refugees and immigrants recognized in their countries in addition to ensuring the integration programming is largely accessible to all refugees (Fix et al., 2017). Nevertheless, these countries should always endeavor to make prior preparations for the refugees who are to be resettled in their borders in addition to establishing specialized plans to successfully meet their particular needs that they have to identify before they arrive. Therefore, Hammond (2014) contends that the neighborhood networks can help the refugee students and their families to fit in well by giving fundamental connections to the association outside of school particularly to help the proficiency improvement of both the students

and the parents/guardians. Former refugees who have successfully integrated into the new home can be invited to help new refugees settle down well. Furthermore, there ought to be successful after-school tutoring projects and schoolwork programs with help from the local area volunteers. Kugler (2009) shows that joining forces with foreign families is powerful in supporting understudy psychological wellness through producing an inviting school climate, separating the shame, going past the school dividers, working with the strict and social pioneers inside the local area, and perceiving the injury and stress of the entire family. This assumes an imperative part in agreement and supporting the instructive requirements of the refugee students.

### **Settlement Programs**

Resettlement gives refugees and immigrants renewed hope as well as the chance to effectively rebuild their lives after the previous ones have been shattered and their futures placed on hold. The United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) urges countries to build up proper resettlement projects to expand the total number of immigrants as well as refugees who are capable of benefiting from such long-term solutions (Brown & Stepler, 2016). Nevertheless, the countries have to be prepared, plan, and establish longer-term commitment and drive to resettle the refugees and immigrants. According to Walton-Roberts et al. (2019), Government/Resettlement Assistance Programs (RAPs) are vital in offering needed help for the resettled refugees and immigrants to establish themselves in new countries. The programs entail providing income support in addition to a variety of immediate essential services, such as quality education, better healthcare, and good infrastructure and support systems. However, Atallah (2017) indicates that providing direct financial support and funding the provision

of essential and immediate services is vital in making their life in a totally different country less stressful. Besides, RAPs promote the successful integration of the residents into the new country.

### **Mental Health and Trauma-Related Issues**

Refugees need help dealing with mental health and trauma-related issues, which requires the creation of effective school-based interventions for treating mental health problems. The unique needs and desires of refugees demand action and awareness by educators and social workers who are based in schools to tailor services to successfully meet all of their delicate but complex needs after they have migrated and have been resettled (Franco, 2018). The schools have to offer a wide variety of mental health services to help deal with their traumatic experiences. The schools should also ensure effective trauma-informed reaching, strengthen their practice and knowledge, and better support their fellow teachers to deal with diverse students (Pelletier, 2018).

### **Language**

According to Garrett (2006), ineffective English proficiency hinders refugees and other immigrants who move to English-speaking countries from leading better lives. In a study conducted by Birman et al. (2007), refugees recounted numerous anecdotes regarding the issues they experienced in America due to their inability to speak English. Refugees' and/or immigrants' inability to speak or understand English adversely impacts their capacity to lead better lives. The language barriers present an essential obstacle, inhibiting their ability to form indispensable associations within the local communities in which they have been resettled. Even daily undertakings like taking a mode of transportation or shopping for food can be overwhelming.

## **School Programs**

The existence of suitable and tailored school programs contributes to the successes of refugees in their new home. States and local education agencies can improve refugees' lives by being set up to meet and surpass their social-emotional and academic needs. According to Becker et al. (2009), instructors ought to be patient and attentive to communicate effectively with English Language Learners (ELLs). Roxas (2011) shows that it is essential to construct solid networks in government-funded schools by tending to the obstacles that educators face to endeavor to create a successful community with refugee students. This network will prevent refugee students and their families from being the target of repeated discrimination, traumatic experiences, and violence. Refugees need school programs that offer assets that meet their one-of-a-kind formative, scholastic, and psychosocial needs when they arrive. The Literacy, English, and Academic Development (LEAD) program is crucial in tending to the extraordinary social, learning, and social-emotional needs of refugee students who show up with negligible conventional training (Miles & Bailey-McKenna, 2016). This is vital in increasing the likelihood of succeeding in the new country.

Support of the refugee and immigrant youths depends on a complex, multi-tiered system of supports stemming from classroom techniques, youth and families, teachers' knowledge and beliefs, and knowledgeable and supportive administrations (Pelletier, 2018). As a result, teachers have to adopt effective classroom management techniques, address discrimination, and ensure there are a variety of community resources. Further, they should get student and family buy-in to access the mental health services to treat and resolve the traumatic experiences of the refugee students.

## **Helping Refugees Settle in their New Home**

Currently, there is a significant number of refugees and migrants who are forcibly displaced, as compared to other times in history (Ellis et al., 2020). Mass migration of people has been caused by ever-increasing global conflict and instability, so more people are fleeing brutality and violence. Besides, climate change is threatening to make more lands uninhabitable, thereby contributing to the migration crisis across the globe. Over 68.5 million people have been forcibly displaced across the globe, and over 50% of today's refugees are minors (Ellis et al., 2020). Most of these individuals and families go across seas, lands, and borders seeking refuge or an opportunity to survive and ultimately thrive.

There are numerous stressors that adversely impact the adjustment and mental health of the refugees that usually incorporate the social ecologies wherein they live (Wait et al., 1996). Therefore, there should be treatments that integrate services across the social ecology's layers to be able to help them live better (Ellis et al., 2020). Healthcare providers have to adopt effective healthcare models for immigrants and refugees that are particularly modeled to be multidisciplinary and collaborative in nature. Besides, it is vital to adopt trauma-focused and outpatient care frameworks to provide quality care to refugee youth and families (Rong & Brown, 2002). One of the essential parts of effective treatment is the development of a targeted plan to address socio-ecological stressors and mental health symptoms due to the core stressors of resettlement, isolation, and acculturation (Kia-Keating & Ellis, 2007). This section reviews literature that describes programs and activities to help refugees settle down well in their new homes.

## **Community Support**

From the experiences and stories of the refugees and immigrants, Garrett (2006) has identified actions that could aid them in overcoming the challenges in their new homes, thereby enabling them to lead healthy, productive, and happy lives. Moreover, such actions can be grouped into four main classifications: restructuring of the current services and then coordinating them better so that they can easily be used by refugees and immigrants, building new services like interpreter programs and services targeted at helping young people, targeting the needs of refugees and immigrants more directly, and offering better and more information about life in their new countries (Garrett, 2006).

Garrett (2006) suggested that all communities should offer mental care that is culturally relevant and affordable for refugees and immigrants to address their traumatic experiences. The healthcare systems should be able to address the cultural stigmas surrounding receiving mental health services. The community should also create more supports for these people in schools.

## **School Programs for Newcomer Students**

Hammond et al. (2018) show that refugee students need high-quality learning environments in mainstream classes. The positive learning environments should be characterized by supportive and respectful teacher-student relationships, predictable learning environments, and consistent and positive feedback to students on behavior and values. Furthermore, there should be collaborative program planning in which relevant information about students is shared for the teachers to know their students. Programs that have clear purposes for learning should be shared with students where educators reflect with students on what they have learned and discussed the purposes of the

individual tasks. Finally, high support programs should allow teachers to recognize the current level of students in their English language proficiency and then build programs from there.

### **Community and School Working Together**

Berliner (2019) indicates that a new future for the newcomer students can be created using eight main practices. For instance, teaching them to be students, partnering with community resources, helping the parents to support the success of students, supporting the whole child, using liaisons to build cultural understanding and success of students, using multiple approaches in delivering effective English language and content instruction, cultivating supported and qualified workforce, and leading with vision, purpose, and skill (Berliner, 2019). The school has to integrate the fundamental principles of social-emotional learning into its functioning. Refugee students experience deep loss of leaving everything familiar in their native countries, and some have even witnessed torture or murder of their family members. Therefore, trauma-informed practices help to improve their emotional wellbeing.

Moreover, Hammond (2014) argues that the local communities can help the refugee students and their families to fit in well by providing necessary links to organizations outside of school, especially those that support the literacy development of both the student and the parents. Besides, there should be role models, such as successful refugee students, who are invited back to talk to the students. In addition, there should be effective after-school mentoring and homework initiatives with community volunteers' support. On the other hand, Kugler (2009) indicates that partnering with immigrant families is effective in supporting student mental health through the creation of a

welcoming school environment, breaking down the stigma, going beyond the school walls, working with the religious and cultural leaders within the community, and recognizing the stress and trauma of the whole family. This plays a vital role in understanding and supporting the educational needs of the new refugee students.

### **Government Resettlement Programs**

According to Walton-Roberts et al. (2019), Government funded resettlement assistance programs (RAPs) are crucial in providing help for the resettled refugees and immigrants to establish themselves in new countries or their new homes. The programs entail providing income support in addition to a wide range of immediate essential services including quality education, better healthcare, and good infrastructure and support systems. Atallah (2017) indicates that providing direct financial support and funding the provision of essential and immediate services is vital in making their life in a totally different country less stressful. Besides, RAPs promote the successful integration of the residents into the new country.

## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this exploratory descriptive qualitative (EDQ) study is to describe the lived experiences of newcomer refugees within the Abilene Independent School District (AISD) system and explore the potential benefit of trauma-informed services. This chapter describes the research design and sampling methods that will be used for this study.

#### **Research Design**

This research will be an exploratory descriptive qualitative study involving refugee parent/caregiver of a child/children in schools within AISD in order to answer the research questions: (1) What do refugee families say they need to help them settle down well and succeed in life? (2) What are some of the obstacles to settling down and integrating in their new home? An exploratory descriptive qualitative (EDQ) method is chosen as the best approach to this study, as the study focuses on an area that has not received much attention to date (Hunter et al., 2019). This study is descriptive as it provides answers to the question “what,” and it is exploratory because not many earlier studies have been done on this issue (Labaree, n.d.). Exploratory descriptive studies build a foundation for more detailed studies on an issue. An EDQ approach will produce better results that will be appropriate for describing and understanding the lived experiences of refugee students and their families.

## **Sampling**

Participants for this project will be drawn from refugees in Abilene, Texas, that have settled down in the city for more than one year. The sample will consist of fifteen (15) refugee parents/caregivers who have children/wards that are students in either middle schools or high schools that host refugee students within AISD. The sampling method was purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling method in which interviewees will be selected to meet the purpose of the research and to get quality information while making the best use of limited resources (Patton, 2002). I worked with former refugees in the Abilene community to identify participants that would be useful to the purpose of the research. Pre-screening was conducted using telephone interviews.

## **Data Collection and Analysis**

A collection of 15 interview questions (Appendix F) was put together to ask to the interviewees who are refugees that have settled down in the city of Abilene, Texas, for at least one (1) year in an attempt to try to understand the lived experiences of refugee students and their families and how the school district can intervene to make their lives better as they settle in a new home. Oral consents were required from all participants, and they also signed a hard copy consent form (Appendix B) or agreed to participate in the study on an online questionnaire prior to participating in the study.

I worked with former refugees who are now citizens living in the Abilene community to identify individuals that were considered for participating in the research study. Initial solicitation information was shared with potential participants through refugee community members. The methods for collecting data for this study included telephone and Zoom interviews, and online survey. Consent to participate in the study

was obtained from participants prior to participation using the following methods: Online participants were directed to the consent form after reading the solicitation and agreeing to participate in the study. Participants who agreed signed the consent to participate by clicking the “agree” tab/option in the online form. Those who chose not to participate and clicked “I do not agree” were not allowed to continue to the survey form. Telephone and Zoom interview participants in this study provided their consent by signing the consent form after receiving the solicitation about the study from former refugees in the community. Information cards with participant name, email and phone numbers as well as the method for participation (e.g., online, telephone or Zoom) were provided with the solicitation letter. The signed consent forms and the information cards were returned to the researcher through the former refugee community members, and participants were scheduled for interview. The consent form, solicitation document and interview questions were translated into French, Swahili, and Kinyarwanda, the main languages spoken by the majority of African refugees in Abilene, Texas. The information collected are kept confidential to the extent allowable by law. As this study involved human subjects, an exempt review approval was requested from the Abilene Christian University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) to carry out this research before any participant took part in the study.

A qualitative descriptive analysis was used to analyze the results of the study to highlight the main characteristics that describe the lived experiences of refugees in Abilene. Content analysis was used to analyze transcripts from interviews conducted with participants. This form of qualitative analysis is flexible and can be used with any written texts (Bengtsson, 2016).

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

In this chapter, study findings are presented. In addition, key elements of the processes used to analyze the research findings are included and discussed. Given the nature, depth, and scope of qualitative inquiry, the data analysis themes, analyzing codes and a summary of the findings are presented. Also included in this chapter is a comprehensive description of the study participants' characteristics and several figures representing the data.

#### **Participants**

In a study to highlight areas of need, adequacy of resources, and potential gaps in services being offered to the newcomer refugee children and their families, fifteen participants were requested to take part in the study. The study aimed to describe the lived experience of refugee students and their families, within the Abilene Independent School District (AISD) system and explore the need for culturally sensitive trauma-informed services. Fifteen African refugees who have lived in Abilene for at least one year and are parents having at least one child in either the middle or high school within the AISD took part in this study. Ten parents who were proficient in English completed the online survey, while five who were not very proficient in English took part through telephone interviews and needed interpretation through a community member who relocated to Abilene as a refugee but is now well integrated into the American society. Study participants less proficient in speaking and understanding English were

interviewed using an interpreter who was fluent in their native language and English. The participants were of mixed genders and of varying ages.

### **Data Analysis Strategy**

The data analysis strategy used in this research is the qualitative content analysis approach. Content analysis is a qualitative analysis method that focuses on recorded human artefacts such as manuscripts, voice recordings and journals. Content analysis investigates these written, spoken and visual artefacts to identify emerging themes from participants' responses. This form of qualitative analysis is flexible and can be used with any written texts (Bengtsson, 2016). The study used a small sample of fifteen refugees; thus, a qualitative content analysis would offer the best platform to analyze the data. Again, most of the answers were recorded using interview notes, or participants' own written responses to the online questionnaire. Because interviews were conducted separately, participant responses varied and reflected the views and opinions of each study participant.

The resulting data collected from the African refugees living in Abilene, Texas and whose children currently attend AISD yielded 225 responses. This process of analyzing qualitative data involves thorough scrutiny of each of the 225 responses from the participants. Identifying patterns, themes, and codes are derived from the content of participants' answers after the analysis. Thus, this data analysis strategy goes beyond what is said; it also pays close attention to how the interviewees answer the survey questions. Lastly, the qualitative content analysis approach helped to organize themes and patterns into resultant interpretive codes for additional critique and discussion, which are presented later in Chapter V.

## **Data Analysis and Coding**

The 15 items on the survey instrument covered several aspects of the participants' lived experiences and adjustment to their new home community (Abilene, Texas).

Among the initial questions was one that asked participants to describe their expectations in coming to America. Participants in the study had different opinions. For example, one participant in the study described their expectations as "to live a better life, free from poverty and political issues". A second participant, who was much less fluent in English described their expectations about coming to America in much more detail: "To have freedom and to live in peace in a place where there is real justice. Also, to have a job and education for my children."

They all expected to have a better life, either by fleeing from violence and political suppression, living in a new environment or having a better education. The majority sought better education for their children. Others were after peace, a life away from political oppression and poverty: some expected free houses and easy money and life. Others sought to experience new lifestyles, get free houses and good jobs, seek justice, or have a life without violence. Most of the refugees interviewed shared the same expectations, with the main reasons revolving around better education, a better future, and overall better lives.

Table 1 presents participants' written and interview responses in summary, as well as the emerging themes and interpretive codes that resulted from the analysis of the responses to participant expectations in coming to America.

**Table 1***Participants' Expectations in Coming to America*

Quotation/Transcribed Text	Code	Category	Main Theme
A life away from political oppression and poverty	Being in a situation where I have opportunity and freedom	Economic and Political Freedom	Economic Independence
I really want a better life for my children and they can attend better schools, which public education is free in America.	There are good schools in America for my children	Education Economic	Opportunities for Children's Education
I really expect and need a lot of support and resources. My expectations in coming to America is that I will get a free house, a good paying job and some peace in my life after so many years of conflict and fighting.	There are many more opportunities to have a decent living.	Economic Freedom	Economic Independence and Economic Stability Equal Freedom

A second area of focus among the instruments' interview questions related to parents' perceptions of their child's social adjustment, social support, mood and temperament. Specifically, when parents were asked about whether they have observed any change in behaviors or moods in their children, and to describe them, three codes were prevalent. Among the codes that emerged from parental descriptions of their child's mood were happy, mixed behavior, or not happy. Some reported that their children were more optimistic in America than in their motherlands. One reported, "They are happy to move away from refugee camps and finally have a home." Another participant described that their child has become more vocal in this way: "The children's mood has been good so far though they have become more vocal since arriving here."

Yet another participant described his/her child's mood, behavior and temperament changes in a much more colorful and positive way. This parent said,

They have been happy. Because they have better opportunities open to them. It was different before arriving like going to school in Africa is challenging. As a parent you have to be fully equipped in order to enroll your child in school.

Thinking about transportation, feeding, etc.

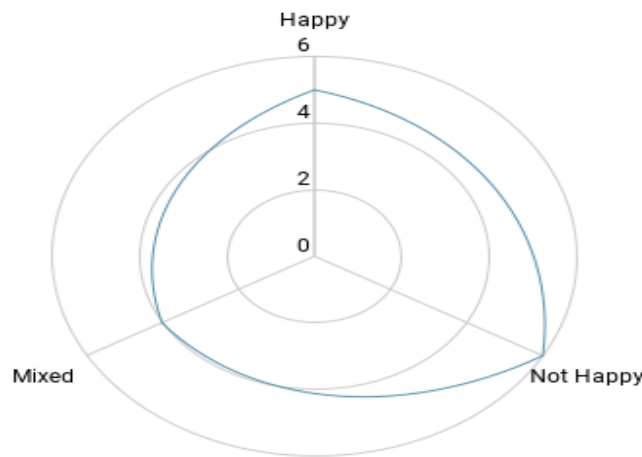
Another stated that they were happy because they had a shelter, internet, water, and electricity. Others indicated that their children had mixed behaviors and feelings.

Sometimes, the children were happy to have better lives. However, their moods changed to sadness and loneliness. This was, in the parents' perceptions, caused by the differences in cultures, an inability to communicate effectively with the other children in their peer groups, and/or feelings of loss when reflecting on memories of their motherlands. One parent had this response about their child's mood: "Mixed mood. Sadness caused by adjustment, and joy to be in a safe place."

Still, other parents in the study reported that the children were not happy in America. This was primarily due to, the parents believed, challenges in communication due to the language barrier. Some had emotional disturbances, and others experienced culture shocks. One parent has this to say about their children: "When we arrived in the USA my children were not too happy. They were depressed because they were not used to the American lifestyle."

**Figure 1**

*Children's Mood Changes Since Coming to America*



This is retrieved from the fifteen responses. The three codes, “happy,” “not happy,” and “mixed,” were obtained by analyzing how the fifteen interviewees answered the questionnaire and the frequency of the words “happy,” “changed,” and “challenges.” The participants were also asked whether their children were having any problems at home and school. Interestingly, all of them said that their children had no home problems; the only challenges they faced were at school. Some said that their children did not face any challenge at home because they held occasional talks about different issues. Others said that their children’s major challenge in school was English because they could not understand what the teachers taught, leading to poor grades in English. Another reported that their child had an overall drop in performance. The majority said that their children had no problems at home or school.

Again, the participants had different answers to whether other family members were sharing the household. Only a few did not have a family member living in the home. Some reported having a close family member living with them, including children, a

brother, or a single family. Those without closed families reported to be living with different people, including a daughter of a close friend, a brother and a sister, a mother-in-law, and a cousin. Thus, almost all interviewees lived with one or more family members in one household.

Family and general support from the community was also an area of concern. Most participants had support from various parties, including families, the community, people from their home countries, a brother's family, family friends, extended family, and fellow country people who had arrived earlier and established their lives in the country. The other participants did not have any support besides their families or themselves. However, the majority needed extra support, even the ones being supported by their families

The interviewees were also asked how they were assisted to feel comfortable once they arrived. Almost all of them said that they found people and traditions that helped them feel comfortable. This was mainly because they found fellow country people in the refugee camp. They ate their native foods, went shopping, spoke their native languages, and practiced their cultures and traditions. Some said that the sponsoring family helped them, and others were helped by the local community. Very few did not find any tradition to make them feel comfortable due to various reasons. Some had a family that had already adapted to the American culture, thus could not help them. The other did not find anyone from their country; therefore, everything was new.

It is also imperative to understand how the children have been adapting to the American cultures. The majority reported that their children experienced some difficulties adjusting to the new culture, majorly due to culture shock. This was evident in

the first days in America. Adapting was hectic and challenging at first; however, most were able to adapt with time. The younger children adapted faster than the older ones, and the children adapted faster than the parents. Significantly few children adapted easily and fast, one reason being that some children had had cultural orientation in their home country before coming to America.

**Figure 2**

*Ease of Adapting to the American Culture*



Apparently, the difficulty of adapting to the new cultures depends on the child's age. The codes "easy," "difficult," and "intermittent" were obtained from the phrases used by the interviewees. The keywords used to formulate the codes include "hard," "ease," "fast," "difficult," and "challenging."

The participants were asked about their experiences in maintaining the cultural norms from their cultures of origin for their children. Most participants admitted that it

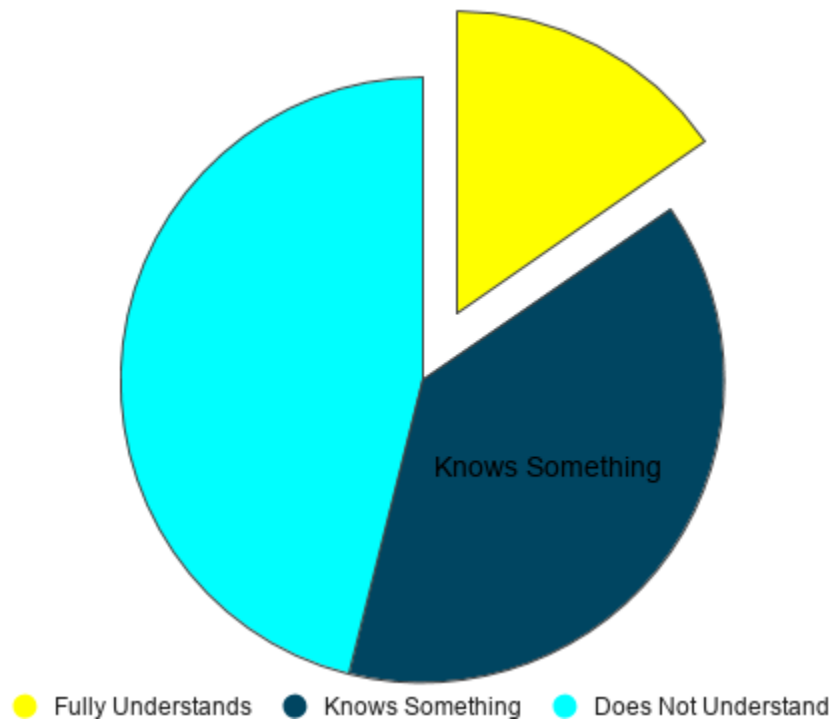
was difficult for their children to retain their native cultural norms. They gave numerous reasons such as immigration into Nigeria and then America and their children not knowing their culture. Most of them were born in refugee camps outside their countries. Some said that it is easy for their children to maintain their culture of origin as they speak their language, eat their homemade foods, and practice other traditions according to their culture. A few noted that they are trying to maintain a basic culture for their children that incorporates both their culture of origin and the American culture.

The interviewees were asked how fast their children were in picking up English and if they (children and family) were able to navigate the city on their own. The majority noted that their children were picking up English fast. They learned and improved their English by watching cartoons, TV shows, and news; reading books; playing computer games; and taking ESL classes. Others said that their children had been in school before moving to the US; hence their English was good. Others said that their children struggled to learn English, and most of them could not speak well. Also, most participants said that their children could navigate the city independently, just a few relied on help from their relatives or friends or applications such as google maps.

The fifteen participants were also asked how well they understood the new school system of their children. Understandably, very few had prior knowledge about the American school system, and even fewer fully understood it. Some admitted to facing significant difficulties understanding the system, but they understood it after a while. Others said that they did not understand the American school system at all.

**Figure 3**

*Parents' Understanding of the American School System*

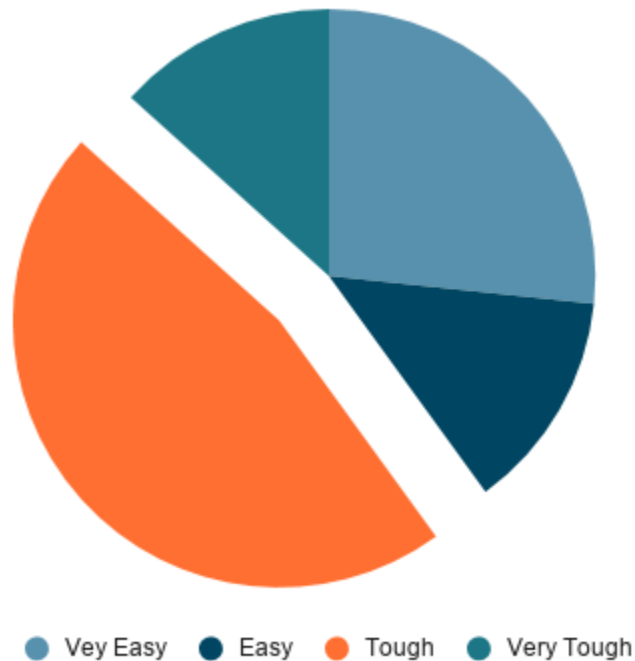


Very few understood the American school system fully. The codes used were obtained by looking for the words which expressed understanding or lack of understanding of the school system from the fifteen responses. The responses were then grouped according to the codes and results presented in a pie chart.

Paying for necessities such as food, clothing, medication, and transportation can be tricky sometimes. The majority had trouble satisfying their basic needs. Some described how they managed to live as a “miracle.” Most noted that the government support they received was barely enough to meet their needs. While some had jobs, sometimes two at a time, the wages could only pay for accommodation. A few said that it was easy to pay for the necessities.

**Figure 4**

*Ease of Paying for Necessities*



The majority could not cater to their basic needs sufficiently. The codes were obtained by analyzing each of the fifteen responses. Most responses were straightforward, while others needed to be scrutinized to understand what the interviewees implied.

Understanding the security of the refugees and how safe they feel is a prerequisite to reaching comprehensive conclusions. Nearly all of them reported to be living in a safe and peaceful environment. However, some of them said that the environments were not the best. Others admitted that they felt unsafe when strangers were around, and others said that their neighbors smoked and abused drugs. Very few witnessed frequent shootings in their area; thus, they felt very unsafe.

Interestingly, very few stated that the children got the help they needed to succeed in school. The majority said that the school was not doing enough and a little more effort had to be put in. They said that the only support the students got was from the family and not school. Again, a few interviewees had children participating in peer groups outside schools. All these peer groups were church-based. Some were choir members, while others played basketball in the church competitions. The majority stated that their children did not have any peer groups outside the school. Some of the reasons were lack of finances, transport, and language barrier.

Lastly, the participants shared their opinions on their children's discrimination, stigma, or unfair bias in school and neighborhood. Very few participants indicated that their children did not experience any sort of unfair treatment or the one they were aware of. Nearly all interviewees said that their children experienced various types of discrimination. A bigger percentage said that the children were criticized by their peers due to their foreign accents. The other children laughed at them and called them names. Some parents had to report the incidents to the principal so that the discrimination could stop or train their children to be vocal and communicate on events of unfair treatment.

From the above data, certain codes and themes are notable. The codes are tabulated in Table 2 below.

**Table 2***Major Patterns, Themes, and Codes Derived from the Data Analysis*

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Codes</b>	<b>Qualitative Data</b>	<b>Description</b>
Social support	Loneliness/sadness	‘...and sometimes loneliness.’ ‘The older child gets angry easily.’ ‘No close family.’	Besides experiencing culture shocks, various factors such as language and finances prevent most refugee children from interacting with others, leading to loneliness and sadness.
	Native culture and people	‘People from our country that have been here before us helped make us feel comfortable.’ ‘We did not get support from others in the community apart from other refugees from our country that have been here before us.’ ‘...we still speak our local language at home and also eat homemade food.’	The importance of finding people from the home country in the refugee camps cannot be overstated. To many, fellow country people living in the refugee camps assisted a lot in making the interviewees feel comfortable.
	Discrimination	‘My child was bullied and called names.’ ‘They look low on them because they can’t speak English and behave like the other children.’ ‘... but they tell me that some of the new refugee students do experience discrimination.’	Being different is inevitable; however, viewing one as lesser and discriminating against them has demeaning effects on the victim. Fair and equal treatment is paramount to building a healthy nation.
	Detachment	‘The youngest is always keeping to herself.’ The child was feeling ‘disturbed.’	Detachment is a sign of emotional distress. Factors such as discrimination and poverty can lead to detachment.

Economic Support	Payments	<p>‘...Very hard, especially if you have a job that don’t pay all your bills.’</p> <p>‘After paying the rent there is nothing left.’</p> <p>‘We have to forgo somethings that we both need so we can take care of our children’s needs.’</p>	Even with government support, the majority of the refugees struggle to pay for necessities.
Education	Better education	<p>‘...my children can get good education.’</p> <p>‘...and provide good education for my children.’</p> <p>‘...have a better education for my children...’</p>	Some refugees come to America searching for better education for their children.
	School system	<p>‘We did not understand much...’</p> <p>‘I don’t understand why the school gives assignment/homework each day...’</p> <p>‘The school is helping but they need more help’</p>	However, some refugees end up failing to understand the school systems and feel that the school is not doing enough to ensure their children’s success.
	Grades	<p>‘He is not having the best passing grades and doing poorly in English, math and science.’</p> <p>‘...they were put in a grade that was above their level.’</p>	Understandably, not all children pass in academics.

### Summary

Most refugees come to America searching for better lives, either for themselves or for their children. Phrases such as “good education” and “better life” are frequent in the interviews. Some even expect to be given free houses and easy jobs. Unfortunately, the distance between the dreams and the realization of those dreams tends to be longer, challenging, and almost impossible to accomplish once they set their feet in their new homes. The central theme of coming to America is to have a better life, either through

better education, simpler lives, or good-paying jobs. Most refugees assume some primary obstacles, such as culture shocks, new environments, sources of income, loneliness, and other related effects of leaving one's native country. The minority of the children in refugee camps tend to be happy; some have mixed emotions while others are not satisfied.

Most children faced some problems at school more than at home. Nearly all participants lived with one or more family members in one household. Some had support from various bodies, while the majority needed extra support. Almost all participants kept their traditions, mainly with people from the same home country. Most parents said that their children had major problems adapting to the American culture. Despite seeking a better education for their children, very few interviewees fully understood the American education system. Notably, most interviewees could not pay for basic needs. Nearly all interviewees lived in safe environments; most felt that the schools were not doing enough to ensure success. Lastly, only a few children had joined peer groups, and almost all children had been discriminated against or treated unfairly at least once.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the research findings and interprets and describes its significance and implications for practice, policy, social work discipline, and further research.

#### **Research Question**

In describing the lived experiences of refugees in Abilene, this exploratory study was designed to find answers to the questions: (1) What do refugee families say they need to help them settle down well and succeed in life? (2) What are some of the obstacles to settling down and integrating in their new home?

#### **RQ 1: What Do Refugee Families Say They Need?**

Using a qualitative content analysis approach, this research found three themes that describe some of the needs of refugees in Abilene based on the responses from the 15 participants in the study. These three themes are a need for social support, need for economic support, and a need for support in order for their children to have a proper education.

#### ***Theme 1: Need for Social Support***

Phrases emerged from this study that show that these refugees need more social support in Abilene. These phrases include: “and sometimes loneliness,” “the older child gets angry easily,” “no close family,” “people from our country that have been here before us helped make us feel comfortable,” “we did not get support from others in the

community apart from other refugees from our country that have been here before us,” and “we still speak our local language at home and also eat homemade food,”

### ***Theme 2: Need for Economic Support***

The need for economic support is supported by phrases from the research study such as, “very hard, especially if you have a job that don’t pay all your bills,” “after paying the rent there is nothing left,” and “we have to forgo some things that we both need so we can take care of our children’s needs.”

### ***Theme 3: Need Support for Their Children to Have Proper Education***

This study found that refugees, after resettlement, are faced with some common issues which tend to hinder them and their generations after them. These issues include language barriers, cultural differences, post-traumatic disorders, and issues with adapting to an entirely new country within a minimal time when their minds are still overcoming the trauma they have witnessed in their native country. These challenges work alongside multiple factors that serve in developing barriers and challenges within the lives of these refugee children. The findings of this study shows that the children belonging to this refugee community have been going through issues in their field of education. These families explained the need for significant support for their children in their field of education in order to ensure better performance and well-being in their lives and academic premises. Phrases from the study that support this need include: “my children can get good education,” “and provide good education for my children,” “have a better education for my children,” “we did not understand much,” “I don’t understand why the school gives assignment/homework each day,” “the school is helping but they need more

help,” and “he is not having the best passing grades and doing poorly in English, math and science.”

## **RQ 2: What Are Some of the Obstacles?**

Besides experiencing culture shocks, various factors such as language and finances prevent most refugee children from interacting with others, leading to loneliness and sadness. Phrases from the participants’ responses such as “My child was bullied and called names,” “they look low on them because they can’t speak English and behave like the other children,” “but they tell me that some of the new refugee students do experience discrimination,” “the youngest is always keeping to herself,” and sharing that the child was feeling “disturbed” all show signs of discrimination and detachment. The refugees also encountered problems adapting to the American culture and problems understanding and coping with the school system. All of these challenges pose obstacles that affect how the refugees integrate into their new home.

## **Conclusion**

Unlike foreign scholars and professionals, refugees come to America in pursuit of a haven. Some are pushed to America by factors such as political oppression and civil wars. Others are pulled by the lucrative lifestyles in America compared to their homes. Thus, it is indubitable that most refugees lack the skills and knowledge necessary to kick-start their lives in America. Very few refugees understand the American education system. In this regard, the country has to implement ways through which these refugees acquire basic knowledge and skills. However, it will be fallacious to assume that schools can transform these students without considering their residential environments, emotional statuses, financial capabilities, and social environments.

Younger children tend to adapt to new environments faster than the older ones who had developed emotional attachments to their native countries. Regardless of this, most interviewees stated that their children faced significant challenges adapting to American culture. One parent stated that her children were more “American” than she. This is one gap that the refugee community fails to fill. The children who migrate to America have different perceptions, feelings, and ideas of America depending on their ages. These attitudes significantly affect how they interact with others, how they grow up, and finally, what and who they become. The majority of the interviewees’ children had experienced, or at least witnessed, discrimination, unfair treatment, and stigma. Most parents whose children did not experience mistreatment were keen to add the phrase “not that I know about,” admitting to the fact that the child may have been discriminated against but did not share the experience with the parent.

Another notable problem is how detached, lonely, and sad some students become after joining the refugee camp. Interestingly, despite nearly all the participants claiming to live in safe neighborhoods, very few children have joined peer groups outside school, and all those groups are church-based. This means that the children do not play or interact with other children outside school except in the church. Socialization, especially in games, is integral in a child’s cognitive, psychological, and social development. Lack of interaction outside school tends to push the students to depression and detachment, as evidenced in the cases where various children felt disturbed and got angry quickly.

Lastly, the inadequacy of resources is salient. Most participants cannot cater to their basic needs, with some describing their existence as a “miracle.” Others are forced to do two jobs, which can only take care of house rent. Thus, most parents need better

jobs. Nearly all interviewees live with at least one family member, and few have external support. This means that limited resources have to be rationed. This calls for a collaboration between the International Rescue Committee (IRC), Family Support Services, local African American/Black civic, religious organizations, and youth groups to come together and build a stronger, self-sufficient refugee community. On the brighter side, almost all interviewees found people from their home countries in their new home. In this way, they are able to maintain their cultures and support each other. This fosters community growth. However, further research should be carried out to determine why most of the participants felt that the schools were not doing enough to ensure the success of their children.

### **Significance of the Research Findings**

Refugee students and their families have varying experiences with settling down in new countries. However, they need love and support the most to be able to settle well. As a result, the research findings have been significant in learning what they need most for them to settle down well in their new home and succeed in life. Individuals move to either attain better living conditions or in response to troublesome conditions in their home countries. The refugees also face numerous stressors after enduring many dangers in their journey that can become secondary traumas that overwhelm the person's capacity to adapt and adjust to life in a new country. Therefore, the research findings provide information for resettlement programs that give refugees and immigrants the renewed hope and the chance to effectively rebuild their lives after the previous ones have been shattered.

### **Implications for Practice**

The research findings are important for practice because they outline how to help refugee students and their families settle down well in their new home and succeed in life. The state should expand the Government/Resettlement Assistance Programs (RAPs) to help the resettled refugees to establish themselves in new countries or their new homes. Additionally, the research findings show that providing direct financial support and funding help make their living in a different country less stressful. Stakeholders such as AISD should work closely with the local communities to help the refugee students and their families to fit in well by providing necessary links to the organization outside of school.

### **Implications for Policy**

The research findings are crucial in coming up with effective immigration policies to address the needs of refugees and other immigrants. For instance, it is vital to create effective resettlement programs to give refugees and immigrants renewed hope in addition to the chance to be able to effectively rebuild their lives. According to the research findings, countries and cities hosting refugees should set up proper newcomer interventions program that will help refugees and other immigrants settle down well and succeed in their new homes.

### **Implications for Social Work Discipline**

The research findings indicate that refugees and other immigrants face numerous challenges. However, the social work discipline is crucial in helping the refugees. For instance, social workers specializing in working with refugees and their families can alleviate some of the challenges through the provision of counseling in addition to

connecting immigrants to valuable and important resources. Social work counselors with trauma training are capable of helping the refugees recover and move ahead with their lives. The social work discipline partners with the city/state to ensure the refugees' access necessary support.

### **Implications for Research**

The research findings are important for subsequent research on the experiences and needs of refugees. For instance, future research should be carried out on the effectiveness of Government/Resettlement Assistance Programs (RAPs) in providing help for the resettled refugees to establish themselves in their new homes. Even though these programs exist, research has to be conducted to determine if they are supporting the refugees and immigrants. Research is lacking on the effectiveness of RAPs in promoting the successful integration of the refugees into the new home. Research is also needed to determine the effectiveness and efficiency of the English as a Second Language (ESL) program in helping refugees succeed through school and beyond.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study was to describe the lived experiences of African refugees in Abilene, Texas. However, it was difficult to get participants that represent all African countries from which refugees in Abilene originated. Of the 15 participants in the study, only 5 of these were interviewed by telephone, while the other 10 participants who were proficient in English completed the survey. The telephone interviewees needed an interpreter to help get the message across to the interviewees who are not well proficient in English. The use of interpreters could have affected the way the message is passed on between interviewer and interviewees. On the other hand, many of the participants that did the

online survey did not give much details to some questions, especially where they were asked to explain. The sampling method did not take into account the effect of the level of proficiency in English or education/literacy level on participants' responses. Also, this study does not take into account the ages of the refugee parents participating in the study or of their children, and the length of time they have been in Abilene, apart from the fact that they have all lived in the city for at least one year, and how these factors could have affected the experiences of the refugee students and their families and therefore, the responses to the interview and survey questions. Therefore, though very significant in understanding the experiences of refugees in finding answers to the questions "What do refugee families say they need to help them settle down well and succeed in life?" and "What are some of the obstacles to settling down and integrating in their new home?", the findings of this study cannot be generalized to all African refugees in Abilene or to other refugee populations. This study is a small step in the right direction but it is inconclusive. Further research is needed on the experiences of African refugees in Abilene.

### **Recommendations**

Refugees face a myriad of challenges in their journey from their home countries to settling down in new countries. However, there are ways in which the school district can help refugee students and their families settle down well in their new home and succeed in life.

- Firstly, the school districts should provide newcomer initiatives to aid refugees to develop English language skills, build or strengthen their native language skills, assist them to acclimate to the U.S. culture and school system, and deliver suitable content area instruction.

- Secondly, the Literacy, English, and Academic Development (LEAD) program should be provided by school districts to address the unique cultural, learning, and social-emotional needs of refugee children who have minimal formal education.
- Thirdly, schools should offer mental health services to minors to help deal with their traumatic experiences.
- The school district should restructure the current services and then coordinating them better for refugees and other immigrants to easily use them, build new, or develop, services like interpreter programs, target the needs of refugees and immigrants more directly, and offer better and more information about life in their new countries. This is vital in helping them settle down well and succeed in school and beyond.
- Also, the school district should ensure effective trauma-informed teaching, strengthen their practice and knowledge, and better support their fellow teachers to deal with diverse students.
- Finally, the school district should take an active role in the provision of Government/Resettlement Assistance Programs (RAPs) to help the resettled refugees and immigrants to establish themselves in new countries or their new homes.

Educational support systems are crucial in meeting the needs of vulnerable groups (Bajwa et al., 2020). The programs ensure that refugees have a wide range of immediate essential services including quality education, better healthcare, and good infrastructure and support systems. Providing direct financial support and funding the essential and

immediate services make the life of refugees in a different country less stressful. Besides, RAPs promote the successful integration of the residents into the new country.

There is a need to engage in the exploration of public awareness, Americans' attitude towards the refugees, beliefs and expectations of the refugees about the future of their new lives, and the scope for behavioral change as shown in the data analysis and the intervention strategies to ensure that their plight is well addressed and that their dreams are met since they were running away from violence and political oppression. In retrospect, refugee immigration is a complex activity that involves many legal, social justice, and psychological considerations (Henry et al., 2019). Hence, it is recommendable that all the aforementioned aspects be integrated to address the plight of refugees.

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## APPENDIX A

### Institutional Review Board Approval Letter

#### ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

*Educating Students for Christian Service and Leadership Throughout the World*

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs  
320 Hardin Administration Building, ACU Box 29103, Abilene, Texas 79699-9103  
325-674-2885

April 12, 2021



Benedict E. O. Richards  
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Abilene Christian University

Dear Benedict,

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board, I am pleased to inform you that your project titled "What do refugee families say are their experiences with settling down in a new country? What do they need most/least?",

(IRB# 21-044 ) is exempt from review under Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects.

If at any time the details of this project change, please resubmit to the IRB so the committee can determine whether or not the exempt status is still applicable.

I wish you well with your work.

Sincerely,

*Megan Roth*

Megan Roth, Ph.D.  
Director of Research and Sponsored Programs

## APPENDIX B

### Consent Form

#### **INTRODUCTION: What do refugee families say are their experiences with settling down in a new country? What do they need most/least?**

You have been selected to take part in a research study. This form provides important information about this study, including the risks and benefits to you as a potential participant. Please read this form carefully and ask the researcher any questions that you may have about the study. You can ask about research activities and any risks or benefits you may experience. You may also wish to discuss your participation with other people, such as a family member.

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate or stop your participation at any time and for any reason without any penalty.

#### **PURPOSE AND DESCRIPTION:**

The purpose of this exploratory descriptive study is to describe the lived experiences of newcomer refugees within the Abilene Independent School District (AISD).

Contemporary research in the area of newcomer services suggests that a trauma-informed services approach may help address barriers identified by refugees who have gone through traumatic experiences before arriving in the United States.

The proposed study is an important initial step in gathering necessary information about the experiences of newcomer children and families and their engagement with AISD. The findings of this study may have implications for current and future Abilene ISD

programming, staff training, as well as culturally sensitive, trauma-informed and student-family centered practice strategies.

**RISKS & BENEFITS:**

There are minimal risks associated with participation in this research study. The most common risk is breach of confidentiality, but measures are in place to prevent that from happening. You may not receive any immediate personal benefits from this study.

However, in the long run, the result of this study may be used to improve the lived experiences of refugees in Abilene and beyond, which may help them settle down well and succeed in life.

**PRIVACY & CONFIDENTIALITY:** Any information you provide will be confidential to the extent allowable by law. No identifiable information collected during this interview will be made public.

**CONTACTS:** If you have questions about the research study, the lead researcher is Benedict Richards, AmeriCorps VISTA member and ACU Social Work Intern, Abilene ISD.

Researcher contact: [ber18b@acu.edu](mailto:ber18b@acu.edu)

If you are unable to reach the lead researcher, or wish to speak to someone other than the lead researcher, you may contact Professor Malcolm Scott, Ph.D., at [mes18b@acu.edu](mailto:mes18b@acu.edu).

If you have concerns about this study, believe you may have been hurt because of this study, or have general questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact ACU's Chair of the Institutional Review Board and Executive Director of Research, Dr. Megan Roth, (Ph.D.) at: (325) 674-2885 or email: [megan.roth@acu.edu](mailto:megan.roth@acu.edu), 328 Hardin Administration Building, ACU Box 29103, Abilene, TX 79699.

Consent Signature

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Interviewee

## APPENDIX C

### Consent Form (Swahili Translation)

**UTANGULIZI: Je! Familia za wakimbizi zinasema nini uzoefu wao na kukaa katika nchi mpya? Wanahitaji nini / kidogo?**

Umechaguliwa kushiriki katika utafiti wa utafiti. Fomu hii hutoa habari muhimu kuhusu utafiti huu, pamoja na hatari na faida kwako kama mshiriki anayeweza. Tafadhali soma fomu hii kwa uangalifu na muulize mtafiti maswali yoyote ambayo unaweza kuwa nayo juu ya utafiti. Unaweza kuuliza juu ya shughuli za utafiti na hatari yoyote au faida unazoweza kupata. Unaweza pia kutaka kujadili ushiriki wako na watu wengine, kama mtu wa familia.

Ushiriki wako katika utafiti huu ni wa hiari kabisa. Unaweza kukataa kushiriki au kusimamisha ushiriki wako wakati wowote na kwa sababu yoyote bila adhabu yoyote.

### **KUSUDI NA MAELEZO:**

Kusudi la utafiti huu wa ufafanuzi wa uchunguzi ni kuelezea uzoefu wa kuishi wa wakimbizi wapya ndani ya Wilaya ya Shule ya Kujitegemea ya Abilene (AISD). Utafiti wa kisasa katika eneo la huduma za wageni unaonyesha kuwa njia ya huduma inayofahamishwa na kiwewe inaweza kusaidia kushughulikia vizuizi vilivyotambuliwa na wakimbizi ambao wamepitia uzoefu wa kiwewe kabla ya kufika Merika.

Utafiti uliopendekezwa ni hatua muhimu ya awali katika kukusanya habari muhimu juu ya uzoefu wa watoto wapya na familia na ushiriki wao na AISD. Matokeo ya utafiti huu yanaweza kuwa na athari kwa programu ya sasa na ya baadaye ya Abilene ISD, mafunzo

ya wafanyikazi, na pia mikakati nyeti ya kitamaduni, inayofahamisha kiwewe na mikakati ya mazoezi ya familia.

**HATARI NA FAIDA:**

Kuna hatari ndogo zinazohusiana na kushiriki katika utafiti huu. Hatari ya kawaida ni ukiukaji wa usiri, lakini hatua zipo kuzuia hilo lisitokee. Huenda usipate faida yoyote ya haraka kutoka kwa utafiti huu. Walakini, mwishowe, matokeo ya utafiti huu yanaweza kutumiwa kuboresha uzoefu wa wakimbizi huko Abilene na kwingineko, ambayo inaweza kuwasaidia kukaa vizuri na kufaulu maishani.

**USIRI NA USIRI:** Habari yoyote utakayotoa itakuwa ya siri kwa kiwango kinachoruhusiwa na sheria. Hakuna habari inayotambulika iliyokusanywa wakati wa mahojiano haya itawekwa wazi.

**MAWASILIANO:** Ikiwa una maswali juu ya utafiti huo, mtafiti anayeongoza ni Benedict Richards, mwanachama wa AmeriCorps VISTA na ACU Social Work Intern, Abilene ISD.

Wasiliana na mtafiti: [ber18b@acu.edu](mailto:ber18b@acu.edu)

Ikiwa huwezi kufikia mtafiti anayeongoza, au unataka kuzungumza na mtu mwingine isipokuwa mtafiti anayeongoza, unaweza kuwasiliana na Profesa Malcolm Scott, Ph.D., kwa [mes18b@acu.edu](mailto:mes18b@acu.edu).

Ikiwa una wasiwasi juu ya utafiti huu, amini unaweza kuwa umeumizwa kwa sababu ya utafiti huu, au una maswali ya jumla juu ya haki zako kama mshiriki wa utafiti, unaweza kuwasiliana na Mwenyekiti wa ACU wa Bodi ya Ukaguzi wa Taasisi na Mkurugenzi Mtendaji wa Utafiti, Dk Megan Roth, (Ph.D.) kwa: (325) 674-2885 au barua pepe:

[megan.roth@acu.edu](mailto:megan.roth@acu.edu), Jengo la Utawala la Hardin 328, ACU Box 29103, Abilene, TX  
79699.

Saini ya idhini

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Mhojiwa

## APPENDIX D

### Consent Form (Kinyarwanda Translation)

**IRIBURIRO: Imiryango y'impunzi ivuga iki ni uburambe bwabo bwo gutura mu gihugu gishya? Ni iki bakeneye cyane / byibuze?**

Watoranijwe kugirango witabire ubushakashatsi. Iyi fomu itanga amakuru yingenzi kuri ubu bushakashatsi, harimo ingaruka ninyungu kuriwe nkumuntu ushobora kwitabira.

Nyamuneka soma iyi fomu witonze kandi ubaze umushakashatsi ibibazo ushobora kuba ufite kuberekeye ubushakashatsi. Urashobora kubaza kubikorwa byubushakashatsi ningaruka zose cyangwa inyungu ushobora guhura nazo. Urashobora kandi kwifuza kuganira kubandi bantu, nk'umuryango.

Uruhare rwawe muri ubu bushakashatsi ni ubushake rwose. Urashobora kwanga kwitabira cyangwa guhagarika uruhare rwawe umwanya uwariwo wose kandi kubwimpamvu iyo ari yo yose nta gihano.

### **INTEGO N'UBUSOBANURO:**

Intego yubu bushakashatsi bwo gusobanura ni ugusobanura ibyabaye ku mpunzi zimuka mu karere k'ishuri ryigenga rya Abilene (AISD). Ubushakashatsi bugezweho mu bijyanye na serivisi nshya bwerekana ko uburyo bwa serivisi bwerekeye ihungabana bushobora gufasha gukemura inzitizi zagaragajwe n'impunzi zahuye n'ibibazo by'ihungabana mbere yo kugera muri Amerika.

Ubushakashatsi buteganijwe nintambwe yingenzi yambere yo gukusanya amakuru akenewe kuberekeranye nuburambe bwabana bashya nimiryango ndetse nubusabane

bwabo na AISD. Ibyavuye muri ubu bushakashatsi birashobora kugira ingaruka kuri gahunda ya Abilene ISD yo muri iki gihe no mu gihe kizaza, guhugura abakozi, ndetse no kwita ku muco, kumenyesha ihungabana ndetse n'ingamba zishingiye ku myitozo ishingiyeye ku banyeshuri.

#### **INGARUKA & INYUNGU:**

Hariho ingaruka nkeya zijyanye no kwitabira ubu bushakashatsi. Iyago bikunze kugaragara ni ukutubahiriza ibanga, ariko ingamba zirahari kugirango ibyo bitabaho. Ntushobora kubona inyungu zihita ziva muri ubu bushakashatsi. Ariko, mugihe kirekire, ibisubizo byubu bushakashatsi birashobora gukoreshwa mugutezimbere ubuzima bwimpunzi muri Abilene ndetse no hanze yarwo, zishobora kubafasha gutura neza no gutsinda mubuzima.

**UMWIHERERO & AMABWIRIZA:** Amakuru yose utanga azaba ibanga kurwego rwemewe n amategako. Nta makuru yamenyekanye yakusanyijwe muri iki kiganiro azashyirwa ahagaragara.

**TWANDIKIRE:** Niba ufite ibibazo bijyanye nubushakashatsi bwakozwe, umushakashatsi uyoboye ni Benedigito Richards, umunyamuryango wa AmeriCorps VISTA akaba na Internal Social Work Intern, Abilene ISD.

Umushakashatsi hamagara: [ber18b@acu.edu](mailto:ber18b@acu.edu)

Niba udashoboye kugera ku bashakashatsi bayoboye, cyangwa ukaba wifuza kuvugana nundi muntu utari umushakashatsi uyobora, ushobora guhamagara Professor Malcolm Scott, impamyabumenyi y'ikirenga, kuri [mes18b@acu.edu](mailto:mes18b@acu.edu).

Niba ufite impungenge kuri ubu bushakashatsi, bizere ko ushobora kuba warababajwe kubera ubu bushakashatsi, cyangwa ufite ibibazo rusange bijyanye n'uburenganzira

bwawe nk'umuntu witabiriye ubushakashatsi, urashobora guhamagara Umuyobozi wa ACU w'Inama ishinze isuzuma ry'ikigo akaba n'umuyobozi mukuru w'ubushakashatsi, Dr. Megan. Roth, (Ph.D.) kuri: (325) 674-2885 cyangwa imeri: [megan.roth@acu.edu](mailto:megan.roth@acu.edu), 328 Inyubako yubuyobozi bwa Hardin, agasanduku ka ACU 29103, Abilene, TX 79699.

Umukono

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Abajijwe

## APPENDIX E

### Consent Form (French Translation)

#### **INTRODUCTION: Selon les familles de réfugiés, quelles sont leurs expériences d'installation dans un nouveau pays? De quoi ont-ils le plus, le moins besoin?**

Vous avez été sélectionné pour participer à une étude de recherche. Ce formulaire fournit des informations importantes sur cette étude, y compris les risques et les avantages pour vous en tant que participant potentiel. Veuillez lire attentivement ce formulaire et poser au chercheur toutes les questions que vous pourriez avoir sur l'étude. Vous pouvez poser des questions sur les activités de recherche et les risques ou avantages que vous pourriez éprouver. Vous pouvez également discuter de votre participation avec d'autres personnes, comme un membre de votre famille.

Votre participation à cette recherche est entièrement volontaire. Vous pouvez refuser de participer ou arrêter votre participation à tout moment et pour quelque raison que ce soit sans aucune pénalité.

#### **OBJET ET DESCRIPTION:**

Le but de cette étude descriptive exploratoire est de décrire les expériences vécues par les nouveaux arrivants réfugiés dans le district scolaire indépendant d'Abilene (AISD). La recherche contemporaine dans le domaine des services aux nouveaux arrivants suggère qu'une approche de services tenant compte des traumatismes peut aider à surmonter les obstacles identifiés par les réfugiés qui ont vécu des expériences traumatisantes avant d'arriver aux États-Unis.

L'étude proposée est une étape initiale importante dans la collecte des informations nécessaires sur les expériences des enfants et des familles nouveaux arrivants et leur engagement avec l'ASD. Les résultats de cette étude peuvent avoir des implications pour les programmes actuels et futurs d'Abilene ISD, la formation du personnel, ainsi que les stratégies de pratique culturellement sensibles, tenant compte des traumatismes et centrées sur la famille des élèves.

**RISQUES ET AVANTAGES:**

Il existe des risques minimes associés à la participation à cette étude de recherche. Le risque le plus courant est la violation de la confidentialité, mais des mesures sont en place pour empêcher que cela se produise. Vous ne pouvez pas recevoir d'avantages personnels immédiats de cette étude. Cependant, à long terme, le résultat de cette étude peut être utilisé pour améliorer les expériences vécues par les réfugiés à Abilene et au-delà, ce qui peut les aider à bien s'installer et à réussir dans la vie.

**VIE PRIVÉE ET CONFIDENTIALITÉ:** Toute information que vous fournissez sera confidentielle dans la mesure permise par la loi. Aucune information identifiable recueillie lors de cet entretien ne sera rendue publique.

**CONTACTS:** Si vous avez des questions sur l'étude de recherche, le chercheur principal est Benedict Richards, membre d'AmeriCorps VISTA et stagiaire en travail social de l'ACU, Abilene ISD.

Contact chercheur: [ber18b@acu.edu](mailto:ber18b@acu.edu)

Si vous ne parvenez pas à joindre le chercheur principal ou si vous souhaitez parler à quelqu'un d'autre que le chercheur principal, vous pouvez contacter le professeur Malcolm Scott, Ph.D., à [mes18b@acu.edu](mailto:mes18b@acu.edu).

Si vous avez des inquiétudes au sujet de cette étude, si vous pensez avoir été blessé à cause de cette étude ou si vous avez des questions générales sur vos droits en tant que participant à la recherche, vous pouvez contacter le président du comité d'examen institutionnel et directeur exécutif de la recherche de l'ACU, le Dr Megan Roth, (Ph.D.) au: (325) 674-2885 ou par courriel: [megan.roth@acu.edu](mailto:megan.roth@acu.edu), 328 Hardin Administration Building, ACU Box 29103, Abilene, TX 79699.

Signature du consentement

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Interviewé

## APPENDIX F

### Interview Questions

1. What were your expectations coming to America?
2. What has been the behavior or mood of the child since arriving in the USA? Is it different from what it was before arriving in the USA?
3. Is the child having problems functioning at home? At school?
4. Are there any other family members living in this household? Tell me a bit about them.
5. Does your family have connections to family or other supports in the community?
6. When you arrived in Abilene, did you find people and traditions that helped you feel comfortable here?
7. How has adapting to US cultural norms been for the child?
8. How has maintaining cultural norms from your culture of origin been for the child?
9. How fast is the child in picking up English? Are you (child and family) able to navigate the city on your own?
10. What do you (parents/caregivers) understand/don't understand about how your child's school works?

11. What is it like for you paying for basic necessities such as food, clothing, medication, and transportation?
12. What is your neighborhood like? Do you feel safe living here?
13. Do you feel your child/children are getting the help they need to be successful at school?
14. Does your child belong to any peer groups outside of school (i.e., athletic teams, religious groups, or social clubs)?
15. Does your child experience any form of discrimination, stigma, or unfair bias at school, or in the neighborhood?