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Refugee Support Staff's Perceptions of Refugees' Physical, Mental, and Social Health Problems in the US

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Aim: The purpose of this undergraduate thesis is to explore physical, mental and social problems of adult refugees living in the United States (U.S.) through staff's viewpoints.

Background: With the humanitarian crisis associated with refugees, it has become critically important to pay an attention to how they live and their problems. And it is also important to focus on perceptions of workers who have been engaged in refugees in the U.S. because little study has been done to explore how workers perceived about refugees in the U.S.

Method: Qualitative description was used. The study participants were 5 staff members who have been engaging in Oregon. Following institutional review board in University of Shizuoka, snowball sampling was used with support through the staff at refugee support center. And the written data through open-ended questions was analyzed using thematic coding.

Findings: Questions about worries/complaints of the refugees were asked in question 1 and 2. Consequently, *Acculturation Stress*, *Cultural Assimilation* (Little information of health care services they know), *Poverty* and *Social Disconnection* were identified. Secondly, questions about refugees who sought healthcare providers for their health concerns and their care services were given. Refugees turned out to have *Psychological Distress* caused by traumatized experiences, depression or anxiety and *Chronic Diseases* (diabetes, high blood pressure, kind of disabilities) in question 3. *Socially Disadvantaged Ones* were revealed when their employment status of the refugees at the center were asked. And *Social Disconnection* (housing, employment, accreditation and language acquisition) was seen as support/help refugees wish to obtain in question 5. Three categories of problems of refugees in the U.S. were found: Physical, Mental and Socioeconomic problem. For physical issue, *Chronic Diseases* was identified. For mental issue, *Psychological Distress* and *Acculturation stress* were identified. For Socioeconomic issue, *Cultural Assimilation*, *Socially Disadvantaged Ones*, *Social Disconnection* and *Poverty* were identified. Additionally, *Language Issue*, *Transportation* and *Cultural Assimilation* turned out to be hindrances to healthcare services for refugees.

Implication: The biggest prospect of this study will contribute to the advocate of refugees' need in the U.S. The results of this research will have to be further used to deepen the understanding and awareness of the situation of refugees in the educational field. For example, further discussion with students and nurses in the U.S. as well as in Japan will be important to raise awareness of the situation of refugees living in the U.S. Additionally, discussions among interdisciplinary teams are expected to be promoted to achieve not only a stronger but also comprehensible healthcare support for refugees.

Title:

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Keywords:

health, refugee and socioeconomic problems

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Abstract Summary:

This study elaborated on the perception of refugee support staff in the U.S. Open-ended questions and interview were conducted with participants and analyzed using thematic coding. Concerning health problems, the subject demonstrated physical, mental and socioeconomic problems from the standpoint of workers in the U.S.

Content Outline:

Introduction

As of 2018, more than 68 million people have fled from home and around 10 million stateless people who have been rejected a nationality and access to basic rights such as education, healthcare, employment and freedom of movement (UNHCR, 2018). Whereas refugees from conflicting zones are suffering from instability at Europe, refugees in pursuit of new life at the United States (U.S.) are also threatened by many adverse conditions. In this study, the problems of the refugees in the U.S. will be investigated from the standpoint of workers who engaged in them in the U.S. And throughout the study, the findings will be contributed to provide people who support

refugees especially healthcare providers more information and raise their awareness about physical, mental and social problems refugees are dealing with.

Body

For physical issue, Chronic Diseases was identified. The findings of the study performed have suggested that chronic diseases (hypertension or diabetes) are major concerns among the refugee community, as several participants remarked. For mental issue, Psychological Distress and Acculturation stress were identified. This study has shown that psychological distress is salient among refugees living in the U.S. As several participants remarked, not only have traumatizing experiences left psychological stress on them, but also the fear for being evicted out of the U.S. is causing them great stress. For Socioeconomic issue, Cultural Assimilation, Socially Disadvantaged Ones, Social Disconnection and Poverty were identified. Firstly, refugees turned out to have little information about how the social services (insurance, health care services) work in the U.S. (Cultural Assimilation). Secondly, those who have no jobs, background of education, insurance and driver license were identified as Socially Disadvantaged Ones. Additionally, when refugees wish to get to health care services, they would be in trouble because Language issue, Transportation and Cultural Assimilation turned out to be hindrances to healthcare services for refugees. Thirdly, the wish for refugees to get has identified support/help for refugees including housing, employment, accreditation and language acquisition. Finally, Poverty(low-income) also turned out to have given refugees worries.

Conclusion

This study has broadened our insights about the issues refugees are dealing with through the perceptions of workers engaging in refugee support. However, further debates among clinical and educational fields should be encouraged in order to encourage students, teachers and nurses to have an impending awareness regarding refugees living in the U.S. However, this study didn't aim for clarifying relationship of intertwined factors such as illnesses or deficiency of social services. Therefore, more research should be conducted in order to understand quantitative data about refugees in the U.S.

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Author Summary: I am an undergraduate nursing senior student. I had volunteered for refugees in Austria and the U.S. My research interests are refugees' health and global health issues.