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Stress, Coping, and Religiosity among Recent Syrian Refugees in Canada

By

Sara Keshavarzi

The current study conducted qualitative interviews with 10 recently arrived Muslim, Arab, Syrian refugees in Windsor, Ontario to explore participants' pre- and post-arrival experiences in Syria and Canada. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded using an interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach, into themes that emerged from refugees' lived experiences. Themes were organized based on the Transactional Model of Cultural Stress and Coping (Chun, Moos, & Cronkite, 2006). The results revealed superordinate themes that corresponded to each of the panels within the theoretical framework. The superordinate themes included 1) pre-migration stress and trauma; 2) identity assertion; 3) post-migration stressors; 4) religious and collective coping; and 5) positive outcomes and well-being in Canada. Pre-migration stress and trauma entailed fear for safety of family members, discrimination from citizens of neighbouring countries, and financial instability. Through enduring adversity, Syrian refugees asserted cultural and religious identities as well as their gender identities. Post-migration experiences included stressors in the form of acculturative stress, discrimination, financial burden, and survivor's guilt and loss. To cope, Syrian refugee participants reported the use of religious coping and collective coping strategies to ultimately achieve positive outcomes and hopeful outlooks for their future in Canada. The findings expanded on existing literature on stress and coping, and illuminated the importance of the cultural and religious contexts of Muslim Syrian refugees in Canada.