



Research Update

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“A Systematic Review: Effects of Psychosocial Interventions on Outcomes in Refugee Adolescents Resettled in the US, Canada, and the UK” by Herr and Kurtz (Honors Research Projects, 2016)

Reviewed by Sheida Azimi

Every year the number of refugee and displaced people in the US increases. Because of trauma in countries of origin, they may have mental health problems and disrupted adjustments during resettlement, resulting in problems with their quality of life, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and overall health. The purpose of this systematic review is to identify, describe, and critically appraise the evidence about the effects of psychosocial interventions on psychosocial outcomes in refugee adolescents. The following question is answered: In displaced or refugee adolescents, how do psychosocial interventions, compared with no intervention, affect mental health, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and quality of life? Recommendations for practice and future research are based on a critical appraisal of the evidence. The review is designed for nurses for whom increased understanding is substantial because they work to promote health and quality of life, which is vital to vulnerable populations, such as refugees, and especially adolescents (Herr & Kurtz, 2016, p. 4).

In regards to future clinical practice, the review has provided evidence for accessible, community based psychosocial interventions such as athletic and after-school programs that could be implemented to improve the lives of adolescent refugees.

Based on the evidence, one of the largest priorities for future research is to develop a more measurable and consistent model to help the reliability of subjective data. Measuring psychosocial changes in areas such as self-esteem, self-efficacy, and quality of life is difficult because of the subjective nature of such data. The implementation of a standardized model for data collection of this nature would create a benchmark or baseline that future researchers could follow, thus making their findings more reliable.

Furthermore, the review shows studies that reveal refugees' needs for types of services that are characteristic of larger urban settings, such as: affordable housing, education and community support (Herr & Kurtz, 2016, p. 17). However, providing such services are more in the area of public policy than what is generally considered to be an area of expertise for nurses. What the review could mention is how important it is for nurses and other community based service providers to participate in influencing public policy as a tool to achieve effective change and greater results.

Publication source: <http://www.socialsciencejournal.org/index.php/site/article/view/7/9>

“Does the TPP work for workers? Analyzing the labour chapter of the TPP” by Macdonald and MacEwen (CCPA, July 2016)

Reviewed by Janine Isaac

The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) is a free trade agreement that ensures signatory countries follow strict guidelines with regards to international trade laws and labour chapters. However, a recent study by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) shows the TPP’s labour chapter “fails to provide sufficient tools to address labour rights violations” and is essentially a reproduction of a flawed rights system (Macdonald & MacEwen, 2016, p. 5-6).

Macdonald and MacEwen (2016) analyse these labour clauses by first reviewing the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) labour chapter to emphasize how this approach as a tool to address labour rights violations is insufficient and has many weaknesses. The authors explain that due to the lack of a labour accord in NAFTA, the North American Agreement on Labour Co-operation (NAALC) responded by suggesting an annexed labour chapter to improve working conditions in the territories. This side-agreement approach, however, posed key weaknesses including:

1. How NAFTA’s dispute resolution process cannot enforce labour provisions.
2. Members being obligated to “enforce their own existing labour legislations” (Macdonald & MacEwen, 2016, p. 7).
3. Labour violations not being accompanied with successful sanctions.

Due to these weaknesses, Macdonald and MacEwen (2016) suggest that member states had dwindling commitment to follow through with the agreement. For example, in Canada, province mandates prevented the efficacy of the

agreement; and in Mexico, labour rights violations have risen over the past 10 years. Furthermore, additional analyses on subsequent labour provisions after NAFTA indicate that labour unions and other civil society organizations are increasingly concerned about whether or not the countries involved in the TPP will live up to the minimal labour standards (p. 11).

Macdonald and MacEwen (2016) also determine that the TPP poses several limitations. First, it requires signatories to adopt the rights stated in the International Labour Organization (ILO), but only refers to the declaration alone and does not go over any follow-up details. With regards to labour law violations, filing complaints are limited to cases that have continual actions or inactions affecting trade within parties, which narrows the amount of potential complaints that become acknowledged by resolution groups (p. 14). Finally, articles in the labour chapter address how to eliminate forced labour in supply chains, but are ambiguous on how it will be effective. In general, the TPP’s labour chapter is determined to be ineffective as it continues to follow a flawed free trade agreement, and consequently, preserves labour rights violations in many countries (p. 16).

Although the authors provide a detailed analysis on the history of labour agreements from NAFTA to the TPP, it was discussed in a prolonged manner and failed to address the key idea of the paper. In addition, the authors do not suggest implications for further studies, especially in the countries where it is stated that the TPP fails.

Therefore, it is recommended that future research include specific studies on these countries to investigate factors on why these agreements fail, and formulate solutions to address labour rights violations. In particular, this research can include working in the countries where labour rights violations are most evident such as Brunei, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Mexico. Within these countries, providing further education to labour unions and organizations can help to unify these groups in raising awareness of the labour conditions, and ultimately, develop a sophisticated resolution plan that can be easily implemented across these nations.

provide a broad analysis on the TPP's labour chapter, however, the article would benefit from a more concise summarization of free trade agreement history and how it relates to contemporary labour chapters. Moreover, suggestions for future implications within this field would also benefit the study in order to improve or develop a more effective resolution plan for global labour rights violations. This article relies on a narrative review structure to address the labour chapter in the TPP, therefore, it is best suited for professionals and academics in the fields of economics, political science, and international affairs.

In conclusion, Macdonald and MacEwen (2016)

Publication source:

https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/National%20Office/2016/07/Does_the_TP_P_Work_for_Workers.pdf

ABOUT THE RESEARCH REVIEWER:



Janine Isaac graduated from the University of Alberta in 2015 with a Bachelor of Science in Atmospheric Sciences. She is currently interested in research on social policy issues such as poverty, homelessness, and city housing.

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“Effects of the Minimum Wage on Infant Health” by Wehby, Dave, & Kaestner (Institute for the Study of Labor, July 2016)

Reviewed by Fatima Khawaja

This discussion paper has been prepared by the Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA). Its target audience is public servants and politicians who are working in favor of an increase in minimum wage to boost their case.

There is considerable discussion currently in the USA and Canada around the matter of raising minimum wage as well as its consequences. While the economic advantages and disadvantages of an increase in minimum wage are frequently debated, the authors of this study take a broader look at how labor policies affect wellbeing in the population. In particular, they investigate how these policies impact infant health.

Wehby, Dave, & Kaestner (2016) studied birth data in the USA over 25 years with an emphasis on birth weight and gestational period for women with a high-school degree or less, between the ages of 18 to 39 years. They concluded that a \$1 increase in minimum wage increases birth weight by 11 grams. In addition, they found evidence for an increase in prenatal care accessed by expecting mothers and reduced smoking during pregnancy, which were both linked to higher minimum wages.

The reasons presented for this small but significant change is credited to the expecting mother being able to improve her nutrition, increase her visits to prenatal care services, experience less financial stress, and cut down

smoking – all factors that are linked to fetal growth and health. This leads to a higher gestational period (meaning fewer preterm births), and higher birth weight for the subsequent babies. These have important and long-lasting effects on the child’s overall health. These findings are also supported by evidence from the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), which enhances disposable income through a tax credit and produces a positive effect on infant health among low-income mothers.

The premise of this discussion paper is that better health and wellbeing of the expecting mother has positive outcomes for the fetus by increasing gestation period and birth weight. While this premise is supported by external research, Wehby, Dave, & Kaestner (2016) fail to establish a clear causality between a higher minimum wage and improved health and wellbeing for expecting mothers.

The discussion paper cites numerous studies that have discussed the impact of minimum wage on the labor force. However, there are very few studies cited that focus on mothers or expecting mothers.

Research on the EITC is garnered as supporting evidence, but has been taken out of context. The EITC is a tax credit which directly increases the disposable income of the earner and does not have any negative impact on the employers. On

the other hand, an increase in minimum wage does not always lead to an increase in disposable income because the earner still has to pay income taxes. Furthermore, an increase in minimum wage has consequences for employers who may reduce working hours of employees to compensate for the increased cost of labor. This can have a negative impact on the financial security of the expecting mother rather than improve it.

While this discussion paper by Wehby et al. is attempting to give substance to the argument for an increase in minimum wage, there is a need to address the above mentioned loopholes to make their argument more compelling.

Publication source: <http://ftp.iza.org/dp10039.pdf>

ABOUT THE RESEARCH REVIEWER:



Fatima Khawaja is currently working as a Policy Analyst with the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade at the Government of Alberta. She has extensive experience in the not-for-profit sector and enjoys volunteering, good food, and good company.

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“Social impacts of the securitized arrival experiences of in-Canada refugee claimants” by Erin Osterberg (TSAS, June 2016)

Reviewed by Noelle Jaipaul

Osterberg (2016) seeks to identify how securitization of migration policies affect the integration of refugee claimants in Canada. The author begins by observing how refugee claimants perceive their own integration in terms of: trust in the Government of Canada; sense of belonging; and ability to acquire employment. The author then observes the unintended policy consequences that result from securitized migration policies. The article is designed for those interested in the field of immigration, including those working directly with refugees, as well as researchers and policymakers.

The securitization of migration policies is framed as an attempt by states, such as Canada, to more tightly control their borders to assert sovereignty. Refugee claimants under Canadian law are those that arrive in Canada and self-declare as refugees at ports of entry. Increased securitization in Canadian policy has essentially limited the factors that allow for refugee claimants to successfully be determined as genuine refugees by the Immigration and Refugee Board. Successful claimants have the legal right to remain in Canada as refugees, while unsuccessful claimants may be removed from Canada.

The research included qualitative interviews with successful refugee claimants in Vancouver and Toronto. The author found that the overwhelming number of research participants were satisfied with the process of having their refugee status claim approved. This finding was contrary to “the expectations of those critical

of the new securitized bureaucratic process” (p. 16). Osterberg also notes that research participants expressed trust in the Canadian government, and felt a sense of belonging within Canada. However, participants stated that gaining employment was difficult, which Osterberg identifies as a barrier to integration. Difficulties in obtaining appropriate work permits and being assigned temporary social insurance numbers were stated as the greatest barriers to securing employment. Osterberg recommends that employment permits be offered earlier in the refugee claim process, and that social insurance numbers not have ‘expiry dates’ that may cause employers to be reluctant to hire refugees.

Osterberg’s article offers insight into the realities faced by refugee claimants. However, a significant gap - which the author acknowledges - is that the research was conducted through interviewing only those refugee claimants who were accepted and allowed to remain in Canada. For those who were accepted into Canada, feelings toward the Government and other Canadians may be more positive compared with those who were not accepted as genuine refugees. Within the Canadian psyche, we pride ourselves on our openness and generosity, reflected by the interviews with successful claimants. Unsuccessful claimants, however, may have given a different perspective on the claim process and their trust in the Government of Canada to uphold their rights as refugees.

In addition, Osterberg’s analysis of unintended policy consequences is limited only to the

discussion of employment, and in particular, the issuing of temporary social insurance numbers. Indeed, these are very important issues to discuss, particularly because employment is a key indicator of successful long-term integration of newcomers. However, securitization of migration is a complex issue with far-reaching impacts that can result in discriminatory and xenophobic policies beyond the realm of employment opportunities for refugees. The expanse of these policy consequences was not discussed in any real way.

Finally, the integration of refugees and

newcomers is a long-term process that does not simply end when a person finds stable employment. In the short-term, feelings of trust in the government and sense of belonging may be amplified immediately after a positive decision on a refugee claim. Yet in the long term, these feelings of belonging may vary or fluctuate, and are not solely dependent upon employment status. The research did not take into account other factors that influence belonging and trust; and was short-term in its understanding and definition of integration into Canadian society.

Publication source: http://tsas.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/TSASWP16-09_Osterberg.pdf

ABOUT THE RESEARCH REVIEWER:



Noelle Jaipaul is an Edmontonian; and a University of Alberta and University of Ottawa alumnus. She has a Bachelors of Arts in Political Science, a Bachelor of Science in Nursing, and a Master's in Public and International Affairs. Noelle is on the Board of the John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights, and is an Associate Consultant with the Centre for Race and Culture. She currently works as a Multicultural Liaison with the City of Edmonton.

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Through our social policy research and advocacy efforts, we hope to create a healthy, just and inclusive community.

-The Edmonton Social Planning Council

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ABOUT

OUR STAFF: THE EDMONTON SOCIAL PLANNING COUNCIL:

Susan Morrissey , Executive Director	The ESPC is an independent, non-profit, charitable organization. Our Focus is social research, particularly in the areas of low income and poverty.
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THE RESEARCH UPDATE:

The Edmonton Social Planning Council, in collaboration with our volunteers, strive to provide stakeholders and community members with up-to-date reviews on recently published social research reports.

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