



Finding voice through narrative storytelling: An exploration of the career development of young African females with refugee backgrounds[☆]

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ABSTRACT

Understanding the complex process of career development of young people with refugee backgrounds, who resettle in developed countries after experiencing prolonged migration journeys, is a contemporary priority at a time when the highest number of people in recorded history is in urgent need of resettlement. Moving towards anticipated futures and access to appropriate work could be challenging for these young people after resettlement, considering the effects of protracted displacement that might have silenced their agency. To propose new ways of assisting young people with refugee backgrounds with such challenges, further research that increases knowledge about their career development is needed. The current research aimed to enhance understandings of the career development of young people with refugee backgrounds through culturally and contextually sensitive exploration of their career stories. Using a qualitative exploratory multiple case study method informed by narrative inquiry, qualitative data were generated through interviews and analyzed using a voice-centred relational method. Each participant's unique career story reflected the operation of various voices, relationships, social structures and dominant narratives, influential in reshaping their future career plans. Findings revealed that narrative inquiry fostered rich storytelling for young people with refugee backgrounds. These findings suggest that narrative career counseling could assist them to re-contextualize their skills, strengths, knowledge and career plans after resettlement. Through such re-contextualization, voices that might have been lost or diminished during multiple transitions have space to re-emerge. This process may be a first step towards gaining a sense of agency that is needed for the actualization of preferred career plans.

1. Introduction

With nearly 1% of the world's population forcibly displaced for the first time in recorded history (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, [UNHCR], 2016), millions of people are migrating to countries that hold the promise of a safe and fulfilling life. Young people with refugee backgrounds face a complex process of career development while resettling in developed countries (Schultheiss & Davis, 2015; Yakushko, Backhaus, Watson, Ngaruiya, & Gonzalez, 2008). The world of work in these resettlement countries is undergoing dramatic shifts with employment markets and educational systems significantly different from

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