

Challenges of Unemployment and Benefits of Employment for South Sudanese People from Refugee Backgrounds in Melbourne, Australia

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Abstract

Settlement of people from refugee backgrounds has been largely discussed in Australia because of critical social issues affecting the integration of newly emerged community such as the South Sudanese community. This research paper has taken one-step back to at looks the benefits of employment in settlement context of refugees using the case study of the South Sudanese community in Melbourne, Australia. The aim of this research was to provide an understanding of the benefits of employment on different forms of capitals that can assist refugees to overcome settlement challenges. These five capitals or benefits are economic capital, social capital, the cultural and psychological capital. This research was conducted through in-depth interviews with 20 participants from the South Sudanese community in Melbourne, Australia with refugee backgrounds. Participants were given taken the time to tell their settlement experiences, the level of participation in employment and benefits of employment to them and their families with duration range between 45 minutes to 60 minutes. Major findings confirmed that participation of refugees in employment assists them to access important benefits of economic capital, social capital, cultural and psychological capital, which they can accumulate through employment.

Keywords: Refugees, Challenges of Unemployment and Benefits of Employment, South Sudanese

1. Introduction

There are a growing number of researchers about the general settlement of refugees and migrants in Australia, but there is no much attention pay in a relationship between employment and settlement of refugee community. Therefore, this paper has explored the benefits of employment in the settlement process of people from refugee backgrounds through a case study of the South Sudanese community in Melbourne, Australia, using a research question of how do the benefits of employment deliver social capital that enables this community to effectively move through the settlement difficulties. Employment for refugees can facilitate pathways and integration for refugees into the host community by enhancing social connection and financial benefits for their families while adjusting themselves in the new country. The integration of refugees with host communities is easily facilitated by their participation in paid employment, which assists them to gain affordable services that meet their needs.

Understanding the sociological concept of employment is important in any given society but more important for people from refugee backgrounds who were forced to leave their countries of births with almost nothing to re-establish themselves in their new country of resettlement. Employment plays a major role in determining a person's level of income and defining a person's status and social class. Employment carries social connections and status that individuals and society impute based on perceived contributions. Those who are employed tend to have privileges and other opportunities in the working environment (Morin, 2004). Social capital theory moves the understandings of integration from a perspective of an individual's processes of taking other cultures on. This dynamic process of learning and acceptance of other cultures is a critical point in bridging capital through interactions and learning from workforce practices and other positives arising from such interactions (Marlowe, 2010).

2. Literature Review

2.1. Definition of Employment and Unemployment

The meaning of employment and unemployment, as well as understanding of their impact, is critical to the study of refugee settlement. First employment is defined as a state of being employed or having a job as an occupation by which a person earns a living in term of payment because of services offer in the form of work or business. Employment provides

potent functions such as a sense of society structure and the meaningful life as people are able to work, make contributions to themselves, their families and community (Blustein, et al. 2012). People tend to look for employment in order to get payment for their services in business. Paid employment includes people who performed some work for wages or salary, in cash or in kind (Krahn, et al 2015). The empirical research in employment suggests employment situation as a state in which all available labour resources are used in the most economically efficient way (Cullen, 1999). There are different conditions of employment, casual employment, part-time employment, full-time employment and voluntary employment. Therefore, this research is exploring all benefits of employment ranging from monetary benefits to skills and social network that people gain through involvement in employment.

While the definition of employment has been discussed, it is important to understand the meaning of unemployment too as critical part of the discussion. “Unemployment” is a limbo situation where someone has no paid work or is actively looking for paid work (Winefield, 2002). The definition of unemployment include all people with specific age of working and remain without work, that is, were not in paid employment or self-employment during the particular period including people who are currently available for work, that is, were available for paid employment or self-employment (Mahuteau et al 2008). Unemployment can vary from country to country, state to state and suburb to suburb. The criteria generally include not being in paid work but actively seeking and immediately available for paid employment and being registered as unemployed and thereby entitled to a benefit (Cullen, 1999). Unemployment affects not only health but is also associated with long-term poverty (Beatty et al. 2010). Unemployment is a continuing concern and has been linked to material deprivation, social isolation, restricted agency, lowered future aspirations, and a range of negative health consequences. The negative consequences of unemployment include perceptions about unemployed people, as they are more likely to be stereotyped and ostracised by public, service providers and government officials as lazy people who does not want to work. This claim is not often justified those who claims it on unemployed people (Cullen, 1999). It is important that social research continues exploring psychological effects of unemployment to better understand the nature of unemployment at both micro and macro levels (Blustein, et al 2012). People with an extended period of unemployment including those from refugee backgrounds are more likely to be affected psychologically by the consequences of unemployment.

The importance of employment and the risks and adverse consequences of unemployment are well documented in research on refugee settlement. Newly-arrived refugees with no financial support or employment opportunities can find the resettlement process distressing and the outcome is unlikely to succeed without sustainable employment, particularly for those who are looking for employment but remain unemployed due to a lack of employability (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2006 and Correa-Velez, et al 2013). Employment is one of the social areas that require more investigation (Abur & Spaaij 2016). Refugees who come to Australia bring different levels of skills and experience. However, some refugees who have spent a long time moving from place to place have not had the opportunity to attain qualifications and employment experience because of the nature of their migration experiences, including long periods spent in refugee camps (Abur 2012). These factors demonstrate the difficulties of refugees securing productive work that meets their needs. Productive work is one of the keys to well-being as work provides income as well as socio-economic status. People need to have productive work in which they can feel social inclusion and so be accepted (Wilson, 2008 and Krahn, et al 2015).

2.2. Benefits of Employment for Refugee Community

Benefits of employment are important for any society and particularly in supporting refugee communities to overcome their settlement challenges and integrate better into the host community. Modern employment theory argues that there is no single policy that carries more potential benefits than true full employment of individuals willing to work (Forstater, 2006) When members of the community are employed in productive jobs, the employee has income and recognition within the community. The community receives better and more goods and services (Wilson, 2008). The benefits of employment can be seen at both social and economic levels. The social level concerns benefits to individuals, families, neighbourhoods and communities through decreased crime rates, drug and alcohol abuses and family disruption, and also through increased and strengthened security, education, health care for the infirm and the elderly and environmental protection (Cullen, 1999; Forstater, 2006). The benefit of participation in employment is a key to refugees' well-being, both physical and mental, as it is the best weapon in eradicating poverty and reducing crime. Children of employed parents can complete their schooling or spend more years at school (or university) compared to children of unemployed parents (Forstater, 2006). In contrast, unemployment harms individuals, families, neighbourhoods, villages and communities; job

creation brings real, tangible, and both direct and indirect social and economic benefits, not only for those employed but for all members of the community (McClelland and Macdonald, 1998; Forstater, 2006).

In modern society, capable people have the responsibility to work for themselves, to their community, to other taxpayers, and to society. Secondly, participating in paid work underpins economic independence; work expectations and income support obligations should be linked to a person's capacity and ability to work (Warr 1987). Therefore, State must design and encourage people to help themselves through work to strengthen families, individuals' and community's well-being. Work is something every individual does in daily life. People do work in different contexts, such as growing food for consumption in a village or in an office in urban areas (Fryers, 2006). In a simplistic description, work is either paid or unpaid. Paid work is what most people associate with the term 'work'. Unpaid work includes parental care, housework, private gardening and schoolwork. In much of current society, most people in full-time employment work 5 days a week, although there has been an increase in the number of people working at weekends and part-time. The ability to work flexible hours has grown more rapidly in recent times. Work outside the expected times may be considered to be leisure but more importantly, the amount of leisure time has been affected in recent years by the long hours culture and the length of travelling time (Morin 2004). Fryers (2006) suggested that work is essential as people earn money for a living through work and more importantly, work is regarded as having a strong moral focus or pressure from the Christian ethic or heritage. Some Christians regard work as part of their vocation which was assigned to humankind by God. This is a sociological point of view from a hard-working Christian who believed that working hard and successful work were signs of salvation.

Morin (2004) argues that work is the means by which a person helps his or her family to get ahead in life. Work is viewed as meaningful and essential, and through work, people use their talents, strengths and abilities to serve other people. By working, one provides necessary support and assistance to their family by paying bills, buying food and relevant essential and basic materials for the living. Work provides comfort for those who have work and it is desirable for those who are looking for it. Work can be a joyous element of people's lives as their main point of contribution to the society, which also adds to the purpose of human dignity.

Work has a progressive force in which is involved a sense of self-attachment and identity. This connection comes simply from being a worker, a participant, and contributor. People who cannot work, or cannot find work in modern society, perhaps carry some consequences as they may be missing out from a network and pride in work. The resentment can be understood in different contexts including psychological adversity (Fryers, 2006)

Problems of Employment and Unemployment for Refugee Community

People from refugee backgrounds are often faced by employment problem on top of many other settlement issues they struggle with during their settlement period. These employment problems often include a shortage of jobs in the market, which results in strong competition. Other employment barriers for refugees that have been documented comprise of the lack of English language acquisition and understanding of operational systems are still issues holding non-English speaking refugees back from employment (Abdelkerim & Grace, 2012, Colic-Peisker and Tilbury, 2007 and Refugee Resettlement Working Group, 1994).

Lawlor and Perkins (2009) and Ziguras and Kleidon (2005) observed several issues that act as barriers to employment for those groups. These barriers include a limited English and experiences in the workforce, a lack of self-confidence to meet job requirements, physical and mental health problems, family conflict, caring responsibilities, low levels of education, lack of social network and hopelessness. However, there are some additional issues that are specific to refugees who have spent a long time in refugee camps. These include traumatic histories, low level of social networks, lack of English acquisition which results in low literacy and numeracy skills, financial hardship, substance abuse and insecure housing (Ziguras and Kleidon, 2005). Refugee communities have experienced numerous challenges in employment for a long time and these are ongoing issues in Australia's multicultural society. Unemployment occurs when a person does not receive any income in exchange for their labour. Under-employment is when a person is employed but the hours may be casual or insufficient to meet living costs. What this means in the social context is that employment and economic self-sufficiency are recognised as important components of effective settlement for many migrant and refugee communities. There is a need for meaningful employment to provide people with financial independence and positive self-identity as aids to the process of establishing a sense of home in a new country (Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria 2008). Warr (1987) found that psychological distress is high among unemployed groups, which affect their mental health to some extent compared to those who are employed. This finding was supported by Murphy and Athanasou, (1999).

Payne & Jones (1987) found that in many cases across different groups, there are negative feelings experienced by unemployed people.

2.3. Seeking Employment

The job search can be a lengthy process and stressful, particularly for refugees who want to work and thus address the immediate needs of their families or who want secure employment for self-identity, income, and connection with the mainstream (local community) working class. “Job search” is the act of looking for and securing employment. Most individuals engaged in this process belong to one of three main groups: those who have been unemployed for a long time; short-term unemployed and those who have decided to look for work, a “recent graduate” group and individuals who are currently working but want to change their position (Hasmath, 2012). In general, it is quite difficult for the refugee or ethnic groups when it comes to job search. Their refugee background (and particularly those who are from South Sudan) may not be familiar with strategies commonly used by the mainstream unemployed to look for work. Job search methods such as direct application (e.g. cold calling or emailing companies which one desires to work for and inquire whether there are any job vacancies), media tools (e.g. newspapers advertisements, online job search engines) or formal employment services (e.g. employment centres or agencies). Research has identified that one’s social networks help one to gain information about a particular job which could either be open to the public or require internal expression and introduction to a potential employer (Hasmath, 2012). Refugees are often considered with less or no power in the workplace regardless of qualifications or of no qualifications. Holding the status of a refugee can be challenging. Refugees can be undermined in the workplace and at school because of their classification. Even neighbours can react negatively about refugees being resettled in their neighbourhood or community without consultation (Ethnic Communities’ Council of Victoria, 2008). Fozdar and Torezani (2008) noted, Racism can traumatise, hurt, humiliate, enrage, confuse and ultimately prevent optimal growth and functioning of individuals and communities. This also leads to negative physical, psychological, social, functional, and spiritual health. There are many indicators, which show a complex relationship between employment and measures of well-being. Employment is often regarded as the means by which one can make a major and positive contribution to society, as well as enhancing skills, social networks, and identity. Given that refugees experience unemployment and other forms of discrimination in everyday life, one might expect them to feel that live in their adopted

homeland is less than satisfactory because they are alienated and disconnected from mainstream society. They may feel unwelcome and cannot reach their potential in terms of work opportunities, are relatively less well-off than the rest of the population and thus feel that their levels of life satisfaction/quality of life/well-being would be significantly lower than the general population (Fozdar and Torezani, 2008). Calma (2008) observes that human rights issues could easily be missed in a situation where refugees are excluded from employment or being given low-paid jobs. Such treatment can make their situation more complex than the expected settlement and integration. There is no justice in a situation where one is feeling insecure in the workplace as a result of being different from other workers or because of language differences such as accent.

3. Method

People from the South Sudan with refugee backgrounds in Australia encountered challenges and opportunities. Some of the challenges are systematic issues in workplace such as racism and discrimination. The data presented in this paper was collected from in-depth interviews with 20 participants (9 females and 11 males with age ranging from 18 to 64 years) from the South Sudanese community in Melbourne. The research was conducted as a Ph.D. project with the South Sudanese community living in Melbourne, Australia, and arrived in Australia as the refugee through humanitarian programs for resettlement. The ethics application for this research was approved by the Victoria University's Ethics Committee, which deemed it to be Safe, Respectful, and Responsible and of a High Quality with no harm to participants or community. All participants were provided with information sheets before interviews began which clearly stated that they were not obliged to take part in this study and that they could voluntarily withdraw at any stage. The background of the wider South Sudanese community was cautiously considered because of their experiences in refugee camps or of oppression and political persecution, forced migration, and the trauma of civil wars in South Sudan. Pseudonym names of the participants were adopted and used in the presented findings to avoid identification of their real names. Atem (2011) explained that often data for in-depth interviews are recorded in a wide variety of ways, including audio recording, video recording, written notes, and stenography. For this study, all in-depth interviews were audio recorded during interviews and transcripts made accordingly. The data from interviews were coded and analysed using a thematic analysis, which was used to extract and classify key themes in all the interviews (Atem, 2011). This process was done to

identify similarities in interviews or conversations concerning settlement experiences, benefits of employment and sport using different forms of capital as a way to group themes for this study.

The validity and reliability of research data are a very important part of research. This study was conducted within research protocols and this researcher is satisfied that the data is reliable and valid. Several scholars have argued that reliability of data requires a discussion of the procedures to justify claims made in respect of the accuracy of the data and it is about truthfulness, credibility in research findings (Sagor, 2000; Bryman, 2008; Neuman 2006; Graziano and Raulin, 2004).

4. Findings

The benefits of participation in employment range from financial to social benefits through connecting with like-minded individuals who have positive attitudes to refugees and understanding of social issues facing the refugee. There are many factors, which hold back people from refugee backgrounds participating in their host community. However, with greater support for those people to enter the workforce, it is likely that settlement challenges confronting refugees can be reduced and employment can open more opportunities for them to integrate successfully. According to the interviews, the benefits of participation in employment were clearly stated: employment provides financial benefits, social capital or social connection and learning opportunities. Good learning experiences can occur when a person finds work. Also, employment provides a platform for financial stability which helps to reduce stress and other settlement pressures. The following quotes are examples of participants' views on the benefit of employment for the community.

Employment helped in many ways. First, you can support yourself if you don't have relatives or friends to support you when you want something. You can buy things that you want if you are employed, pay rent and other bills. You can also learn lots in workplaces by meeting friends, socialising with workmates, learning from workplace culture and English. It always helped to get employment. I enjoyed my time when working because I can buy what I want. (P#1, Dut)

Getting a larger network is a good thing when you are working; you have to meet a great many people who can be a challenge to you in terms of their behaviour and issues they are facing. This can be a great learning experience to people who are working. In my case, I like things that challenge me sometimes, and that is how I learned. Trying a new role in the workplace can be daunting unless you have great

support in your team, but I have learned teamwork is so important in many workplaces and is a great skill to have, too. You can help your team members when they need help.(Participant11, 28-year-old female, 11 years in Australia)

Sometimes there are myths that unemployed people with refugee backgrounds do not want to work. This is not the case for the many people who see the benefits of employment and want to work, but there are no jobs available for them. The next statement describes the feelings expressed by those who want to work to support themselves and to contribute to society through paying taxes.

Employment is essential, not only to provide income for yourself, but also you feel like you are meaningfully contributing to Society through work and taxpaying. I do not think that anyone wants to be a parasite, stick to welfare benefits, and suck government's money. Some people like to work and have a sense of identity, a sense of belonging as workers. To me, employment is extremely important as it can help people to get and use the money.(Participant19, 27-year-old female, 11 years in Australia)

4.1. Economic Capital Financial Benefit of Employment

Any financial benefit of employment is regarded as psychological and economic capital because having work provides economic stability. Employment reduces psychological stress and assists in gaining peace and psychological satisfaction. Participants described financial benefits through employment provide a great deal of psychological and economic stability. People who have work seem to be happy and more settled than those who depend on social security benefits.

The benefit of employment is financial and health because of emotional wellbeing attached to employment or finances. Therefore, employment improves your psychological and physical well-being. With work, one could support himself and herself with finance or you could support your family members who are going through financial hardship.(Participant18, 30-year-old female, 15 years in Australia)

The level of financial benefits of employment was discussed and it appeared to be the most important thing for people, as they would like to get jobs to earn income and support their relatives or family both in Australia and back home in Africa.

Work is beneficial to me because I am able to pay bills, my car's fuel and buy things that I wanted to buy for myself. This is helpful lots compared to someone who is living on welfare/ security benefit. It is difficult to meet your financial needs. Those from refugee community groups, who have work, do integrate easily because of people they meet in workplaces.(Participant17, 25-year-old female, 12 years in Australia)

The financial benefit of employment is explained by a participant who had a factory job. He gained more freedom to do things he wanted and because his payment comes fortnightly he can also support his family.

I am employed in one of the factory companies in Melbourne. I do factory work and I had benefited a lot from my work because I am paid fortnightly and I was able to support myself financially compared to the time I was not working. When you are employed, you depend on yourself and are not depending on social security/ Centrelink payments. You can afford to rent a house, buy a car for yourself and afford to support your relatives or family members. Especially as us South Sudanese or Africans have our relatives/family members back home in Africa, we send money to support them. In my workplace, I have a good relationship with my team in which I have learned lots because we work as a team not as individuals or in isolation. Because of my hard work, I was promoted to an assistant supervisor. I know my role well and it was hard for people to put me down for what I was doing (Participant 7, 38 year old male, 10 years in Australia)

The contribution to the community through taxes was raised by both the unemployed and the employed who want to work to help themselves and their families and to contribute to the community through paying taxes. Some people believe that being employed is good because it keeps people away from being involved in crime, particularly young people who may not like to stay without doing something tangible to their skills level. They can easily get bored and tend to engage in wrong social activities, which put them in trouble without thinking of the consequences.

Employment is good for the economy of the country because when you are employed, you pay taxes to the government, which is good for the country. Employment is also good for the individual when you are employed; you have a sense of stability and you can learn lots from employing new knowledge and skills. I got my job because of an idea, which I discussed with my friend; I applied for the job and was called for an interview. I was given the job because I had done well during the interview. When you are working, your living standards change because you can be in a better position financially in which you have no worries about financial stress. You have less financial stress when you are working and you are able to spend your income on the things you wanted to have instead of waiting and asking someone to assist. Employment helps you to stay away from committing crimes because people who are working, particularly young people, some can attempt to steal or do stealing which is a crime and not good for their future. To me, employment is so important to anyone's life. (Participant 19, 27-year-old female, 11 years in Australia)

The benefits of employment thus have a great range, from financial benefits, social networking, and learning. This is culture capital as people build their knowledge through experiences learnt at work.

The benefits of employment are many and can range from making a better living, pay the mortgage when you have money or are employed. Employment brings lots of benefits including the financial benefit that helps people to enjoy living a better life in general. When you are employed, you can have less financial stress as well as having a decent life as a result of financial stability. (Participant 9, 30-year-old female, 12 years in Australia)

Employment is also beneficial because it keeps people occupied with daily routines. People who work might not have as much time to waste on activities that are unhelpful to them. Many unemployed people find themselves with problems, which are sometimes due to stress and a lack of something meaningful to do. The participants discussed the benefits of employment, which included describing it as one way of keeping people away from trouble.

When you work, you can learn about workplace policy and communication. Your boss can ask you to deal with some issues that need more understanding before you approach it. You may not fully understand it but learn or read about it until you understand the policy or procedures to manage tasks. People can tell you what you had never heard before and you ask what it means. This can be a learning moment for you at work. (Participant 8, 25-year-old female, 14 years in Australia)

Employment is powerful in the sense that it allows you to participate in society and contribute to your wellbeing as you count yourself that you are part of the community and feel you are included in society. It is motivating in many ways. I am not a psychologist but I think there is more than what I just said as social and psychological benefits of employment; it is important that people feel included in employment to participate and contribute in society. You feel valued when you are employed which is opposite to when you are not employed. (Participant 18, 30-year-old female, 15 years in Australia)

Some participants see the benefit of employment as something that provides them with a routine as well as contributing to the community and government through taxes.

I am not working at the moment; I am a full-time student but I have worked previously in a factory. When I was working, I got a lot of benefits I benefited from working as an individual and contributing to the community through paying taxes as a citizen of the country. One of the many benefits I got from work was an active engagement and routine focus on my work. To me, employment controlled me and engaged me which helped me to avoid being with people who are not contributing positive things to the

community. There were people who think that I came by boat. I told them you cannot come by boat from Africa. (Participant15, 28-year-old male, 10 years in Australia)

4.2. Social Capital

The benefits that people get through meeting friends and colleagues in workplaces, as well as outside work, can be underestimated by people with refugee backgrounds. As these people often have no social network due to lack of connection with people who they know in Australia, the workplace is one of the places that can help people from minority ethnic groups to connect with mainstream communities. However, the workplace must be non-discriminatory, must be a place of supporting and nurturing people to work in a safe environment without stress. Participants explained the social benefit of networking with their friends/colleagues as follows.

A social benefit of employment is that it gives you an opportunity to engage with people from different community groups at the same time you can engage with professionals in the government and private sectors. My work is linked to both sectors, which helped me to understand their work and the way they engage community groups on different social and public policies.(Participant18, 30-year-old female, 15 years in Australia)

Networking is critical because people get jobs through their networks. I would encourage people to seek networks as a way forward to get jobs.(Participant14, 23-year-old male, 10 years in Australia)

Some people obtain employment through networking with different groups and different professional workers. Such networking has a great benefit to people from refugee backgrounds with very little social network resources in Australia.

I got my jobs through networking; I attended many networks when I was looking for work. I am always ready to take a challenge. I got my job through networking and my personality. It is important for people to take available opportunities and not to be selective when hunting for work. Without that network, it is challenging refugees to find employment. There is an unemployment problem with South Sudanese and other African migrants. The benefit of employment: there are a lot of benefits when you are employed, especially within a refugee community, you learn a lot from work. Get experience; build your network with people you are working with. You learn about work and of course, get an income to pay bills and rent. It is very important to rent a place for yourself and family. (Participant 2, 25-year-old male, 10 years in Australia)

Meeting friends and social networking through employment was described as one of the benefits of employment. Social connections with people in the workplace often assist

people to break the cycle of social isolation. Participants report that they met friends through work and it is helpful for them to stay connected with them.

I met many friends through work and we all shared our experiences and cultural knowledge to each other. They learned lots from me and I learned lots from them. Work teaches you to be responsible because you follow policies in the workplace and under the guidance of your boss(Participant 15, 28-year-old, 10 years in Australia).

I work in a small environment with a great team; we know ourselves well in terms of skills and strengths. Work can expose you to meet people from different backgrounds and some can be so helpful.(Participant14, 23-year-old male, 9 years in Australia)

Gaining social capital is important and benefits people looking for employment or other better opportunities. Building social capital through networking with colleagues from the workforce is an incredibly powerful way of integrating for refugees. Major learning and job opportunities are often enhanced through networking with friends, present, and past work colleagues. Social networks are important for sharing formal and informal knowledge that enhances future opportunities and innovative thinking. Social networking provides learning opportunities for those involved in three main areas, knowledge transfer, support and generation of ideas. Participants described how they got their jobs through friends.

When I started my job I had one of my best friends working in the same company with me. I got work for him there but we quickly became best friends. We always enjoyed our time together and that motivated us all the time to come to work. When you have good friends at work, you always think of going to work because weekends can even become boring for you and that is a benefit of work too, apart from financial benefits. We always had good break times socialising with each other and that was what made us love our work. Socialising at work is great as it makes you think on the weekend that Monday is too: I wanted to go to work and meet friends. I have great friends at work and in sport. They say, 'Hey, how you are doing?' checking in with me all the time when I meet them, which is great for me.(Participant 10, 21-year-old male, 12 years in Australia)

4.3. Cultural Capital Learning experiences from employment.

Participating in employment can provide learning experiences, particularly for those who have work experience only from overseas or who had never worked before. People from refugee backgrounds who get involved in work consider the benefit their employment opportunity as a learning experience for them to learn about the way Australians work. The specific areas of learning can range from understanding the system, the policies of

organisations, workplace politics and general behaviours of employers as well as employees. Throughout the time in which the interviews were conducted, the participants described that gaining experiences through employment is a huge benefit to young people who are entering the workforce as well as people who had experienced working in other countries but who may have to go through new workforce cultural experiences depending on organisation perception and expectations.

I work in childcare because I had to train and did placement/work experience in children's services, which has been so helpful for me now in my current job. I did a Certificate and Diploma in Childcare training. (Participant 11, 28-year-old female, 8 years in Australia)

I used to work with people from different community groups, which I have learned lots from their ways of doing work and their cultures. For example, I worked with Chinese and Indians in my company. We talked to each other about food and culture, which was good for me in terms of learning. (Participant 12, 22-year-old female, 11 years in Australia)

Facing people with challenging behaviours can be confronting but also a good learning experience for some. One participant described how she met some people with difficult behaviour at work. Despite their difficult or "grumpy" behaviour, she treated it as a learning experience. She similarly described meeting good people and she learned from their good behaviours.

Working is very interesting because sometimes you can find grumpy people and good people, and you learn from both sides. For example, with grumpy people, you can learn to understand that they may have had a bad night and "cannot be bothered. Let me deal with this in a positive way and let them play their grumpy way if they want to continue being grumpy for a day. Sometimes you can treat such grumpy people in a nice way that can change their day and see it in a positive way. In my opinion, it is good to work and meet all different people with different behaviours, which can assist you understanding society better. (Participant 8, 25-year-old female, 14 years in Australia)

Working in a good organisation can be rewarding, professional development, which can assist, in the next job. A participant suggested that work experience is about personal development and professional development. She explained it as two ways learning, meaning people can also learn from people with refugee backgrounds.

Personal development is one of the big benefits that you get from employment because you can learn from people and people learn from you as well. There is a lot of

learning in which you can be the teacher at some points and be students at some points. (Participant 18, 30-year-old female, 15 years in Australia)

The South Sudanese traditional family taught young people to work hard starting with their family tasks appeared to be useful when a person grew up and entered the workforce. One participant explained that encouragement from the family to work hard sometimes has great outcomes of transferring skills to employment. She shared a thoughtful experience when her mother pushed them to work hard with her siblings when they came to Australia.

When we came to Australia, my mum pushed us to work hard in learning and interacting with people in a different community as a way of improving our English and connection because we were in a place where there were not many Africans. Our family was the only family from as African background. Mum believed that it was important for her children to integrate and not to be left out of the wider community. Pushing myself helped me to connect with people from different groups. To integrate well, you need to go beyond your comfort zone. You can be rejected but you need to be ready for rejection or disappointment. Integration needs you to be courageous enough to face challenges and you will succeed after you try many times, with some disappointments. (Participant 18, 30-year-old female, 15 years in Australia)

4.4. Psychological Capital Social Impact of Unemployment

The social impact of unemployment ranges from a social breakdown, family break up, and lack of self-care to abuse of alcohol and other drugs as ways of managing the stress of unemployment. Being unemployed have long-term effects on an individuals' ability to support the family and one's own needs and wellbeing. For the South Sudanese, it is almost a duty of each individual to make a contribution for the family when reaching a reasonable working age. This expectation is often diminished by the lack of employment which leads to dependence on welfare. The well-known problem of welfare or social security income is that it is not enough to pay daily living costs and also to assist someone else. Participants agreed that unemployment holds people back and affects individuals and families.

The impact of unemployment is that it makes people live on the social security benefit, which is not enough for family and individuals. Sometimes people think those who are not working are lazy; they do not want to work. That is not true for many people. People do want to work but there are no jobs for them. (Participant 13, 39-year-old male, 10 years in Australia)

So jobless and houseless are the key challenging issues in the settlement. People can suffer psychological stress; lack of psychological freedom can lead to self-distraction such as causing people to drink heavily, which is because their minds are not free.

They have to find something that can help to deal with psychological stress and drinking is unfortunately not a solution because alcohol is a depressive and habit forming. It becomes a habit to drink and is hard to get out once you get used to it. (Participant 14, 23-year-old male, 9 years Australia)

It is not a nice experience for anyone to keep looking for work but has no luck. It has social and psychological effects, particular on refugees who have come from situations of nothing but hoping and wanting to organise their lives in a new land. Some arrive with expectations that they can return, even after suffering much as a result of a war, through earning income. So, when people remain unemployed for long periods, other social psychological issues kick in. This can make it increasingly harder for both families and individuals.

Without employment, life is challenging in various ways. Unemployment is not good for anybody. It creates a lot of psychological stress and tension in families when there is no work and no income. It creates anxiety. Lack of employment has led to unhealthy relationships within the community. There is the high level of family breakdown and financial stress. (Participant 13, 39-year-old male, 10 years in Australia)

Refugees seek ways to deal with unemployment. This study has demonstrated that long-term unemployment has impacted on individuals, families and the South Sudanese community at large. For instance, people with a long-term issue of unemployment are more likely to become involved in a heavy drinking problem and other psychological issues.

The problem is people do not know how to deal with social issues. Unemployment is a challenge for us: if people are not employed for a long time, they are more likely to do things that are not good for themselves and community. Lack of work is very discouraging to many people from refugee and migrant backgrounds. People desperately want to work but there is no work for them. One of the reasons why young people or adults drink heavily is because there is nothing for them to do. They tried their best to find employment but always failed. They stress and then tend to begin drinking as a way of managing psychologically. (Participant 2, 25-year-old male, 10 years in Australia)

Some see unemployment as the end of the world, particularly those who have been to school, hoping that when they finish their studies, they will be able to get work and earn income for a better life. When it becomes an unreachable dream, it becomes hurtful and difficult to normalise. Participants describe unemployment issue at the end of the world for some people in the community.

The main issue facing people who are not employed is stress. Stress is a big factor because people from refugee backgrounds had already experienced many issues in their lives, and stress from unemployment can lead to depression and suicidal thoughts. People feel isolated and lack of employment can also lead to criminal activities. Unemployment brings or causes a lack of self-esteem and confidence.(Participant 18, 30-year-old female, 15 years in Australia)

Keeps receiving unsuccessful applications for employment is painful and can force some people to consider going back for further studies as a way of preparing for employment. This is not a bad idea when one finishes and gets work straight away. For refugees, it is important that help is provided to them in the process of looking for work; companies should be more inclusive by supporting them in accessing employment. Participants have described the general difficulties when looking for work, particularly when applications keep being rejected.

Unemployment is very difficult and I would encourage people to help those who are looking for employment. For example, you know that there is a job available at your place of work: forward it to your friends and encourage them to apply. I think it is difficult for the South Sudanese but they need to continue trying by looking around and applying for jobs. When you are looking, you also need to be organised and ready to knock at doors because work will not come to you without working really hard at it. (Participant 8, 25-year-old female, 14 years in Australia)

4.5. Challenges of Unemployment

In a community where there is a high level of unemployment, there are always many social problems such as crime, family breakdown, a high level of drug and alcohol consumption, mental health issues and lack of education for the younger generations. This is no different for people with refugee backgrounds like the South Sudanese community in Australia.

Sometimes you can have transferable skills. You explained in the application that while you do not have direct skills you do have transferable skills from previous work which related to this role. Still your application remains unacknowledged. Without being given a chance to learn and gain local experience, how would people who have just arrived in the country get local experience and local skills? I think people need to be given a chance to participate in employment and so gain local experience and local skills. Even a short-term contract can help people to get local experience and local skills to help them move to the next level. Some who actually do have local experience and local skills still faced rejection because of their skin colour. It is sad to see people who have studied in Australia still knock back when they apply for work. This is a part that I am very confused about and not sure, what else people could do to improve the situation.(Participant 16, 28-year-old female, 10 years in Australia)

Competition in the job market is a particular problem for the non-English speaker and especially for refugees. They have not acquired enough or sufficient skills to compete with people who have achieved a high level of skills and education. In addition, the lack of connection with organisations and companies is another problem for a community with fewer or no connections, such as the South Sudanese community. Without especial support from the government and other organisations, as well as the general community, this South Sudanese community is likely to be ignored in the employment sector.

There is also a high competition in the job market. It is hard for someone from non-English speaking backgrounds to compete with an Aussie who English is their first language. South Sudanese are easily knocked back in the jobs market because of English being second, third or fourth language. I think there is no fairness and justice: people should not be denied work because English is not their first language.(Participant 13, 39-year-old male, 10 years in Australia)

When I was looking for the job, it took me a while because of the high competition in the job market. It is always disheartening to see people from refugee and migrant backgrounds looking for work and there is nothing for them in the field. Sometimes, conditions force them to take jobs that are not equivalent to their skills. Many have high education but they have no jobs in their fields of study(Participant 14, 23-year-old male, 9 years in Australia)

The factors holding people back from employment include lack of skills, lack of English language acquisition and lack of understanding the process of job hunting and networking with the right people in the labour market. A participant described these factors.

Factors that caused unemployment within the South Sudanese community are many; they include the lack of skills, lack of English language and not knowing the process of looking for jobs. For example, most work requires you to apply online, which is a major issue for those who have not enough skills in computing or knowing how to apply online. People who came to Australia as adults also have a language issue, their education is very low and it requires a lot of support to learn English to be able to look for work.(Participant 13, 39-year-old male, 10 years in Australia)

Employment is difficult for our community because of high competition in skills demanded as well as lots of pressure and expectations that our community is not ready for, in term of skills and experience.(Participant 16, 28-year-old female, 10 years in Australia)

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Benefits of employment for people from refugee backgrounds are ranged from economic benefit, social benefit, cultural and psychological benefits. Therefore, employment is a critical part of refugees' settlement particularly for those who have skills and willing to work in order to establish themselves in a new country of resettlement. Employment can facilitate their integration and learn in the new environment. People from refugee backgrounds can only achieve successful integration through employment with authentic support, which is free from stereotyping and ostracising. They can truly feel accepted when they realise genuine support and non-discriminatory working relationship.

The successful settlement can be facilitated by the level of engagement for people from refugee backgrounds in critical areas that could help them to enhance learning, connection with other and opportunity to get jobs. This paper has raised benefits of employment for people with refugee backgrounds as pathways of themselves to integrate in the Australia community. Pathway for employment for people with refugee backgrounds includes supportive environment and training as well as non-discriminative policies or attitude in the workforce. Forming different capitals such as social capital and economic capital is helpful for refugees who moved from their community of origin to a community that is new to them. This research confirmed that settlement in new country often takes time for people to establish themselves by making connections with local network or services. The historical record of the labour market in Australia shows that people from refugee and migrant backgrounds are less engaged in the employment sector. This leads to their community suffering from the risk of exclusion and marginalisation. Lack of social capital and networks in the jobs market is a major issue-holding people back from accessing employment on top of other barriers such as language issue, lack of confidence and skills as well as discrimination and racism in workplace. Findings that demonstrated that refugees needed support from host community groups, without the support and facilitation from the host society to work with people with refugee backgrounds; it is hard for people with refugee backgrounds to get into the workforce. Refugees need support and facilitation to join a local community network and to have the courage to involve themselves in local activities such as social events with an aim of meeting people and introduce themselves to their local community members.

Declaration

Author declared that there is no conflict of interest associating with this research project in whatsoever.

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