

Social Networks and Support to Older People in Refugee Situation in Western Countries: A Scoping Review Protocol

Prince Chiagozie Ekoh^{1,2}; Christine Walsh¹; Anthony Obinna Iwuagwu²; Elizabeth Onyedikachi George^{2,3} *

¹Faculty of Social Work, University of Calgary, Canada

²Department of Social Work, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

³Centre of Diaconia and Professional Practice, VID, Specialized University, Oslo

ABSTRACT

Background: Forced migration of humans as a result of conflict continues to be a global problem. Many of the refugees displaced and made vulnerable by conflict induced forced migration are older adults. These older adults may lose their social networks and support as a result of the conflicts leading to migration and be unable to recreate them, making them more vulnerable. This review aims to describe the social network and support situation of older adults in refugee situation as presented in global literature.

Methods/Design: The five steps of Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) framework to search multiple databases from inception till June 2021 will be followed. MeSH terms and keywords, e.g., "older refugees", "refugees", and "social network", "social support", will be adopted for the following databases: SocINDEX, PsychINFO, Social Work Abstracts, Sociology Abstracts, Social Services Abstracts, Web of Science and/or Scopus, Canadian electronic library. Citations will be screened (title/abstract and full text) using predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR) will be used to describe the process of data inclusion and exclusion.

Discussion: This review will reveal gaps in the provision of social support to older refugees and inform policy development for the improvement of support to older refugees.

Keywords: *aging, older adults, refugees, social networks, social support.*

1. Background

Human displacement is a prevalent crisis affecting humanity globally with nearly 26 million out of the 79.5 million forced migrants considered refugees (United Nation's High Commission for Refugees [UNHCR], 2020). These refugees were forced out of their countries due to armed conflicts, generalized violence and human right violations in 59 countries and territories (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre [IDMC], 2021). Different countries in the world have recorded scores of human displacements. However, Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and North Africa have the highest recorded number of incidents of new refugees as the

* Correspondence to Prince Chiagozie Ekoh. Email: princechiagozie.ekoh@unn.edu.ng
Social Science Protocols, May 2022, 1-7.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.7565/ssp.v5.6692>

Democratic Republic of Congo, Syria, and Ethiopia account for majority of new conflict-induced displacement (IDMC, 2021).

Many of these refugees are older adults aged 60 years and over (UNHCR, 2021). They make up about 4% of all refugees globally (UNHCR, 2021) with a potential for increase given that 80 percent of older adults will live in low- and middle-income countries by 2050 and these countries account for 86 percent of global conflicts and violence (World Bank, 2021; World Health Organization [WHO], 2007) which will lead to further increase of older refugee population. Despite their significant and growing prevalence, this population of forced migrants remain relatively invisible to humanitarian aid and draws very little scholarly attention (HelpAge International, 2018). Scholars argue that this limited attention is because of the assumption that their needs are not as important as other vulnerable groups like children and women (Calvi-Pariseti, 2011; Hatzidimitriadou, 2010).

According to HelpAge International (2018) and Handicap International and HelpAge International (2014), this lack of focus on older refugees may put them at far greater risk of falling through the gaps of humanitarian relief which, in turn, may affect their health, living condition, resettlement, social integration, and overall wellbeing. In fact, the specific needs of older refugees may not be met because support to refugees has been largely generic and generalized (HelpAge International & Internally Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2012), which could make older refugees with specialised needs become more vulnerable.

Furthermore, older refugees who may originate from countries where the major source of care and support are informal from family and friends may also lose their family (especially male family members) and friends to the events that led them to become refugees (Bello *et al.*, 2014; Displacement Tracking Matrix, 2018). Similarly, co-migrant social networks of older refugees may abandon the older adults given that they (co-migrants) are also vulnerable and thus are preoccupied with their own survival (Ajakaye & Ibukunoluwa, 2019; IDMC, 2019; United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund [UNICEF] & IDMC, 2019). These changes may not only deny older people the care and support from the networks which have been found to promote resilience in older people in crises situation (Chao, 2016; Olanrewaju *et al.*, 2018) cushion trauma, boost recovery, and buffer stress (Ajibade *et al.*, 2017; Sippel *et al.*, 2015); it may also worsen their health and wellbeing (Grovin, & Brown, 2012; Noosorn & Kanokthets, 2015).

Several recent reviews have explored the challenges of forced migrants. For instance, in the area of children and youth, Abojedi *et al.* (2020) conducted a scoping review on the impact of family loss and separation on refugee youth, Salami *et al.* (2021) explored the health of African refugee children, while Khan *et al.* (2018) reviewed refugee youth mental health in Canada. Scoping reviews have also been carried out on the general health of refugees across the life span, for example: Filler *et al.* (2021), Madi *et al.* (2019), Riza *et al.* (2020) Keboa *et al.* (2016), and Forss and Magrio (2018) all reviewed literature on the healthcare of refugees. Also, Cipriani *et al.* (2020) and Wachter *et al.* (2021) reviewed the occupational and resettlement needs of refugees. These reviews have highlighted the physical health, mental health, resettlement and economic challenges of refugees. However, segregation of the demographics reveals the studies in these reviews largely focus on women, children and youth. Some of the studies that included older samples did not disaggregate them by age. Thus, to the best of our knowledge, no reviews have focused specifically on older refugees and none of these reviews focused on social support and network which is essential to building resilience and the general wellbeing of older refugees.

This review aims to describe the situation of older refugee's social support and networks and how forced migration may have led to changes in the support networks. The scoping review will strengthen our understanding of the social network and support situation of older refugees

and reveal gaps in knowledge. It will also assist in designing policies and responses required to better meet the social support needs of older refugees.

2. Methods/Design

The Arksey & O’Malley (2005) York framework will guide this review. This framework has five stage which includes:

2.1 Identifying the research question(s)

The following two research questions will guide the review: (1) What is the nature of older adults’ social support and networks in refugee situation? (2) How has social networks, types, quantity, and quality of support changed as a result of forced migration?

2.2 Identifying relevant studies

Identification of studies relevant to this review will be achieved through searching of electronic databases of published peer reviewed literature which will include: Ebsco health database, SocINDEX, PsychINFO, Social Work Abstracts, Sociology Abstracts, Social Services Abstracts, Web of Science and/or Scopus, Canadian electronic library with the key terms in table 1 below. We will hand search the references of identified studies for additional studies that may be relevant to this review. Organizational websites such as IDMC, HelpAge International, Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement, UNICEF and UNHCR will be searched for additional literature. The grey literature will be excluded because of the challenges of assessing quality, given the lack of quality assessment typical of grey literatures which may affect the findings of the proposed scoping review. However, the references of the grey literature will be hand searched for more relevant peer reviewed literature. The search terms will be determined by the authors with input from librarian and a knowledge specialist. The search strategy will be developed in consultation with social work librarian specialist.

Table 1. Key terms and MeSH terms

Concept	Key or MeSH terms
Forced migrants	“Refugees” OR “older refugees” OR “older forced migrants” OR “displaced older adults” OR “displaced persons”
Older adults	“Older adults” OR “Older people” OR “Older persons” OR “Seniors” OR “ag*ing” OR (MH “Aging”) OR (MH “Aged”) OR “elder*” OR “elderly”
Social support and social network	“Social network” OR “social support” OR “sense of community” Or “sense of belonging”.

For all the database searches, the symbol * will be used to allow the inclusion of varied word endings.

The inclusion criteria include: 1) Any peer reviewed study that has the initial search terms within the title, abstract and/or keywords; 2) Full text articles are available electronically; 3) Published in English; 4) Research that covers support to older refugees; 5) Participants were displaced by conflict or violence; 6) The study includes participants who are 50 years and above. While the exclusion criteria include: 1) Gray literature; 2) Research on younger

displaced persons; 3) Research on other forms of forced migrants (Internally displaced persons and asylum seekers). When there are confusions in the inclusion criteria, the author(s) will be contacted three times requesting clarifications and articles whose author(s) do not respond on the third attempt will be excluded from the review.

2.3 Selecting studies

All article citations from the aforementioned databases will be exported into Rayyan QCRI© for removing duplicates and study screening. The review process will consist of title and abstract review, followed by full text review using the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The authors will do the first level of screening which is the title and abstract screening which will be done using Rayyan QCRI© and then reviewed by a knowledge specialist. In the second level the authors will assess the full-text articles to determine if they meet the inclusion/exclusion criteria. A pilot testing will be done by two or more independent authors at each stage using at least 100 articles. Kappa will be adopted to calculate the Inter-rater agreement and if the Kappa score is ≥ 80 , interpreted as an almost perfect strength of agreement for abstract/title and full-text screening (Landis & Koch, 1977; Ojemba et al., 2021), the articles will be shared equally among the reviewer authors. In event of the Kappa score being ≤ 0.81 , all reviewer authors will independently conduct title/abstract and full-text screening. The authors will also hand search the references of all screened article to ensure no relevant article is left out. This will continue until saturation is reached and no new studies meeting the inclusion/exclusion criteria are identified. The rationale for study exclusion will be documented and the process of study selection presented in a flow chart. When discrepancies arise at any stage, we will meet to discuss and address it.

2.4 Data collection and charting

The following information will be extracted: authors name(s), publication year, study country or region, study aims/hypothesis/ research questions, type of study (qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-method), research design, participants characteristics (e.g., the number of participants, mean age of the participants), sampling method, study findings, policy statements, and recommendations using Microsoft Excel Data-charting form.

2.5 Summarizing, synthesizing and reporting the results

The metadata of the articles will be summarised using frequency counts, means, medians and standard deviation. However, it is not possible to predetermine the best method of reporting the results, the result may be presented in narrative, table, visual (e.g., map or diagram) or a combination of two methods. Accurate documentation of the reporting method will be documented to avoid potential bias (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005).

The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR) will be used to describe the process of data inclusion and exclusion. The PRISMA-ScR was developed to provide guidance on the reporting of scoping reviews (Tricco et al., 2018). This is similar to the reporting guideline of Joanna Briggs Institute guidance for scoping reviews, which highlights the importance of methodological rigor in the conduct of scoping reviews (Vandenbroucke et al., 2007).

3. Discussion

Previous reviews (e.g., scoping, integrated and systematic reviews) on refugees have largely focused on youths and children, and the general population of refugees, no review has focused on older refugees, their social support and networks. This is because the issue of older people

in forced migration have drawn little scholarly attention, as their needs are not considered as important as that of children, youth, and women. However, older people in displacement may be more predisposed to the challenges emanating from lack of social networks and support in crises time (Ekoh et al., 2021). Therefore, conducting this review on the social networks and support of older refugees is salient. This scoping review will provide data on the nature of support to older refugees as well as older people in displacement and gaps in their support system. The review will also inform policy development around the provision of more formal support to older refugees.

References

- Abojedi, A., Alamgir, A., Nudel, S., Siggiqui, R., Janczur, A., McKenzie, K., Roche, B., & Hyne, M. (2020). Impact of family loss and separation on refugee youth: Implications for policy and programs - scoping review. *Canadian Diversity*, 17(2), 37-46.
- Ajakaye O. G., & Ibukunoluwa, M. R. (2019). Prevalence and risk of malaria, anemia and malnutrition among children in IDPs camp in Edo State, Nigeria. *Parasite Epidemiology and Control*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.parepi.2019.e00127>
- Ajibade, B. L., Ajao, O. O., Amoo, P. O., Akintola, D., & Adeniran, G. O. (2017). Types of traumatic events, response to the events and coping strategies amongst selected adults resident of internally displaced persons camps in Nigeria. *European Journal of Educational and Development Psychology*, 5(5), 45 - 50.
- Amodu, O. C., Richter, M. S., & Salami, B. O. (2020). A Scoping Review of the Health of Conflict-Induced Internally Displaced Women in Africa. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 17(4), 1280. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17041280>
- Arksey, H., & O'Malley, L., (2005). Scoping studies: towards a methodological framework. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 8(1), 19-32, DOI: 10.1080/1364557032000119616
- Bello, A. R. S., Daoud, S. A., & Baig, M. B. (2014). Coping strategies of Darfurians displaced women in Khartoum. *Journal of Agriculture and Extensive Rural Development*, 6(5), 168174. <https://doi.org/10.5897/JAERD2013.0553>.
- Calvi-Pariseti, P. (2011). Older people and displacement. <https://www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/fragilestates/calviparisetti.pdf>
- Chao, S. (2016). Social support, coping strategies and their correlations with older adults' relocation adjustments after natural disaster. *Geriatrics Gerontology International*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ggi.12807>
- Cipriani, J., Davis, M., Gralinski, E., Monforte, S., & Strausser, J. (2020). Examining the occupational needs and intervention strategies used with refugee populations: A scoping review. *The American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 74(4), 7411505203. <https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2020.74S1-PO7508>
- Displacement Tracking Matrix (2018). *DTM Nigeria*. <https://displacement.iom.int/nigeria>
- Ekoh, C. P., Uzoma, O. O., Agbawodikeizu, P. U., George, E. O., & Ejimkaraonye, C. (2021). Changes in family structures and roles, and its impact on older people in displacement in Abuja, Nigeria. *Journal of Population Ageing*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12062-021-09332-8>
- Filler, T., Benipal, P. K., Torabi, N., & Minhas, R. S. (2021). A chair at the table: A scoping review of the participation of refugees in community-based participatory research in healthcare. *Globalization and Health*, 17(1), 103. <https://hdl.handle.net/1807/107442>

- Forss, S. K., & Mangrio, E. (2018). A scoping review of refugees' experiences of healthcare. *European Journal of Public Health*, 28(1), 11-25. <https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/cky048.094>
- Grovin, L., & Brown, D. (2012). A psychology of feeling like a burden: A review of literature. *Psychotherapy and Counselling Psychology Programme*, University of Surrey.
- Handicap International & HelpAge International (2014). Hidden victims of the Syrian crises: disabled, injured and older refugees. <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/40819>
- Hatzidimitriadou, E. (2010). Migration and ageing: settlement experiences and emerging care needs of older refugees in developed countries. *Hellenic Journal of Psychology*, 7(1). 1-20.
- HelpAge International (2018). *Older people in displacement: Falling through the cracks of emergency responses*. <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/>
- HelpAge International and Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, (2012). *The neglected generation: the impact of displacement on older people*. <https://www.helpage.org/blogs/>
<https://www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/fragilestates/calviparisetti.pdf>
- Internal Displacement Monitoring Center [IDMC] (2021). Global report on internal displacement 2021. <https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2021/>
- Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (2019). *Twice invisible: Accounting for internally displaced children*. <https://www.internal-displacement.org/>
- Keboa, M. T., Hiles, N., & Macdonald, M. E. (2016). The oral health of refugees and asylum seekers: A scoping review. *Globalization and Health*, 12(59), 1-11. DOI 10.1186/s12992-016-0200-x
- Khan, A., Khanlou, N., Stol, J., & Tran, V. (2018). Immigrant and refugee youth mental health in Canada: A scoping review of empirical literature. In S. Pashang, N. Khanlou, & J. Clarke (Eds.), *Today's youth and mental health: Hope, power, and resilience* (pp. 3–20). Springer International Publishing/Springer Nature. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-64838-5_1
- Landis, J. R., & Koch, G. G. (1977). The measurement of observer agreement for categorical data. *Biometrics*, 159-174. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2529310>
- Madi, F., Ismail, H., Fouad, F. M., Kerbage, H., Zaman, S., Jayawickrama, J., & Sibai, A. M. (2019). Death, dying, and end-of-life experiences among refugees: A scoping review. *Journal of Palliative Care*, 34(2), 139–144. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0825859718812770>
- Noosorn, N., & Kanokthets, T. (2015). Abandoned elderly and health problem in the Lower Northern Region of Thailand. *International Journal of Current Microbiology and Applied Sciences*, 4(3), 188-194
- Ojemba, B. U., Kalu, M. E., Ezulike, C. D., Ekoh, C. P., Osifeso, T., Oyinlola, O., Iwuagwu, A. O. Makanjuola, J., & Kpariri, L. (2021). Exploration of loneliness among black older adults: A scoping review protocol. *Social Science Protocols*, 1-11. <http://dx.doi.org/10.7565/ssp.2021.v4.5748>
- Olanrewaju, F. O., Omotoso, F., & Alabi, J. O. (2018). Datasets on the challenges of forced displacement and coping strategies among displaced women in selected Internally Displaced Persons' (IDPs) camps in Nigeria. *Data in Brief*, 20, 152-158. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dib.2018.07.042>
- Riza, E., Kalkman, S., Coritsidis, A., Koubaridas, S., Vassiliu, S., Lazarou, D., Karnaki, P., Zota, D., Kantzanou, M., Psaltopoulou, T., & Linos, A. (2020). Community-based healthcare for migrants and refugees: A scoping literature review of best practices. *Healthcare*, 8(2), 115. doi:10.3390/healthcare8020115

- Salami, B., Fernandez-Sanchez, H., Fouche, C., Evans, C., Sibeko, L., Tulli, M., Bulaong, A., Kwankye, S. O., Ani-Amponsah, M., Okeke-Ihejirika, P., Gommaa, H., Agbemenu, K., Ndikom, C. M., & Richter, S. (2021). A scoping review of the health of African immigrant and refugee children. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *18*(7), 3514. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18073514>
- Sippel, L. M., Pietrzak, D. S., Charney, L. C., Mayes, & Southwick, S. M. (2015). How does social support enhance resilience in the trauma-exposed individual? *Ecology and Society*, *20*(4), 1-10. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5751/ES-07832-200410>
- Tricco, AC, Lillie, E, Zarin, W, O'Brien, KK, Colquhoun, H, Levac, D, Moher, D, Peters, MD, Horsley, T, Weeks, L, Hempel, S, Akl, E. A., Chang, C., McGowan, J., Stewart, L., Hartling, L., Aldcroft, A., Wilson, M. G., Garritty, C., Lewin, S., Godfrey, C. M., Mcdonald, M. T., Langlois, E. V., Soares-Weiser, K., Moriarty, J., Clifford, T., Tuncalp, O., & Straus, E. S. (2018). PRISMA extension for scoping reviews (PRISMA-ScR): checklist and explanation. *Annals of Internal Medicine*, *169*(7), 467-473. doi:10.7326/M18-0850.
- UNICEF and Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (2019). *Protecting and supporting internally displaced children in urban settings*. <https://www.unicef.org>
- United Nations High Commission for Refugees [UNHCR] (2020). *Global trends of forced displacement*. <https://www.unhcr.org/flagship-reports/globaltrends/globaltrends2019/>
- United Nations High Commission for Refugees [UNHCR] (2021). *Older persons*. <https://www.unhcr.org/older-persons.html>
- Vandenbroucke, J. P., von Elm, E., Altman, D. G., Gøtzsche, P. C., Mulrow, C. D., Pocock, S. J., Poole, C., Schlesselman, J. J., Egger, M., & STROBE Initiative (2007). Strengthening the Reporting of Observational Studies in Epidemiology (STROBE): explanation and elaboration. *PLoS medicine*, *4*(10), e297. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.0040297>
- Wachter, K., Dalpe, J., Bonz, A., Drozdowski, H. & Hermer, J. (2021) A scoping review of social support interventions with refugees in resettlement contexts: Implications for practice and applied research. *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*, *19*(4), 557-572. DOI: 10.1080/15562948.2020.1854917
- World Bank (2021). Fragility, conflict and violence. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/fragilityconflictviolence/overview#1>
- World Health Organization [WHO] (2007). Age friendly cities: A guide. https://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Global_age_friendly_cities_Guide_English.pdf