

Surviving to Thriving: Post-secondary Education for Refugee Youth in Smaller Centers in Canada



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Research Objectives and Questions

To investigate refugee youth's aspirations for and access to post-secondary education in St. John's, NL

Research questions:

- 1) To what extent do refugee youth aspire for post-secondary education?
- 2) What programs and support are in place for helping refugee youth pursue post-secondary education?
- 3) What are the obstacles to post-secondary education faced by refugee youth?
- 4) What recommendations could be made to increase refugee youth's participation in education beyond high school?

Theoretical Framework

Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model

- Individuals & four nested environmental systems (i.e., microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem) are central to human development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

Methodology

Research design: A basic qualitative study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015)

Participants: 20 refugee youths (6 in college; 5 graduating from high school; 6 in grade 10&11; & 3 in adult education programs) & 3 educational service providers

Data collection methods: One-on-one semi-structured interviews

Data analysis: Constant comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967)

Results

Refugee youths

- **Had strong aspirations for post-secondary education**
"After I came to Canada, I thought it might be possible for me to go to university. I see the hope!" – Youth4
- **Preferred for attending local post-secondary institutions**
"If I moved to another city, the money would be more. I don't have that much." – Youth12
- **Believed a university education was superior to a college education**
"... going to university then you can get a job need to use your brains, but you can only get a job only need to use hands if you go to college." – Youth14
- **Many were interested in the nursing program in preparation for a career in healthcare**
"I think this work is not just money. You know, you need to be happy with what you are doing. That work makes me happy. It is what I want from my heart!" – Youth2
- **Eight refugee youths would move to other places in Canada with their family sooner or later**
"The reason why I don't want to stay here is like you cannot go anywhere by car. You have to fly." – Youth10

Recommendations

- **High schools should help refugee students:**
 - Make informed decisions about course selection
 - Set academic and career goals
- **Post-secondary institutions should provide:**
 - Scholarships and bursaries
 - Student Success Program specifically for refugee youth
- **The government should:**
 - Extend the high school age limit
 - Make adult high schools available in NL
 - Further alleviate the loan repayment burdens for refugee families with school-aged children

Environmental systems

- **Refugee parents' high expectations for their children's education**
- **Family financial stress**
 - The immigration loan
"There is a transportation loan. We have to pay back the government, but not every people know about this." – Youth16
 - Little access to information on scholarships
 - A limited number of scholarships specifically for refugee students in NL
 - ❖ The Joyce Foundation Bursary
 - ❖ Ahmed Award
- **Peer positive/negative influence**
- **In-school and out-of-school support for the transition to post-secondary education**
 - Course selection and the credit system
 - University fair
 - University application
 - Exposure to university
- **Support for refugee students in the post-secondary institutions:** insufficient help with course selection and academic English
- **The policies of high school age limit**
"Send me back to Africa because I can go to high school there!" – Youth17
- **The limitations of the current LINC program for refugee youth in NL**
 - Multiage learning environment
"It's hard for me to go to the language school, because everyone there are much older than me, like my mom she went to the language school with me. I felt bad." – Youth18
 - Emphasis: daily life/work & the language requirements for the citizenship application
"They value this benchmark for citizenship, but why don't they value this benchmark for post-secondary education?" – Youth16
- **The only adult education program in NL**
 - The hurdle of the language entrance requirements
 - The self-paced learning environments may be not able to adequately address the needs of young refugees for completing their secondary education in a timely manner

Contact

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References

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