Perceptions of Iraqi Refugee Integration in Egypt and Jordan: A Secondary Analysis

by

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Science in the Duke Global Health Institute
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2021

ABSTRACT

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Abstract

Social interactions with civil society are an essential component of the refugee experience, actively shaping humanitarian aid as well as policies towards refugee needs (Barnes, 2011; Van der Leun & Bouter, 2015). However, material needs are frequently depicted as the main endeavor for refugee support. This overlooks the moral components of the refugee experience, through the need for dignity (del Soto, 2008), mental health resources (Silove et al., 2017) and a sense of security (Eby et al., 2011) which are essential support structures if refugees are to, even temporarily, live in the new communities they join. Notably, current research on existing systems emphasizes material refugee provisions with little focus on mental health (Weine, 2011) or the cultural implications of integration (Esses et al., 2017). This thesis explores refugees' perceptions of integration in host countries with an emphasis on the lack of support structures beyond material humanitarian response in Egypt and Jordan as a secondary data analysis project. It is based on 108 qualitative life-story interviews with Iraqi refugees conducted by the Kenan Refugee Project of Duke University between 2012 and 2019 primarily in Cairo, Egypt and Amman, Jordan. Through this analysis, I determined a pressing need for a temporary, informal integration process with much needed social support and mental health resources beyond the current legal standards in place. I further argue that the multi-dimensional, multi-disciplinary nature of refugee needs are frequently overlooked and underestimated and that a new approach beyond material

provisions at the global decision-making table is long overdue for the dignity, human rights and quality of life refugees deserve across the globe.

Keywords: refugee, integration, Egypt, Jordan, labeling, belonging, stigma

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1. Introduction

1.1 Refugee Background

With nearly 30 million documented refugees and more than 70 million displaced peoples worldwide, rates of overall displacement today are at a record high (UN, Issues Depth on Refugees) Individuals who find refuge in other countries are subject to local laws and policies that restrict their resources (Gammeltoft-Hansen, 2011).

It wasn't until the United Nations' 1951 Geneva Convention that a universal refugee rights standard was established. In the convention, a 'refugee' is defined as

"someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion." (UN General Assembly, 1951)

Refugees are obliged to leave their homes due to many reasons ranging from war, conflict, violence and discrimination (Tribe, 2002). By doing so, they effectively lose the protection provided by their governments, and are in need of a more global, international shelter. Many NGOs and intergovernmental organizations worldwide focus on refugee rights & advocacy and play a critical role in their integration (Sunata & Tosun, 2019). Furthermore, many refugees accepted particularly in EU Member States come from middle and upper class, well-educated backgrounds which further increases the disparities asylum seekers face. (Mestheneos & Ioannidi, 2002) Therefore, the legal

standards in place are frequently not enough to uphold refugee rights. (Edwards, 2005) Instead, a universal moral obligation is essential for their protection.

1.2 Belonging

Throughout their journeys for asylum, as well as processes of resettlement, refugees face significant social challenges which deteriorate their emotional, mental, social and physical well-being. A sense of belonging and hope towards the future are frequently associated with positive integration experiences and long-term success in refugee outcomes (Valentine et al., 2009; Yohani & Larsen, 2009).

1.3 Temporary Integration

An important concept that will be at the center point of this thesis is informal or temporary integration. We define this concept as any infrastructural or governmental approach towards improving refugee outcomes including but not limited to physical and mental health, social well-being and a sense of peace, on top of their basic needs for survival. The durable solutions proposed by the UN which comprise of voluntary repatriation, local integration or resettlement are decisive, clear-cut solutions that aren't always applicable to the volatile situations that refugees face, and are instead more long-term goals that do not take into account the refugee experience in between their country of first asylum and final resettlement. The approach of temporary integration is opposed

to the widespread local perceptions of refugees being temporary, passing realities with no long-term support structures provided. Through this, we aim to propose that any integration attempt, permanent or temporary, formal or informal, is important to foster community, to improve access to resources, and to overall increase quality of life, mental health, regardless of either refugee's desired final destinations or the intentions of the states. This approach would be beyond basic survival needs with a focus on psychosocial well-being, echoing the universally moral obligation beyond pre-existing legal standards governments and inter-governmental structures should uphold.

1.4 Pre-Existing Work on Temporary Integration

Alexander Betts and his colleagues have done significant work on the UNHCR concept of "durable solutions" by examining the practical shortcomings of this proposed theoretical framework. According to UNHCR, voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement are long-term, durable solutions which refugees may need once their "immediate protection needs are addressed" (UNHCR, 2007). Betts similarly argues that refugee protection is divided into two components consisting of "first, a set of civil, political, economic and social rights accorded to refugees, and second, their long-term reintegration within a State (durable solutions), whether in their country of origin (repatriation), the interim host State (local integration), or another State (resettlement)." (Betts, 2010)

Betts further states that the initial assumption of refugees repatriating quickly is simply a myth, and that the sooner a state can realize this the better. Instead, he proposes what he calls a "development-based approach as early in a refugee crisis as possible".

The durable solutions proposed by UNHCR are frequently unattainable and far from the realities of refugees due to multiple factors, ranging from ongoing turmoil in the country of origin to the perceived temporariness of refugees when accepted by a host country. Therefore, instead of relying on these steps, Betts proposes treating refugee camps effectively as cities, fostering an environment that actively supports refugee development, especially for those facing limbo. Indeed, if provided with the tools to not only survive but thrive, such as "education, the right to work, electricity, connectivity, transportation, access to capital", refugees will meaningfully and effectively contribute to the communities they join. Betts calls for this "geographical space that can empower people and allow them to become self-reliant pending a long-term solution." (Collier & Betts, 2017)

Other studies have also confirmed that the entrepreneurship refugees would engage in through their own individual capital, if given the opportunity, can be beneficial to the informal economy. Atasü-Topçuoğlu describes this initiative through

"symbolic capital", or prestige and professional recognition earned within the home state of a refugee that translates, or is re-established, within host states that individuals sought refuge in. (Atasü-Topcuoğlu, 2019)

1.5 Brief on Turkey – Case for Temporary Integration

While Turkey has only had mass influx of Syrian refugees, it has served as a decent example of temporary integration and will serve as such an example for the purposes of this thesis.

Turkey has created one of the biggest refugee influxes globally after opening its borders unconditionally to Syrians in 2014, leading to more than four million documented refugees, becoming home to the world's largest refugee population (UNHCR, 2020b).

The country has implemented a proactive temporary integration policy initially through an "open-door" policy, hosting 98% of its refugees among locals followed by solely 2% in "Temporary Accommodation Centers", or refugee camps. The Turkish Law on Foreigners and International Protection, established in 2013, provides a robust opportunity for refugees to legally stay in the country with rights to education, social health care, and other services and provisions. Through this attempt of temporary

integration, the UNHCR is attempting to create “social cohesion and harmonization interventions” aiming at educating the public and fostering dialogue between locals, refugees and the service providers. (UNHCR, 2020b) This solidarity, however, has gradually withered as long-term refugee resettlement and encouraged integration practices have created rifts between the locals and the refugees such as in Turkey, where local communities are expressing discontent against the government through misconceptions of unprecedented resources and privileges afforded to Syrian refugees at the expense of provisions offered to those holding citizenship. (Özden, 2013)

Turkey is an example of a middle-income country accommodating refugees without the necessary infrastructure to sustain their presence. The EU as well as the rest of Europe, despite their abundance of resources, have politically relied on Turkey as a buffer state between the Syrian crisis and European nations, which has proven to be ineffective and unsustainable instrumentalism (Keyman, 2016).

However, Turkey is certainly facing challenges through lack of resources, lack of public education towards co-existence with refugees, and the politicized refugee label. Sumata and Tosun describe the need for social cohesion within Turkey’s refugee climate, through the proposal of a bottom-up, human rights framework that is driven by “active citizenship”. (Sunata & Tosun, 2019)

Despite these setbacks, Turkey has offered unprecedented support to Syrians, and global aid followed. The number of registered NGOs increased between 2011 and 2017 from near 88,646 to 111,307. Furthermore, pre-existing organizations such as Civil Society Organizations (CSO) have altered their local activities to deal with the emerging crisis. (Sunata & Tosun, 2019).

Another factor that influences integration is citizenship. Turkey has made multiple amendments to its citizenship law to sustainably facilitate the integration of certain, more skillful refugees as an incentive to boost economic growth, while simultaneously using it to establish a means through which integration, which is a highly preferable outcome, is accessible but not immediately attained or given (Akçapar & Şimşek, 2018).

It is a given fact that the temporariness of refugees' status is known to hinder their access to resources, as well as their realization of their long-term aspirations while simultaneously affecting the labor market. (Bloch, 2004) Though, much like other host countries, the Turkish government initially perceived the Syrian influx to be a short-term problem which ended up transforming into a longitudinal and demanding crisis leading to more alienating, less accommodating policy over time rendering integration more and more difficult. Success towards refugee accommodation in the long-term is

only attainable by the presence of more inclusive institutions, a policy of "equal citizenship" and "sustainable economic development" through an overall re-establishment of order in the state. (Keyman, 2016)

In sum, only through human rights-based approaches will Turkey ever be able to implement a more robust, long-lasting policy for Syrians in need of integration.

1.5 Need for Study

The current literature is overwhelmingly focused on refugee resettlement in High-Income Countries (HICs) such as Canada, US and Europe as well as the material needs of refugees as they pertain to integration, and fewer studies look into refugee resettlement in Low and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs) that neighbor the crises that lead to displacement, particularly as they reflect solidarity. Further areas that should be explored include the intangible structures of belonging and integration (Ehrkamp, 2006) and refugee mental health (Jordans et al., 2009). Given these gaps in the literature on the building blocks of refugee well-being beyond the means for survival, there is a need to reframe and reimagine pre-existing legal frameworks and hold them accountable towards the welfare of refugees.

Furthermore, few studies critique the application of lawful standards towards refugees at the expense of human rights violations. Collier and Betts describe the challenges and needs for reframing and rethinking refugee policy worldwide with a particular emphasis on their rights and welfare. They divide this process of reimagining policy into different stages: Ethics and the Duty of Rescue, Haven (Refuge), Assistance and Autonomy, and Post-Conflict Recovery. Through my stance on informal integration, I'd like to argue that the stage of rethinking assistance and autonomy is key in allowing refugees to re-obtain the agency and freedom that was taken from them. Collier and Betts further describe that the main component of autonomy is restricted not on paper, but in practice, for refugees worldwide through "administrative barriers". (Collier & Betts, 2017)

2. Background

While this thesis is primarily focusing on the realities of Iraqi refugees as they await resettlement, it is important to understand the local context of Egypt and Jordan in order to accurately interpret to the best of our ability the lived experiences of Iraqis. Therefore, this background section will provide information on Iraqis in Egypt and Jordan, as well as Syrian and Palestinian refugees resettled in Jordan in order to paint a more representative picture of what Betts calls "The Refugee Regime Complex", defined as the overlap between the refugee regime of states and "a range of other regimes within which States engage in forms of institutionalized cooperation that have a direct and an indirect impact upon refugee protection". (Betts, 2010) This will help illustrate the multidimensional complexity of refugee resettlement.

2.1 Overall Context of Iraqi Refugees

Iraqis sought refuge primarily in two waves; the first being the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War, followed by the 2003 war. Both of these effluxes were triggered by US' interventionist foreign policy. After the 2011 Syrian war, global resources and research has focused overwhelmingly on the influx of Syrians with very little insight into refugees of other origins (Kvittingen et al., 2019). This particularly impacted the Iraqi refugees due to limited UNHCR funding used for both Syrian and Iraqi refugee populations at the time, further exacerbated when the majority of UNHCR resources

went into resettling an incredible influx of then-new refugees in 2011. In 2014, another influx of Iraqi refugees started due to ISIS' activities. While the US-initiated Iraq wars have been recognized globally, the sheer number of people who fled Iraq to seek resettlement in Syria, Jordan and Lebanon has been largely ignored or dismissed by a more global audience, as well as the academic literature, particularly as it pertains to social work. (Libal & Harding, 2007) Furthermore, especially in recent years, literature has been disproportionately focused on the Syrian crisis with little focus on pre-existing difficulties Iraqi refugees face. (Kvittingen et al., 2019)

2.2 Egypt

Cairo, Egypt hosts some of the highest number of urban refugees globally. In January 2021, Egypt was estimated to host near 260,000 refugees from 58 countries of origin, half of which are from Syria. Syrians particularly sought refuge in Egypt around the end of 2012, with their numbers skyrocketing from 12,800 to 130,000 within months. Though the obsolete government of Egypt has significantly affected refugees' access to "basic services and supplies to sustain human security, dignity and development". (Keyman, 2016)

2.2.1 Iraqi Refugees in Egypt

The number of Iraqi refugees in January 2021 is 6,806 (UNHCR, 2021). Compared to the recent data, the UNHCR Global Appeal Report from 2012-2013 states that in January 2012, the number of Iraqi refugees in Egypt was 7,400 (UNHCR, 2014).

The majority of the Iraqi refugees in Egypt were displaced as a result of the 2003 US invasion in Iraq, followed by the aftermath of war, persecution and violence, particularly between 2006 and 2007 (El-Shaarawi, 2015). This led to nearly one in five Iraqis leaving their homes to seek refuge. (Leenders, 2008). However, the Iraqi refugees in Egypt were often middle-class, well-educated and had financial stability which led to significantly less infrastructural difficulties during their asylum experience. Their education and status have led to their distinction from other refugees in Egypt. (Goździak & Walter, 2012)

However, the Egyptian government has been strictly against any integration attempts at the time of these interviews, as refugees were forced to seek resettlement elsewhere. Many of them sought to seek refuge in the US or Europe with hopes for permanent residence. Over time, their resources and wealth diminished leading to 56% of the population to report worse health outcomes including nutrition in 2009 (WHO, 2009). It was also reported that despite their Arabic proficiency, they weren't feeling cohesive with the local communities as well as with the Iraqi refugee groups in Egypt.

This is partly due to Egypt's refusal to establish a solid Community Based Organization (CBO) for Iraqi refugees. (Goździak & Walter, 2012)

2.3 Jordan

Jordan has been a global example of a state hosting refugees. According to UNHCR, it is the country with the second highest number of refugees per capita, behind Lebanon (UNHCR, 2020a). Jordan's population in 2019 was over 10 million (World Bank, 2019), with more than half of the population being under 25 years of age. In 2020, nearly one-tenth of Jordan's population consisted of documented refugees, with over 740,000 individuals. There are 57 documented refugee nationalities across the country. 83.2% are urban refugees, while 16.8% live in camps. The government and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinians in the Near East (UNRWA) estimates of refugees lead to the conclusion that the number of refugees is near 4 million (UNHCR, 2020a). Jordan has one of the largest refugee to national ratios globally, however despite this fact, lacks a domestic asylum establishment (Stevens, 2013).

The primary refugee identities that Jordan hosted at the time are Palestinian, Syrian and Iraqi refugees. As mentioned above, I will provide brief summaries of each to highlight their unique circumstances however will be focusing on Iraqi interviews for the analysis.

2.3.1 Iraqi Refugees in Jordan

Throughout the years, the Jordanian Government has been open to Iraqi refugees both through short-term policy and long-term integration. However, the increasing number of refugees overall in the country created unprecedented economic and infrastructural burdens, leading to Jordan shutting its borders to them in 2006 (Al-Qdah & Lacroix, 2011; Kvittingen et al., 2019). 2014 saw a surge in Iraqi refugees registering with UNHCR, many of whom were part of the Christian minority trying to avoid ISIS. (Kvittingen et al., 2019) By 2016, only half of the Iraqi refugee population of Jordan, estimated to be around 131,000 (Department of Statistics, 2016), were registered with the UNHCR. (UNHCR, 2016a)

2.3.2 Palestinian Refugees in Jordan

The Palestinian refugee experience can shed light on more long-term cases of refugee integration. The refugee influx to Jordan started with Palestinian refugees escaping the Palestine War in 1948 which reoccurred in 1967. The 1948 refugees were deemed eligible for citizenship, however that was not the case for the 1967 wave. The 1967 refugees were provided with the legal right to integration. Both of these conditions, as well as the longevity of the Palestinian crisis led to most of the current Palestinian refugees in Jordan being multigenerational.

Given the very politicized nature of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, neighboring countries have been reluctant to accept Palestinian refugees without any guarantees of future repatriation. The UN durable solutions (voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement) are less applicable to Palestinians as they are to other refugee identities due to multiple factors, including the refusal of the Israeli state to follow the UN General Assembly's resolution demanding the acceptance and "embracement" of Palestinian refugees (Soh et al., 2016). According to the UNHCR, very few Palestinian refugees were able to be resettled elsewhere, rendering all solutions impossible to implement rendering them in an indefinite state of limbo. Jordan has the highest proportion of Palestinians to overall population in the world. This has also led to about 40% of the UNRWA-accredited refugees to obtain identical rights to Jordanian citizens (Brynen, 2006).

2.3.3 Syrian Refugees in Jordan

The Syrian refugee crisis is a relatively more recent global mass refugee efflux, starting in 2011 with the Syrian war, and is a perfect illustration of what was initially perceived to be a short-term problem becoming much more longitudinal and demanding that initially anticipated, leading to ambiguous, unstable host policies that make day-to-day refugee life unpredictable (Baban et al., 2017).

Since 2013, the Government of Jordan argues to have taken a proactive role in seeking to respond to the impact of the Syria crisis within a resilience framework, by preparing the National Resilience Plan (NRP) 2014, which focused mainly on host communities. In September 2014, the Jordan Response Platform for the Syria Crisis (JRPSC) was established to "coordinate, guide and provide oversight to the preparation, implementation and monitoring of the JRP 2015 and the JRP 2016" (Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, 2014). The more recent response plans present a paradigm shift by bridging the divide between short-term refugee and longer-term developmental response within a resilience-based comprehensive framework (Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, 2016). After a Vulnerability Assessment determining the unmet needs of the refugee community, 12 Task forces were established to lead sector wide responses in education, energy, environment, food security, health, justice, livelihoods, municipal services, shelter, social protection, transport as well as sanitation. (Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, 2016). The 2020-2022 Plan was released in July 2020 with a particular focus on systems strengthening following the 2019 decreased funding by 49% which significantly impacted the delicate Syrian refugee infrastructure in place in Jordan (Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, 2019). The COVID-19 pandemic was not addressed in this update.

2.4 The Coming Years After Interviews

As an important note, a great number of the Iraqi refugees interviewed during this study have been resettled in the coming years after the interviews, while many of the Syrians have either been resettled elsewhere or repatriated. (S. Shanahan, personal communication). The instability of asylum seeking is demonstrated quite commonly through two, sometimes three successive countries of asylum, and refugees often don't find long-term solace until their granted asylum results in permanent residence or citizenship in countries they'd like to resettle. (UNHCR, 2007)

3. Methods

3.1 Overview of Project and Interviews

The interview data analyzed in this thesis were collected through by Duke University's Kenan Refugee Project (KRP), a community-based research and advocacy project founded in 2010. Through this initiative, the interviews were conducted by Duke faculty and students, with self-identified refugees and asylum seekers between 2010 and 2019 and across four countries (Egypt, Jordan, Nepal and Rwanda). The participants gave their verbal consent to be interviewed and were also asked if they were comfortable being recorded with a recording device. They were then given the option to use their real first name or a pseudonym to use throughout the interview transcript and summaries, and their names were kept confidential.

The interviews were translated as they were happening from Arabic to English. Some refugees chose to express themselves directly in English. Translators in both countries were also community partners of the Kenan Refugee Project.

The interviews were archived on the Duke Box cloud platform throughout the years either in the form of interview transcripts, interview summaries, or both.

The study was approved through the Duke University Campus Institutional Review Board (IRB) (Protocol#: 2010-A-0129) and renewed for each subsequent year (2010-2021).

3.2 Interview Specifics

Interviews followed a life-story protocol which is designed to allow interview subjects significant agency in the interview process. This interview methodology is described as a way to "allow for highly contextualized individual judgments on the part of the researcher [and] for the unanticipated turn in a conversation". (Atkinson, 1998) Seven* core questions were used as the basis for the interview and remained constant across all interviews. Follow-up questions and conversations fill the space in-between and allow interviewees to change the direction of the conversation as they wish. The interviews varied in length between thirty minutes to two and a half hours to provide the necessary space and time for the interviewees to comfortably share their stories. The questions used were: "What's a typical day like for you?", "Can you talk about your family, community, and social network?", "How would you describe your health here in [name of country]?", "Could you describe your religious beliefs if you have any and what they mean to you?", "Can you describe 7 significant events in your life?", "What do you hope for the future?", "If your life were a book, what would its title be?", "Is there anything else you would like to add to the interview?".

Given the longitudinal nature of these interviews, some interviews were transcribed fully as transcripts while others were presented in the form of interview summaries, which could also impact wording and reflect interpretations of what was actually said beyond the translation itself.

3.3 Egypt and Jordan Interviews

This thesis will focus on the Iraqi refugee interviews in Egypt and Jordan. The Egypt interviews were conducted in 2012 and 2013 while the Jordan interviews were between 2014-2017 and in 2019. These temporal differences as well as contextual changes in the realities of each refugee, whether through altered policy, unpredictable individual circumstances as well as varying levels of funds and support will also provide contextual distinctions in interpreting their realities. One such example is the difference in UNHCR policies between 2014 and 2015 which also shifted the local refugee perceptions and rhetoric against Syrians in Jordan.

Interviews with Syrians and Palestinians, as well as interviews for undergraduate student theses with differing questions were excluded from analysis alongside the interview summaries, leading to a total of 108 interview transcripts with 111 Iraqi refugees to be considered for this thesis.

Table 1 details the age and self-identified gender of participating Iraqi refugees. Participants were aged between 19 and 72 years at the time of interview. The gender distribution was also relatively balanced

Table 1: Age and Gender Distribution of Iraqi refugees by Country Interviewed

	Age								*Gender*		
	*19**	*20-29*	*30-39*	*40-49*	*50-59*	*60-69*	*70-79*	*Age Data Missing*	***Female Total***	***Male Total***	**Total**
Iraqi (Egypt)	1 Male 0 Female	2 Male 3 Female	1 Male 3 Female	3 Male 7 Female	8 Male 4 Female	1 Male 0 Female	0 Male 2 Female	3 Male 1 Female	20	19	39
Iraqi (Jordan)	1 Male 0 Female	6 Male 4 Female	4 Male 12 Female	11 Male 7 Female	11 Male 3 Female	3 Male 8 Female	1 Male 0 Female	1 Male 0 Female	34	38	72
Total	2	15	20	28	26	12	3	5	54	57	111

*No minors were interviewed for this study: the minimum age of the interview transcripts used was 19, and the minimum age of all participants including excluded interviews is 18.

3.4 Analysis

The aforementioned interview summaries were not used for the purposes of this study and were removed from the NVivo Project to exclude from all analyses to maximize credibility, maintain internal validity and consistency. All the quotes used in this thesis were solely from interview transcripts with no interpretation of wording beyond the translation itself.

Applied Thematic Analysis (ATA) was used for analysis, which is defined as a synthesis of methodologies comprised of "grounded theory, positivism, interpretivism and phenomenology" to "ensure the credibility of findings" by determining recurring ideas, or themes, throughout a set of data, and analyzing them transparently (Guest et al., 2011). This method has effectively allowed me to analyze the interviews with an open mind, and identify patterns, differences and similarities across the data more objectively. Given such a large dataset, starting out with a codebook can bias the findings of this analysis, and the use of both deductive and inductive coding throughout the entire process should help reduce my own personal biases.

Before reading the interviews, I received a separate codebook on the Rwanda data from the Duke University Kenan Institute for Ethics Program Director Tra Tran, which helped me narrow down the initial codes I had in mind, helping form a deductive

coding process before analysis. After reading the interviews and field notes provided in the project folder, I analyzed the interview transcripts on NVivo 12 (QSR International) via open, inductive coding, shifting codes as I progress through the interviews, and separated the Egypt and Jordan sub-groups to determine response patterns as they pertain to integration and sociopolitical realities in host countries. The current codebook wasn't finalized until all eligible interview transcripts were read. It was then established via repeated patterns throughout the interviews that pertain to general demographic information as well as the topic of integration through concepts of identity, family, neighborhood, community, future, religion, as well as institutional support that pertain to social challenges and support networks Iraqi refugees face in their countries of first asylum (see Appendix).

After coding, I further narrowed down the quotes to those that solely pertain to integration in order to reduce researcher bias. I then ran queries through NVivo to further determine patterns and compare and contrast responses between the Egypt and Jordan interviews. The interview year also provided important context for the responses we received, however the lack of any follow-up with the refugees made it difficult to interpret differences in individual experiences and responses. The field notes that were taken by Duke students served as an important tool to learn about the local context, how

the interviews were initiated and any other interaction/observations that weren't present during the interview.

Both within and in-between group comparisons were done through queries as well as quote comparisons between interviews which were done within the established themes of identity, family, neighborhood, future, community, religion and institutional support. However, interpretations of these comparisons were challenging due to the completely different context as well as individual realities of each refugee, as well as the host countries and even neighborhoods. Therefore, these comparisons should not be perceived as universally definitive or generalizable beyond identifying common challenges that refugees face.

4. Results

Given the nature of the sample of Iraqi refugees in Egypt and Jordan, a comparative case of refugee experiences across differing conditions is possible. The results section will be focusing on the Egypt and Jordan sub-groups separately to make contextual comparisons within populations.

Throughout the analysis, 5 key themes affecting refugee integration were identified. These themes will be used alongside relevant quotes to demonstrate the realities of refugees at the time of interview, and at the host states they were then residing in. The themes in question are as follows: *religion, mental health outcomes, host policies and resources, availability of jobs and education* and *temporariness and temporality.*

These themes are also impacted by individual challenges each refugee and their family faced at the time, however due to the number of interviews examined individual challenges will not be addressed in this thesis unless directly connected to one of the aforementioned themes.

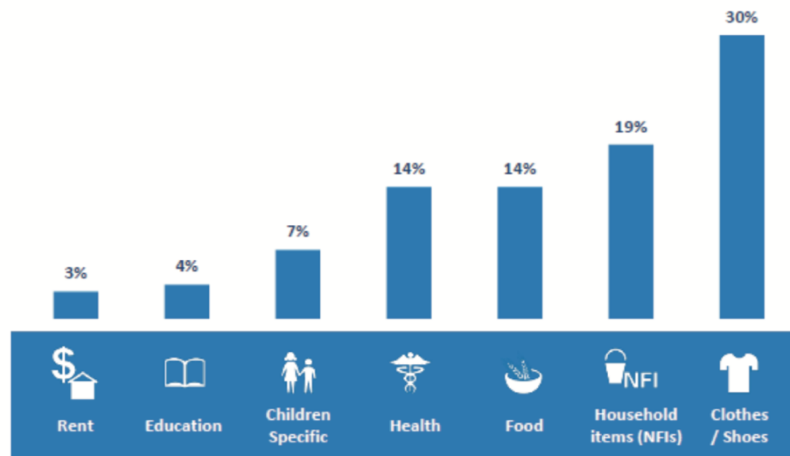

Figure 1: Illustration of Percentage of Unmet Needs of Refugees in a UNHCR Survey (UNHCR, 2016)

4.1 Religion as a Unifier and a Divider

Religion simultaneously serves as a unifier and divider across predominantly Muslim states.

There were many further remarks on the Shia-Sunni conflict and their implications towards refugees' experiences in Iraq and in Egypt. Furthermore, refugees in Western Asia are frequently initially perceived through a Muslim solidarity lens when admitted to a neighboring host state, however, this solidarity transforms into discontent as refugee realities extend to a more long-term crisis, leading to longer, sometimes intergenerational stay.

> "…they accepted us as refugees because of the international law, but they might change their policies, also they do not like Shia as I can not say I am Shia."
>
> - AlSandouk, 70 y/o female, Egypt, 2012

“[…]I am Sunni living in south of Iraq with Shia majority, so I felt it was unsafe for me and my family to stay there.”

- Salih, 50 y/o male, Egypt, 2012

“I am Muslim, Sunni, but I do not care whether the person I am talking to is Muslim or not as I think that person like me, despite whether that person is Muslim, Christian, or Jewish, or any other religion.”

- Ali, 26 y/o male, Egypt, 2012

4.2 Mental Health Outcomes

Mental health is frequently impacted by the unmet material and social needs of refugees.

There was a clear pattern of mental and psychological strain on refugees who more often than not arrive as families with children, as well as a lack of hope due to the uncertainty of their status (frequently limbo).

It has been observed that the unmet needs of refugees are frequently an obstacle to their sense of belonging in the new communities they join in their host countries. However only 16% of refugee households in Jordan believe that cash assistance will be a meaningful means of support to their issues (UNHCR, 2016b). There clearly are more factors at play than just material needs and survival, and that’s where mental health comes in.

Amongst all the hurdles, refugees wish to simply be able to live in the countries they seek asylum.

"…there is no peace in living in Iraq. By the days of Saddam Hussein, people who disagree with Saddam's regime, they got resettlement and had Asylum status in many countries, now I can not live in Iraq, so why I do not be treated like those, me and my family also deserve to live."

- Alanee, 47 y/o female, Egypt, 2012

"I am feeling tired, because I am thinking always about our future, as we are unstable here, we are worried about what will happen to us."

- Hanan, 46 y/o female, Egypt, 2013

Many refugees explicitly stated the mental toll the instability and limbo has taken from them.

"[…]stability based on having jobs, be financially able to support yourself, also lack of safety causes us to have unstable life all that affect my psychology and health."

- Hashim, 44 y/o female, Egypt, 2012

Other refugees expressed passion towards upholding their Iraqi identity while in Egypt, whereas some expressed indifference towards any nationality and just wanted to pursue a peaceful life.

"Losing my home [is significant to me], as now I do not care about nationality, I just want to live because in war you lose everything you like."

- Ibrahim, 19 y/o male, Egypt, 2012

4.3 Host Policies and Resources

Ever changing conditions within host states, either first country of asylum or third country, make refugee life even more unpredictable than the happenings in their country of origin.

There is a clash between imposed international laws and their local context, as well as the unpredictability of their application.

> "I am not sure after the revolution whether the rules might change or not, maybe one day the Egyptian government may make it difficult for us to stay here, because in Arab states there are not permanent laws relating to refugees."
>
> - AlSandouk, 70 y/o female, Egypt, 2012

Refugees also highlight the bureaucratic difference between obtaining a case at UNHCR and obtaining refugee status, and how years can pass between these two processes which effectively place refugees in a state of limbo.

> "In 2008 we got our case in the UNHCR. From 2008 until now, they have not accepted us as refugees. Until now we are asking for status as refugees. And we don't know why."
>
> - Hussein, male, Egypt, 2013

Through this, there were multiple refugees who expressed their feelings of being neglected due to their status as Iraqis by the UNHCR, particularly after the Syrian crisis of 2011.

> "[…]I think sometimes that we are in the last status for the priorities of the UNHCR and Caritas, even these organizations worked better in Syria and Jordan, they are giving Iraqis there, salary, English courses, and food products."
>
> - Ahmed, 40 y/o male, Egypt, 2013

In terms of health and healthcare, there seem to be long wait times and stalling tactics that prevent refugees to seek care, particularly for their children and the elderly, despite their conditions.

> "[…] I asked [the UN] to support my children, because of their health situation. Every time we go there they tell us, 'okay next time, hopefully soon, hopefully soon' but nothing. […] Even if I'm gonna take her to [a healthcare establishment by the UN], I'm not gonna take the approval to take her by a doctor unless I'm gonna spend three months waiting for the approval. (referring to a prescription)"
>
> - Fars, 45 y/o male, Jordan, 2017

Similar to Egypt, due to the uncertainty of their resettlement, refugees in Jordan also frequently live with constant anxiety that is further exacerbated by their financial instability, unemployment and health conditions. Many of them expressed hope towards either resettling one day to another country of their choice or going back home, while expressing fear towards the sustainability of their assistance program.

> "My only other source of income is from the UN but it is only [150 USD] per month. Thankfully, I am in good health now. In the beginning, I had many health problems. […] My psychological health is better than in Iraq, but it is not suitable. I do not feel safe here and there is no future here. I hope my settlement completes, this will make my life easier because then I could also get an education. It is my only hope. If settlement does not happen, what will happen to me if the UN assistance programs stops?"
>
> - Bilal, 28 y/o male, Jordan, 2014

Some Iraqi refugees put a huge emphasis on respect and standards of life, while maintaining the realism that they are indeed paying for all of these opportunities. There

is a balance between their gratitude for the opportunities they are provided with and the level of respect and sincerity they have towards Jordan and Jordanians.

> "Nobody is welcome to us except the Jordans. We are respected here in Jordan. There is a good standard of life here and pay for it. We are not refugees, we are paying for everything, the house, residency, and everything. The relationship between the Iraqis and Jordanians is good. Also, the countries Iraq and Jordan have good relations. That is why it is easy to live here. We respect ourselves and the other.
>
> - Sahar, 48 y/o female, Jordan, 2016

Other refugees with more pressing medical concerns deem their health incredibly difficult to navigate, as they are unable to work altogether and cannot afford treatment plans or surgeries needed to alleviate or remedy their conditions.

> "I am paralyzed in my legs. I cannot move. It is the result of an accident which happened in 2007.There was an explosion and from it I was hurt in my back. I need an operation, but I don't have enough money for it."
>
> - Mohammed, 31 y/o male, Jordan, 2015

4.4 Jobs and Education

The lack of availability of jobs and/or education impact the longevity of refugee's desire, and ability, to stay in host countries, which is used as a systemic tool to softly push refugees towards resettlement elsewhere or repatriation, while complying with UN standards in place for hosts.

The lack of jobs, lack of funds, lack of education all lead to no hope for refugee futures in host countries. Refugees come to accept their positions as temporary given the hostility of the situation and want to relocate elsewhere like the US.

One of the most common themes that emerged within this section is unemployment, despite a vast number of skillsets available within the refugee communities. Employment is sought after due to multiple benefits it provides, such as potential residence as well as medical insurance.

> "I only want a suitable place and a good place for me. Suitable, so I can stay there. I don't care where, but I'm not thinking to stay in Jordan because there is no income here, no job. Also the life here is very expensive. You need to pay for the rent of the house, also for your food or anything. You have too many expenses so it is difficult for me. I am trying to get resettlement. I don't care, anywhere. I am only looking for good safety, a good place for me."
>
> - Said, 42 y/o male, Jordan, 2015

> "I thought it wasn't going to take a while, 5 months maximum, and then I'm going to leave Jordan. Also, back in Iraq, before we came here, I was jobless, because there is no job back in Iraq also."
>
> - Yasin, 50 y/o male, Jordan, 2019

Refugees' resettlement also triggers a chain of desperation for younger generations whose education and future are in jeopardy given the inaccessibility of local resources, restarting the cycle of targeted impoverishment.

> "Both of [my daughters] are home, because they lost the chance to have a high school. Here in Jordan, they lost the future. They did not graduate high school, so it is hard for them to complete their studies in Jordan. That is why they are at home jobless and without completing studies."
>
> - Sahar, 48 y/o female, Jordan, 2016

4.5 Temporariness and Temporality

Institutional misconceptions of temporariness and the short-term nature of refugees, leading to lack of investment and support structures.

Refugees are frequently expected to return home and are not wanted long-term to fit into the host countries they are allowed into. Their stay is seen as absolutely temporary by locals and governments alike, and this is reflected in their inability to find long-term jobs and opportunities, as these would otherwise be gateways for their integration and ultimately, their stay.

> "Life in Jordan is very different and very difficult. I am sleeping, I don't have any income. It is expensive here, especially because of the rent. I cannot do anything because I do not know how long I will stay here. It is a temporary time, so I am not sure what to do. I cannot work because it is illegal to work as an Iraqi. I don't have residence in Jordan so my only option is to work illegally, which they would take half the salary of anyways. I don't know what to do."
>
> - Najimm, 45 y/o male, Jordan, 2014

Furthermore, the Iraqi refugees in Egypt face particular difficulties as they pertain to their identities. Refugees report that they were easily identifiable through their accent and were solely accepted due to international pressures.

> "The cheapest thing here in Jordan is the il-respect of the Iraq. the Jordanian know you are Iraqi he is gonna raise the price for you, if you gonna take a taxi or car, he gonna from your accent know you are Iraqi and raise the price also."
>
> - Fadhil, 57 y/o male, Jordan, 2019

5. Discussion

Refugees in Jordan have individual hopes, expectations and needs that pertain to their background and lived experiences. While some are hoping for resettlement in countries like the US, others are happy to stay in Jordan yet hope for the improvement of infrastructural and interpersonal treatment. On the other hand, some are hoping to one day go back to their country once it is safe.

I would like to frame this results section based on Collier and Betts' process of rethinking refugee policy in a changing world: through ethics, refuge, autonomy, recovery, and institutional efficacy (Collier & Betts, 2017). Through this discussion section, I argue multiple points that are highlighted below.

Amongst economically stable, middle-class, well-educated Iraqi refugees in Egypt and relatively lower-income refugees in Jordan (S. Shanahan, personal communication), we observe common concerns and hopes about the future as they pertain to their realities. This further demonstrates that refugees are not solely in need of material support, but also of local social structures as well as "sympathy for the plight of the displaced" which will help establish systems that aid refugees more effectively. This is in line with the autonomy and recovery stages of refugee policy. (Collier & Betts, 2017)

Initially, through deductive coding, I assumed that themes regarding religious and neighboring country solidarity would emerge. That seemed to be the case, however, there was also a significant amount of sectarian violence at play (Sunni and Shia conflicts) as well as a clash between imposed international laws and their temporality at the local context. This further implies that the religious solidarity offered by many surrounding countries are short-term responses, which, given long-term conditions leading to long-term displacement of refugees, may backfire through progressively more restrictive policy that could push refugees into repatriation or resettlement elsewhere out of fear. Therefore, the policies that are in place in host countries are affected by the length of the crises at hand and behave like a pendulum dependent on context.

It was also clear that financial stability was not enough to facilitate refugees' way of life, ease stress, and improve poor mental health outcomes. Furthermore, UNHCR resources were frequently proven to not be sufficient, as for many refugees, registration with UNHCR isn't possible. The UNHCR's proposed Durable Solutions are often not possible or applicable to refugee circumstances, leading to my observation that the overall definition and needs of refugees are quite outdated on the Geneva Convention, and an amendment that takes into account today's era of displaced peoples is overdue.

My main points are that refugee integration, even if informal or temporary, is an essential component of their experience for their well-being and survival through increased community support, resource allocation and sense of security, and that lack of any attempts of integration at the state level, frequently followed by a lack of provisions implying disregard and temporariness of refugee presence, particularly during times of limbo, is a violation of international human rights law as described by the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

"[human rights are] indivisible and interdependent: governments should not be able to pick and choose which rights are respected". (UN Assembly, 1948)

It is important to highlight that throughout this entire process, I was humbled to learn about individual narratives, and how distinct each lived experience was which makes it difficult, and unjust, to generalize refugee needs into a universal rhetoric. There were also significant differences and similarities across Egypt and Jordan refugees, especially when it comes to the differences in how the Egyptian and Jordanian governments perceived refugees.

Refugees are frequently depicted as facing universal challenges while having a determined set of needs. However, the stark contrasts, as well as nuances that I observed during this study between each individual reality beyond universal refugee needs is what struck me the most when going through interviews.

The study didn't collect demographic information except gender, age, country of origin, country interviewed, and occasionally education level and profession. While this is clearly a limitation towards understanding more nuanced factors in refugees' expectations of resettlement or integration, we see a clear pattern beyond simply infrastructural lack of resources. Individual lived experiences differ greatly even across refugees with similar demographics, and thus require deep understanding of the conditions of each refugee, as well as host countries' approaches towards each identity in order to seek solutions for a sustainable, integratory refugee practice. Future research could further explore, in a longitudinal fashion, individual refugee realities across the years from a wide range of socioeconomic positions in order to better estimate overall refugee needs to thrive in communities they join.

The status of refugees leads to delicate and volatile life conditions whose uncertainty adds to the already prevalent stressful lifestyle refugees experience. As the length of stay increases, there tends to be decreasing tolerance for refugees both at the individual local scale as well as at the policy level through each government.

Throughout the interviews, there was a clear pattern of insufficiency and unsustainability of infrastructural resources offered to refugees, mostly through the UNHCR. Ranging from financial instability to medical expenses, many refugees

expressed concern over the differential access of resources refugees face, compared to locals, as well as the sustainability of resources. This is further exacerbated by bureaucratic barriers, which make the process of resettlement incredibly difficult to navigate and ambiguous.

Through financial, medical, mental, social difficulties, each refugee and their families navigate these conditions differently, which demonstrates a multidimensional reality for a frequently dichotomized problem.

Multidimensional issues call for multidimensional measures, and the primary act of containment implemented by states dismisses refugee realities, and simply fosters short-term band-aid measures to an erratically growing global crisis. This is further diminished through the lack of local sympathy towards refugees. (Collier & Betts, 2017)

Refugees are frequently depicted as helpless, desperate. However, if provided with a combination of supportive policies and opportunities, refugees can and will successfully provide for themselves/their families within the communities they resettle. All it takes is initiatives from both ends. However, local communities such as in Turkey frequently have the misconception that refugees are lazy and well-off due to initiatives such as the UNHCR and many local NGOs. This is further supported through the

argument of a developmental space where refugees can thrive, not just survive (Collier & Betts, 2017) as well as the entrepreneurial potential and individual capital refugees possess. (Atasü-Topcuoğlu, 2019)

These criteria demonstrate the true need for a global initiative or alliance that does not hold other commitments such as the UN to monitor each country's refugee integration or hosting practice to determine whether they pertain to human rights guidelines. Europe in particular has been trying to contain the influx of refugees out of the Middle East, towards Europe and the Americas, which is a perpetuation of their own functionalism (Keyman, 2016). Current standards in place for refugees do not put enough emphasis on mental or psychological well-being and are too focused on the legal rights of refugees as well as their short-term survival, leading to insufficient governmental or institutional mental health care, relief or support.

Therefore, there's a pressing need for a global refugee movement beyond NGOs and IGOs. The global refugee narrative, rhetoric and support networks should not be at the hands of Western-based organizations such as the UNHCR. Countries with abundance of resources should have pre-set budgets and quotas to accept refugees of all backgrounds, and not screen for refugees with a minimum level of education or wealth to accommodate their resettlement needs.

Future research and endeavors towards refugee welfare should focus on the individual, not the institutional. Studies should be done with a true emphasis on the refugee journey, from start to finish, in order to determine the chinks of the system. Anything less will only result in storytelling and perhaps awareness with no true agent of change.

5.1 Implications for policy and practice

Like any other lived reality, academic research and publications only highlight the disparities at hand without any given promise towards addressing them. Therefore, as with any other disparity, refugee lives must be the priority of policy and implementation practices. This particular study has clearly shown the stance of individual governments through restrictive policies, not just towards refugees as a whole, but even tiered amongst different ethnicities. This divisive approach to policy politicizes an otherwise human rights issue that can only be solved through long-term accommodations and welcoming policy. Instead, countries are pushed to assume buffer roles while other states strive to preserve their national identities while shredding any hopes for resettlement for a better future.

Many refugee frameworks constitute outdated theory, such as those proposed in the 1951 Convention, that are overdue for change. Literature that highlights refugee

experiences frequently overlooks the instability of refugee realities leading to a theoretical approach to a practical problem. Therefore, swift assessments followed by actions on refugee needs in a timely manner is needed to keep up with these changing realities.

5.2 Implications for further research

Despite an abundance of resources and efforts being pooled into refugee aid, there's very little literature emerging from LMIC-based authors that highlight the local perspectives of refugees. Much like global health, refugee aid is a topic that is frequently dissonant from real lived experiences and is institutionally and politically prescriptive in both theory and implementation. Further research, as well as assessments, are needed to hold accountable the lack of universal standards in place, while an amendment to the 1951 Convention should be made to better accommodate more contemporary refugee realities. Furthermore, the dominant role of HIC-based NGO and IGOs in decision making and implementation truly highlight the voicelessness that refugees and those belonging in their communities are facing with regards to the very issues they themselves are experiencing. Research covering these debilitating power dynamics is seemingly absent from literature.

As emphasized through the Egypt and Jordan data, the literature needs to further distinguish between rights afforded to refugees overall and those to particular identities such as Syrian, Iraqi and Palestinian refugees in Jordan, while also taking into account the longevity of each of these crises and their impact on policy. Furthermore, an emphasis on the need for, yet the difficulty of, establishing universal refugee rights is underdeveloped. Further research should also highlight the insufficiency of IGO and NGOs especially as they pertain to material needs, and how governments typically do not have the best interest of refugees in mind when accommodating them through shortsighted political vision. These assessments are perhaps politically absent from the literature.

5.3 Study strengths and limitations

Refugee lives are ever-changing. Their status in host countries can decisively change in a matter of weeks. This study aimed to capture a snapshot of refugees' lived experiences and stories and didn't seek follow-ups with any participants in subsequent years. Thus, this study cannot represent long-term challenges refugees face when awaiting resettlement, repatriation, or when in limbo.

Another limitation is the selection bias towards refugees that were encountered for potential interviewing. Potential participants of these interviews were refugees in

urban settings who were not camp based. Furthermore, Iraqi refugees often travelled back and forth to Iraq while maintaining their refugee status in their countries of first asylum, which could improve their well-being and have more positive outcomes regardless of host country experiences.

We also acknowledge potential biases and loss of meaning that could emerge from translations. On many occasions, interviewers observed that men were more comfortable being interviewed given the predominantly male interpreters working on the study, which could've also caused disproportionate participation of men, though the overall data seems to be fairly balanced.

Finally, as highlighted in this thesis, the difference in years, as well as the host countries' stark contrasts in their approach to refugee policy, make it very difficult to interpret results. While a common trend across years wasn't noticeable, what really impacted refugees' welfare and state of mind was the length of stay in said host country and whether this was their country of first asylum or not. This information wasn't present in all interviews and thus wasn't taken into consideration during the analysis, serving as a further limitation.

6. Future Directions and Conclusion

Through this secondary analysis, I aimed to use pre-existing qualitative interviews to shed some light on differential refugee realities as they pertain to long-term belonging and integration. However, much like any other global phenomenon, the realities of refugees are ever-changing and unpredictably dynamic. This was observed many times throughout the Syrian crisis as predominantly high-income host countries underestimated the long-term nature of the issue at hand and decided to, against the 1951 Geneva Convention standards of non-refoulement, send refugees elsewhere or back to their country. This is also a direct violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. (Assembly, 1948) Furthermore, the aims of these interviews did not consider follow-ups with the refugees across subsequent years, which would provide some insight into the changes observed both at the community and state levels. There is also a need for further studies to examine and reveal Western stigma, the political scapegoating refugees face, as well as the distinction of policies between accommodating refugees in European countries compared to those within Western Asia, whose proximity to the ongoing realities of refugees' homelands as well as religious solidarity shape their responses to these crises. Further directions for the future include differences in refugee integration, stigma and resources in HICs and LMICs, refugee mental health differences between differing stages of resettlement, and the efficacy and beneficence of intergovernmental and non-profit organizations in handling the refugee crisis.

Appendix A

Category	Parent Node	Child Node	Description
Demographic			**Demographics of the interview**
	Age		age of interviewee
	Gender		self-identified gender of interviewee
	Host Country		The country that is hosting the refugee at time of interview/country interviewed
		Year of Interview	year of interview
Integration			**Themes related to Integration and Social Structures**
	Identity		Relates to individual identities, solidarity amongst certain groups, refugee identity
	Family		Relates to family support and companionship
	Neighborhood		Relates to social surroundings, including local treatment, profiling, labelling
	Future		Relates to future, perceptions of the future, impact on the future, hopes
	Community		References to isolation or to the opposite, community
	Religion		References to religious solidarity
	Institutional Support		References to institutional support: government, NGOs, IGOs, other organizations

Figure 2: Codebook for Qualitative Analysis

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