

Recently Arrived Refugee Families and the Experience of having an introduction plan and being in the Resettlement Process in Sweden: a Qualitative Study

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Background

- Migration, in particular involuntary or forced, is known to cause mental stress
- Refugee families suffer from depression and physical disease, such as eczema, gastritis and pain
- The social environment can affect how well families adjust during the resettlement process. Problems with finances, experiences of discrimination and learning a new language can pose significant challenges
- Families have another kind of war to fight: against disrespect, poor jobs and futility.



Background

- Since the educational level of newly arrived refugees in Sweden is lower today than 15 years ago, they face additional challenges in the job market
- As the introduction plan requires active participation, the simultaneous establishment of childcare and school start could cause frustration and have a negative impact on the introduction process



Aim

- The aim of the study was to shed light on the experience of newly arrived refugees in the resettlement process.



Method

- A qualitative descriptive study conducted by interviews with newly arrived refugee families who have received residence permits.
- The inclusion criteria were refugee families that had recently arrived, applied for asylum, received residence permits and enrolled in the Swedish introduction plan.
- 15 families participated in the study, all of whom from Syria. The parents in the families were between 21-65 years of age and had 1-6 children per family. They had been in Sweden between 2-36 months.



Method

- The interview covered how the family perceived their situation, health, struggles and hopes for the future.
- Authorized interpreters were used
- Data were thematically analysed using Attride-Stirling`s approach and illustrated as thematic networks.



Results

Basic theme: Waiting for residence permit

- Took long time to attain residence permit
- Not everyone got permanent residence permits
- Stateless children without ID papers



Results

Basic theme: Trying to find stable housing

- Challenges to find housing
- Moving very often and apartments without proper contracts
- Doubting to find a stable housing:

“Swedish landlords do not want to rent to families like us, since we do not have an employment contract yet and it will take a long time before we do, since we just recently started to study the language (3).”



Results

Basic theme: Initial struggle

- Rough time in the beginning:

“A lot of newly arrived refugees in Sweden say that they are on the way to *breaking down (2)*.”

- Adjustment to new culture och social life
- But life improved after a while



Results

Basic theme: Experiencing the Swedish system

- Gratitude to the Swedish society and its system

Sweden following human rights

“It would be great if I could go back in time and be younger in order to work in this country and give something back (9).”

- Gratitude for schools and financial support
- Sense of stability since you get everything you need



Results

Basic theme: Children`s adjustment

- Children liked school and that everyone were treated equally
- Some children had to switch school several times due to moving often
- Children liked Sweden
- Parents mentioned a different culture and way of raising children



Results

Basic theme: Striving toward the future with the goal of finding a job

- Hard to find jobs

“I will try my best to complete the establishment process here in Sweden and then find a job so that I don't have to rely on the terrible social welfare *net and low benefits (8).*”

- Many were optimistic, about finding jobs

“If you make the effort, you can have a good future here.”



Results

Basic theme: Adjusting to a different kind of social life

- Some of the families made friends with others but mainly their compatriots. One woman said:

“We have gotten to know people here in Sweden whom we did not know before, and we go visit them and they come visit us. They are mostly from Syria and Palestine (15).”

- Participants talked about wanting to make more friends among native Swedes



Results

Basic theme: Mental struggle with a new social situation

- The interviewees mentioned that they were struggling mentally due to changes in their social situation.
- Another participant talked about the mental struggle of having to wait for the rest of his family to arrive in Sweden:

“I have been stressed out and depressed because I couldn't see *my family* in Turkey and had to wait 13 months before they could arrive (14).”



Conclusions

- The authorities in Sweden should emphasize and improve efforts for more stable and appropriate housing, as well as reuniting families
- This will strengthen the integration process, not to mention the wellbeing of both parents and children.

