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Using the Annual Survey of Refugees Questionnaire to Identify Pre and Post-Migration Stressors and the Relationship with Effectiveness of Refugee Assistance Programs for Refugees that Entered the United States between 2011 and 2015

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The original question for the current research project set out to answer are refugee assistance programs successfully aiding refugees in having a higher income within the United States from 2011 to 2015 and whether this success is impacted by post migration stressors? After conducting initial research, we noticed there was a gap in the research on pre-migration stressors. Thus, the question was changed to include pre and post-migration stressors (Bhugra & Jones, 2001; Wessels, 2014). The Annual Survey of Refugees was our main source of data collection which included question about the refugees prior to and after their migration. The Annual Survey of Refugees was divided into pre-migration and post-migration questions, and control variables. Not all questions within the survey were relevant to the study and those questions were not included in the analysis. The independent variables were the pre and post-migration stressors with reported annual household income as the dependent variable. Prior research has utilized income as a proxy measure of “success” in the United States (Kerwin, 2019). The data was recoded and organized for use in the current study. Some variables had to be recoded like country of citizenship was recoded into region of citizenship to better cluster the large and varied population of refugees. The final variables that were included in the study were region of citizenship, pre-post migration English language proficiency, post-migration education level, and type of post-migration assistance received, along with gender and marital status which were control variables.

The results revealed that refugees who reported speaking English ‘very well’ prior to migration and those that were not currently attending school or university had significantly higher annual household income than those who did not speak any English prior to arrival and attended higher education. Prior studies have also found that a lack of English language proficiency is a significant barrier for refugees in the United States (Hadley & Sellen, 2006). However, annual household income was significantly lower for refugees from some regions of origin and among those who received certain types of financial assistance which is also consistent with the literature (Bollinger & Hagstrom, 2008). There are no current plans for further publication after the poster symposium. However, we are considering conducting follow up research on this topic with additional data and possibly presenting at the American Psychological Association Annual Conference next year. There are current gaps in knowledge and studies about refugees. Refugees are a constant moving population and the socio-political climate can make studying this population both important yet challenging at the same time. Future studies should examine additional migration factors that are associated with financial and other types of “successful” transition/settlement in the United States. However, it may also be more prudent to find a more suitable dependent variable for measuring success within their host country because refugees are faced with many challenges beyond financial ones when adjusting to a new settlement. Future studies should also conduct a deeper examination of the effectiveness

of assistance programs used by refugees given that research shows that refugee households utilizing food stamps were highly likely to still have food insecurity (Hadley & Sellen, 2006).

Citations

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