



University of  
East London

# **The lived experiences of Syrian Forced Migrants in the United Kingdom and the Implications for Clinical Interventions**

Vjosa Hyseni

A thesis submitted to the School of  
Psychology in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree of Professional  
Doctorate in Counselling Psychology

University of East London

August 2022

## **DEDICATION**

To every teacher, mentor and supervisor who has believed in me and has worked closely with me.

## **Acknowledgments**

I would like to acknowledge and give my warmest thanks to the participants who spared me their time and travelled to my university to take part in my research. Meeting all of you was an honour and the highlight of my doctoral experience.

I would also like to acknowledge my supervisory team particularly Professor Rachel Tribe, who has worked very closely with me and has reassured me through her unwavering support, genuine warmth and guidance.

I must express my gratitude to my family who have been on this journey with me and have experienced all of the ups and downs of my research. I want to thank my parents, whom left their law careers in Kosova behind so that I could have a better chance fulfilling my ambitions in the United Kingdom. I want to also thank my brother for his willingness to proof read my analysis; and my sister for her continued support and encouragement. I would also like acknowledge my newborn niece, Eliza, for her beautiful smile - you are the most beautiful girl I have laid my eyes on.

Completing this research project would have been all the more difficult were it not for my friends and their loving support. To Arjeta, Almedina, Iris, Nikos, Vikki, Rachel .S, Saran, Nadir, Becky, Tameem and Lee – thank you for your positivity and for helping me in your unique ways.

Above all, I want to thank Allah for protecting my sanity and giving me the inner strength to complete this project despite the setbacks I have encountered along the way.

# Table of Contents

	Page
<b>Dedication</b>	
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	
<b>List of Figures</b>	
<b>Abstract</b>	
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b>	
1.1. Overview	8
1.2. International Scale of Forced Displacement	8
1.3. Syrian Conflict in Context	8
1.4. Syrian Forced Migrants in the United Kingdom	10
1.5. Problem Statement	11
1.6. Aims and Objectives of the Study	11
1.7. Personal reflexivity	12
1.8. Definition of Key Terms	13
<b>Chapter 2: Literature Review</b>	
2.1. Overview	15
2.2. Outline of search strategy	15
2.3. Perspectives on the Experiences of Syrian Forced Migrants	16
2.3.1. <i>Mental Health Perspective</i>	16
2.3.2. <i>Limitations of the Mental Health Perspective</i>	20
2.3.3. <i>Alternative Perspectives and approaches</i>	22
2.4. Summary of chapter	27
2.5. Current Study	27
2.5.1. <i>Rationale</i>	27
2.5.2. <i>Research Question</i>	28
2.5.3. <i>Relevance for Counselling Psychology</i>	28
<b>Chapter 3: Methodology</b>	
3.1. Overview	30
3.2. Introducing IPA	30
3.2.1. <i>Philosophical origins of IPA</i>	32
3.2.2. <i>Theoretical tenants of IPA</i>	32
3.3. Rationale for choosing IPA	33
3.3.1. <i>IPA's compatibility with my ontological and epistemological standpoint</i>	33
3.3.2. <i>Suitability of IPA for my research question</i>	34
3.3.3. <i>Comparing IPA to other methodologies</i>	36
3.4. Participant Recruitment	38
3.5. Inclusion and exclusion criteria	40
3.6. Interview Schedule	40
3.7. Research Procedure	41
3.8. Ethical Considerations	42
3.8.1. <i>Data Confidentiality, protection, and storage</i>	43

3.8.2. <i>Right to withdraw</i>	43
3.8.3. <i>Issues of trust in migration research</i>	43
3.8.4. <i>Power Imbalance in migration research</i>	44
3.8.5. <i>Ethics in practice</i>	44
3.8.6. <i>Risk of emotional distress in researcher</i>	44
3.9. Personal reflexivity	45
3.10. Analysis	47
3.10.1. <i>Stage 1: Reading and Re-reading</i>	48
3.10.2. <i>Stage 2: Initial coding</i>	48
3.10.3. <i>Stage 3: Developing emergent themes</i>	48
3.10.4. <i>Stage 4: Connection across emergent themes</i>	48
3.10.5. <i>Stage 5: Moving to the next case</i>	49
3.10.6. <i>Stage 6: Looking for patterns across cases</i>	49
3.11. Summary of chapter	49
<b>Chapter 4: Analysis</b>	
4.1. Overview	51
4.2. Superordinate theme 1 – Thrown in the deep end: the initial changes and challenges of being in the UK	52
4.2.1. <i>Subordinate theme 1.1 – “the cultural shock is multi-dimensional”</i>	53
4.2.2. <i>Subordinate theme 1.2 – Self-development as a necessity but a challenging experience</i>	57
4.2.3. <i>Subordinate theme 1.3 – Lost in communication</i>	61
4.2.4. <i>Subordinate theme 1.4 – Strained family dynamics</i>	64
4.3. Superordinate theme 2 – Tensions with identity and self-construal	67
4.3.1. <i>Subordinate theme 2.1 – Individual identity: Ambitious view of self</i>	68
4.3.2. <i>Subordinate theme 2.2 – Social identity: Perceived stereotypes towards oneself</i>	71
4.3.3. <i>Subordinate theme 2.3 – Familial identity: from useless to the useful self</i>	74
4.4. Superordinate theme 3 – The search for belonging: facets of a home	77
4.4.1. <i>Subordinate theme 3.1 – A place that accepts oneself</i>	77
4.4.2. <i>Subordinate theme 3.2 – A place that provides opportunities</i>	80
4.4.3. <i>Subordinate theme 3.3 – A place where one feels supported by others</i>	82
4.5. Superordinate theme 4 – Means of coping	85
4.5.1. <i>Subordinate theme 4.1 – Ambiguity of Islam: a source of hope and isolation</i>	85
4.5.2. <i>Subordinate theme 4.2 – Seeking comfort through the familiar, supportive and proactive other</i>	89
4.5.3. <i>Subordinate theme 4.3 – Avoiding aspects of the unwanted self.</i>	93
<b>Chapter 5: Discussion</b>	
5.1. Overview	97

5.2. Summary of the main findings	97
5.3. Contextualising the main findings within the literature	98
5.3.1. <i>Superordinate theme 1 – Thrown in the deep end: the initial changes and challenges of being in the UK</i>	98
5.3.2. <i>Superordinate theme 2 – Tensions with identity and self-construal</i>	100
5.3.3. <i>Superordinate theme 3 – The ongoing search for belonging: facets of a home</i>	103
5.3.4. <i>Superordinate theme 4 - Means of coping</i>	104
5.4. Implications	106
5.4.1. <i>Implications for Clinical Practice</i>	106
5.4.2. <i>Implications for Policy</i>	107
5.5. Strengths and limitations of the study	108
5.6. Reflexivity	110
5.6.1. <i>Personal reflexivity</i>	110
5.6.2. <i>Epistemological reflexivity</i>	111
5.7. Evaluation Criteria	112
5.7.1. <i>Sensitivity to Context</i>	112
5.7.2. <i>Commitment and Rigour</i>	112
5.7.3. <i>Transparency and Coherence</i>	113
5.7.4. <i>Impact and Importance</i>	114
5.7.5. <i>Constructing a compelling, unfolding narrative</i>	114
5.7.6. <i>Developing a vigorous experiential and/or existential account</i>	115
5.7.7. <i>Close analytic reading of participant narratives</i>	115
5.7.8. <i>Attending to convergences and divergences</i>	116
5.8. Recommendations for future research	117
5.9. Conclusion	118
<b>References</b>	
<b>List of Appendices</b>	
Appendix A: Information sheet	
Appendix B: Risk assessment screening tool	
Appendix C: Consent to participate	
Appendix D: Consent to record	
Appendix E: Distress and crisis helpline numbers	
Appendix F: Debrief sheet (for researcher)	
Appendix G: Debrief Sheet for participant without suicidal risk	
Appendix H: Debrief Sheet for participant with suicidal risk	
Appendix I: Crisis management plan	
Appendix J: Interview schedule	
Appendix K: Research Poster	
Appendix L: Ethics Approval	
Appendix M: IPA graph - Subordinate and superordinate themes for each participant	
Appendix N: IPA analysis: Themes from participant 1	
Appendix O: IPA analysis: Themes participant 3	
Appendix P: IPA analysis: Annotated Transcript	

---

Appendix Q: Journal entry: initial assumptions and preconceptions of target population

---

Appendix R: Literature Search strategy

---

## Abstract

The Syrian conflict, which broke out in 2011, has led to a rise in the number of Syrians seeking refuge in the United Kingdom (Karyotis et al., 2021). At the time of this study, approximately 20,000 Syrians have been resettled under Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (UK Parliament, 2019) and a further, 21,168 Syrians have been granted refugee status between (Migration Observatory, 2022). A review of the existing psychological literature shows that there has been scholarly interest in Syrian migrants (Tinghog et al., 2017; Cantekin & Gencoz, 2017), but very few of these studies are concerned with understanding Syrians' perceptions and interpretations of their resettlement experiences. In light of this identified gap, the present study aimed to explore the subjective experiences of six forced Syrian migrants in the UK and their coping methods. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant and transcribed. Transcripts were then analysed using Smith et al.'s (2019) a step-by-step guide to Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Four superordinate themes emerged through the analytical process: (1) *Thrown in the deep end: the initial changes and challenges of being in the UK*, (2) *Tensions with identity and self- construal*, (3) *The ongoing search for belonging: facets of a home*, and (4) *Means of coping*. These findings have been contextualised within the existing literature and their implications for clinical practice and policy have been discussed. Finally, the limitations of the current study and subsequent recommendations for future research have been proposed.



## **Chapter One: Introduction**

### **1.1. Overview**

This introductory chapter will begin by presenting the Syrian conflict in context. Then it will highlight the experiences of Syrian migrants who have arrived to the UK and outline concerns with respect to how their experiences are understood in the psychological literature. Finally, the concordant aims and objectives of this study will be provided followed by my personal interests in the topic and definitions of key terms used in this thesis.

### **1.2. International Scale of Forced Displacement**

Migration is not a new phenomenon and has prevailed throughout human history. However, annual reports published by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR; 2021) suggest that the number of people displaced from their homes has risen year on year. In 2010, it was estimated 41 million people had fled their homes; but by the end of 2021, this figure had climbed to 89.3 million people displaced worldwide. This latest figure includes 21.3 million refugees, 53.2 million internally displaced persons, 4.6 million asylum seekers and 5.8 million Palestinian refugees. The UNHCR reports that this increase in the global human displacement is due to the conflicts in the Sahel region of Africa and Myanmar, the deteriorating socio-political and economic conditions in Venezuela, and the continuing conflict in Syria (UNHCR, 2021c). The Syrian conflict is particularly relevant to this thesis and will be discussed further in the proceeding section.

### **1.3. Syrian Conflict in Context**

Syria, officially the Syrian Arab Republic, is a 12000 years old country situated in the Middle East, bordered with Turkey, Iraq, Jordan and Palestine/Israel. Prior to conflict in 2011, Syria was home to an estimated 22 million people of different ethnicities and religions.

Sunni Muslims formed around 62% of Syria's population; around 10% were Christians, 3% were Shia Alawites Muslims, and approximately 3% were Druze. Syria's population included Kurds, Armenians, Turkmen as well as half a million Palestinians who had been forcibly expelled by Israel (Kahf, 2013).

Prior to the conflict, Syria was filled with ancient ruins and was a popular tourist attraction in the Middle East, hosting about three million holidaymakers each year (Al-Faham et al., 2009). However, tensions in Syria broke out after government forces allegedly tortured a group of schoolchildren for their anti-government graffiti in March 2011 (Berti & Paris, 2014). The government's alleged brutality against the children led to peaceful protests in the southern town of Deera who called on president Assad to resign from his role. Their call for political reform was part of the Arab Spring movement which was marked by a series of anti-government protests, uprisings across much of the Arab countries (Hove & Mutanda, 2015). However, unlike their counterparts in Arab countries, the Syrian president - Bashar al-Assad, refused to stand down from political power and allegedly responded to the protests with violence, igniting further protests in the country (Aburas et al., 2018).

The political unrest in Syria has since expanded into a complex, geopolitical proxy war as several foreign nations such as Russia and the United States of America have been drawn into the conflict and have supported different regional forces in the upheaval (Defence Intelligence Agency, 2012; Ostrand, 2015). This ongoing violence in the region has damaged the majority of the country's infrastructure, including supermarkets and medical healthcare facilities. Syrians have subsequently struggled to access nutrition and medical healthcare, making them vulnerable to malnutrition, diseases and mortality (Kakaje et al., 2021; UNHCR, 2018). Moreover, a report by the United Nations (UN; 2014) shows that the government has also conducted massacres, indiscriminate violence and used chemical weapons in populated areas.

According to the UNHCR (2021c) Syria is the biggest source of the world's forcibly displaced population in 2021. Figures show that approximately 13 million Syrians have escaped the conflict to neighbouring countries such as Turkey, Lebanon, Egypt, and Jordan. A further one million Syrians have arrived in Europe and have sought refuge in several countries including the United Kingdom (UNHCR, 2021c).

#### **1.4. Syrian Forced Migrants in the United Kingdom**

Syrians have arrived in the UK through two main routes. An estimated 22,000 Syrians have been directly resettled in the UK through the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS; Home Office, 2021); whilst other Syrians have found their own way to Britain and applied for asylum. As Karyotis et al. (2021) noted, the mode of entry to Britain is important because it determines legal rights and level of support Syrians receive in the UK.

Syrians who have arrived in the UK under the VPRS would have been screened as a vulnerable person by the UNHCR before their arrival, classifying them as genuine people in need of support (Karyotis et al., 2021). As such, they are granted a five-year humanitarian protection status by the British government, which gives them access to several entitlements including the right to work, claim benefits and pay home student tuition fees instead of overseas student fees at university (Home Office, 2021). In addition to these rights, Syrians under the VPRS scheme are offered immediate support by local authorities partaking in the scheme to facilitate their orientation into their new communities. Support includes but is not limited to access to financial support, housing support and further education including ESOL English-language courses (Karyotis et al., 2021).

To the contrary, Syrians who have arrived in the UK outside the VPRS scheme are responsible for managing and adjusting their new, unfamiliar environment without bespoke support from local authorities (Karyotis et al., 2021). In addition to this, they are not offered the same humanitarian protection status by the UK government and must apply for asylum

which not only increases their risk of deportation if their application fails but it also limits their rights (e.g., right to work and access education) until they are formally recognised as refugees (Karyotis et al., 2021).

### **1.5. Problem Statement**

Previous studies on Syrian migrants have shown that the issue of relocating to a new, culturally unfamiliar country can present multiple contextual and personal challenges, such as difficulties understanding culture and social norms (Korukcu et al., 2017), language barriers (Torun et al., 2018), perceived discrimination (Yilmaz-Zambak, 2021), disrupted family dynamics such as marital conflict (Al-Natour et al., 2019), and family separation (Tinghog et al., 2017). Given these challenges it is perhaps not surprising that research into the mental health of Syrian forced migrants is the dominant field of study (Schweitzer & Steel, 2008). But, in more recent years, studies have shown that Syrians can also experience positive aspects of change in their resettlement country, such as better healthcare and more legal rights (Kikhi et al., 2021), suggesting their experiences are far more complex and ambiguous. Yet, the issue of how Syrian migrants understand and interpret their experiences has been widely neglected in favour of quantitative research focusing on prevalence and cause and effect. It is therefore important to study the subjective experiences of Syrian migrants given their voices and the meaning which they assign to their personal accounts seldom contribute to scholarly literature.

### **1.6. Aims and Objectives of the Current Study**

The present study aims to understand the lived experiences of Syrian migrants in the UK and how they make sense of their experiences. Its particular objectives were to understand the concerns of Syrians in the UK and what kind of coping methods they have used in the UK through the use of an IPA approach. IPA is an inductive and idiographic

approach and is a known methodology for its capacity to explicate salient experiences of forced migrants (Schweitzer & Zachary, 2008). IPA also emphasises openness to human experiences and encourages researchers to set aside their assumptions (Smith et al., 1999), which means that the current study could contribute to the literature by privileging indigenous knowledge and experiences. The current study could also have implications for clinical practice as its focus on individual experiences has scope to challenge generalisations and taken-for-granted assumptions about forced migrants. Counsellors may subsequently make fewer ill-informed assumptions about forced migrants in the therapeutic context from this study's findings. Before reviewing the existing psychological literature on Syrian migrants in greater detail, it is important to make explicit my motivations for the research topic and to clarify how I will define the subjects under study.

### **1.7. Personal reflexivity**

Qualitative research is underpinned by the notion that a researcher's personal experiences, assumptions and values influence the research process including the selection of a study topic (Ponterotto, 2005). I will therefore reflect on my own situatedness within the research and make transparent my motivations for studying forced migration.

I applied for the doctorate degree; self-assured that I would pursue forced migration research as part of my course requirements. My interest in forced migration research stems from my personal experience of war, conflict and displacement in a refugee camp. I was born in the capital city of Kosova, Prishtina, in 1992 where I lived with my parents and two siblings. Kosova is a small country in the Balkans region, with an estimated population size of 1.8 million; of whom 93 percent are Kosovar-Albanians and 1.5 percent are Serbian.

Growing up in Kosova was difficult and hostile for me because of my ethnicity. I was institutionally discriminated and deprived of my basic human rights, including my right to

attend state school. In 1999, tensions mounted, and Kosovar-Albanians became subjected ethnic cleansing by the Serbian forces of the Slobodan Milosevic regime. Serbian forces had raped, tortured and killed Kosovar-Albanian civilians (Panagiota, 2008). In addition, they caused widespread destruction of civilian and religious property (Panagiota, 2008). My family and I subsequently fled our home and sought temporary refuge in a North Macedonian camp before being relocated to the United Kingdom by the UNHCR and Refugee Agency. This early personal experience of war and displacement made me aware that injustice, discrimination, inequality and deeply inhumane and cruel treatment exist, and I profoundly stand against them today.

When choosing research topic, I became particularly interested in studying Syrian forced migrants because I identified with their representation in the media as a population who had been deprived of their basic human rights including their right to dignity, fairness, respect and equality. Moreover, my father, who worked as Human Rights Lawyer in Kosova, has always encouraged me to defend and support people who are less fortunate. Thus, whilst I was aware that migration research would be complex and a time-consuming endeavor, I was confident my personal experience of displacement in addition to my father's influence would sustain my attention and passion for my topic.

### **1.8. Definition of Key Terms**

A review of the literature suggests that the participants in this study could have been referred to as either *refugees* or *asylum seekers*. The term refugee is defined in Article 1A(2) of the 1951 Convention as:

owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his [or her] nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to

avail himself [or herself] of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his [or her] former habitual residence is unable or, owing to such fear, unwilling to return to it

This term was considered inappropriate for the participants under study for two reasons. First and foremost, this term is a legal term and some of my participants did not have this political status in the UK. Using this term therefore had scope to mislead the reader into assuming the current participants had certain rights and entitlements. Secondly, the term ‘refugee’ is a political construct, meaning it reflects the opinions of politicians and policymakers on the subjectivity of my participants. I considered this to be incompatible with my interpretative epistemological stance, which transcends through an open and curious attitude towards the other and what it might be like to experience the world from their perspective.

The term ‘asylum seeker’ was considered to be equally problematic in the sense that this is also a political construct and inconsistent with my epistemological stance. Furthermore, discursive studies suggest that this term is associated with negative inferences (e.g., bogus; fraudulent) in the political sphere because it is usually issued to a person who has not yet convinced state authorities of their eligibility for refugee status (Marie-Borrelli et al., 2021).

Given these tensions with legal terms, the participants in this study will be referred to as forced migrants or migrants. This term was considered to be more appropriate because it acknowledges that my participants have fled their homes. Furthermore, in contrary to the terms ‘refugee’ and ‘asylum seeker’ ‘forced migrant’, is not a legal term, thus there is a sense of ambiguity associated with this term, which is more fitting with my epistemological stance.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **2.1. Overview**

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an up-to-date review of the existing psychological literature concerning Syrian migrants. The identified gaps in the literature will be emphasised and the concordant aims and objectives of this study will be presented. However, before doing so, an outline of the steps and key terms used to retrieve appropriate articles will be provided.

### **2.2. Outline of Search Strategy**

It is well-known in academia that there are various ways in which a literature review can be structured (Paul & Criado, 2020). The literature review presented in this section is most closely aligned with a critical literature review, which goes beyond a description of presenting studies and includes a degree of analysis and conceptual interrogation (Paul & Criado, 2020).

In order to identify appropriate journals, the research topic was reviewed multiple times and synonyms of words and phrases relating to each concept were identified (see Figure 1). For example, the current study is concerned with Syrians and is informed by Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. Synonym words, which reflected these concepts in the title included Syria, IPA, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, qualitative, lived experiences and meaning-making.

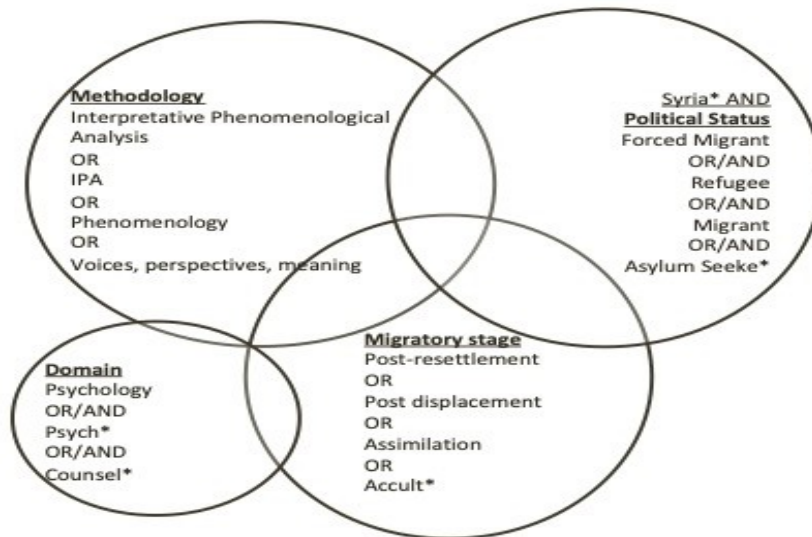
Boolean Operators (AND/OR) were also added to expand and narrow the search as necessary. For example, Syria\* AND Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis was used as a combination in various databases such as PsycArticles. Figure 1 shows alternative



combinations, which were used in the databases. A comprehensive graph, detailing literature search strategy can be found in appendix R.

**Figure 1**

*Key Terms and Phrases Used in Literature Search*



### **2.3. Perspectives on the Experiences of Syrian Forced Migrants**

This literature review is concerned with how the experiences of Syrian forced migrants have been understood in the literature. Overall, the literature suggests that the experiences of Syrian migrant have been extensively understood from a mental health, quantitative perspective. As such, the literature review below will provide an overview and critically evaluate some of these studies in detail. It will then introduce alternative approaches to understanding the experiences of Syrian migrants. Finally, a summary of the literature will be provided and the rationale for the current study as well as it's relevance for the practice of Counselling Psychology will be stated.

#### ***2.3.1. Mental Health Perspective***

There is a wealth of research that has aimed to understand the experiences of Syrian forced migrants in their resettlement context. The vast majority of these studies were

conducted from a psychiatric epidemiological perspective, which is otherwise known as the mental health perspective (Summerfield, 2013; Hassan et al., 2016). Researchers have investigated the mental health among Syrians residing in neighbouring countries such as Jordan (Sharp et al., 2021), Lebanon (Naal, 2021), and Turkey (Acarturk et al., 2021; Cantekin, & Gencoz, 2017). In addition to this, they have investigated the mental health among Syrians located in various European countries, such as Germany (Georgiadou et al., 2018; Renner et al., 2020), Greece (Ben-Farhat et al., 2018) and Sweden (Tinghog et al., 2017).

Mental health literature problematises and pathologises the experiences of Syrian migrants (Miller & Rasmussen, 2010). Embedded in this body of literature is the direct-effect model and the scholarly assumption that war, displacement and resettlement is a negative stressful experience, which increase Syrians' risk of suffering from an otherwise biologically determined psychiatric disorder (Summerfield, 2008; Cantekin & Gencoz, 2017). Mental health literature also purport that it is possible to examine the impact stressors (e.g., discrimination, social isolation) have on mental health outcomes empirically because psychiatric disorders listed in the Diagnostic Statistical Manual (DSM; e.g., depression) have a biological basis and are characterised by certain behavioural and cognitive symptoms, which can be observed and measured objectively (Summerfield, 2008). However, the literature indicates that there is some scholarly disagreement on what kinds of factors best predict mental health outcomes among Syrian forced migrants.

The literature indicates that some scholars have investigated Syrian migrants from a trauma-focused model, which is underpinned by the assumption that direct war exposure and other conflict-related events influence mental health outcomes (Miller & Rasmussen, 2010). Studies based on the trauma-focused model show that Syrians have encountered a wide range of stressful events before fleeing Syria. Pre-migratory stressors such as loss of loved ones,

sectarian discrimination, physical injury, witnessing violence with others (Cantekin, 2018; Mahmood et al., 2019) have been linked to increased risk of trauma-related symptoms (PTSD), depression and anxiety (Cantekin, 2018; Mahmood et al., 2019). However, in more recent years scholars have examined Syrian migrants from psychosocial approach, which is underpinned by the assumption that challenges in the host country, otherwise known as post-migration stressors most influence mental health outcomes (Poole et al., 2018; Hemono et al., 2018). Indeed, Miller & Rasmussen, (2010) points out that one of the reasons for the shift from a trauma-focused to psychosocial approach is because statistical analysis has repeatedly shown war exposure events account for a small variance in mental health outcomes; “in fact war exposure typically accounts for 25% of variance in PTSD symptoms. This has inspired researchers to subsequently investigate post-resettlement factors.

Mental health researchers have studied Syrian migrants with two objectives in mind. Their first objective has been to assess the prevalence of psychiatric symptomatology, namely depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among Syrian migrants (Drescher et al., 2021). Tinghog et al. (2017) for instance, examined the prevalence of these disorders in addition to low-subjective wellbeing by administering four standardised mental health instruments to a sample of 1215 adult Syrian migrants residing in Sweden. Findings based on the participants’ self-report measures showed that prevalence rates of depression, low subjective well-being, and anxiety varied between 30-40%. Among them, depression was the most prevalent mental health disorder with a prevalence rate ranging from 36.9 to 43.3%, and PTSD was the least common with a prevalence rate between 27.2% and 32.6%. Relatively similar results have emerged from a cross sectional-study among Syrian migrants in Turkey (Acarturk et al., 2021) which has shown prevalence of anxiety, depression and PTSD to be 36.1%, 34.7% and 19.6%, respectively. This latter study also

found that comorbidity was high, suggesting Syrians are highly likely to be suffering from multiple disorders.

The second objective of mental health scholars has been to identify which post-resettlement factors (cause) are most strongly associated with mental health outcomes (effect) (Miller & Rasmussen, 2010). For example, Tinghog et al. (2017) hypothesised that newly arrived Syrians in Sweden were vulnerable to seven stressors including discrimination, lack of host country specific competencies, economic strain, loss of home country family concerns, social strains and family conflicts. The authors suspected that these stressors could increase Syrian migrants' mental ill health and measured this cause-and-effect between variables using questionnaires. Results revealed that all seven stressors were associated with the measured mental health outcomes. However, discrimination was the most stressful experience that predicted mental ill health, while family separation had the weakest association with mental ill health. Cantekin and Gencoz (2017) on the other hand found that Syrian migrants in Turkey were most worried about their family at home (94.6%) and about being separated from their family (88.3%). However, statistical analysis revealed that 'loss of culture and support' was the most impactful post-migratory determinant of PTSD, anxiety and depression. In addition, researchers showed that being female, unmarried and young increased the risk of depression and anxiety.

Overall, mental health studies on Syrian migrants (Cantekin & Gencoz, 2017; Tinghog et al., 2017) have advantages and can support Counselling Psychologists in the clinical practice in two ways. Firstly, epidemiological studies with a focus on prevalence and risk factors associated with disorders shed light on the mental welfare of a particular community (Wade & Halligan, 2004). Counselling Psychologists can benefit from reviewing this body of literature in greater detail because it gives an indication of the kinds of worries and concerns Syrians might present with in the clinical context. Nevertheless, Counselling

Psychologists should avoid using such findings to generalise across the Syrian population because they are limited to the participants who took part in such studies.

Another advantage of mental health literature is that psychiatric categories such as PTSD when applied to forced migrants help to identify their mental health needs and the kind of specialised care and support they need to ameliorate their distress. Diagnosis can therefore help Counselling Psychologists identify appropriate evidence-based interventions. However, interventions should be discussed collaboratively with clients as they might have a different explanatory model of mental health and thus different treatment preferences.

### ***2.3.2. Limitations of the Mental Health Perspective***

With that said, mental health studies on Syrian migrants also have limitations. One limitation is that they heavily rely on quantitative methods and do not provide an in-depth understanding of variables associated with mental health outcomes. For example, Malm et al., (2020) predicted discrimination to be a risk factor associated with mental health outcomes among Syrian migrants and measured this variable in their questionnaire by asking respondents whether they had ever felt disrespected due to their national background. Whilst this item certainly speaks to discrimination, Borho et al.'s (2020) study on Syrians in Germany revealed that discrimination is a multifaceted phenomenon and can occur in at least four domains of life including neighbourhood, shops, authorities and professional life. In light of this, it can be argued that Malm et al.'s (2020) one-dimensional conceptualisation of discrimination did not provide meaningful insight into the respondents' personal and contextual experience of discrimination.

Another limitation salient to epidemiological mental health studies is that they are limited to discovering pathology. Watters (2008) argued that studying forced migrants with the sole purpose of measuring pathological symptoms and discovering psychopathology is

reductive because they do not allow respondents to voice their own perspectives and meaning-making. Moreover, this body of literature homogenises migrants' experiences because the act of asking respondents to describe their experiences by selecting from a list of pre-determined variables controls how their experiences are narrated. Adichie (2009) pointed out that homogenising forced migrants' experiences is unhelpful because "the single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story" (p.6). In this regard, it can be argued that mental health literature puts Syrians at risk of being viewed through a narrow lens and potentially discriminated by society on the basis that they are associated with mental health (Scheitzer & Steel, 2008).

In light of the limitations associated with quantitative methods, a number of researchers have begun to utilise qualitative approaches to understand the resettlement experiences of Syrian forced migrants. Frederick (2000) points out that qualitative methods are generally able to add to literature from quantitative studies because such approaches are concerned with understanding forced migrants' perspectives and can shed light on the full richness and complexity of their experiences.

Qualitative studies on Syrian migrants are generally based on Bronfenbrenner's *Ecological Systems Theory* (1977; 1979). This framework broadly implies that an individual is in relation to four different systems, each of which can either, promote or hinder wellbeing and integration. According to the ecological model, protective or risk factors can be located at the *microsystem* (e.g., family), the *mesosystem* (e.g., community groups), the *exosystem* (e.g., healthcare and environmental organisation), and the *macrosystem* (e.g., legislative and economic systems). Ecological systems are transactional in the sense that individuals can influence the nature of their social context, while also being subjected to social constraints (Wells et al., 2018). Researchers from an ecological framework have subsequently studied Syrians with the objective of understanding how they interact with their resettlement

contexts.

### ***2.3.3. Alternative Approaches***

A review of the qualitative literature shows that researchers have adopted different methods in their attempt to understand Syrians experiences of resettlement. For instance, Dogan et al., (2019) conducted a thematic analysis (TA) on the perspectives of Syrian migrants' experience with mental health services in Turkey. Some of the themes identified through the analysis included (1) difficulties making appointments, (2) difficulties obtaining medicine (3) lack of information (5) language barriers and (6) discrimination. Overall, these findings have a number of strengths and limitation. A limitation is that Dogan et al., (2019) adopted a narrow research focus and as such the study's findings are limited to healthcare support. The existing literature shows Syrians can have wide range of difficulties in their resettlement context and on this basis it can be argued that Dogan et al., (2019) provides an incomplete picture on Syrians experience of resettlement. It can nonetheless be argued that the yielded findings of this study are valuable because they reflect the participants' views and shed light on contextually-informed barriers to mental health support which could not have emerged from quantitative, pre-determined checklists and questionnaires. These findings also have implications for clinical practice because they suggest that the participants understanding of distress is caused by external social factors as opposed to an internal dysfunction and in light of this, it can argued that psychosocial interventions which address the participants challenging circumstances may be more effective at reducing stress (thereby improving mental health) than traditional mental health interventions based on promoting change within the client. Indeed, Miller and Rasmussen (2010) suggest that when working with forced migrants, clinicians should implement a sequenced, integrated approach whereby

the initial objective should be to reduce daily stressors before addressing trauma sustained through war exposure. Miller and Rasmussen (2010) argue that psychosocial interventions aimed at reducing daily stressors and improving one's social and material ecology should be a priority because daily stressors are immediate stressors, whereas war exposure and trauma is more of a distal experience. In addition, they argue that daily stressors are ongoing and present a chronic threat to psychological wellbeing; thus fostering emotional and social support with daily stressors are likely to go a long way towards improving mental health in war-affected communities.

Paudyal, Tattan and Cooper (2021) were similarly interested in the experiences of Syrian migrants and conducted a TA on participants' verbatim extracts. However, Paudyal, Tattan and Cooper (2021) adopted a broader focus, with their objective being to explore the participants' mental-wellbeing; their barriers to seeking mental healthcare services: coping mechanism and their pathways towards integration. The yielded findings subsequently provide a more holistic understanding into the participants' experience of resettlement in the UK. For example, findings show that the participants had several challenges adapting to the UK. Participants reported that loss and separation from loved ones, language barriers and nostalgia for the homeland were some of the many sources of their psychological distress in the UK. In addition, participants considered language barriers to be the most important barrier to seeking mental health support and they struggled for connectedness due to cultural difference. However, unlike previous studies, the participants in this study expressed how they turned to faith and social support as a coping mechanism. This finding is significant because it suggests Syrians can have their own coping resources which runs contrary to the mental health literature and its depiction of Syrians as a population without resilience and dependent on mental health professionals to ameliorate their suffering. However, the study of Paudyal, Tattan and Cooper (2021) has several limitations. A limitation of this study is that



the participants were interviewed in Arabic. Whilst there are many advantages to interviewing people in their mother tongue, there can be a loss of meaning when it is translated, particularly if back translation is not undertaken (Aloudah, 2022). Another limitation of the study is that TA does not have an idiographic lens with respect to meaning making. As such there may have been divergences in the participants' narrative and their meaning-making processes but this information would have been outside the scope of TA and discarded by the authors.

Al-Natour et al. (2018) also adopted a qualitative, idiographic approach in their study of Syrian migrants and marital violence (MV). However, the researchers explored the participants' experience of MV using Husserlian phenomenology to describe meanings, expressions and experiences of the Syrian women. The findings highlighted the following four themes pertaining to the essence of MV (1) loss, insecurity, and suffering; (2) shame and humiliation, (3) justifying and enduring MV and (4) ways of coping with marital violence. Overall, it can be argued that these findings compliment quantitative literature by showing that family conflict is not necessarily limited to tensions with relatives (Tinghog et al., 2018) and can exist with one's partner. In light of this, it can be argued that 'family conflict' should be specified further in checklists to better measure Syrians' experience of violence. Furthermore, the researchers found that the female participants had resources of their own to cope with their experiences of MV. This finding is significant because it further reinforces the notion that Syrians can be resilient in the face of adversity as opposed to suffering from mental health disorders and in need of professional psychological support. However, a limitation of Al-Natour et al. (2018) study is that Husserlian phenomenology requires researchers to abstain from preconceptions but the researchers did not detail their reflexivity. It is therefore difficult to judge the credibility of the findings given this lack of transparency.

Yilmaz-Zambak (2021) was similarly drawn to a phenomenological approach. However, contrary to Al-Natour et al. (2018), Yilmaz-Zambak (2021) adopted Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to study the experiences of 15 Syrian forced migrants in Turkey. Analysis of the data revealed eight superordinate themes. Some of the identified themes included (1) changes in family dynamics; (2) changed views of the self; (3) rebuilding a new life; (4) facing ongoing challenges and losses (5), ways of coping and (6) future aspirations. Yilmaz-Zambak (2021) noted divergences and convergences within each theme, which is a benchmark of good quality IPA (Smith, 2010). Moreover, Yilmaz-Zambak (2021) was sufficiently transparent in terms of data collection and data analysis, increasing the trustworthiness of the data. The themes identified also provide a complex and rich understanding of the experiences of Syrian migrants. For example, the study found that some Syrian men struggled to come to terms with the challenges in their transitional roles of being the breadwinner in the family in Syria to being unemployed in Turkey. These findings build on Tinghog et al.'s (2019) study on loss of social status as a predictor of mental health. Based on Yilmaz-Zambak's (2021) study one could suggest that a loss of social status can lead some men to feel a sense of shame for not being able to provide for their families. Results showed that this not only has a negative impact on men and their wellbeing, but it can also increase violence against women and girls (Suerbaum, 2018; Yalim & Kim, 2018). Overall, this study provides an array of findings and appears to meet Smith's (2010) benchmark criteria for good IPA. However, the findings of this study are limited to the experiences of Syrians in Turkish socio-political context and do not reflect the kinds of concerns Syrians residing in other countries might have. For example, a cross-comparison study on Syrians residing Turkey and Switzerland (Drescher et al., 2021) shows great variation in kinds of problems Syrians reported. Financial problems were more common in Turkey, whereas government regulations and housing problems were common among Syrians in Switzerland.

Syrians in the UK may similarly have unique concerns. For example, the UK is founded on Christian values as opposed Islam, which is the predominant faith in Turkey. Syrian in the UK may subsequently be more inclined to report faith-related difficulties such as challenges finding mosques compared Syrians in Turkey. This possibility highlights the need to understand the experiences of Syrian forced migrants in the UK and kinds of concerns they have in the UK.

It would also be important to understand how Syrians have coped in the UK because the existing literature highlights the possibility that Syrians might have their own coping methods. In addition, there is the possibility that contextual changes that come with relocating to a new, unfamiliar country reduces their distress and promotes their resilience. For example, Wells et al., (2018) adopted a transactional ecological model in their study of Syrian in Jordan. An ecological/transactional approach generally highlights how individuals respond to environmental challenges and are useful for describing how people may use resources for resilience in the face of adversity. The study of Wells et al., (2018) shows that some members of the Syrian community, more specifically females, were better placed to respond to and take advantage of the changed environmental circumstances to support their own adaptive function. For instance, they found that for women, social acceptability of seeking services to address basic needs in their resettlement countries was beneficial because it meant they were no longer stigmatised and dependent on males for resources. As such, the females welcomed this change in social norm and shared how it reduced their distress because they could access as variety of financial, social, psychological, educational resources. Men on the other hand, shared how they struggled with this change in norm as they associated it with a loss of role. Overall, the study of Wells et al., (2018) highlights the importance of human agency and the subsequent need to understand how a person responds and copes in their new cultural context.

## **2.4. Summary of Chapter**

The purpose of this chapter was to present and critically evaluate contemporary studies on the experiences of Syrian migrants. A review of the literature using the key terms detailed in figure 1 revealed that the vast majority of studies on Syrian migrants are epidemiological studies rooted in a ecological model of mental health, which is based on the assumption that stressful environmental factors such language barriers and socioeconomic hardships are potential risk factors associated with mental health outcomes. Epidemiological studies on Syrians' have generally documented various prevalence rates and risk factors. Whilst these studies are useful, they also have limitations. They do not for instance, factor Syrian voices and the meaning they give to their concerns in resettlement contexts. To fill this gap, researchers have begun to utilise alternative, qualitative methods (i.e. NA) in order to understanding Syrians' perspective and meaning-making processes. Whilst qualitative methods extend the literature, it was argued that IPA is a particularly suited approach because it's idiographic commitment and subsequent honouring of individual-meaning-making has capacity to challenge taken-for-granted assumptions about their experiences.

## **2.5. Current Study**

### ***2.5.1. Rationale***

The current study aims to understand the lived experiences of Syrian migrants because the vast majority of studies are rooted in an epidemiological, mental health approach, which are heavily dependent on standardised, quantitative instruments. This is problematic because it does give Syrians the opportunity to express what is meaningful to them and the meaning they give to that experience. It can therefore be argued that this controlled-experimental design obscures indigenous conceptions and variations.

Giving Syrians the power to speak and make their voices heard through an inductive and exploratory research method can also be an empowering experience for participants given their narratives are the forefront of academic research. Moreover, their voices and nuanced individual meaning-making shed light on the complexity of their lived experiences and this may inspire more researchers to use methodologies that capture migrant experiences as best as possible.

### ***2.5.2. Research Questions***

In consideration of the gaps identified in this literature review, the research questions of this study are:

- 1) What are the concerns of Syrian Forced Migrants in the UK?*
- 2) What meaning do they give to their concerns in the UK?*
- 3) How have Syrian Forced Migrants coped with their concerns in the UK?*

### ***2.5.3. Relevance for Counselling Psychology***

The purpose of this thesis is intended to support the discipline and professional practice of Counselling Psychologists in the UK who work with forced migrants. Before outlining how the current study will aim to support Counselling Psychologists in the clinical practice, an outline of the discipline will be provided.

The discipline of Counselling Psychology became formally recognised in the UK by the British Psychological Society (BPS) in 1982 (Strawbridge, 2016). The BPS recognises the identity and practice of counselling psychology as being strongly rooted in humanistic values and ethics. The humanistic values underpinning counselling psychology include (but is not limited to): (1) a prioritisation of the client's subjective, and intersubjective, experiencing versus a prioritisation of the therapist's observations, or 'objective' measures;

(2) a commitment to a democratic, non-hierarchical client—therapist relationship (versus a stance of therapist-as-expert); (2) and understanding of the client as a socially- and relationally-embedded being, including an awareness that the client may be experiencing discrimination and prejudice (versus a wholly intrapsychic focus) (Cooper, 2009).

The humanistic underpinning to the discipline shape how Counselling Psychologists work with their clients. For example, the non-hierarchical client—therapist relationship would transcend through working collaboratively with clients' and exploring their subjective experiences. These values are not always compatible with mainstream mental health literature, which encourages Counselling Psychologist to adopt an expert, monologue stance and treat pathological symptoms through the use of evidence-based, individual-focused interventions (Milton, 2010). The current study has scope to raise implications for this one-size fits all approach through the voices and individual meaning-making Syrians give to their lived experiences. Moreover, the current study will privilege what Syrians consider to be important about their lived experience. The yielded finding may therefore encourage counselling psychologists to approach Syrians with curiosity on their lived experiences and what their concerns might be. Cooper (2009) adds that a person-centred approach to counselling psychology might reveal that a persons' distress is the result of not being able to actualise their needs due macro, structural inequalities, which subsequently calls on counselling psychologists to go beyond their traditional individual-based therapy to engaging in advocacy.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **3.1. Overview**

In this chapter, I will provide an overview of my selected methodology, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), and discuss my rationale for choosing IPA over other methodologies. I will also provide an overview of my participants, the procedure and ethical considerations, the evaluation criteria for my research, and the research steps involved in IPA data analysis.

### **3.2. Introducing IPA**

I have chosen IPA (Smith, 1996) for the current study. IPA is an experiential qualitative methodology, concerned with how individuals make sense of a particular phenomenon in their personal and social world (Smith et al., 2009). IPA considers the participant as an expert of the phenomenon under study who can offer the researcher a detailed insight of their lived experience in relation to a research question (Reid et al., 2005). IPA also acknowledges that participant's experience does not simply reveal itself and that the researcher will have to engage and interpret their description of their lifeworld. This engagement is referred to as the *double hermeneutics* approach to data analysis whereby the researcher seeks to make sense of the participant as the participant tries to make sense of their own lived experience (Smith et al., 2009). However, a researcher's interpretation of another's experience can only occur in light of their own experiences and preconceptions. IPA researchers must therefore engage in *reflexivity* whereby they make explicit how the world in which they live in and their experiences have influenced their interpretation of the data (Willig, 2008, 2013).

#### ***3.2.1. Philosophical origins of IPA***

Two schools of thought inform phenomenology, namely Husserlian (descriptive) phenomenology and Heideggerian (interpretative) phenomenology. Both approaches seek to understand a person's lived experience of a particular phenomenon.

Edmund Husserl believed that phenomena are already out there, and the essential elements of an experience could be grasped objectively providing researchers engage in *bracketing, phenomenological reduction and imaginative variation*. *Bracketing* refers to researcher's suspension of preconceived beliefs and biases about the phenomenon under study so that it is described exactly as it was experienced or intended by the subject. *Phenomenological reduction* involves the description of a phenomenon in its entirety including thoughts and feelings associated with the experience. And finally, *imaginative variation* involves explicating the manner in which phenomenon appears in consciousness. For Husserl, the combination of these three techniques is said to reveal the essential elements of an experience.

Martin Heidegger, who was initially Husserl's student, went on to challenge Husserlian phenomenological ideals. Heidegger argued that it is not possible to bracket biases and study a phenomenon in a presuppositionless form. He posited that human beings are always in relation to the world (*Dasein*) and give meaning to a phenomenon through their worldly activities, which include their daily interactions with others. From this stance, Heidegger rejected Husserl's method of phenomenological reduction and argued that all description was a form of interpretation (a construction).

IPA does not dismiss Husserlian ideas on phenomenology as it seeks to describe lived experience. However, IPA is extensively based on Heidegger's approach to phenomenology. Concordantly, IPA stresses the importance of interpreting a phenomenon on a case-by-case basis. IPA is also an inductive, idiographic and emic approach as it seeks to understand a participant's perception and experience of a particular phenomenon. The underlying objective



of IPA is to understand the participant's lived experience of the particular through the process of interpretation and the role of language.

IPA assumes that language conveys the meaning participants ascribe to their experiences in their interactions with their environment (Smith et al., 1999). IPA, therefore, encourages researchers to pay attention to nuances within a participant's narrative, such as metaphors and pauses, in order to make sense of the meaning they give to their social and personal world. The overall objective in IPA is to emphasise convergences and divergences, commonalities and idiosyncrasies in peoples' experience of a phenomenon they have lived through (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Data analysis in IPA is created through a researcher's sustained engagement with transcripts and continuous revision of categories in order to reflect as best as possible the mental and social worlds of respondents (Willig, 2013). However, it is acknowledged that interpretation can only occur through the researcher's own experience, meaning they can never fully access the other's lived experience.

### ***3.2.2. Theoretical tenants of IPA***

IPA is informed by three theoretical pillars, which inform how researchers engage with the data (Smith et al., 2009). One of its theoretical pillars is *phenomenology*. Phenomenology has evolved into a pluralistic movement over the years. The movement originated from ideas of Husserl and has since had input from other key philosophers including Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Sartre. Despite this varied interest, philosophers share a collective interest on the study of lived experience, making phenomenology a distinctive, singular endeavour.

The second major theoretical underpinning of IPA is *hermeneutics*. *Hermeneutics* refers to the theory and practice of interpretation. A hermeneutic approach deals with texts, which need to be interpreted and understood rather than explained by laws of nature. A hermeneutic approach is informed by the *double hermeneutic* process whereby the researcher

attempts to make sense of the participants' sense-making of their own experiences of being in the world (Smith et al., 2009). To facilitate this meaning-making, researchers must engage with the *hermeneutic cycle*, where they understand parts of the phenomena in relation to the whole phenomena and visa versa (Smith, 2007). This hermeneutic underpinning to IPA means that the researcher is involved in the co-construction of knowledge and must be aware of how their experiences and preconceptions have shaped their analysis of the participant's experience.

The third and final theoretical underpinning of IPA is *idiography* (Smith et al., 2009). Idiography stems from the Greek word *idios*, which means one's own (Ponterotto, 2005). An idiographic inquiry conceptualises individuals as complex entities and seeks to understand their unique experiences. IPA researchers honour this idiographic underpinning by examining the detailed experience of each particular case before moving on to the next case. IPA researchers also emphasise the divergences and disparities between participants, which lends itself to idiography (Smith et al., 2009).

### **3.3. Rationale for choosing IPA**

Qualitative researchers can choose from a wide array of qualitative methods of research in psychology to analyse their data; and it is recognised that no methodology is better than the other. However, it is recommended that researchers choose an approach, which is compatible with their underlying philosophical worldviews and nature of research question. I will therefore begin by outlining my philosophical world view and how it is compatible with IPA. I will then outline the suitability of IPA for my research question, where I also revisit some of the other approaches and argue why IPA is the best.

#### ***3.3.1. IPA's compatibility with my ontological and epistemological standpoint***

Ontology and epistemology are interrelated terms. The former refers to beliefs concerning the nature of reality and the latter refers to kinds of knowledge that are possible about that reality (Crotty, 1998). My ontological position lies within critical realism, which uses components of a constructivist and interpretivist paradigm. I believe that there is an independent, socio-culturally and historically constructed reality, which exists independently of my own perceptions. However, I make sense and interpret reality through my own personal experiences, historical and cultural context. IPA also shares a broadly realist ontology in that it considers a phenomenon to be out there with a particular essence (Reid et al., 2014). However, it also recognises that individuals cannot have unmediated access to reality because they understand reality through their own experiences and socio-historical context.

My epistemological position is interpretative phenomenology (Willig, 2003). I believe that I understand peoples' experiences through my personal experiences and context, meaning my understanding is an interpretation of an individual's sense-making. In keeping with this stance, I will aim to grasp and capture my participants' lived experiences of resettlement in the UK but I also recognise that my analysis of their experiences is an interpretation rather than an accurate representation of their lived experiences. I acknowledge that a different researcher from a different context and point in time may interpret the same data differently. IPA is also informed by an interpretive phenomenological epistemological stance. It posits that the meanings an individual ascribes to events are of central concern but are only accessible through an interpretative process. Furthermore, IPA considers findings to be *interpretation* because it understands a researcher's consciousness as a by-product of their personal, social and cultural environment; meaning a different researcher can draw different inferences of the same data based on their life world (Willig, 2013).

### ***3.3.2. Suitability of IPA for my research question***

IPA is informed by several features, which are able to address the identified gaps in the literature. At present, the experiences of Syrian migrants have been extensively studied in European countries, but very little attention has been given to Syrian migrants residing in the UK. It is important to address this gap in the literature because experiences are shaped by context and the UK is socio-culturally and geopolitically different from other countries. My research objective is to therefore gain an understanding on the experiences of Syrian migrants in the UK. I would like to know the kinds of concerns they have in their relationship with the UK and the meaning they give to those concerns. I would also like to know how they have coped with their experiences. IPA is able to assist me with these objectives because this approach is concerned with understanding peoples' subjective experiences and the meaning they assign to them (Waerden & Alison, 2014; Smith, 1996). IPA is also able to provide a contextual understanding as it seeks to understand a phenomenon from a particular context (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

A review of the literature also indicates that the issue of how Syrian migrants perceive and experience their post-resettlement is generally neglected. IPA methodology can empower my participants in this respect because it considers participants as experts of their experience and would be interested in Syrians' experience, understandings and perceptions of resettlement (Reid et al., 2005). In addition, IPA methodology emphasises openness to human experience and invite researchers to bracket their assumptions in order to attend to their participants experience more fully (Schweitzer & Steel, 2008). IPA therefore has the capacity to privilege underrepresented voices of Syrian migrants. Furthermore, IPA's idiographic commitment to data analysis means illuminating the particularities of their individual lives. This idiographic lens is much needed in migration research given forced migrants are conceptualised as a homogenous mass of passive victims in mainstream literature. An idiographic approach also means honouring what participants consider

important about the phenomenon under study as opposed to what the researcher thinks is important (Smith et al., 2009). Through being reflexive about my own experiences of displacement, I believe I would gain a richer, in-depth understanding of resettlement in comparison to a descriptive approach.

Whilst IPA does not test hypothesis or generate new theory, this methodology can contribute to and question existing theory and psychological literature (Larkin & Thompson, 2012; Rizq & Target, 2008). As such, I will endeavour to contribute to the literature by exploring participants' beliefs and understandings of forced migration in the context of existing research in this field. Furthermore, IPA is committed to an in-depth exploration of convergence and divergence of participants' experiences and detailed and nuanced analysis of the lived experience. This idiographic approach emphasises the richness of individual accounts (Collins & Nicolson, 2002) and is in keeping with increased efforts within the National Health Service (NHS) to make greater efforts to acknowledge the voices of service-users.

### ***3.3.3. Comparing IPA to other methodologies***

Before choosing IPA as the most suitable method, other approaches compatible with my philosophical perspectives were considered. These included: grounded theory, narrative theory and thematic analysis. I will briefly outline the ways in which they are similar to IPA before stating my rationale for excluding these approaches.

Constructivist Grounded Theory (GT) was the first approach I considered for my study. Constructivist GT is concerned with developing contextually situated theories from participant data (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). IPA and GT have similar data analysis procedures. Both approaches are concerned with core categories and master themes that capture the process and essence of the phenomenon under investigation. Moreover, both approaches draw on *symbolic interactionism*, which posits that

the meaning an individual gives to their life world is only accessible through an interpretative process (Willig & Stainton-Rogers, 2008). Thus, both approaches acknowledge that the researcher plays a role in the construction of knowledge. However, the recommended practice in GT is to not engage with the relevant literature prior to beginning data analysis. This is so that the analysis is not shaped by preconceptions from existing literature. However, I engaged with the literature during the initial stages of my research endeavour and when I applied for ethical approval from my university. Moreover, I have experienced forced migration and this personal experience would inevitably influence my interpretations, even if I abstained from reading literature related to the phenomenon under investigation. Another drawback of GT is that is concerned with uncovering social processes. This focus was not aligned to my phenomenological research questions concerned with exploring the nature of experience.

Thematic Analysis (TA) was the second approach I considered for my study. TA is a method for analysing and reporting patterns and themes within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I considered TA because it is theoretically flexible and could have been used to answer my experiential-type questions within a phenomenological framework. As Larkin (2019) noted, researchers can do phenomenological analysis using TA, adding TA has a long history as a phenomenological method that predates the development of IPA. Nevertheless, I considered TA to be an unsuitable method because my research questions have an idiographic focus with emphasis on understanding individual concerns and the unique meaning participants give to their concerns. TA on the other hand is concerned with identifying patterned meaning across the entire data set. This focus on patterns would mean that my participants' personal and unique sense-making would be lost, hindering my ability to represent their lived experiences. Moreover, Braun and Clarke (2006) stressed that if TA is

not applied carefully, it will create little more than a description and have little interpretative value.

Narrative Analysis (NA) was the third and final approach I considered for my study. NA seeks to develop narratives grounded in participants' stories and is similar to IPA in some aspects. Both approaches for instance are concerned with lived experiences; however, NA researchers seek to interpret lived experiences through stories as data. Both approaches are also idiographic and promote working with a small sample to get an in-depth understanding into peoples' lived experiences. NA's idiographic commitment was attractive because my review of the literature indicated that forced migrants are portrayed as a homogenous group, all of whom are distressed by the challenges they encounter in their host country. NA's idiographic commitment to data analysis would mean I could point to the ways in which my participants were different from one another, subsequently challenging the stereotype of forced migrants as a group of suffering, passive victims. However, NA was not selected for the current study because my research questions are concerned with meaning-making, rather than questioning how people 'story' their experiences which is the main focus of NA.

### **3.4. Participant recruitment**

I interviewed a total of eight Syrian adult migrants with legal status for my research project. The participants were purposively selected because they had experience of the phenomenon under study. However, two participants have not been included in the write-up of this study as one participant was part of the pilot study and the other was withdrawn from the study for ethical reasons, which are detailed in section 2.8.5. This study is therefore based on a sample of six participants with an equal distribution of gender. Smith and Osborn (2003) noted that there is no 'right' sample size in IPA; but a minimum of 6 participants is

considered appropriate for an idiographic examination of each case while meeting recommendations for a professional doctorate (Smith et al., 2009).

I obtained consent to recruit participants from the Refugee Council and other non-governmental agencies (see appendix). Posters were also placed on online Facebook forums such as the 'Marhabtayn Syrian Supperclub - London'. Furthermore, I attended community-based programs and events and presented my research face-to-face to potential participants. I took this proactive role with the objective of building trust with the Syrian community because the literature (Van Liempt & Bilger, 2012) indicates that migrant populations can have suspicious and careful approaches to academic researchers. Overall, I found engaging with Syrians in their community to be the most effective method of recruitment. This method not only generated interest in my study but it also promoted snowballing sampling whereby my participants recommended my study to others and helped me recruit further participants.

Below is a list of the participants who took part in this study and their gender. A fictional name (pseudonym) has been issued to participants to protect their identity.

Table 1

*Table of participants*

<b>Name (Pseudonyms)</b>	<b>Gender</b>
"Tahib"	Male
"Masim"	Male
"Rabia"	Female
"Rashida"	Female
"Erum"	Female
"Sarim"	Male



### **3.5. Inclusion and exclusion criteria**

IPA advocates using a small and homogenous group for whom the research topic is meaningful. Thus, all participants were purposively sampled on the basis that they had arrived in the UK as a result of the conflict in Syria. The participants also had to be adults with English proficiency given the significance of language in IPA analysis. Moreover, given the sensitive nature of my topic, Syrians with existing or previous history of severe mental health problems were excluded from participation to minimise risk of harm. Undocumented Syrian migrants in the UK were also excluded from participation because they are not considered to be *ordinarily residents* and must pay for NHS healthcare. Furthermore, undocumented irregular migrants may be deterred from contact with healthcare trusts for fear of being reported to UK immigration enforcement. This suggested that I could not support the psychological wellbeing of undocumented Syrian following their participation; and as such I decided to exclude them for participation (Zaklaki, 2019).

### **3.6. Interview schedule**

The aim of an interview schedule in IPA is to facilitate participants' ability to share their own story, using their own experiences that are important to them. With this aim in mind, I used a flexible interview schedule, incorporating open-ended questions with prompts and probing statements. Some of the questions in my interview schedule included: *What is it like to be Syrian migrant in the UK? Can you tell me about your experience in the UK?* However, I did not strictly adhere to these questions as my objective was to remain curious and open to my participants' lived experience of the phenomenon. Indeed, the aim in IPA is to explore participants' concerns in relation to the phenomenon under investigation rather than to explore what the researcher considers important (Willig, 2008). IPA also favours

open-ended questions because these kinds of questions adhere to its inductive nature to research (Smith, 2004).

Interviews lasted between 55 to 150 minutes and were recorded using two voice recorders. Each recorded interview was then played back, transcribed and formatted using the template suggested by Smith et al. (2009). Sample of transcribed and annotated transcript can be found in appendix P.

### **3.7. Research Procedure**

Participants who expressed an interest in taking part in my study were sent an information pack via email. This information pack contained two forms: one of which was the information sheet containing further details about my study (e.g., aims, location and contact details etc.) and the other was the screening measure. The screening measure asked questions about their language competency, legal status and mental health status. The information sheet explained the purpose of the interview, how long their interview might take, my role as a researcher, how their data would be managed and their right to withdraw. It was explained to participants that their eligibility for participation was subject to their responses in screening measure and as such they were encouraged to complete this before giving consent. Participants who did not meet the criteria were told they could not take part and sent the distress helpline sheet, whereas participants who met the inclusion criteria and provided consent were offered a date and time for their interview. Interviews took place in a quiet and confidential space on the university premises. My director of studies was also notified when and where interviews were taking place so that they could clinically intervene and manage potential distress among participants.

Before interviewing participants, I revisited the forms sent to participants in the information pack to ensure they understood the terms and conditions of the study including

their right to withdraw from the study. During the interviews, I remained alert to signs of distress and implemented Rogers' (1957) core conditions in counselling, which included empathy, congruence and unconditional positive regard. I implemented these basic counselling skills with the objective of building rapport with my participants so that they felt comfortable sharing their personal experiences in detail with me. Finally, once I finished interviewing participants, I thanked them for their time and provided them with a debrief form which I also explained to them in person. In addition, I provided participants with a sheet offering sources of support and reminded them that I would contact them the following week to check-in on their emotional welfare. See appendices A-H for all research participatory forms, including distress helpline sheets.

In the event that a participant disclosed suicidal thoughts, the interview would have been immediately terminated and their data would have been discarded. The distress protocol would have been activated whereby I would have asked further questions on the nature of their distress to determine whether or not to break confidentiality. The distress protocol also included practicing mindfulness with the participant, documenting the nature of events and informing my research supervisor.

### **3.8. Ethical Considerations**

I received ethical approval from the School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee at the University of East London before I interviewed and collected data (see Appendix L). I also adhered to the Code of Human Research Ethics by the British Psychological Society (BPS, BPS, 2014); Code of Ethics by the International Association for the Study of Forced Migration (IASFM; IASFM, 2018) and Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics by the Health and Care Professions Council (Health and Care Professions Council, 2019b).

### ***3.8.1. Data confidentiality, protection and storage***

As outlined above, I obtained written consent from all participants before interviewing them. The information sheet provided to participants explained the purpose of the interview including how their personal data would be managed. They were informed that any identifiable information would be removed in the write-up of my thesis and they would be issued pseudonyms. In addition, I ensured that electronic copies of data were confidentially stored by uploading them to my personal, password-protected laptop, which I kept at home. Meanwhile, paper documents with identifiable information (e.g. consent to participate forms) were stored in locked filing cabinet at home. After successful completion of voice examination, electronic-based data will be permanently deleted and paper-based documents will be destroyed using a paper-shredder.

### ***3.8.2. Right to withdraw***

Participants were also made aware of their right to withdraw from the study. They were notified that they could withdraw from the interview at any time and following their participation providing they gave 30 days' notice as specified within the information sheet.

### ***3.8.3. Issue of trust in migration research***

As outlined above, I adhered to the IASFM Code of Ethics (2018) and adapted my study to three key ethical principles with the target population, one of which was mistrust towards the researcher (Krause, 2017). According to the literature, the experience of war displacement and exposure to violence can lead forced migrants to develop a negative model of others, making them suspicious of other people and their intentions (Clark-Kazak, 2021). This negative perception of others can affect how migrants relate and engage with the researcher. Forced migrants may for instance, believe that the researcher works with governmental agencies and as such they may not talk freely in the interview (Hynes, 2003; Muller-Funk, 2020). I attempted to minimise potential mistrust by reminding participants of

my role as a researcher and that the interview was confidential unless they disclosed active suicidal risk. Moreover, I reminded them that their identifiable details (e.g., names) would be removed in the write-up of the study and that only my research supervisors and examiners would have access to their data.

#### ***3.8.4. Power imbalance in migration research***

Power imbalance, between the researcher and participant is another widely documented ethical concern in migration research (IASFM, 2018). It is recognised that forced migrants are often socially isolated and in precarious situations with respect to their socio-economic position in the host country. Forced migrants may subsequently participate with the view that the researcher could provide assistance with their contextual and legal difficulties, such as housing, employment and other social benefits. I addressed this ethical challenge by clarifying my role and the purpose of research in the information sheet and in person.

#### ***3.8.5. Ethics in practice***

Whilst researchers are expected to adhere to documented processes outlined in ethics applications, Swartz (2011) noted that researchers also need to adopt ethics in practice, which is achieved through ongoing ethical reflexivity and being alert to other potential ethical dilemmas, which were not previously been considered in the ethics application. I believe I demonstrated ethics in practice on one occasion where a female participant presented with no risk and provided me with written consent to part in my study. However, on the day of interview, I noticed she was heavily pregnant. I explained that the sensitive nature of my research topic and recall of events could elicit distress. In light of this, we jointly agreed that her participation would not be in the best interest of her unborn child and I withdrew her from the study to minimise the risk to her foetus.

#### ***3.8.6. Risk of emotional distress in migration researcher***

Over the years, there has been growing recognition that researchers in migration studies are at risk of emotional distress from displaced communities and their stories of struggle, loss and hardship. Sorensen (2021) noted that the recall of such stories can not only distress the participant, but it can lead researchers to experience burnout, compassion fatigue and secondary stress. I noticed that I was particularly at risk of emotional distress during the pilot study as my participant's experience of migratory plight resonated with my own experience of displacement and resettlement in the UK. However, my training and identity as a reflective-practitioner equipped me well to manage such challenging situations and I implemented various self-care strategies to minimise my risk of emotional distress. My strategies included spacing interviews, keeping a reflective journal to process my emotions, personal therapy and regular meetings with my supervisory team. I also took regular breaks in the write-up of my study.

### **3.9. Personal reflexivity**

As a qualitative researcher, I was conscious of my identity and the effect that it may have had on recruitment and sampling. As noted in section 3.4, I recruited my participants at a Syrian event in London. When I attended this event, I was conscious of the fact that I was not a member of the Syrian community and that my outsider status may have made potential participants suspicious of my motivations, deterring them from taking part in my research. I was also conscious that disclosure of my doctoral student status could have had the unwanted effect of intimidating potential participants. However, to my surprise, I recruited my participants within a relatively short time. I found participants were generally forthcoming, welcoming, warm and keen to help, with some participants travelling over 2 hours to be interviewed at my university campus. I wondered if their generosity was because they could partially relate to me. For example, my data showed that all of my participants valued

education. They may have therefore respected my student status and could appreciate the complexities that come with research recruitment; motivating them to take part in my research. I also wondered if my disclosure as someone who had also fled war and resettled in the UK made my participants comfortable and hopeful that I would understand their experiences.

As a qualitative researcher, I was also conscious of my identity and how it may have impacted data collection. For example, as an outsider, I was aware that my participants may have been suspicious thus reluctant to openly share their experiences. I tried to manage this by validating their emotions and paraphrasing their experiences to check my understanding. I also drew on my understanding of attachment theory in clinical practice, which encourages practitioners to withdraw and give space when an individual retracts in the narrative. I was particularly conscious of attachment theory in my interaction with Erum who reported feeling discriminated by her teacher because of her hijab. After Erum disclosed in this our interview, she said mentioned that “I do not like to speak this way” and changed the topic in the interview. Her withdrawal was possibly because she did not trust me fully at the beginning of our interview. Moreover, I was mindful that as a British-Kosovar researcher she may have felt uncomfortable disclosing negative narratives in the UK; possibly because she was worried about seeming ungrateful towards a country that gave her refuge. However, I responded to her narrative by validating her emotions and giving her the space to take the interview where she felt most comfortable. Later on in the interview, Erum revisited her experience of discrimination and shared how she had become consumed by her teacher’s behaviour towards her for over a year. Her willingness to revisit the same topic indicated she had become comfortable by the end of our interview as she also opened up on other experiences of racism and xenophobic attitudes towards her in the UK. In addition she

requested further time in our interview and it seemed she appreciated the experience of me listening to her narrative without judgement as she disclosed:

*Erum: it's a big chance to speak about myself. its nice to find somebody erm... who understand what I mean exactly and without any thought.. just to focus on what I am saying. Its very important for me.*

*Researcher: You felt that today?*

*Erum: yeah!*

*Researcher: Thank you*

*Erum: Because sometimes when you speak to a friend.. its happen.. or have some notes, background about your personality. But you don't have anything about that, you are jus focusing on what I am saying. And I respect that. (1195-1206)*

In addition to the above, I was also conscious of the relationship I had built with my participants and how this may have affected the data analysis. I noticed in my relationship with the data analysis that I wanted to serve them well; I wanted to represent their lived experiences as best as possible especially in light of the injustice they had experienced in addition to how forthcoming and open they had been in the interviews. This posed challenges in terms of selecting extracts, as it seemed everything was relevant (see appendix M, N, O). I subsequently sought supervision and tried to bare in mind the purpose of IPA, pointing to convergences and divergences in narratives.

### **3.10. Analysis**

I analysed the data according to the 6 steps provided by Smith et al., (2009). The overall objective of my data analysis was to produce themes, which captured my participants' lived experience of forced migration as well as my interpretation of the meaning they attributed to their concerns.



### ***3.10.1. Stage 1: Reading and re-reading***

As per the guidelines provided by Smith et al., (2009), I started the process of data analysis by listening to the interview recordings and transcribed each one in detail including pauses and emotional responses (such as crying). I read each transcript several times in a line-by-line basis to familiarise myself with the data.

### ***3.10.2. Stage 2: Initial noting***

I then analysed the transcripts making notes of descriptive, linguistic and conceptual comments (Smith et al., 2009). My descriptive comments, which were marked in bold text, reflected my initial thoughts in relation to my participants' verbal (tone of voice, delays/pauses in speech, filler words, use of metaphors) and non-verbal communication (emotional reaction, behaviour). My linguistic comments, which were marked in italics, consisted of my reflections in relation to the participants' use of language. And my conceptual comments, which were underlined, reflected my interpretation of the participants' overarching understanding of their concerns.

### ***3.10.3. Stage 3: Developing emergent themes***

After comprehensive exploratory commenting, I moved my attention away from the transcripts and focused on my comments. I analysed and rearranged my comments, clustering them into emergent themes. My emergent themes reflected my interpretation; however, my interpretation was stimulated by and grounded in the participants' narratives; reflecting the 'I' in the IPA. My emergent themes were labelled according to Smith et al. (2009) definition of an emergent theme: "Themes are usually expressed as phrases which speak to the psychological essence of the piece and contain enough particularity to be grounded and enough abstraction to be conceptual" (p. 92).

### ***3.10.4. Stage 4: Connection across emergent themes***

Once I had established a set of themes within each transcript, I printed them out, cut them up and placed them on a new separate piece of paper. I carefully examined the emergent themes and looked for connections and patterns between them. I used several techniques suggested by Smith et al. (2009) to facilitate this process including abstraction, which refers to the process of putting like for like together and developing a new name for the cluster.

#### ***3.10.5. Stage 5: Moving to the next case***

I repeated steps one to four with the remaining transcripts, ensuring I treated each transcript as a separate, unique, entity in honour of IPA's idiographic commitment to data analysis (Smith et al., 2009). To facilitate this idiographic commitment in IPA and treat each transcript in its own right, I kept a reflexive journal. The purpose of the reflexive journal was to bracket preconceptions from previous transcripts as far as possible so that I could essentially read each transcript with a fresh lens and allow new themes to emerge (see appendix M). I revisited previous transcripts to check if I had overlooked the presence of the new emergent theme.

#### ***3.10.6. Stage 6: Looking for patterns across cases***

The final stage involved looking for patterns across cases. To achieve, this I laid out the emergent themes from each transcript and looked out for reoccurring themes or patterns between them. I reviewed and pulled themes from each individual that spoke to a particular essence or process (such as self-identity) and gave them a new, superordinate label. I labelled my superordinate themes using language and phrases that reflected the themes that were nested within it and created a narrative account illustrated by the verbatim excerpts from the transcripts. The overall objective was to point out the commonality in their experiences yet also their individual, lived experiences.

### **3.11. Summary of chapter**

The purpose of this methodology chapter was to provide an overview of my selected methodology, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), and discuss my rationale for choosing IPA over other methodologies. The chapter also provided an overview of my participants, the procedure and ethical considerations, the evaluation criteria for my research, reflexivity (with respect to sampling, data collection and data analysis) and research steps involved in IPA data analysis. In the proceeding chapter, I will present my findings and analysis.

## Chapter 4: Analysis

### 3.1 Overview

The research questions guiding this study were to understand: (1) What are the concerns of Syrian Forced migrants in the UK? (2) What meaning do they give to their concerns in the UK? And (3) how have they coped with their concerns in the UK? This chapter outlines the findings from an IPA analysis of 6 semi-structured interview transcripts. Four superordinate themes and 12 subordinate themes have been identified through the analysis (see Table 2).

It is worth noting the role of the ‘double hermeneutic’ in IPA with respect to data analysis. The double hermeneutic circle required for IPA consists of the researcher trying to make sense of the participants’ sense-making. In other words, the researcher is trying to make sense of participants’ stories whilst participants are trying to make sense of their own personal and social world (Smith, 2004). This process of sense-making is based on the researcher’s close engagement with participant narratives. However, IPA recognises that researchers will interpret from a particular socio-cultural and personal world; meaning elements of their subjectivity (e.g., values, preconceptions, hopes and feelings) will influence their analysis of the data (Smith, 2007). My data analysis is, therefore influenced by my close reading of the participants’ accounts as well as my preconceptions and personal experience of displacement. I therefore recognise that my interpretations are only one possible interpretation of the data and that another researcher may develop different superordinate and subordinate themes based on their subjective understanding of the data.

**Table 2. Master Table of Superordinate and Subordinate Themes**

<b>Superordinate themes</b>	<b>Subordinate themes</b>	<i>Frequency</i>
<b>Thrown in the deep end: the initial changes and challenges of being in the UK</b>	“The cultural shock is multi-dimensional”	6
	Self-development as a necessity but a challenging experience	5
	Lost in communication	6
	Strained family dynamics	6
<b>Tensions with identity and self-construal</b>	Individual identity: Ambitious view of self	6
	Social identity: Perceived stereotypes towards oneself	6
	Familial identity: from the useless to useful self	6
<b>The ongoing search for belonging: facets of a home</b>	A place that accepts oneself	5
	A place that provides opportunities	4
	A place where one feels supported by others	5
<b>Means of coping</b>	Ambiguity of Islam: a source of hope and isolation	6
	Seeking comfort through the familiar, supportive and proactive other	6
	Avoiding aspects of the unwanted self.	6

The above themes will be explored in greater detail below.

#### **4.2. Superordinate Theme: Thrown in the deep end: the initial changes and challenges of being in the UK**

This theme concerns the participants' initial experience of the UK and is characterised by changes, all of which were challenging for participants. The analysis revealed that the participants encountered four changes. The participants reported coming to terms with environmental changes as they experienced the UK to be socio-culturally dissimilar from Syria. Participants also reported changes within themselves as they went from being established in Syria to lacking basic skills and purpose in the UK. In addition, they encountered changes in relating to the general public, as they could no longer communicate effectively due to language barriers. Finally, they encountered relational changes with meaningful others in their lives (e.g., changes in intimacy, roles, dynamics) due to the unique demands of being in the UK. Taken together, these experiences implied a metaphorical sense of being 'thrown in the deep end' in the UK, which is my phrase of choice. I felt this metaphorical language was appropriate for the phenomena in question, because this phrase is used to describe starting a new and difficult activity when one is not fully prepared (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate dictionary, 2013). The participants articulated this through their experience of the UK as a new country, presenting to them various changes, which they found challenging and overwhelming.

#### ***4.2.1. Subordinate Theme: "The cultural shock is multi-dimensional"***

The participants described the UK as a culturally unfamiliar country, which they had to learn to navigate and adjust to. They compared the UK to Syria and many socio-cultural facets noted differences in the climate, social norms, transport systems, food and education. They described feeling bewildered, confused, lost and overwhelmed by the way things work in the UK, leading some participants to experience homesickness.

This subordinate theme was named after a phrase from Tahib, who experienced the UK to be culturally dissimilar from Syria on many dimensions:

it's.. the cultural shock is multi-dimensional. From the transportation system to the how cosmopolitan London is, erm.. the way the banking system works, the way that work is based on someone's experience and not his education. So erm.. those things.. I'm still realizing them, I haven't finished yet (laughs). So yeah, it's all goes into one big cultural shock. (lines 238-245)

Tahib listed various facets of culture shock, each of which are very different from one another and have different repercussions. Although Tahib did not explicitly state his emotional process in relation to facets; one can imagine that being hit with these layers of shock all at once is an emotionally overwhelming experience. Moreover, towards the end of the extract, Tahib mentioned that he was "still realising them" and laughed. His laughter seemed to be out of context given his narrative indicated he was still learning and adjusting to the UK. His laughter could have therefore symbolised his discomfort at the realisation that he had not yet grasped the UK.

Masim's experience of culture shock was more specific to the transport system but he similarly implied that he was in the process of familiarising himself with and adapting to the UK:

I can't use train, I can't use bus, I can't for example go from area that I am living to another area.

Researcher: so would you say that you are still learning? You are still trying to find places and things..

Masim: yeah because you it is my first time that I visit England. It was my dream to come to England before. (lines 529-535)

He repeatedly asserted “I can’t” which indicated he experienced a loss of agency and felt debilitated in the UK. One could also imagine that not being able to use public transport or go from, “one area ... to another area” could also feel isolating and lonely. It seemed that these challenges hindered Masim’s view of the UK because he stated it had always been his “dream to come to England before”. His reference to ‘dream’ implies he once fantasised about coming to the UK, but his reference to ‘before’ suggests past tense indicating he no longer thinks highly of the UK. This language could therefore hint a sense of disappointment in the reality of the UK.

Rabia’s experience of culture shock seemed to be related to daily errands such as how people pay for their bills in the UK:

I don’t remember that my mum went to the.. like... you know the water, gas buildings or anything at all. It was.. in my country, you have to go the shop.. the same shop who sells you the food, you have to go that shop and pay for your phone, pay for your gas. (lines 780-783)

Rabia engages in comparison, and notes how UK is different from Syria from her personal experience. Her comparison indicated that she experienced the UK to be more emotionally and physically demanding than Syria given in Britain she is expected to settle different bills with different providers whereas in Syria she was able to settle all bills in one place. This comparison implied that she experienced Syria to be more straightforward and hassle-free compared to the UK.

Erum described culture shock in relation to adapting to British social norms:

We have some different culture and tradition. Like when I see a baby in the street, it’s very sweet and kind in my country that you give them a sweet or that you speak to them.. it’s very very kind, but here it is forbidden (laughs). It’s not allowed...this makes some difficulties to interact. (lines 859-864)



In a similar vein to Rabia, Erum highlighted her culture shock by comparing what her social life was like in Syria to what it is like now in Britain. She expressed that in contrary to the UK, it is not socially frowned upon to interact with other people's children in Syria. While coming to terms with different norms on social conduct is not necessarily an unpleasant experience, Erum noted that this cultural facet has minimised her interaction with others, suggesting she has experienced it negatively and it has possibly contributed to her feelings of isolation of loneliness in the UK.

Sarim also emphasises his experience of culture shock through comparing to another city, specifically Calais:

it was depressing, especially for who was in Calais because it was very action life in Calais- meeting people, volunteers. There is friends...and there is a community.. there is a nice community but when I arrive here – everybody was by themselves in the house in dark place. (1599-1605)

Sarim's narrative indicates his experience of culture shock in UK was related to social housing and his local community's atmosphere. Similarly to Rabia, Sarim's account of culture shock indicates he felt lonely and isolated as he transitioned from a vibrant and social community in Calais to being secluded in his own "dark" apartment in the UK. Moreover, there is a sense that he enjoyed being busy in Calais through his emphasis on "it was very action life" and experienced low mood when arrived in the UK because he did not have anything to do.

Rashida's experience of culture shock took a more existential turn as she described how she struggled to find her purpose in the UK:

"all of this puts me in so much like.. hard time because I didn't know what to do in my life. It's kind of like my life came back on hold again so after we arrived it was happy, we

finally made it and everything looked so good, but it's just like .... So erm, what's going to happen next now. So where I am in this life again. (1127-1133)

Her narrative suggests that she initially felt happy when she arrived in the UK as she recalled how “everything looked so good” in the UK, which implied that she felt reassured and hopeful. This positive process is similar to Masim’s reference to the UK being his dream before his arrival. However, she then suggests that she did not know her purpose in the UK and questioned “where am I ... again?”. This rhetorical question could be interpreted in different ways. For example, one could argue that she could have possibly felt excited and wonderful to be in the UK because she experienced it as land that offered her an infinite number of options and possibilities. However, it seemed more likely that this question implied she felt disorientated because earlier on the passage she talked about not knowing in relation to the number of options available to her and described this as a “hard time”. Thus, when she questioned herself again it can be assumed that she felt uncomfortable.

#### ***4.2.2. Subordinate Theme: Self-development as a necessity but a challenging experience***

In addition to familiarising and adapting to the UK, all of the participants were keen to professionally develop themselves in the UK; which implied that self-development was necessity. However, each participant encountered unique challenges, which they described feeling frustrated, exhausted, demotivated and demoralised by. Taken together, the participants’ emphasis on self-development suggested that self-development was a necessity but their reference to various difficulties also suggested that self-development was a struggle and unpleasant experience for a variety of reasons as will be detailed below.

For Masim, it seemed that enrolling in college was a double-edge sword. On the one hand, he seemed to acknowledge it would benefit and help him with his integration but on the other hand he implied academia was a personally challenging, difficult endeavour for him:

When I came to England erm.. I come without anything – without language, without job, family, without everything! But I keep my time to build myself here. I start to learn some things for me for future like jobs and I start college from the beginning to improve myself and to learn the language because different community between Syrian and here, and different culture as well! Erm.. it was really hard for me when I started but I want to build myself here. (24-33)

He repeatedly asserted “I come without anything” which indicating he arrived to the UK bare, “without” key skills or meaningful connections. One can imagine he felt isolated and lonely when he first arrived in the UK through the fact he could not communicate with others in English and was separated from his family. However, he then associates starting college with “building himself”, which implies that he considered education to be a source of hope; a venue which would help him grow in these areas and settle more effectively in the UK.

Tahib similarly emphasised the need for professional and personal development through education. But gives a more detailed account of the academic challenges he encountered once he was on the course:

It’s just because erm.. there is foreign language being spoken around me in a very calm pace...and it was totally strange, I didn’t understand a single word from what he was saying (starts laughing). So erm, ok what am I doing here? Like it’s totally different. There is no numbers, there is nothing, there are no maps, no plans, what am I doing here. (196-202)

Tahib’s narrative suggests that he was possibly conflicted and confused in his lecture because on the one hand he suggests perceived language barrier to be the cause for his

hindered performance. There is a sense that his experience of language barrier led him to question his belonging given he shared how he could not understand his lecturer and referred to English as a “foreign” language, indicating he felt alienated in relation to the norm. He also talked about how “there was no numbers, no plans” which implied he felt outside his comfort zone and in unfamiliar territory. However, he also referred to his learning environment as a “calm” place, which implies that he also felt at ease, safe and comfortable. This tension between being in unfamiliar territory but also feeling at ease at the same time suggests a conflict thus confusion.

Erum similarly emphasised self-development in the UK through education, but it seemed she felt discriminated by her teacher once she was enrolled on the course:

I believe education need time but in all my tests and all my assessments, better than other [students]... All my assessments are tests are good. But I am astonished that for the last exam- the teacher don't put my name in the list to do the exam. This is my right! (414-426)

Erum reported that she got good grades and outperformed her classmates, yet she was not allowed to sit the exam. This narrative suggested that Erum considered her teacher's decision to refuse her entry for the exam to be illogical, unfair and personal. One can therefore imagine that Erum felt discriminated by her teacher's perceived act of bias. Her reference to “it is my right!” consolidates a sense of being denied fair and equal treatment. However, later on the interview Erum seemed to justify her teacher's decision by considering cultural differences:

maybe in my country it's very high level but in the UK it's very low: I recognise that.

Researcher: you mean your qualification?

Erum: yeah. Maybe I am in university; I have the same qualification but it means a lot more in Syria than it does here. (453-458)

This change in perspective suggested that Erum was similarly conflicted. She firstly implied she considered her teacher to be unfair, leading her to feel discriminated. However, her latter explanation opens the possibility that her teacher was possibly justified in his decision to remove her from sitting the exam. It is interesting that the nature of these explanations shifts from being personal to impersonal by drawing on cultural differences; suggesting Erum potentially finds the latter explanation more comforting than the former.

Rabia similarly described academic rejection in her pursuit of self-development:

she [interviewer] asked me questions but I said to her ‘what you say’, and she said ‘how you will study A-levels and you are not understanding this type of questions’. I told her ‘it’s ok, just give me time, I will be fine and I am a good student, just let me in’. She said ‘no, you are not going to be in – go home’, ‘you are not going to do A-levels’ ‘who sent you to here’ I was so angry and when I reached my home, my eyes were so red from crying. (713-721)

Rabia seemed to be confident in her ability to overcome language barriers and pass the course, suggesting she had a positive view of self. Moreover, she implied that she could improve with time. This is similar to Masim who also mentioned developing and improving with “time”. However, Rabia was met with someone she felt was equally confident that she would not succeed, leading her to become emotionally distressed. Rabia’s pleading and emotional response indicated she disagreed and was disappointed by the teacher’s decision. This is similar to Erum whose initial explanation also appeared to suggest she felt discriminated by her teacher.

Rashida also expressed a desire to develop herself in the UK. However, unlike the other participants who expressed clear goals in the UK, Rashida did not seem to know what she wanted to achieve in the UK:

I have no idea what I am going to do. I didn't know how to do anything. I didn't have any connections. I didn't have anyone to ask and it start to feel, 'where should I start again?' 'How do I go on with my life?' ... I was just kind of a hopeless person who don't know what to do and who don't event know who to ask. (1135-1188)

It appears that her lack of knowledge and isolation in the UK hindered her self-development. Her monologue "where shall I start?" suggests she felt lost and confused in terms of her purpose in the UK. She also questioned "how do I get on with my life?" which implies that she perhaps felt stuck and debilitated by this experience. Overall, there is a sense that this experience contributed to her negative view of self as she referred to herself as a "hopeless person".

#### ***4.2.3. Subordinate Theme: Lost in Communication***

Whilst the participants were keen to familiarise themselves to and professionally develop in the UK, they experienced language barriers, which hindered their experience. Findings showed that language barrier was the most consistently reported concern throughout the interviews. Participants encountered language barriers in different context and associated it with different implications. Tahib seemed to believe that his limited language proficiency had social consequences:

They [British] would not have much interest to talk to me. Erm.. maybe because of my bad language which will take more time.. like this.. like right now (laughs) to form sentences so they would lose interest very quickly" (289-291).

Tahib implies that his limited language proficiency made him socially undesirable to British students. It seemed he believed British-born student would negatively judge his language competency and distance themselves from him, suggesting he anticipated rejection.

One can therefore imagine Tahib felt lonely and isolated because of this perceived lack of interest in him and vulnerability to rejection.

Masim also implied that his limited language proficiency had social consequences, specifically hindering his ability to perform basic daily tasks: “I want to do shopping for me.. I want and told someone who was there, just to tell me.. for example, I need yogurt - I can’t explain to him.. ‘please.. I need yoghurt’. I don’t have enough language to tell him I need yoghurt’. I try to use my hands to explain to him, but it doesn’t work always” (505-513).

It seemed that language proficiency hindered his ability to communicate with others and get his basic needs met. He subsequently used alternative forms of communication (hands), which implied a sense of despair, but he was nonetheless unsuccessful. One can imagine Masim felt frustrated by this experience in addition to a loss of agency. Masim also reflected on this experience with a lower, softer and flatter tone of voice, which appeared to suggest that he felt sad and demoralised reflecting on this experience.

Rabia on other hand, shared how her language proficiency had academic consequences:

the first year...nothing. I didn’t understand nothing, I was crying all the time... when I go I was still crying. I told my mum, ‘what I did for myself, how I did the application for A-levels and now, how can i continue with it, when I can’t understand anything. How will I pass?’. (802-807)

Rabia’s English proficiency seems to have severely affected her academic performance, as she recalled how she could not understand anything. It seems that this experience also made her doubt herself when she questioned “*how will I pass?*”. One can imagine that Rabia felt a sense of helplessness given her academic future seemed bleak.

Erum similarly discussed how her language proficiency hindered her academic success:

sometimes I make very strong sentences because I practice.. practice, but the teacher not guide me, just to act with me in bad way. And is, it makes me very sad. In front of my colleagues, he told me that – told me that you need more time, you are not ready. (468-473).

Erum, similarly to Rabia, implied a positive view of herself through her recognition that she “*sometimes makes strong sentences*”. But it seems that her teacher thought she was incapable of succeeding at the time and Erum took particular issue with how he communicated his decision to her. She recalled how the teacher expressed his concerns to her in front of her classmates. This method of delivery implies her incompetency was made public, possibly causing her to feel humiliated and ashamed in front of others.

Rashida also mentioned language barriers in the interview. However, unlike the other participants she shared how this affected the dynamics within her marriage:

my husband always ask me to do the things for him. Like when we went to sign the contract for renting the flat, it's like... I was the person who was speaking and he was telling me what to say in Arabic and I use to say in English to the other person. So I was kind of the mid-man in there- the middle man who speaks English, although my English when arrived here was kind of rubbish cause I never spoke English before...so this thing of speaking was so difficult. (1094-1105)

She shared how her husband's limited proficiency shifted the dynamics within their marriage. It seems that her husband became dependent on her because he could not communicate effectively in English and as such relied on Erum to translate on his behalf. However, it seemed that Rashida found her new role challenging as she described her English proficiency as “rubbish”, indicating she could not perform this role effectively.

Sarim appeared to be the only participant who seemed to imply feeling content with his language skills:



we learnt in school some English, so I have like basic English, even though I use to fail all the exams in English, but at least I can say 'hello, how you are you... I want to buy something.'” (1217-1222).

He described his English proficiency as basic, suggesting he did not consider himself to be fluent and advanced. However unlike, Rashida who referred to her limited language competency as “rubbish”, Sarim appeared to be content because he could communicate his basic needs to others. This suggests that he believed his English competency was good enough and it did not significantly impact his sense of agency in the UK.

#### ***4.2.4. Subordinate Theme: Strained family dynamics***

The participants were also conscious of their families in Syria when they first arrived in the UK. All of the participants implied that their family dynamics had been physically and emotionally disrupted as a result of relocating to the UK. Their narratives indicated a loss of intimacy, connectedness and support due to their new lifestyles in the UK (i.e. long working hours) and geographical location, meaning it was no longer possible for them to visit their families in Syria as often. However, the participants had different kinds of relationships with their family, which varied how their disrupted family dynamics impacted them and what it meant for them. Half of the participants mentioned concealment from family members and others mentioned loss of intimacy; overall this indicated a strained family dynamics.

Tahib seemed to have strained relationship with his parents in Syria and described concealing his lifestyle choices from them:

So I cannot tell them that I was sitting with my friends who were drinking alcohol because ‘why are you sitting with them.. no.. you should cut your friendship with them’. So.. I still speak to them every couple of days on the phone but it is nothing, it is about ‘how are you, what are you eating blah blah blah.’ (735-738)

His narrative implies that he struggled for autonomy because his parents wanted him to live his life in the UK according to their wishes but he wanted to live his life according to his personal wishes. There is also a sense that he experienced his parents to be controlling through the fact they intruded on his personal affairs and instructed him how to conduct himself. Moreover, it appears he perceived them to be critical of his decisions as indicated by “why are you sitting with them.. no”. He nonetheless lived his life in the UK according to his wishes, suggesting he wanted to have a control over his life.

Sarim also described a strained relationship with his parents in Syria; “And the families... you are not allowed to do many things. So the family they kill your motivation. So when people here... they still suffer from the families there” (1892-1896). This extract suggests he felt controlled by his parents and this hindered his quality of life. He reported how his parents “killed [his] motivation” which implies that he felt demotivated and demoralized when he lived with them. The term ‘kill’ is also quite strong and implies a permanent effect. Thus, it possible Sarim’s experience of his parents’ treatment have had a scarring effect on him in the UK. But his use of pronouns ‘you’ instead of ‘I’, conveyed an impersonal tone suggesting he was uncomfortable owning his experience. Later on in the interview however, he implied that being in the UK with his friends and away from his parents gave him some freedom to be himself; “and here we kind of a family. There are no rules – not this system” (1918-1920).

Rashida shared how the physical separation from her family in Syria eroded their intimacy, leading her to feel isolated and lonely in the UK:

I just told her [mother] that ‘yeah we are here...we are happy.. we are fine.... everything is good’. So you can’t just tell her that we’re miserable here, we’re not happy I didn’t want to add sadness to her heart and tell her about the bad things. But I needed a friend

or someone who was so close to me, who I could talk to, speak to about my feelings.. (1243-1249)

Similarly to Tahib, Rashida shared how she has concealed information from her family in Syria; suggesting an incongruent self. However, unlike Tahib who seemed to conceal information to protect himself from criticism, Rashida appears to conceal information to protect her parents from unnecessary worry. Rashida later reflected on the disadvantages of concealing information from her family in Syria, noting “but I needed a friend” which suggested she felt lonely, isolated and not listened to in the UK as a result.

Erum shared how resettlement in the UK affected her bond with her husband. She described leaving her family in Syria behind in order to start a new life with her husband who had already been living in the UK for three years prior to her arrival. However, she reported a loss of physical intimacy and familiarity when she saw him for the first time at the airport; “And when I reach here from long journey, I am looking for my husband as a new person. 3 years it’s a long time, it’s not easy. I feel he became older, he have another mood.” (779-782)

It seems that time had eroded their familiarity with one another as she recalls how her husband’s personality and physical appearance had changed over the period they were separated. She referred to him as a ”new person“, which could be interpreted in different ways. ‘New’ could be associated with positive feelings such as excitement and joyment. However, Erum’s narrative suggests she experienced her husband’s ‘new’ appearance negatively because later reports how reuniting with him after being 3 years apart was hard “ it is not easy”.

This indicates that she experienced her husband as stranger and had work on their intimacy again.

Masim also described a loss of intimacy with his family in the UK due to busy work schedules; “My uncle is here but he doesn’t have time for me.. to show me or to teach me for anything” (523-524). He made a similar remark in relation to his wife; “we don’t have more time.. and my wife here to, for example to go to rest here... or visit any place. To enjoy life here...because we are both busy here” (632-633). He implied a loss of family cohesion in both excerpts. In the first, he described being unsupported by his uncle in the UK due to his work commitments, and in the second he talked about how his and his wife’s work commitments have limited their quality time together. Masim’s reference to the fact that they do not “visit places” and “enjoy” their lives in the UK indicated a loss of joy in their marriage.

Rabia was the only participant whose relocation to UK did not affect her family dynamics. She shared how she lived in the UK with her mother and implied their relationship had been consistent, stable and supportive; “My mum supporting me so much in life. And she still supporting me” (818-820). Moreover, she referred to her mother as occupying multiple roles “because she is [her] friend, she’s [her] mum, she’s [her] dad, she’s [her] brother, she’s [her] sister (1120-1121). Rabia’s description of her mother as someone who occupies multiple roles suggests that they had a close relationship and she considered her mother to be a very significant person in her life. It also suggests that she experienced her mother to be non-judgmental because she implied that she confides in her mother on a range of topics that others would potentially only feel comfortable disclosing to particular people in their lives.

#### **4.3. Superordinate Theme: Tensions with identity and self-construal**

All participants talked about their identity and sense of self in the UK. However, there were discrepancies between how the participants viewed themselves, how they considered society viewed them and how they viewed themselves in relation to their families. The

participant's view of self was largely associated with positive inferences as participants spoke on how they were ambitious, hardworking and determined to thrive in the UK. However, the participants shared how they felt the British public frowned on their social identity and associated them with negative stereotypes. The participants also view of self in relation to their families left behind in Syria was associated with mixed inferences; Masim for instance considered himself to be useful for his family in Syria in the sense that he could financially provide for them. Erum on the other hand implied she considered herself useless because she could physically support her family in Syria. Taken together, the participant's view of self, society's perceived negative stereotype of them and their view in relation to their families in Syria suggested that they

#### ***4.3.1. Subordinate Theme: Individual identity: Ambitious View of Self***

This subordinate theme spoke to the relationship participants had with themselves in the UK. Five participants expressed a desire to pursue personally meaningful futures in the UK and spoke of returning to education and learning to develop in the UK. This process suggested they had an 'ambitious' view of themselves. I considered this term, which is my choice of word, to be appropriate, given the participants' strong desire to do well in the UK.

Masim described being protective and engaging in economic opportunities to 'build' himself:

If I be in Syria.. I will be sitting with my father until now erm.. and he's going to support me. I am not going to support myself. ... Here it is different. The age until 20 or over 18 exactly you can find job.. you can build yourself. In Syria no! you going to keep yourself to your father. (60-67)

Masim implied a change in self-construal. He indicated that he was dependent on his father when he lived in Syria due the lack of economic opportunities but has become self-

sufficient in the UK through the economic opportunities, which became available to him. Masim's increased autonomy in the UK can be understood as an ambivalent phenomenon because while he could be happy with his increased capacity to provide for himself; he could also feel overwhelmed by the fact that he could no longer rely on his father as a safety net.

Rabia similarly emphasised working hard and pursuing her studies despite her personal setbacks:

when I came here I started ESOL. I didn't like stop, because I still wanted to go to university even with everything that had happened- I wanted to go to uni'. Yeah, I did the ESOL and start from entry 2. I stayed in entry 2 for 6 months and during this period, I got pregnant and after that I did entry 3 for one year. (700-706)

Her use of phrase "I did not stop" suggests her resilience and determination to succeed despite past setbacks. It seemed that even her personal challenges in the UK such as falling pregnant and giving birth to her child did not stop her from progressing with her studies. This drive indicates a sense that she persevered and was dedicated to her long-term goals.

Rashida also emphasised a drive to learn and achieve something, but it seemed she was less certain on what this would be; "I'm this kind of person who always needs something to go on. I always want something to do. Maybe learn or do something" (1148-1151). Rashida implied a sense of being ambitious through being proactive in the UK as opposed to being passive. However, unlike the other participants, Rashida seemed uncertain and confused about how to action her plans. Her phrasing "maybe learn" implies education was one of the options she was considering.

Contrary to the other participants, Erum described being ambitious in the UK and working hard because she believed her success would challenge the public (perceived) negative conception of her:

I spend all the summer holiday with my house with laptop and books and I am learning. Just learning. Nothing else. No sleeping, no eating, no speaking with anyone else because I want to prove to them [British public] that I am not a homeless. I am not useless. (442-446)

It seemed that Erum believed mainstream society had a negative perception of her which she could challenge through hard work and success. Thus, there was a sense that educational success may prove her worth to the public. This appeared to motivate her, leading her to make many sacrifices in order to stay focused and accomplish her goals.

Unlike Masim, Sarim seemed to suggest that he had no option but to work hard and engage in the opportunities available to him:

the home office will just kick you out after they give you the paper [residency permit].. after they give you paper.. they tell you to go. No money, no insurance number, no house and you have to apply to insurance number... then when you get your paper, you have to apply to get a house and also takes time or you have to go and start learning English or to find work and sometimes it's hard to find work if you don't speak English – so it's a very depressing time. (1627-1639)

He reported being “kicked out” by the Home Office without basic necessities, which appeared to suggest he felt abandoned, isolated, unwelcomed and unsupported by the Home Office once they issued him refugee status. He had to subsequently find his way and it seems that he found this process overwhelming because he had to obtain multiple necessities (e.g., work, education, home). His tone of voice during our interview was cold and disapproving, which indicated he felt annoyed and angry but his lack of personification in the extract indicates that he felt uncomfortable owning his narrative, possibly because he felt guilty to criticise the Home Office.

#### ***4.3.2. Subordinate Theme: Social identity: Perceived Stereotypes Towards Oneself***

All of the participants believed that the British public had a negative perception of their identity and that they were subsequently vulnerable to criticism and rejection in the UK. Some of the participants, such as Tahib, appeared to anticipate hostility and judgment from the British public whilst others, such as Masim and Rashida, had encountered actual experiences which made them believe members of the public treated them unfairly. These experiences had an emotional and behavioural impact as the participants reported feeling angry, frustrated and withdrew from the society.

Masim shared how he was explicitly labeled as coming from a 'crazy culture':

I have another friend.. he asks me about Syrian culture.. erm, to explain to him. I explain to him about Syrian culture, but he doesn't understand ... he said.. "my friend, that is crazy culture". I told him.. "that's your opinion, I am not going to tell you anything". I am not going to tell him anything That's why I am saying sorry I can't talk to you.. I have no idea about Syrian culture. (1092-1113)

It seemed that Masim was offended and upset by his friend's comment because he withdrew from the interaction and has since chosen to minimise his contact with this particular friend. Masim may have possibly believed his friend considered his Syrian cultural identity to be strange and abnormal, leading Masim to become behaviourally distant. Overall, this narrative suggests that perceived stereotypes can have negative social consequences and contribute to isolation.

Tahib anticipated that the British public would consider him to be socially inappropriate:

if I want to ask anything like for example.. like the LGBT, I would not ask someone who is not very close to me because they would start to judge me. "Ok you should not ask



that blah blah..” OK! But I am not aware, I am not from this culture so... please (laughs) stop. So I would ask my close friends who cannot lecture me on every question. (364- 373)

He appears to believe that the UK is characterised by particular cultural codes, which he is not familiar with; and as such he may ask questions which may lead the British public consider him inappropriate. However, Tahib seems to consider the British public as being harsh and unfair towards him because they do not consider that he is “not from this culture”. This explanation is powerful because it seems that he believes he has a valid reason as to why he might break social codes; yet the British public do not probe further and make sweeping negative judgments.

Sarim appeared to believe that the British public associated his Syrian cultural identity with notions of fragility and vulnerability:

Syrians are suffering and don't touch them because they are broken like glass... so you can feel like... why are you treating us like this? we are stronger than you. We suffer more than you, and we are here. We have more experience than you, so we are stronger than you. Stop treating us in bad way or kind of looking at us like we're vulnerable. (1748-1757)

He appeared to believe that the British public associate his Syrian cultural identity with notions of vulnerability and fragility, making them reluctant to interact with his community. Sarim's response to this perceived stereotype “why are you treating us like this” implies that he felt offended by such inferences and proceeded by challenging this perceived stereotype in quite a confrontational manner which indicated that he felt frustrated and angry. His repetitive use of 'you' versus 'we' felt like he was directing his frustration at me, suggesting he experienced me as a member of the public who belittled him.

Rashida felt she was specifically labelled a “refugee” in the UK and expressed discomfort with this term:

I kind of felt like I am the refugee who escaped the war and who was like not part of this community, but is the extra person who is trying to fit in but it's kind of more like ... you know the things that you hold on your shoulders. like the extra weight... I am the extra weight on this community. I am the useless person or something like that – this is how I use to feel when I came. (1536-1549)

Feeling like a refugee within the community appears to have had a negative impact on how Rashida viewed herself within her community, hindering her integration. For instance, she reported that that she felt like someone “you hold on your shoulders|” which seemed to suggest that she felt like burden to her community. Furthermore, she expressed “I am the useless person” which implies she felt hopeless and did not consider herself as an asset to her community. As a result, she talked about how she felt like she was “not part of this community... [and tried] to fit in” which suggested that she considered herself to be outlier and lacked belonging.

Erum similarly felt labelled a refugee and associated this term with negative inferences:

Syrian people like education – Syrian people not homeless. We are sometimes treated this way. But we had a house, we had work. We had a family- we are not homeless. In some countries people treat you this way. Like..oh you are refugee, that means you are homeless. We are not homeless. (356-361)

Erum seemed to dislike being classed as a “refugee” because she believed this term misled the public into perceiving her as someone who is homeless thus lacks belonging. However, unlike Rashida, Erum did not appear to have internalised negative conception as she reported, “we are not homeless”. She elaborated that Syrians had achieved many accomplishments in their country of birth, including having a home and job. This suggested

that she viewed herself, as a member of the Syrian community, as someone who was capable, hardworking, independent and successful.

Rabia on the hand felt she was labeled a refugee in the UK but seemed to suggest that this label had social advantages; “Now as a refugee- the government help us”. They gave us some support to get a house” (874-875). Rabia’s narrative is somewhat similar to Erum and Rashida’s. There is similarity in the sense that she also considered herself labelled as a refugee in the UK. However, unlike Erum and Rashida who associated this term with negative inferences, Rabia suggested that this label made her eligible for governmental support and facilitated her integration.

#### ***4.3.3. Subordinate Theme: Familial identity: from the useless to useful self***

5 of the participants spoke about family members they had left behind in Syria and discussed how they viewed themselves in relationship to their family back home (familial self). A close reading of transcripts revealed that the participants had different kinds of relationships with their families, which subsequently varied how they experienced the separation and their view of self in the UK. The experience captured by this theme isn't of familial identity itself, but of participant’s challenges in understanding their view of self in the UK in relation to their family.

Tahib appeared to described a incongruent sense of self in the UK because his parents in Syria were controlling and this was subsequently impinging his freedom and authenticity in the UK:

I am not living life the way I would like to live [in the UK] because.. they would not accept that (laughs). Yeah, no it’s erm, I’m only trying to go along with them.. to work with them.. not for me, but for my two little sisters. (478-482)

His lifestyle choices adhere to his parents' not his wishes, suggesting he felt unhappy and controlled by his parents in the UK. There is also a sense that he felt frustrated because he implied that he was sacrificing his happiness and adhering to his parents' expectations of him for the sake of his sisters. Overall, there is a sense that Tahib has become incongruent since moving to the UK because of his controlling parents in Syria.

Sarim seemed to suggest that his life in the UK has also hindered by his parents in Syria; "We have a family system there but also family is pushing you down.. they kill your motivation. So when people here... they still suffer from ..from the families there" (1893-1895). Sarim's phrase "push you down" suggests he potentially felt oppressed and discouraged when he lived with his parents in Syria. It seems that this experience has had a permanent psychological effect on him and has hindered his quality life in the UK as he reported "*people here.. they still suffer*"; suggesting a permanent mark. However, Sarim's lack of personification in this extract suggests that he felt uncomfortable owning his experience, possibly because he felt depicting his own parents in a negative light is culturally-taboo and condemned within his culture.

Masim provided a contradictory account. He described a positive relationship with his family and shared how the economic opportunities available to him in the UK enabled him to provide for his family in Syria; "In England, I have many options to support my family than in Syria. I can help build them a better life. I work, send them money.. I like this point" (480-483). There is a sense that being in the UK has facilitated a positive change in his self-construal because he implied that there were limited financial opportunities in Syria, meaning he could not support his family; but in the UK, he had many options and was working, therefore could financially support and care for his family's needs. One can therefore imagine that Masim felt more useful for his family. Sarim also mentioned that he liked this aspect of being in the UK and conveyed joy through his elated tone of voice.

Erum also reported a positive relationship with her family in Syria but felt she could not adequately support her family from the UK; “I can’t do anything for them. I just listen to their problems on the phone. I can’t do anything. Sometimes advice is suitable for some things but we need something more. Like resolve in an action way” (809-813). She appears to express a negative view of herself in relation to her family in Syria because she considered supporting them in the sense of being physically by their side and intervening in practical ways. Thus, there is a sense she believed her support from the UK was not good enough and she felt useless being in the UK: “I cannot do anything for them”. This narrative runs in contrary to Masim’s who felt he was supportive towards his family in Syria from the UK.

Rashida reported she had positive relationship with her family in Syria and reported feeling lonely without her family’s presence in the UK:

Half of me really wanted to go back because it felt so strange here. I mean like London is diverse.. lots of people from different backgrounds, but still you feel isolated kind of. So I sometimes say I want to go back...at least I know the country (Syria), I know the people, I had friends, I had family over there. (1267-1269)

Rashida’s narrative implies she was mentally conflicted in terms of her belonging because she stated positive aspects of being in the UK (e.g. diversity) but also that she felt lonely without her family and friends in the UK. It seems that she was not used to being alone and felt strange without her family and friends.

Rabia was the only participant who lived in the UK with her mother; and shared how mother had consistently supported her:

I was crying all the time... when I go I was still crying. I told my mum, “what I did for myself, how i did the application for A-levels and now I can’t understand anything. How will I pass’. And she said ‘be patient- you will be. You are intelligent, you are smart’- ‘be patient’. (802-807)

Rabia's description implies that her mother had been there for her when she felt hopeless and frustrated by her academic journey. Thus, one can imagine that Rabia felt supported by her mother. There is also a sense that Rabia's mother thought highly of her daughter. One can therefore imagine that Rabia perhaps felt comforted and reassured through her mother's positive, affirmative statements.

#### **4.4. Superordinate Theme: The Search for Belonging: Facets of a Home**

All participants were involved in a search for home and belonging. A home determined belonging; however a home was a multifaceted phenomenon. Home was place where the participants felt accepted and supported. Moreover, it was a place that provided opportunities for self-development. Finding showed that the participants struggled to locate their home because neither their former home in Syria or current homes in UK met their definition of a home.

##### ***4.4.1 Subordinate Theme: A Place That Accepts Oneself***

The participants considered a home to be a place where they felt others understood and accepted their identity and personal wishes. It seemed that home was a place that allowed them to be comfortable with who they were without experiencing or fearing negative judgment and discrimination from others. All six participants reported experiences of actual or perceived rejection in the UK.

Masim described feeling unwanted by the British community:

I feel upset as well when other nationalities ask me "why Arab countries does not accept Syrian people?". Why are you coming to Europe?" I find this question, many people ask me this question. "Why are you coming to England? Why doesn't you choose Arab country like Saudi or Lebanon?" (1113-1121)

He recalled some of the many questions people from diverse ethnic groups in the UK posed to him and reported he felt “upset” by such questions. It is possible that he felt upset by these questions because he believed his decision to come to the UK was being scrutinised. Certainly the latter two questions imply that his decision to come to the UK was odd given he could have sought refuge in Syria’s neighbouring countries. Masim could therefore believe ethnic minority groups were insinuating he did not belong in the UK, leading him to become upset.

Rashida described feeling rejected and punished as soon as she landed in the UK:

He said [border control officer] like “erm... who are you coming to see” and I said “my husband is here – he is a refugee and we have we have this family visa so we’re coming here”. And he said “does he have phone number can we call him because we need to check where you are going to stay”. “We this like proof, it’s all legal paperwork, why are you doing this!’ Why are you taking so long.” (976-984)

She implied that the immigration officers had their concerns about her stay conducted necessary checks. However, it appears that Rashida felt that they treated her with suspicion as she recalled questioning the officers “why are you doing this?”. This narrative implies that she felt she was being punished and discriminated against which caused her to feel distressed.

Erum described feeling rejected and discriminated by her teacher on the grounds of her ethnicity and religion:

I am a dressed woman.. I am a Muslim woman. I am Arabic woman – sometimes it’s happened ... because.. student in the same case (same appearance), when the teacher ask a question, he avoid them, and give chance to another. I don’t like to speak in this way. (528-539)

She indicated that her teacher rejected and discriminated against her because he disapproved aspects of her identity, specifically her visible marker of faith (wearing the

hijab) and ethnicity. It seems she concluded her identity was the cause of discrimination following her observation of how the teacher treated other students from similar backgrounds. Erum reported, “I don’t like to speak this way” which indicated she felt uncomfortable disclosing her negative perspective of the teacher. However, she also revisited this experience multiple times, which indicated it was a pressing concern and she wanted to be heard; “That is why I am sad about the teacher. Its since last year, I remember these things” (1061-1062).

Tahib felt he had to be politically correct in the UK to avoid public criticism:

I realised last year that everything is about being politically correct. Like, if I want to ask anything like for example.. like the LGBT, I would not ask someone who is not very close to me because they would start to judge me. (364-368)

He reported that he had to be “politically correct” in the UK, which implies he believed he had to restrict his verbal speech to be accepted and perceived as socially appropriate by the people he met. Being cautious about language selection implies that he was metaphorically *walking on eggshells* around the British public and thus was not comfortable to be himself.

Sarim appeared to believe that his geographical community had a negative stereotype of him:

they think Syrians suffer from war that... we cannot talk with them about war because they are half crazy.... No! (laughs) people... they understand, talk with them about any subject... I mean 95% of people don’t mind to answer these questions.(1739-1744)

It seems he believed the British public have a negative stereotype of his social identity, preconceiving him as “crazy”. But Sarim’s response suggests that this stereotype does not reflect how he understood his social identity and rejected it. His narrative also



indicates that the British public are afraid to interact with Syrians because of their preconceptions and appears to call for more engagement with Syrians “talk with them”.

In contrary to the other participants, Rabia implied that she felt accepted through the medical support and care offered to her, “But if there is anything dangerous in your life, they do it straight away. They care about your life” (943-945). There was sense that she felt accepted and cared for in the UK through the medical support available to her. She appeared to believe that doctors would treat her immediately if they spotted something concerning which may indicate that she felt equal to other citizens and treated fairly. But later on she reported “even after everything that this country gives me, but I don’t want to die here” (994-995). Whilst she seemed to recognise the support she had received in the UK, the latter extract suggests feeling cared for was not enough, indicating a home has many facets. Her wish to die elsewhere but the UK implied that the UK lacks other facets of a home which were perhaps more important for her and as such she did not see herself as belonging to the UK.

#### ***4.4.2. Subordinate Theme: A Place That Provides Opportunities***

The participants also considered a home to be a place, which provided them with opportunities for personal and professional development. All of the participants seemed to believe that the UK offered more opportunities for self-development in comparison to Syria. However, they had different experiences of the opportunities available to them in the UK which varied how they felt about the UK.

Rabia felt the education system in the UK provided her with more chances to fulfill her goals:

It doesn’t close the way in your face. It doesn’t close the way. If you didn’t pass like in a-levels, you can do it again. It has so many options but in my country we don’t have these

options. If you didn't get a high mark, you can't go university at all. But this country... I like it. (864-873)

She reported that, unlike Syria, the UK is a place that opens doors to opportunities. This narrative implies that she believed she had more chances to fulfill her dreams and accomplish her academic goals in the UK than when she lived in Syria. It seems that she favoured the UK over to Syria in this aspect.

Erum also discussed the education system in the UK, but she felt she was treated unfairly and discriminated by her teacher:

when I was in class..I make very strong sentences because I practice.. practice, but the teacher not guide me, just to act with me in bad way. And is, it makes me very sad. In front of my colleagues, he told me that – told me that “you need more time, you are not ready.” (468-473)

It appears she felt disappointed when she was on the course as she perceived the teacher to undermine her capabilities in front of her peers. She expressed that she disapproved of her teacher's style of communication and it is possible she felt humiliated and discouraged when her teacher exposed her flaws in front of others students.

Masim seemed to believe that his life was easier in the UK because Britain offered more financial opportunities than Syria:

it is easier than Syria. You can for example, house and benefit going to support you if you doesn't work – In Syria no! Or if you are going to be 18, you can have work, or a job - you can support yourself or you can study; or you can do many things here. You have many choices.. just build your plan for the future and choose the way you are going to get yourself. (715-721)

He similarly compared the UK to Syria and reported that that life was easier in Britain compared to his former life in Syria. It seems that he considered life to easier because the UK

offers more opportunities for personal and professional development. One can therefore imagine that Masim felt more hopeful and optimistic about his future in the UK compared to when he lived in Syria.

However, Rashida described feeling pressurised to engage in financial opportunities by authorities:

even the universal credit that we are in, they started to tell me "you need to find a job, you need to work – here everyone works, so you need to work" but back in Syria, our culture... the mother takes care of the children and stay at home and if she wants to work – she can work but as well as she is taking care of the house but she was not forced to work.

(1668-1680)

It appeared Rashida experienced societal pressure to find employment in the UK and this was an uncomfortable experience for her because it hindered her role as a mother. Moreover, she stated that in Syria, women were not "forced to work". This language appeared to suggest that she experienced more freedom in Syria because she was not coerced into employment in Syria.

#### ***4.4.3. Subordinate Theme: A Place Where One Feels Supported***

Finally, the participants seemed to consider a home to be a place where they felt socially 'supported'. It seems that 'support' was a multilayered phenomenon. Participants emphasised the need to be situated in a place where they felt society supported their ambitions and identity. As such they highlighted and reflected on different kinds of social support

Masim implied that he felt supported in the UK through the economic opportunities available to him:

In England, I have many options to support my family than in Syria. I can help build them a better life, i like that point. I can study safety, in Syria I cannot. In Syria it is not safe. Other things, I can work here. I can find many choices for my life here. I can find many ways. But if I was Syria- no! (480-486)

His description of the UK as a country that offers him “many choices” implied he now finds himself in a society with greater possibilities, enabling him to provide for his family and self-develop. His phrasing “I like this point“ implied a positive emotional response to being in the UK. It can be inferred that Masim possibly felt hopeful for the future in the UK as it seemed to be a place that provided him with chances to become self-sufficient and accomplish his goals.

Rabia also emphasised the structural opportunities in the UK and implied that she felt supported in Britain through the financial help she received:

if you are not working, they give you money until be fine and find your job. You can get some money to live, but in my country they don't have that. They don't have this – the job center – I know it's annoying to go and sign every two weeks, but they still help. They still give you a hand at least. But in my country – no. (899-912)

She stated that she has been offered more support in the UK compared to Syria and subsequently felt more “cared” for in the UK compared to her former home. However, there is also a sense that she was not fully satisfied with the support she had received in the UK because she implied it came with certain terms and conditions (e.g. signing at the job center) which she described as “annoying”.

Rashida similarly emphasised the institutional support in the UK, however it seemed she felt this support came with “pressure”:

this pressure.. . it's too much. It really drove me crazy. It made me sit in front of my laptop for four hours, just searching online for jobs- for pointless reasons...for getting

money, which I am already getting from my husband. I don't need this stress to be on me. I definitely prefer my old life because in my old life, I had all the time to study by myself... to work if I want to or not, to visit my family to have my connections, my friends and everything without this pressure. (1689-1698)

Her use of phrase "it made me" appears to suggest that she felt forced and coerced to engage with meaningless tasks in order to receive support in the UK. This is similar to Rabia's experience of institutional support. However, Rashida was more explicit in her dissatisfaction than Rabia and conveyed more annoyance in her tone of voice. Moreover, she described a strong preference for her former home in Syria and it seemed this was because she believed she had more freedom and control over her life in her former home.

Sarim provided a contradictory account to the above participants, as he described feeling institutionally neglected by the Home Office, which led him to feel isolated and marginalized:

Lets' say the home office gave him a house here in the street. Like he cannot make friends. He cannot knock on people's door to meet people. Nobody will talk to him in the streets and also if he goes... for example... to buy from Morrison's or from any place... he cannot talk to people. Just kind of give and take... give and take... that's it. No relationship with people. (1418-1426)

There is a sense that Sarim experienced the support to be inadequate because whilst the Home Office offered him a house; they did not assist him with his social integration in the community. As such, he implied he felt isolated in the UK because he did not have any opportunity to build social networks and subsequently had "no relationship with people". Sarim's use of possessive pronouns (him, he) suggested that he felt uncomfortable owning his experience. He might have felt guilty criticising the home office considering they provided Sarim with his residency permit.

Tahib on the other hand seemed to suggest that he felt existentially supported in the UK because it allowed him to embrace his authentic self:

I was feeling I was being seen by family and they will judge me, but here there is no-one to judge me. (717-719).. so I don't know if I was willing to go back to Syria or not because I.. yeah I am still looking to live the way I would like to do. (609-611)

He implied that he has more liberty to embrace his authentic self in the UK compared to when he lived in Syria where he seems to have felt judged by others. However, it seemed Tahib was uncertain on where he envisioned his future. He seemed to prefer the UK on the grounds that no-one would judge his lifestyle choices. However, he did not rule out returning to Syria either. This process indicated he felt confused about his belongingness.

#### **4.5. Superordinate Theme: Means of coping**

The participants described three main coping methods in the UK: (1) faith-based coping methods, (2) avoidance and (3) social support. Faith-based coping methods included different beliefs about God, which provided participants with comfort and reassurance at times when they felt lonely, frustrated and overwhelmed. Avoidance included various behavioural and cognitive strategies, which participants implemented for the purpose of distracting them from unwanted unpleasant thoughts and emotions. Finally, the participants sought support from others, such as friends, family and members of their local community to cope with their concerns.

##### ***4.5.1. Subordinate Theme: Ambiguity of Islam: a source of hope and isolation.***

Three of the participants (Rabia, Rashida and Erum) described a strong and positive relationship with Islam and had implemented faith-based coping methods to cope with unpleasant emotions and memories in the UK. However, the remaining three participants

(Masim, Sarim and Tahib) had a negative relationship with Islam. Their narratives implied they considered Islam to restrict their life in different ways and in light of these negative inferences and they either struggled to practice faith-based coping methods or did not mention them at all.

Erum was among the participants who had strong faith in Islam and reported communicating to her God and feeling comforted through the notion that her God was watching over her:

if I have any problem, I just pray and speak to my god. (922-926).. I believe that my god observe me all the time and give me the best. And erm.. how I explain this.. we have in Qu'ran, a sentence that tells us prophet Abraham – that is our gods name, “you are in our eyes”. I remember this. (580-584)

Erum began by suggesting that she confided her problems to God, which implied she has spiritual relationship with her God and trusted God would direct her in a way that serves her best interests. She recited a verse from the Qur'an, which seems to be meaningful for her: “I remember this”. The verse she mentioned implies that God was watching over her. Thus, one can imagine that verse helped Erum by reassuring she was not alone.

Rashida similarly implied that religion helped her emotionally and cognitively:

The only thing that kept my sanity this entire time, these entire years was my beliefs – because I believe that everything will be better soon- inshallah. I am a Muslim, so I have this kind of positive attitude to life. (1294-1299)

It seems that religion had helped her by leading her to adopt certain hopeful beliefs. This is somewhat similar to Erum and her relationship with faith because she also implied being comforted through religious beliefs. However, Rashida added a new dimension to faith-based coping methods by later suggesting her religion has informed her psychological make-up for the better: “I am a Muslim, so I have this kind of positive attitude to life” (add

line numbers). This segment implies that religion had helped her by inspiring her to adopt a positive, optimistic mind-set. She reported that this was the only coping strategy that kept her “sanity”, suggesting she believed this method to be the most effective coping method for her. However, later on in the interview she implied that this method was not always effective; “It’s just like although I have to be positive, and think about good things, things around you doesn’t seem good” (1303-1311).

Rabia appeared to believe that her God intervened and helped her in more structural ways by giving her the opportunity to study; “I know that you were so angry because I rejected you’. I told her ‘yes’, but now ‘God helped me, and now I can do the A-levels, even that my English is not good enough” (745-749). Her narrative suggests she believed God is more powerful than human beings because she implied God allowed her to get onto the course despite her teacher’s refusal. There is also a sense that she believed God rescued her, as there is a sense that he intervened and metaphorically re-opened doors her teacher had shut, providing a path to accomplish her goals.

Unlike the participants who expressed a positive relationship with religion, Sarim reported a more conflicting relationship with faith:

Even from religious leaders- we suffer from them. That’s why nobody now Syrian don’t pray. Even if we believe in God and we believe Islam is the right way for us, but nobody pray because we hate our teachers, we hate our religious leaders. (1923-1927)

Sarim’s narrative suggests that he had faith in God and Islam but had become resentful of religious leaders. His vocabulary indicates he had particularly strong views on his religious leaders as he reported, “we suffer from them”, which suggests he was unhappy with who taught him Islam. It seems that his negative experience of religious leaders has somewhat hindered his relationship with faith because although he mentioned he still



believed in Islam he did not follow its associated practises such as praying, which Erum considered as a helpful coping method.

Tahib also provided a conflicting relationship with his faith. Unlike, Sarim, he implied that he could speak to his religious figures about his problems but not his parents because of their interpretation of Islam:

I can discuss with any religious man if there is something wrong. I can go to them for further discussions but with my family, I am afraid if I was discussing them with a religious thing they would think that “ok I am not religious now”, they would cut relations with me. (639-648)

His narrative seemed to suggest that he experienced religious leaders to be less judgmental than his parents and was more comfortable seeking their advice than seeking support from his parents. It seems that he believed his parents would judge his narrative according to their interpretation of the Qur’an and would potentially disown him: “they would cut relations with me”. This was an interesting account of faith because the initial sentences imply that he has been supported and felt comfortable seeking advice from religious leaders, but the latter segment implies that faith had hindered his bond with his parents because their opinion of him was based on what the Qur’an deems appropriate. Tahib reference to “they would cut relations with me” also implies that Islam can lead him to become isolated. This runs contrary to Erum whose reference to Allah watching over her implied a sense of Islam helping her combat isolation.

Masim also described negative feelings towards religion, indicating it teaches hate and intolerance more than healing; “For example, if I want to sit in Syria and if you are Shia, I am going to hate you or you going to hate me” (106-111). Masim reflected on public conduct in Syria and implied he was not fond of religion because it controls how people feel about people who practice different interpretations of Islam and divides society. Masim’s

account suggests that religion segregates and isolates people and this is similar to Tahib experience of religion in the sense that his narrative implied that his parents can disown thus isolate him because of their interpretation of Islam. Overall, Masim's experience and perspective on religion is in contrary to Erum, Rashida and Rabia's who associated religion with notions of giving them hope, support and healing.

#### ***4.5.2. Subordinate Theme: Seeking comfort through the familiar, supportive and proactive other***

All of the participants shared how they relied on others to help them cope with their difficulties in the UK. A close examination of the extracts in this theme suggests the kinds of qualities the participants valued in the other. For three of the participants, (Rabia, Erum and Masim) there was a sense that they found support from someone who was familiar to them in some sense to be helpful. For Rabia, it seemed that someone who is familiar to her can be trusted:

I am the type of person that doesn't listen... I listen to people, so it's ok... I take their... I keep their decision in my mind but the final decision will be to my mum. So they... I don't care about their decision. I listen to them, its ok. I discuss something with them but if their decision is not like hers... I can't take it. (1089-1095)

Her extract suggests that she was open to receiving advice from others and kept it in mind but ultimately listened to and followed her mother's advice. Rabia's compliance with her mother's advice could be interpreted in different ways. One could suggest that she perhaps felt pressure to adhere to her mother's advice. However, she spoke about her mother in positive terms, which suggests her compliance reflected their close bond and that she trusted her mother's advice; "My mum supporting me so much in life. And she still

supporting me” (818-820). This latter extract implies that she perhaps trusts her mother because she has been consistent and reliable figure.

Masim similarly seemed to emphasise the importance of seeking support from someone who felt familiar through his preference for people who shared a similar cultural background as him. It seemed that for Masim, the familiar other would understand him better:

someone who is from Iraq or someone who is Arabic ...they understand us. We are not going to talk with people..like English people. Or Jamaican people or another one that is not from our culture. Because you know, some of middle east are similar culture.. yeah we going to talk to people who understands us. We are not going to talk to other people who doesn't understand anything about our culture. (1774-1182)

Masim suggested that he preferred to seek support from Middle-Eastern Arab people in the UK because he believed people from this region share a similar culture. Masim seemed to believe that someone who shares a similar cultural background as him would understand his concerns better than individuals from other backgrounds.

Tahib similarly seemed to suggest a preference for support in someone who felt familiar. For Tahib there was a sense that someone who was close to him, would not judge him:

I feel like I am little bit embarrassed if I asked something silly, so sometimes I avoid asking random people. I would go to my close friends to ask them which I don't have any the beginning but after that I had some close friends. (357-358)

It seemed Tahib was afraid of making mistakes and being judged by others because he reported that he was afraid of “asking something silly”. This language indicates he had a negative view on the kind of questions he would ask, increasing the risk that people would also view him negatively. It seemed he has coped with this perceived fear of judgment by

seeking information from his “close friends” whom he perhaps believed were less likely to judge him.

Erum also seemed to convey a preference for someone who felt familiar through her preference for someone who shared a similar experience to her. Her narrative seemed to suggest that someone who is familiar through shared experience comforts her by normalising her experience:

sometimes when I feel very nervous and somebody tell me the same experience, “this has happened to me, its ok... calm down and be careful”. It’s make me more relaxed and I find myself this as a solution.

Researcher: normalising your experience is helpful?

Erum: yes! That I am not a stranger on this world and other people have this problem.

(997-1010)

She implied that people who have shared the same personal experience as her had helped her cope with her personal challenges. It seemed that having conversations with people who have encountered similar problems was helpful because it normalised her experience and reassured her that she was not alone.

Rashida provided a slightly different account from the other participants above as she suggested that she did not a preference for someone who felt familiar. Her experience of social support from a staff member at her local citizens advice bureau appeared to imply that a supportive other through affirmations helped her accept herself:

I wasn’t even proud of my life or my story or the way... the things I went through but after thinking about it and starting to talk to people as I told you like this lady ‘Naomi’ – she was like ”wow, amazing, you have done a wonderful thing and you keep asking for help and things like that...” and I started to ...”well yes, I think this is my life and I am proud of it” – I don’t care if you don’t like it or not as a person whoever I was talking to’... this is what I

have accomplished... all of these are my accomplishments. I went through all these things by myself and I made it to the finish line. (1554-1605)

Her phrasing “I wasn’t even proud” indicated that she initially felt ashamed of her identity and story when she arrived in the UK. But it seemed that the relationship she had with herself changed through the positive affirmations she received from Naomi (staff member). Towards the end of the extract, she stated “well yes...this is my life”, which implied that she came to accept her identity and owned her story irrespective of what the public might think of her. She also noted “I made it to the finish line” which was interesting because this remark is usually made when an individual accomplishes a challenging task. This remark could therefore suggest that Rashida felt proud of how far she had come.

Sarim was similar to Rashida in the sense that he did not express a preference for support in a familiar other. However, he implied that being in the physical presence of acquaintances was useful because a proactive other kept him distracted from unpleasant thoughts:

I was trying not to be myself, even though at that time, I want sometimes to be myself. I hang out with people and I don’t like them... I just don’t want to be myself. Sometimes... I don’t know, I think... I made a mistake. I have to, not to be with people always not feel down. I had to give myself time but sometimes it’s hard to give yourself time because you are thinking a lot. At least when you are with people you forget. (1647-1655)

He expressed discomfort with his internal thoughts and coped with them by keeping himself busy. Unlike Tahib and Rabia who had sought support from close friends and family, Sarim was comfortable being in the company of anyone so long as they kept him mentally engaged. However, it seems that he doubted the efficacy of this coping method as he acknowledged that keeping himself constantly busy was a “mistake”.

#### ***4.5.3. Subordinate Theme: Avoiding aspects of the unwanted self***

The extracts in this theme show that the participants were keen to disconnect from painful memories and uncomfortable emotions as this appeared to have a negative impact on their wellbeing and integration. They subsequently engaged in some kind of avoidance as means of coping with unwanted aspects of the self. The extracts below show that Erum, Rabia, Tahib, Sarim and Rashida engaged in behavioural avoidance through pursuing self-development and socializing with friends. Masim on the other hand appeared to describe cognitive avoidance.

Erum appeared to imply that focusing on self-development was strategy to avoid loneliness. “because I am working on myself but when I have free time, I feel lonely” (1047-1050). Her narrative implies that she felt uncomfortable when she had “free time” because she felt lonely during these times. She therefore focused on self-development and kept herself busy. It appears she considered this coping method useful because it kept her mentally engaged and protected her from connecting with difficult feelings.

Rabia similarly seemed to suggest that she focused on self-development as a coping method to avoid connecting from painful past; “when I came here I started ESOL. I didn’t like stop, because I still wanted to go to university even with everything that had happened - I didn’t want to focus on that. I wanted to go to uni” (700-703). It appears she had focused on self-development to keep herself mentally engaged and distracted from past memories and events. Her choice of phrasing “even with everything” suggests that she has encountered and carried a heavy mental burden; thus, it is possible she felt she could become overwhelmed if she were to connect and unpack this enormous heavy burden.

Tahib engaged in socialising to avoid feeling stressed in the UK:

I realised that the more I was.. the more socialable I get, the more I was with friends... meeting new people, doing more activities ... it was .. the less stressful I get.

Especially because of this. The more alone... the more overthinking i will do in this kind of thinking. (1004-1009)

His phrase "I realised" at the beginning of the extract indicates that he had come to acknowledge that being around others was helpful coping method for him. He expressed that being in the company of others and keeping busy through meeting new people and engaging in activities eased him from his unpleasant thoughts and affective states. This implies that being alone was perhaps unpleasant for Tahib, which was similar to Erum's experience.

In a similar vein to Tahib, Sarim engaged with friends to avoid painful memories:  
my friends most of them English, and they like you know, wherever they go... they want go club or pub or to do a party... it's.. I don't like this atmosphere.. it makes me.. arghh!  
But I go there because I don't want to be by myself.. at least I will talk to people. (1655-1662)

He described adhering to his friends' wishes and partaking in activities, which he found unpleasant, such as clubbing and going to the pub, to prevent being alone. His exclamation "argh" in reference to his experience of clubbing appeared to also suggest that he felt frustrated and unsettled in this kind of environment; but it seemed that this was still more comforting than being alone and isolated. Sarim's experience of being dependent on others for mental and emotional stability is similar to Tahib's experience of being reliant on others to keep himself distracted from his personal processes.

In contrary to the participants above, Masim appeared to express a desire to avoid distressing thoughts through cognitive/mental means as opposed to behavioural means:

I want to be in this life.. to think about anything normal because if I think about the dark side, I am not going to be happy. I am never going to be happy. I will just sit in the corner and think, think think. It makes me sad.. yes because I know I cannot do anything. I can't do anything, and if I still think.. it makes me angry.. it makes me upset.. it makes me

sad. But I can't do anything. I want to choose the right side...because I want to carry on with my life as well. (968-976)

Masim described engaging in mental avoidance as opposed to behavioural avoidance to cope with unpleasant thought and affective states. He placed emphasis on staying present and focusing on the future as opposed to the past. It seemed that he considered focusing on the past unhelpful because "he cannot do anything", indicating he felt helpless and could not rewrite history. Moreover, there is a sense that if he focused on the past, it would only lead him to experience negative emotions and rob him of his happiness, as he shared "I am never going to be happy".

Rashida provided a contradictory account. Unlike the other participants who wanted to avoid their distressing thoughts and uncomfortable emotions, Rashida wanted to express her process but did not have social support in the UK:

I just told her [mother in Syria] that 'yeah we are here...we are happy.. we are fine.... everything is good'. So you can't just tell her that we're miserable here, we're not happy ...I didn't want to add sadness to her heart and tell her about the bad things. But I needed a friend or someone who was so close to me, who I could talk to, speak to about my feelings. (1243-1249)

Rashida reported concealing information from her mother. However, it seems she felt conflicted towards concealing information from her mother as on the one hand, she recognised that this decision protected her mothers' wellbeing; but on the other hand, she seemed to recognise that her emotional needs went unmet, leading to her feeling lonely and isolated in the UK.



## Chapter 5: Discussion

### 5.1. Overview

The main findings will be summarised and situated within the existing literature in this final chapter. Then the findings' implications for the professional policy and practice of counselling psychology will be discussed. The study will then be critically evaluated according to Yardley's (2000) quality criteria. Finally, the strengths and limitations of the study and recommendations for future research will be highlighted.

### 5.2. Summary of Main Findings

The current study was informed by two objectives. Its first objective was to identify and understand the meaning Syrians give to their concerns. The findings in response to this objective suggest that the participants had three concerns in the UK. Their first concern related to the challenges they experienced adjusting to the UK. This process was informed by 1) "the cultural shock is multidimensional", 2) self-development as a necessity but a challenging experience, 3) lost in communication, and 4) strained family dynamics.

Their second concern related to tensions with their identities and self-construal's in the UK, which included 1) the individual identity, 2) the social identity, and 3) the familial identity. The *individual identity* refers to how they viewed themselves in the UK; the social identity refers to how the participants felt the British public viewed them; and the familial self reflects how the participants viewed themselves in relation to family they had left behind in Syria.

The participants' third and final concern in the UK related to their ongoing search for home and belonging. Participants defined home to be a place where they felt supported, accepted, and had opportunities for personal and professional development. The participants

felt the UK met some of these aspects of a home but lacked others, which suggested an ambivalent sense of belonging.

The second objective of the current study was to understand how Syrians coped with their experiences. The findings in response to this objective suggest that the participants discussed three coping methods while in the UK. The first coping method '*Ambiguity of Islam: a source of hope and isolation*' shows a great deal of divergence among participants and the role of faith. The second coping method, 'Seeking comfort through the familiar, supportive and proactive other', reflect the kinds of qualities participants sought in others. Finally, the third and final coping method, 'avoiding aspects of the unwanted self' reflects a variety of strategies participants used to disconnect from various painful memories and affect.

### **5.3. Contextualising Main Research Findings Within the Literature**

Four superordinate themes emerged through the analysis: *Thrown in the deep end: the initial changes and challenges of being in the UK*, *Tensions with identity and self-construal's in the UK*, *The ongoing search for belonging: facets of a home*, and *Means of coping*. Each of these will be discussed below.

#### ***5.3.1. Superordinate Theme 1: Thrown in the Deep End: The Initial Changes and Challenges of being in the UK***

This first theme reflects the participants' initial experience of the UK, which was characterised by difficulties navigating their new surroundings, communicating in a different language, continuing professional development, and coming to terms with disrupted family dynamics. The findings from this theme make two unique contributions to the existing literature. The first relates to ways in which scholars conceptualise resettlement. The participants in this study shared how they did not have any prior experience or knowledge of the UK and experienced Britain as a new and culturally unfamiliar country. They implied

feeling disorientated and confused through their experiences of being lost in different contexts. These findings speak to the existing literature on ‘culture shock’, which is otherwise known as acculturative stress (Abdualla, 2020; Aldiabat et al, 2021; El Hout, 2019; Yilmaz-Zambak, 2021). Culture shock is generally defined as a sense of confusion and uncertainty when one relocates to a new and unfamiliar environment without adequate preparation (El Hout, 2019). However, of interest, the current findings highlight that some participants reported having positive as well as negative affect in response to their new surroundings. Masim, for instance, shared how he could not communicate with others in English and was separated from his family in Syria, which seemed to suggest that he felt isolated, and lonely in the UK. However, by the same token, he emphasised giving himself “time to build” which implied he was patient and hopeful for the future in the UK rather than homesick (Kozikoglu & Aslan, 2018; Rekhis & Popenoe, 2018). Previous studies have not found this multi-dimensional nature of culture shock. El Hout (2019), for instance, interviewed Syrian migrants and concluded that culture shock is associated with negative psychological processes. A possible explanation for these differences in findings could be that El Hout (2019) conceptualised culture shock as a negative phenomenon linked to “worry, fear, anxiety and depression” (p.15). Hout (2019) subsequently asked participants if they had any feelings of distress, anxiety and homesickness since their arrival; and if their symptoms improved or worsened. Given these open-ended questions are specifically concerned with Syrians’ experience of distress in their new environment, the yielded findings would have only gone as far as reiterating El Hout’s (2019) preconception of culture shock as a negative phenomenon. The current study did not constrain the participants in the same way and it seemed from their positive and negative emotions in relation to their new-environment that culture shock is a multi-dimensional rather than a one-dimensional phenomenon. The notion that culture shock is a multifaceted phenomenon suggests future research needs to refrain

from conceptualising culture shock as a negative one-dimensional phenomenon; such preconception is simplistic and can prevent Syrians from voicing the complexity and enormousness of their resettlement in the new country.

The findings also highlight the different ways in which researchers conceptualise family separation. All of the participants had been separated from their relatives and family members in Syria. This finding is not new as there is a plethora of research exploring family separation among Syrian migrants (Tinghog et al, 2017; Cantekin, 2018). However, what is unique and surprising about the current findings, is that participants had different kinds of relationships with their relatives in Syria and this relational dynamic affected how they experienced family separation. For example, some participants expressed a positive and strong bond with their relatives in Syria and subsequently yearned to be reunited with them. Other participants on the other hand described a strained relationship with his parents. This was particularly evident with Sarim who implied feeling controlled by his parents in Syria through the fact that he was “not allowed to do many things” when he lived with them in Syria. He subsequently enjoyed being separated from his family while in the UK as this allowed him to regain control and freedom. This finding makes a unique contribution to the literature because it refutes the notion that Syrians will struggle with their resettlement due to being “located at a great distance from relatives with whom they wish to connect” (Liempt & Staring, 2021, p.310). Moreover, this finding has implications for quantitative mental health research because it shows that family separation is not necessarily a stressor and sad reality (Tinghog et al., 2017). Thus, checklists which assume family separation can only correspond to feelings of sadness, do not capture the experiences of Syrians who have strained family dynamics and who might not experience family separation as such.

### ***5.3.2. Superordinate Theme 2: Tensions with Identity and Self-construal***

This second theme reflects the participants' identity and self-construal in the UK. Results show that the participants narrated three different identities in the UK. The first identity was in relation to how they perceived themselves in the UK (self-perception). The second identity was in relation to how they believed the British public perceived them, and the third identity was in relation to how they viewed themselves in the UK relative to their family in Syria (familial perception). Overall, these findings speak to the existing literature on migration and identity formation (Zeno 2017). According to Valentine and Sporton (2009) identity formation does not occur in a vacuum but is relational in nature, developed through one's interaction with others in and through different spaces. The current findings support this notion as the participants became aware of perceived stereotypes through their interaction with the British public. However, the findings contradict Haase et al.'s (2019) suggestion that perceived stereotypes affect Syrians' self-construal because whilst the participants in this study were aware of perceived stereotypes, they maintained a positive sense of self and rejected negative labels. For instance, Sarim appeared to believe that the British public associated Syrian identity with notions of vulnerability and fragility through his metaphorical language of being treated like a "broken glass". His other statement, "we are stronger than you", indicated he perceived himself to be resilient and rejected society's opinion. The current findings do however concur with those suggesting that perceived stereotype can hinder Syrians' integration (Balikci, 2020). For example, Tahib anticipated that the British public would "judge" him if they perceived his questions to be inappropriate and as such, he preferred seeking advice from close friends who "cannot lecture" him. These findings run contrary to Yılmaz Zambak's (2021) IPA study on Syrian migrants in Turkey, which highlighted that most participants portrayed their relations with local people as positive, describing Turkish people as helpful, friendly and welcoming. One possible reason for these differences in findings could be that Turkey is more culturally and religiously

similar to Syria (Adalı & Türkyılmaz, 2020) compared to the UK; and studies have shown that the greater cultural dissonance between home and host culture, the greater acculturative stress (Razzak, 2020).

The participants' relationship to being labeled a refugee is another interesting finding. Erum for instance, expressed discomfort being labeled a refugee in the UK because she believed people assumed she lacks belonging. Rashida similarly expressed discomfort with being classed as a refugee and implied that this hindered her self-construal and integration within the community: "I am the extra weight on this community. I am the useless person". These findings partially support those reported by Gissi (2019) who explored Syrians' perspectives of the term 'refugee' and found participants associated this term with negative inferences subsequently, preferring to distance themselves from this label. However, the current findings also show that the label refugee was not necessarily experienced negatively by all of the participants. Rabia, for instance, shared that being labeled a refugee enabled her to receive housing support, suggesting the refugee label facilitated her integration rather than hindering it. An explanation for these differences in findings could be Gissi's (2019) conceptualisation of the refugee term as "restrictive and detrimental to Syrians and their wellbeing" (p.2). This preconception may have led Gissi (2019) to overlook positive inferences given to the term. The current study on the other hand was committed to an IPA approach, which encourages researchers to bracket their preconceptions of the phenomenon under study and remain sensitive to convergences and divergences across data transcripts. This approach revealed the term refugee can mean different things to different individuals, and in light of this, the current study does not support the notion that this label indefinitely hinders one's integration as suggested by Gissi (2019) and Chalcraft (2005).

### ***5.3.3. Superordinate Theme 3: The Ongoing Search for Belonging: Facets of a Home***

This third theme reflects the participants' search for home and belonging in the UK. Findings show that the participants associated home with three particular facets, (1) a place where they felt accepted, (2) a place where they felt supported, and (3) a place that provided them with opportunities so that they could plan their future and achieve their goals. The current findings relate to the existing literature on the concept of home (Eltokhy, 2020; Arvanitis & Yelland, 2021). Previous studies have emphasised that home offers physical security and safety (Kaya, 2016). However, the findings suggest that a home is more than a place that is associated with feeling safe. Sub-theme 3.4 highlights that the participants considered a home to be a place that offered them opportunities for development. For example, Rashida believed she had more opportunities for professional development in the UK compared to when she lived in Syria. Rabia also preferred Britain over Syria because the opportunities provided her with more chances for attaining goals, suggesting she had more hope for a meaningful future in the UK. These findings support Boccagni's (2017) conceptualisation of homemaking as an active process evolving efforts to establish a sense of autonomy. The participants in this study were able to establish a sense of autonomy and independence through the opportunities available to them.

However, the findings show that homemaking was not limited to opportunities. Participants also emphasised the importance of feeling accepted and supported by others. This finding supports the notion that some people feel at home somewhere because of the social relationships they make in a particular place (Van- Liempt & Staring, 2021). In keeping with the literature, some participants emphasised the role of being supported by family; however, of particular interest was that some participants had a strained relationship with their family, which had implications for their belonging. Tahib, for instance, appeared to

experience his parents in Syria as quite controlling and critical through the notion that they would instruct him who to socialise with in the UK. This narrative implied that he experienced his parents to impinge his freedom and self-autonomy. He subsequently preferred the UK because he was away from their watchful eye and was able to live his life according to his own terms, suggesting he could embrace his authentic self in the UK. This finding makes a unique contribution to the existing literature which suggests Syrians value the role of the family and experience difficulties belonging in their host community because being located at distance from relatives with whom they wish to connect has a negative impact on how much they are at home in their environment. This tension between these facets suggested that home was somewhere between both cultures, without the need to identify where they really belong.

### ***5.3.3. Superordinate Theme 4: Means of Coping***

This final theme reflects the kinds of coping methods used by Syrians in the UK. Findings highlight that Islamic faith can be a source of comfort and solace during difficult times for some Syrian migrants. This finding is consistent with previous research (Rayes et al, 2021; Renner et al., 2021; El-Khani et al. 2017) some of which showed that reading the Qur'an (Boswall & Akash, 2015) and attending mosque are commonly used coping strategies among Syrian migrants. The findings of the current study suggest that religious beliefs can also provide comfort. For instance, Erum described a strong positive relationship with faith and recited a verse from the Qu'ran, which from her perspective implied God was watching over her. It seemed that Erum gained reassurance through this verse because she mentioned that God "would give her best", which indicated she believed God to have her best interests at all times. Rashida also described a positive relationship with faith and shared how she believed "everything will get better with time –inshallah", suggesting faith had been a source



of hope and perseverance for her. These findings build on Hassan et al.'s (2018) qualitative study on Syrians in America; researchers showed religious beliefs can be a useful source for releasing pent-up emotions. The current findings suggest that religious beliefs could help with distress by providing reassurance, hope and perseverance. However, something that was quite unique and unexpected was that the male participants associated faith with negative inferences and did not mention faith-based coping methods, which indicated that these methods were not important to them. Sarim, for instance, shared how he continued to believe in God but felt controlled by and disliked his religious leaders, leading him to no longer pray. Such findings highlight the intertwined nature of faith and personal experiences, suggesting the importance of understanding faith from a person's lived experience.

The current findings show that the participants also relied on others to help them cope with their distress and relate to the existing literature on social support. Three participants sought support from close networks such as 1) close friends (Tahib), 2) members of the Arab community (Masim) and 3) mother (Rabia). It seemed these three participants preferred close networks because they experienced them to be non-judgmental, trustworthy and understanding. These findings are consistent with and expand on Atari-Khan et al.'s (2021) study, which highlighted that Syrians considered family and the community as their preferred social-coping methods. However, it is also important to equally emphasise that the other half of the participants had sought social support from the British general public. Sarim, for instance, shared how he frequently went clubbing with his "English friends" to avoid painful memories and thoughts; Rashida had similarly sought support from the Citizens Advice Bureau where she encountered a woman who had praised Rashida on her accomplishments, leading Rashida to accept and own her identity and history: "I went through these things by myself and I made it to the finish line". These findings showed that some Syrians were willing to seek support from the general public and have already had positive experiences.

## 5.4. Implications

### 5.4.1. *Implications For Clinical Practice*

The current findings raise two implications for clinical practice. First and foremost, all participants reported perceived discrimination, prejudice and stereotyping from the British public. It appeared that they believed the British public associated their identity with notions of dependability, vulnerability and laziness. This not only hindered the participants' integration. Tahib, for instance, shared how he had restricted himself to seeking support from close friends because he feared the British public would judge him. These findings reflect a social explanatory model of distress, whereby individuals consider external social factors to be the cause of their distress (Bhui, K., & Bhugra, D. (2002).

A social explanatory model of distress suggests that Counselling Psychologists need to adopt a holistic approach to meet the needs of Syrian migrants. A holistic approach would entail working with the individual as well as addressing the wider socio-political contextual factors which contribute to their distress. The former objective can be achieved through traditional therapy and the implementation of evidence-based cognitive behavioural interventions, such as *thought challenging* (via Socratic questioning). Thought challenging might prove useful because the majority of participants reported perceived discrimination rather than actual discrimination. It might therefore be useful encouraging Syrians to reflect on the validity of their thoughts through socratic questioning. The latter objective on the other hand could be addressed through taking additional steps outside the therapy room and engaging in community work, potentially organising informative events, which would allow Syrians to meet UK citizens and share their experiences with one another. Such events could have the positive effect of addressing perceived stereotypes, increasing Syrian's belonging, facilitating integration, and improving their overall wellbeing.

Theme 4 (means of coping) also raises implications for clinical practice. Overall, the findings from this theme suggest that Syrians have their own preferred coping methods as they cited factors such as family, friends, religion and avoidance to be important sources of support. This raises the possibility that Syrians might not seek therapeutic input. However, the findings also show that newly arrived Syrians may lack local knowledge of the UK, which might hinder their ability to connect with preferred coping methods (e.g., meeting members of their community). Syrians could therefore be referred to counselling services by their local GP. In such situations, Counselling Psychologists should consider asking Syrians how they have coped with their distress and implement interventions, which focus on building those resources. For example, Erum shared how she preferred being in the company of others, who shared a similar experience to her. This would indicate that Erum could benefit from being signposted to local support groups.

#### ***5.4.2. Implications For Policy***

The findings of this study, specifically the participants' difficulties adapting to the UK (highlighted in subtheme 1.1), raise implications for policy. All participants in this study lacked local knowledge and reported feelings of uncertainty and confusion when they first arrived in the UK. They shared how they struggled to complete basic daily tasks such as using public transport, applying for college, paying their bills, and finding their desired foods. Whilst the literature shows that relocating to a new, culturally unfamiliar country contributes to a degree of disorientation and a loss of agency (Ward, 2020) it is worth noting that none of the current participants indicated they received early support with their resettlement process in the UK. Their experiences of acculturative stress may therefore have been mitigated had they had someone help them navigate the UK system. Deniz's (2021) study on Syrian migrants in Turkey showed Syrians valued such support with their resettlement and felt the loss when this support came to an end. The UK government should similarly consider

assisting new migrants with their resettlement irrespective of their mode of entry to the UK (Karyotis et al., 2020). Providing Syrians forced migrants with resettlement support would benefit the NHS because the current finding shows that adapting to the UK was an emotionally challenging experience for the participants. Support could therefore ease this stress and reduce their need for mental health support in the NHS. Supporting Syrians with their resettlement can also have positive impact on Britain's economy because the participants in this study shared how they were highly motivated to pursue professional development and become skilled workers; but their lack of knowledge of the UK delayed this process. Helping migrants access education can therefore help them get their qualifications more promptly and move into work more efficiently, meaning they would be able to participate in society more fully. If the current government is unable to provide resettlement support for migrants who have arrived outside government-led resettlement schemes due to limited resources, then it may be worth utilizing volunteers, faith and nonprofit organisations to connect forced migrants with mentors who can assist them with daily tasks like finding a college, paying bills and connecting with members of the Syrian community.

### **5.5. Strengths and Limitations of Current Study**

Using IPA was both a strength and a limitation of this study. IPA was considered an appropriate methodology because there is limited research, which has explored the forced migration phenomenon from the perspective of Syrian migrants. There is also very limited research, which has explored the experiences of Syrian forced migrants in the UK. IPA was able to address these identified gaps in the literature given its objective is to explore individuals' lived experience of a particular phenomenon within its context (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). However, IPA, as a methodology, is heavily dependent on the participants' ability to express their experiences to the researcher and understand their verbal

communication to give insight into their thoughts and feelings (Wiling, 2013). Although all participants in this study had resided in the UK for a number of years and spoke English with some fluency, they could not always find the right words to describe their experiences during the interviews. It is therefore possible that their language competency reduced some of the detail and accuracy of their reports.

In keeping with IPA, I was sensitive to non-verbal communication, such as filler words and silences, and used this information to further facilitate my interpretation. This unique feature of IPA was useful given my participants sometimes struggled to express themselves in the interviews. However, IPA also stresses that researchers interpret the data through their personal experiences of the phenomenon (Smith & Osborn, 2015). I have therefore interpreted the data through my personal experience of resettlement in the UK, which I personally experienced to be challenging and difficult. Over the course of this project and through working closely with my director of studies, I became aware of how personal experience of displacement shaped my analysis. I had for instance overemphasised my participants' negative emotions because it resonated with my personal experience of resettlement. In light of this awareness, I reviewed the transcripts and my analysis once again to ensure I stayed close to my participants' experiences with appreciation for similarities and differences in the content of the statements.

Furthermore, I recognise that aspects of my identity may have facilitated and hindered how much the participants were willing to share in their interviews. For example, male participants might have felt uncomfortable disclosing their emotional process to me, as a female researcher, if they felt pressure to adhere to traditional gender roles, such as the idea that men are protectors/providers and must not show vulnerability. Female participants on the other hand may have felt they could identify with my gender and perhaps felt more comfortable sharing their processes with me.

My British and Kosovar-Albanian identity might have also implicated the data. Some participants may have for instance experienced me as an outsider due to my name and might have not trusted me fully, subsequently limiting the information they shared during the interviews. This could have especially been the case with Masim who described trusting Arabs with Middle-Eastern ethnic heritage only. However, the participants may also have felt comfortable in the interview given they knew I was a British student and Britain has made efforts to overthrow president Assad from power.

## **5.6. Reflexivity**

In qualitative studies, the researcher is considered to play a role in constructing the data and the findings (Willig, 2013). IPA recognises a researcher's active role in how a phenomenon is understood and encourages researchers to detail their reflexivity whereby they reflect on how aspects of their self has affected data collection. Vicary et al., (2017) argued that this reflection on self and reflexivity is important because it helps credibility in IPA. I will subsequently engage with two forms of reflexivity. I will begin with personal reflexivity, where I will discuss how my personal experiences, beliefs, assumptions and identity have shaped the research collection and analysis. I will then engage with epistemological reflexivity where I will reflect on how my philosophical standpoint has shaped my data and knowledge production.

### ***5.6.1. Personal reflexivity***

My interest in forced migration research stems from my personal experience of war and displacement. I was born in Prishtina, the capital city of Kosovo, in 1992 where I lived with my biological parents, sister and brother. When I was 7 years old, I was subjected to ethnic cleansing and fled Kosovo with my family. I lived in a refugee camp for a few weeks before arriving to the UK with my family where we have had to metaphorically start life from

scratch. I believe my personal experience of displacement and hardships in the UK (such as language barrier and isolation) affected how I engaged with the data. In particular, I noticed that I was drawn to my participants' experience of challenges in the UK and overemphasised this aspect of the phenomenon over other aspects, such as the benefits and positive emotions associated with resettlement.

I believe I occupied the position of both an insider and outsider in relation to my research participants which hindered and facilitated data collection and analysis. On the one hand, I considered myself as an insider and identified with my participants because I have my personal experience of the phenomenon under investigation. UK. Moreover, I was not born in the UK, and my characteristics such as my name suggest I am not British. I believe these aspects of identity facilitated the research process in some ways. For example, participants asked questions on the origins of my name and the nature of this conversation led them to establish that I had also migrated to the UK. It seemed that this knowledge helped build rapport and trust with my participants as they referred their friends to my study and discussed culturally- taboo topics including mental health and resentment for family members.

By the same token, I occupied an outsider status, because my participants were aware that I was not Syrian, and this could have hindered my data collection and analysis in a number of ways. Participants may have for instance not trusted me as a member from another community. Moreover, they may have been uncomfortable expressing cultural idioms fearing that I would not understand them. It is also possible that I may have missed cultural idioms in my analysis, which a researcher from the Syrian community would have been more aware of.

### ***5.6.2. Epistemological reflexivity***

I believe my epistemological stance, interpretive phenomenology, is the result of the pluralistic value-base that underpins my professional training and identity as a trainee counselling psychologist. My epistemological position means that I interpreted my

participants' experiences through my own socio-cultural and personal lens. I believe that my own experience of forced displacement, as detailed above had scope to influence how I understood the participants' making sense of their experiences of the same phenomenon. However, I tried to be aware of preconceptions through keeping a journal and discussing my findings with my researcher supervisor.

### **5.7. Evaluation Criteria**

Research quality is important in order to determine utility of research findings (Braun & Clarke, 2013). I assessed the quality and validity of my research using Yardley's (2000; 2008) four broad principles: sensitivity to context, commitment and rigour, transparency and coherence, and the impact and importance of my topic. Yardley (2008) noted that these principles could be fulfilled in many ways, meaning there is no prescriptive, correct manner. I will therefore reflect on how I believe I have demonstrated each of these principles in my study below.

#### ***5.7.1. Sensitivity to Context***

Sensitivity to context could be demonstrated through a researcher's attention to participants' perspectives and the socio-cultural and linguistic context of the research (Yardley, 2008). I attempted to do this by ensuring that my participants' voices were heard through grounding my interpretations in their narratives. I also labelled some of the subordinate and superordinate themes using their own words. Furthermore, some of my interpretations reflect the possibility some pauses and incoherence could have been a result of my participants' language competency as opposed to a sign of apprehension, confusion etc. I believe that such commentary shows sensitivity to their context.

#### ***5.7.2. Commitment and Rigour***



Commitment and rigour can be exemplified through the researcher's in-depth engagement with the topic, immersion in the data and detailed analysis (Yardley, 2000). I believe I have demonstrated commitment by reading widely on the multi-disciplinary nature of forced migration literature and including different theoretical perspectives in my literature review. I have also kept up to date with the latest literature and I have attended conferences on migration organised by the BPS as well as the Refugee Research centre at the UEL. Yardley (2000) also stated "commitment and rigour might be demonstrated by the effective use of prolonged contemplative and empathic exploration of the topic" (p.222). I believe I have demonstrated this by dedicating over 4 years to this research project.

In terms of rigour, I have sampled, analysed and interpreted the data according to the guidance provided by Smith et al., (2009). I also arranged frequent supervision during the early stages of my research endeavour and have immersed myself in the data by reading transcripts multiple times and creating detailed graphs for each participant (see appendix M), which I have presented and discussed with my supervisory team.

### ***5.7.3. Transparency and Coherence***

Transparency means that the reader should be able to see clearly how the interpretation was derived from the data whereas coherence refers to the link between the philosophical perspectives, the method of investigation, the research question and analysis (Yardley, 2008). I believe I have demonstrated coherence by reflecting on the nature of research question and its compatibility with the theoretical underpinnings of IPA over other methodologies. I have also reflected how my epistemological stance is compatible with IPA and how IPA is a particularly suited method for migrants who are underrepresented in research (Smith et al., 2009). I believe I also have shown transparency through my reflexivity section where I have taken ownership of my personal experiences of displacement and how this has affected my engagement with the topic and data analysis. I have also shown

transparency through my journal entries, which contain some of my initial and presumptions about the target population (see appendix Q). In addition, I have been regularly updating my online research portal, which now provides a timeline of how my research has evolved. I believe I have also shown transparency in my data analysis by providing a comprehensive appendix, which shows how my interpretations and themes have evolved from participant extracts (See Appendices M).

#### ***5.7.4. Impact and Importance***

Importance refers to the requirement for all research to generate knowledge that is useful – whether in terms of practical utility, generating hypotheses, or even changing how we think about the world (Yardley, 2008). It is hoped that findings from the current study will assist healthcare professionals including counselling psychologists to appreciate the contextual and personal challenges Syrian forced migrants face in the UK. This is necessary because the vast majority of existing research on Syrian migrants either homogenizes their experiences or is based on Syrians in other countries. A contextual in-depth understanding of Syrians living in the UK is important because it illuminates how their experiences are implicated by regional policies and institutions; encouraging counselling psychologists to critically reflect on sources of human distress and the importance of advocacy (Cooper, 2009).

In addition to using Yardley's (2000; 2008) evaluation criteria for IPA, I also adhered to Nizza et al., (2021) four quality indicators of good IPA studies which include: (1) constructing a compelling, unfolding narrative; (2) developing a vigorous experiential and/or existential account; (3) close analytic reading of participant narratives; (4) attending to convergence and divergence. I will review each of these markers in greater detail and provide examples on how my study demonstrates these markers.

#### ***5.7.5. Constructing a compelling, unfolding narrative***

I believe my analysis shows the first marker, ‘compelling and unfolding narratives’ within and across my themes as I aimed to select extracts, which add something new and offer a different perspective. For example, subordinate theme 3.2.1 shows that the participants experienced culture shock in relation to different facets including the transport system, social norms, housing and daily errands. Noting these differences created a dialogue and showed the multi-faceted nature of culture shock.

#### ***5.7.6. Developing a vigorous experiential and/or existential account***

I believe my analysis demonstrates the second marker ‘developing a vigorous experiential and/or existential account’ through my attempt to engage with the participants’ experiential and existential concerns and their meaning-making around them. For example, in subordinate theme ‘Individual Identity: Ambitious View of Self’, Masim shared “If I be in Syria.. I will be sitting with my father until now erm.. and he’s going to support me. I am not going to support myself. ... Here it is different... you can build yourself. In Syria no! you going to keep yourself to your father” (60-67). In my analysis, I shared how Masim implied a change in self-construal through the opportunities available to him in the UK. This extract seemed to suggest that he had become more independent and self-sufficient in the UK compared to when he lived in Syria and sat with his father. I extended this interpretation by adding that Masim’s increased autonomy in the UK can be understood as an ambivalent phenomenon because while he could be happy with his increased capacity to provide for himself; he also could also feel overwhelmed by the fact that he could no longer rely on his father as a safety net. Nizza et al., (2021) notes that developing a vigorous experiential and/or existential account is demonstrated when the analysis “brings to light how these experiences have consequences for the participants sense of selfhood” (p.6) and I believe my analysis of Masim’s account exhibits this.

#### ***5.7.7. Close analytic reading of participant narratives***

I believe my analysis shows the third marker, ‘close analytic reading of participant narratives’, through my close analytic reading of quotes, with the objective of drawing out the meaning of selected extracts. For example, in Subordinate Theme ‘Social Identity: Perceived Stereotypes Towards Oneself’, Sarim believed the British public viewed Syrians as “suffering and don’t touch them because they are broken like glass... so you can feel like... why are you treating us like this?” (1748-1757). In my close reading of his quoted extract, I noted how Masim metaphorical choice of word “ broken glass” conveyed a sense of perceived as weak, fragile and vulnerable by the British public. I believe this interpretation achieves Nizza et al., (2021) definition of the second marker, ‘close analytic reading of participant narratives’ which is conveyed through the researchers close attention to participants’ choice of particular words and phrases, linguistic tone, ambiguity, repetition and emphasis, imagery and metaphor.

#### ***5.7.8. Attending to convergence and divergence***

Finally, I believe my analysis demonstrates Nizza et al., (2021) fourth and final marker ‘attending to convergence and divergence’ which can be achieved through the researchers’ aim to strike a balance between commonality and individuality. I believe my analysis shows convergence and divergence between accounts. This is not only conveyed in my graph at the start of the analysis chapter, which provides information on prevalence, but there are also similarities and differences and idiographical details enriching each theme. For example, the fourth superordinate theme, which captured the kinds of coping methods used by participants, includes religious coping methods. The extracts in this subordinate theme suggest the participants’ commitment to faith and religious coping methods are on a spectrum. Female participants’ referenced the importance of implementing faith on a daily basis and whilst they engaged with faith in different ways, they echoed an overall sense of hope and resilience through faith. This positive inference to faith was in contrary to male

participants, one of who did not mention faith when asked on what had helped him cope with the challenges in the UK. Overall, the findings within this subordinate theme show convergence among females as well as divergence between females and males in their relationship with faith and religious coping methods.

### **5.8. Recommendations for Future Research**

The findings of this study raise a number of implications for future research. First and foremost, the current study found two participants disliked being referred to as a refugee. They associated this term with negative inferences such as being useless and homeless. In light of this finding, future researchers should take caution in how they define their subjects. Whilst an overwhelming number of researchers have referred to Syrians as ‘refugees’ (Guoet al., 2019), the findings of this study suggest that this term could potentially be the reason why some Syrians become reluctant to take part in research studies.

It is also worth emphasising that the findings of this study are influenced by certain contextual and sample characteristics. Future researchers should go beyond these variables to widen the literature on the experiences of Syrian migrants. For example, all of the participants emphasised the opportunities available to them in the UK. One possible reason for this could be because they lived in the capital city of England, London, which offers more opportunities for self-development compared to other regions in the UK. It would therefore be interesting for future researchers to explore the experiences of Syrian migrants, residing in less developed, marginalised areas.

Another important factor worth emphasising is that the participants in this study arrived in the UK outside the government’s Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS), meaning they would have received less governmental support with their resettlement process compared to Syrians who have resettled under the government-led scheme. Future studies should therefore consider investigating the experiences of

Syrian migrants who have arrived in the UK under the VPRS scheme. Syrians under this programme would have received support from their local authority for some of the concerns participants in the current study raised, including employment, education and civic integration. An investigation into Syrians under the VPRS might therefore reveal that their transition and resettlement experiences were easier compared to the participants in this study. It would therefore be important to study the experiences of Syrians who have arrived in the UK through the government-led resettlement scheme and cross compare their experiences of integration to the experiences of Syrian migrants who have arrived independently of this scheme.

## **5.9. Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to understand the lived experiences of Syrian migrants in the UK and the implications for clinical interventions. Findings from an IPA approach highlight the participants' lived experience of the UK was characterised by three concerns. Theme 1 shows that all participants experienced structural and personal changes and challenges in the UK. Theme 2 shows that the participants also experienced tensions with their identity and self-construal as they had an ambitious, positive view of self but appeared to believe the British public stereotyped and discriminated against them which contributed to their feelings of frustration and being misunderstood. Findings show that the participants were also concerned about their belonging. They implied they belonged to a place that had particular qualities, and whilst the UK appeared to have met some of their required qualities of a home, it did not meet others, which contributed to this ambivalent sense of belonging. The participants' lived experience and their unique meaning-making processes in relation to these concerns encourage future researchers to critically examine how they conceptualise and

study the experiences of forced migrants. The findings of this study also raise a number of implications for professional practice and policy as discussed above.

## References

- Aburas, R., Najeeb, A., Baageel, L., & Mackey, T. K. (2018). The Syrian conflict: a case study of the challenges. *BMC medicine*, *16*(1), 1-6.
- Acarturk, C., McGrath, M., Roberts, B., Ilkkursun, Z., Cuijpers, P., Sijbrandij, M., ... & Fuhr, D. C. (2021). Prevalence and predictors of common mental disorders among Syrian refugees in Istanbul, Turkey: a cross-sectional study. *Social psychiatry and psychiatric epidemiology*, *56*(3), 475-484.
- Adichie, C. N. (2009). The danger of a single story.
- Al-Faham, Z., Takriti, F., Habboub, G., & Jawaid, A. (2009). Travel to Syria: expect the unexpected. *International Journal of Infectious Diseases*, *13*(5), e326
- Al-Natour, A., Al-Ostaz, S. M., & Morris, E. J. (2019). Marital violence during war conflict: the lived experience of Syrian refugee women. *Journal of transcultural nursing*, *30*(1), 32-38.
- Aloudah, N. M. (2022). Qualitative research in the Arabic language. When should translations to English occur? A literature review. *Exploratory Research in Clinical and Social Pharmacy*, 100153.
- Ben Farhat, J., Blanchet, K., Juul Bjertrup, P., Veizis, A., Perrin, C., Coulborn, R. M., ... & Cohuet, S. (2018). Syrian refugees in Greece: experience with violence, mental health status, and access to information during the journey and while in Greece. *BMC medicine*, *16*(1), 1-12.
- Berti, B., & Paris, J. (2014). Beyond sectarianism: Geopolitics, fragmentation, and the Syrian civil war. *Strategic Assessment*, *16*(4), 21-34.
- Borho, A., Viazminsky, A., Morawa, E., Schmitt, G. M., Georgiadou, E., & Erim, Y. (2020). The prevalence and risk factors for mental distress among Syrian refugees in Germany: a register-based follow-up study. *BMC psychiatry*, *20*(1), 1-13.



- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2013). Successful qualitative research: A practical guide for beginners. London, England: SAGE Publications Lt
- Cantekin, D. (2019). Syrian refugees living on the edge: policy and practice implications for mental health and psychosocial wellbeing. *International Migration*, 57(2), 200-220.
- Cantekin, D., & Gençöz, T. (2017). Mental health of Syrian asylum seekers in Turkey: The role of pre-migration and post-migration risk factors. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 36(10), 835.
- Cooper, M. (2009). Welcoming the Other: Actualising the humanistic ethic at the core of counselling psychology practice. *Counselling Psychology Review-British Psychological Society*, 24(3/4).
- Doğan, N., Dikeç, G., & Uygun, E. (2019). Syrian refugees' experiences with mental health services in Turkey: "I felt lonely because I wasn't able to speak to anyone". *Perspectives in psychiatric care*, 55(4), 673-680.
- Drescher, A., Kiselev, N., Akhtar, A., Acarturk, C., Bryant, R. A., Ilkkursun, Z., ... & Morina, N. (2021). Problems after flight: understanding and comparing Syrians' perspectives in the Middle East and Europe. *BMC Public Health*, 21(1), 1-12.
- Frederick Jr, L. (2000). Psychosocial wellness of refugees: Issues in qualitative and quantitative research (Vol. 7). Berghahn Books.
- Gissi, A. (2019). 'What Does the Term Refugee Mean to You?': Perspectives from Syrian Refugee Women in Lebanon. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 32(4), 539-561.
- Georgiadou, E., Zbidat, A., Schmitt, G. M., & Erim, Y. (2018). Prevalence of mental distress among Syrian refugees with residence permission in Germany: a registry-based study. *Frontiers in psychiatry*, 9, 393.
- Hemona, R., Relyea, B., Scott, J., Khaddaj, S., Douka, A., & Wringe, A. (2018). "The needs have clearly evolved as time has gone on.": A qualitative study to explore stakeholders' perspectives on the health needs of Syrian refugees in Greece following the 2016

- European Union-Turkey agreement. *Conflict and Health*, 12(1), 1-9.
- Home Office. 2021. "Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) Guidance for Local Authorities and Partners."  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/631369/170711\\_Syrian\\_Resettlement\\_Updated\\_Fact\\_Sheet\\_final.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/631369/170711_Syrian_Resettlement_Updated_Fact_Sheet_final.pdf).
- Hosein, A. (2019). *The ethics of migration: An introduction*. Routledge
- Hove, M., & Mutanda, D. (2015). The Syrian conflict 2011 to the present: Challenges and prospects. *Journal of Asian and African studies*, 50(5), 559-570.
- Hynes, T. (2003). New issues in refugee research. The issue of 'trust' or 'mistrust' in research with refugees: choices, caveats and considerations for researchers. Geneva: Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit, The United Nations Refugee Agency.
- IASFM (International Association for the Study of Forced Migration). 2018. "Code of Ethics: Critical Reflections on Research Ethics in Situations of Forced Migration." <http://iasfm.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/IASFM-Research-Code-of-Ethics-2018.pdf>.
- Karyotis, G., Mulvey, G., & Skleparis, D. (2021). Young Syrian refugees in the UK: a two-tier system of international protection?. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 47(3), 481-500
- Kahf, A. (2016). Geopolitical realignments around Syria: Threats and opportunities. *Insight Turkey*, 18(2), 21-30.
- Kakaje, A., Al Zohbi, R., Hosam Aldeen, O., Makki, L., Alyousbashi, A., & Alhaffar, M. B. A. (2021). Mental disorder and PTSD in Syria during wartime: a nationwide crisis. *BMC psychiatry*, 21(1), 1-16

- Kikhia, S., Gharib, G., Sauter, A., Vincens, N. C. L., & Loss, J. (2021). Exploring how Syrian women manage their health after migration to Germany: results of a qualitative study. *BMC women's health*, *21*(1), 1-15.
- Korukcu, O., Aydın, R., Conway, J., & Kukulu, K. (2018). Motherhood in the shade of migration: A qualitative study of the experience of Syrian refugee mothers living in Turkey. *Nursing & health sciences*, *20*(1), 46-53.
- Krause, U. (2017). Researching forced migration: Critical reflections on research ethics during fieldwork. *Refugee Studies Centre. Working Paper Series*, *123*, 1-39
- Larkin, M., & Thompson, A. R. (2012). Interpretative phenomenological analysis in mental health and psychotherapy research. In A. Thompson & D. Harper (Eds.), *Qualitative research methods in mental health and psychotherapy: a guide for students and practitioners* (pp. 99-116). Oxford, England: John Wiley & Sons.
- Larkin, M., Watts, S., & Clifton, E. (2006). Giving voice and making sense in interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Qualitative research in psychology*, *3*(2), 102-120.
- Legido-Quigley, H., Pocock, N., Tan, S. T., Pajin, L., Suphanchaimat, R., Wickramage, K., ... & Pottie, K. (2019). Healthcare is not universal if undocumented migrants are excluded. *Bmj*, 366.
- Mahmood, H. N., Ibrahim, H., Goessmann, K., Ismail, A. A., & Neuner, F. (2019). Post-traumatic stress disorder and depression among Syrian refugees residing in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. *Conflict and Health*, *13*(1), 1-11.
- Malm, A., Tinghög, P., Narusyte, J., & Saboonchi, F. (2020). The refugee post-migration stress scale (RPMS)—development and validation among refugees from Syria recently resettled in Sweden. *Conflict and health*, *14*(1), 1-12.
- Marie Borrelli, L., Lindberg, A., & Wyss, A. (2022). States of suspicion: How institutionalised disbelief shapes migration control regimes. *Geopolitics*, *27*(4), 1025-

1041.

Miller, K. E., & Rasmussen, A. (2017). The mental health of civilians displaced by armed conflict: an ecological model of refugee distress. *Epidemiology and psychiatric sciences*, 26(2), 129-138.

Milton, M. (Ed.). (2010). *Therapy and beyond: Counselling psychology contributions to therapeutic and social issues*. John Wiley & Sons.

Müller-Funk, L. (2021). Research with refugees in fragile political contexts: How ethical reflections impact methodological choices. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 34(2), 2308-2332.

Naal, H., Nabulsi, D., El Arnaout, N., Abdouni, L., Dimassi, H., Harb, R., & Saleh, S. (2021). Prevalence of depression symptoms and associated sociodemographic and clinical correlates among Syrian refugees in Lebanon. *BMC Public Health*, 21(1), 1-13.

Nizza, I. E., Farr, J., & Smith, J. A. (2021). Achieving excellence in interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA): Four markers of high quality. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 18(3), 369-386.

Ostrand, N. (2015). The Syrian refugee crisis: A comparison of responses by Germany, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States. *Journal on Migration and Human Security*, 3(3), 255-279.

Panagiota, T. (2002). Human rights violations in Kosovo.

Paudyal, P., Tattan, M., & Cooper, M. J. (2021). Qualitative study on mental health and well-being of Syrian refugees and their coping mechanisms towards integration in the UK. *BMJ open*, 11(8), e046065.

Paul, J., & Criado, A. R. (2020). The art of writing literature review: What do we know and what do we need to know?. *International Business Review*, 29(4), 101717.

Pietkiewicz, I., & Smith, J. A. (2014). A practical guide to using interpretative phenomenological analysis in qualitative research psychology. *Psychological*

*journal*, 20(1), 7-14.

Ponterotto, J. G. (2005). Qualitative research in counseling psychology: A primer on research paradigms and philosophy of science. *Journal of counseling psychology*, 52(2), 126.

Poole, D. N., Hedt-Gauthier, B., Liao, S., Raymond, N. A., & Bärnighausen, T. (2018).

Major depressive disorder prevalence and risk factors among Syrian asylum seekers in Greece. *BMC public health*, 18(1), 1-9.

Reid, K., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2005). Exploring lived experience. *The psychologist*.

Rizq, R., & Target, M. (2008). 'The power of being seen': an interpretative phenomenological analysis of how experienced counselling psychologists describe the meaning and significance of personal therapy in clinical practice. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 36(2), 131-153.

Sandberg, M., Rossi, L., Galis, V., & Bak Jørgensen, M. (2022). Research Methodologies and Ethical Challenges in Digital Migration Studies: Caring For (Big) Data? (p. 262). Springer Nature.

Schweitzer, R. (2008). Robert Schweitzer & Zachary Steel.

Sharp, M., Kara, J., Almidani, S., Ahram, M., Mahmoud, R., & Khoshnood, K. (2021).

Exploring the bidirectional relationship between chronic disease and depression among female Syrian refugees and Jordanians: a qualitative analysis. *Eastern Mediterranean Health Journal*, 27(12), 1153-1161.

Smith, J. A. (1996). Beyond the divide between cognition and discourse: Using interpretative phenomenological analysis in health psychology. *Psychology and health*, 11(2), 261-271.

Smith, J. A., & Osborn, M. (2003). Interpretative phenomenological analysis. In J. A. Smith (Ed.), *Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to research methods* (pp. 51–80).

London, England: SAGE Publications Ltd.

- Smith, J. A., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2009). *Interpretative phenomenological analysis: Theory, method and research*. London, England: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Strawbridge, S. (2016). Science, Craft and Professional Values. In B. Douglas, R. Woolfe, S. Strawbridge, E. Kasket, & V. Galbraith (Eds.), *The Handbook of Counselling Psychology* (4th Ed.) (pp. 20-40). London, England: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Summerfield, D. (2013). “Global mental health” is an oxymoron and medical imperialism. *Bmj*, 346.
- Tinghög, P., Malm, A., Arwidson, C., Sigvardsdotter, E., Lundin, A., & Saboonchi, F. (2017). Prevalence of mental ill health, traumas and postmigration stress among refugees from Syria resettled in Sweden after 2011: a population-based survey. *BMJ open*, 7(12), e018899.
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2010). *UNHCR global trends 2021*. <http://www.unhcr.org/statistics/country/4dfa11499/unhcr-global-trends-2021.html>
- United Nations High Commissioners for Refugees. (2021c). Global trends: Forced displacement in 2020. <https://www.unhcr.org/60b638e37/unhcr-global-trends-2020>.
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2021d). Syria regional refugee response. Retrieved September 11, 2021 from <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria>
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2011). *Convention and protocol relating to the status of refugees*. <http://www.unhcr.org/protect/PROTECTION/3b66c2aa10.pdf>
- Vicary, S., Young, A., & Hicks, S. (2017). A reflective journal as learning process and contribution to quality and validity in interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Qualitative Social Work*, 16(4), 550-565.
- Wade, D. T., & Halligan, P. W. (2004). Do biomedical models of illness make for good

healthcare systems?. *Bmj*, 329(7479), 1398-1401.

Wells, R., Lawsin, C., Hunt, C., Youssef, O. S., Abujado, F., & Steel, Z. (2018). An ecological model of adaptation to displacement: individual, cultural and community factors affecting psychosocial adjustment among Syrian refugees in Jordan. *Global Mental Health*, 5, e42.

Willig, C. (2008). *Introducing qualitative research in psychology* (2nd Ed.). Maidenhead, England: McGraw-Hill Education (UK).

Willig, C. (2013). *Introducing qualitative research in psychology* (3rd Ed.). Maidenhead, England: McGraw-Hill Education (UK).

Yalim, A. C., & Kim. I. (2018). Mental health and psychosocial needs of Syrian refugees: A literature review and future directions. *Advances in Social Work*, 18(3), 833-852.  
<https://doi.org/10.18060/21633>

Yardley, L. (2000). Dilemmas in qualitative health research. *Psychology and Health*, 15(2), 215-228. <https://doi.or/10.1080/08870440008400302>

Yardley, L. (2008). Demonstrating validity in qualitative psychology. In J. A. Smith (Ed.), *Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to research methods* (53-80). Sage Publications.

Yilmaz Zambak, D. (2021). FORCED MIGRATION EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG ADULT SYRIAN REFUGEES: AN INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

## Appendix A: Information Sheet

**UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON**  
School of Psychology Stratford Campus  
Water Lane London E15 4LZ

### **The Principal Investigator(s)**

Vjosa Hyseni  
**Email** : [u1010570@uel.ac.uk](mailto:u1010570@uel.ac.uk)  
**Telephone** : 07507101366

### **Information Sheet**

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the information that you need to consider in deciding whether to participate a research study.

The study is being conducted as part of my Professional Doctorate in Counselling Psychology at the University of East London.

### **Project Title:**

**The lived experiences of Syrian Forced Migrants in the United Kingdom and the Implications for Clinical Interventions.**

### **Project Description**

I would like to explain why this research is being done and what it will involve. Then you can decide if you want to take part.

I am interested in your experiences of resettlement in the UK. I would like to know the kinds of concerns you have experienced in the UK. What those concerns mean for you and how you have coped in the UK. Maybe you have some ideas about what was helpful for you and what was not – things that helped you cope with the experience and things that made it worse.

Finding out more about your experiences may help professionals to better understand what is meaningful for Syrian citizens and improve ways of helping.

There is no pressure to discuss experiences or answer questions that you do not feel comfortable with. You can stop or leave the interview at any point or if you need a break or to pause, just say. If you want support after the interview I can give you a list of counsellors and free therapy services that you can contact if you want to talk to someone afterwards.

The interview will approximately last an hour.

### **Confidentiality**

With your consent, I will record our discussion. I will protect your identity by changing any names of places and information that might identify you as well as by changing your name.

The recording of our discussion will be kept on a password-protected computer – of which only me, the researcher, will have access to. Recordings will be destroyed at the end of the study, but the typed up discussion (in other words the anonymised transcripts) will be kept for up to 3 years on a password protected computer, for the purpose of potential publication at a later stage. If it is published it is likely other academics and psychologists will read the paper.



You can withdraw at any time during the interview (in other words just say you want to stop). If you stop the interview today or you feel distressed, I will stop recording and erase everything we have talked about - if you want. You can also withdraw afterwards as long as you let me know within 30 days following your interview. If 30 days has passed after the interview, I will use your anonymised data in the write-up of the study and any further analysis that may be conducted by me, the researcher.

You do not have to take part in this study and should not feel pressurised.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to sign a consent form before you take part. After the interview I will call you within one week to check-in and make sure you have information or support in case taking part in the research has made you think more about difficult experiences and that is hard to cope with.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to ask me.

If you have any questions or concerns about how the study has been conducted, please contact the study's supervisor Dr. Claire Marshall, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ. **Telephone:** (0)20 8223 4553 **Email:** C.Marshall@uel.ac.uk **or** Chair of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Sub-committee: Dr. Mary Spiller, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ. (Tel: 020 8223 4004. Email: m.j.spiller@uel.ac.uk)

Please keep this information letter for reference.

Thank you for your time and interest,

Kind Regards  
Vjosa Hyseni  
Postgraduate Researcher





## Appendix C: Consent to Participate Form

### UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

#### Consent to participate in research study

#### **The lived experiences of Syrian Forced Migrants in the United Kingdom and the Implications for Clinical Interventions.**

I have read the information sheet in relation the research study and have been given a copy to keep. The nature and purposes of the research have been explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask further questions about the study. I understand what is being proposed and the procedures in which I will be involved have been explained to me. I understand that my involvement in this study, and particular data from this research, will remain strictly confidential unless I pose a significant risk to self or members of the public. Only the researcher(s) involved in the study will have access to identifying data. It has been explained to me what will happen once the research study has been completed. I hereby freely and fully consent to participate in the study, which has been fully explained to me. Having given this consent I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without disadvantage to myself and without being obliged to give any reason. I also understand that should I withdraw, the researcher reserves the right to use my anonymous data in the write-up of the study and in any further analysis that may be conducted by the researcher.

Participant's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

.....

Participant's Signature

.....

Researcher's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

.....

Researcher's Signature .....

Date: .....



**Appendix D: Consent to record**

1. I understand that the interview will be recorded, and that only the persons involved in the project will hear the recordings.

2. I understand that the data from the recording will be downloaded onto a password-protected computer on site, and that it will be destroyed once the project is complete.

3. I agree to be recorded for the purpose of the project.

Name of the Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix E: Distress and crisis helpline numbers

In cases of emergency or high distress here is a list of helplines & support agencies that can help.

**If you have a plan to end of your life and feel you may act on it today:  
Please go to your local Accident and Emergency department or call 999**

Below are some numbers you might find useful if you experience non-urgent distress.

### **Crisis & emotional support contacts**

#### **NHS Direct**

<http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk/>

Operate 24/7 and should be able to provide details of local crisis support services or advise on accessing local A&E

Tel: 0845 4647

#### **Samaritans**

<http://www.samaritans.org/>

24 hour emotional support line

Tel: 08457 90 90 90

#### **Saneline**

<http://www.sane.org.uk>

Emotional support line for people in mental distress

Tel: 0845 767 8000 opening hours: 6pm-11pm everyday

#### **No Panic**

<http://www.nopanic.org.uk/>

Helpline for people with anxiety disorders. Also has telephone recovery group for members

Tel: 0800 138 8889 opening hours: 10am-10pm everyday

#### **Anxiety Alliance**

<http://www.anxietyalliance.org.uk/>

Helpline for people with anxiety disorders

Tel: 0845 296 7877 opening hours: 10am-10pm everyday

#### **Mood Swings**

<http://www.moodswings.org.uk>

Helpline providing advice, info and support to people with severe mood disorder

Tel: 0845 123 6050 opening hours: 10am-4pm, Mon-Fri

#### **Maytree**

<http://www.maytree.org.uk/>

London based respite centre that provides short-term respite to people who are suicidal.

People can ring them directly to discuss arranging a stay. Can only stay there once.

Tel: 0207 263 7070

## **Appendix F: Debrief sheet (for researcher)**

Participants will be asked questions in relation to their wellbeing. Questions and statements will be tentatively phrased as below:

**Thank you for taking part in my research.**

**How are you feeling?**

**How did you experience today's interview?**

**Do you feel safe and able to look after yourself following the interview?**

I would like to remind you that there is always support available. If you find yourself distressed and need urgent help, please call 999. Otherwise, you can contact the distress helpline numbers provided to you. I would like to issue you with a hardcopy, is that ok with you? (Participants will be given appendix B- distress helpline numbers)

If participants are report suicidal thoughts with an active plan on how they will end their life, then the crisis management appendix E will be followed.

## Appendix G: Debrief sheet for participants without suicidal risk



### **UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON**

School of Psychology Stratford  
Campus Water Lane London E15  
4LZ

#### **The Principal Investigator(s)**

Vjosa Hyseni

**Email:** [u1010570@uel.ac.uk](mailto:u1010570@uel.ac.uk)

**Telephone:** 07402259645

#### **Project Title:**

**The lived experiences of Syrian Forced Migrants in the United Kingdom and the Implications for Clinical Interventions.**

### **PARTICIPANT DEBRIEF SHEET**

Thank you for offering me your valuable time and taking part in my research! I would like to take this opportunity to remind you on your rights and how your data will be managed.

Our interview will be treated with highest level of confidentiality and anonymity. Your data will be anonymised (using pseudonyms) and saved on password-protected computer, of which only the researcher will have access. Recordings will be destroyed at the end of the study, but anonymised transcripts will be kept for up to 3 years on a password protected computer, for the purpose of potential publication at a later stage. Please note that you also have the right to withdraw your data from the study following your interview today, however a 30 days notice must be given by email or telephone call. You will also receive a follow up phone call from the researcher one week after the research interview. This is to check on your wellbeing following your participation as well as give you the opportunity to ask any questions about the research.

Additionally, if you have any questions or concerns about how the study has been conducted, please contact the study's supervisor Dr. Claire Marshall, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ. Telephone:

(0)20 8223 4553 Email: C.Marshall@uel.ac.uk ] or Chair of the School of Psychology  
Research Ethics Sub-committee: Dr. Mary Spiller, School of Psychology, University  
of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ. (Tel: 020 8223 4004. Email:  
m.j.spiller@uel.ac.uk.





## **Appendix H: Debrief Sheet for participants with suicidal risk**

### **UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON**

School of Psychology Stratford  
Campus Water Lane London E15  
4LZ

#### **The Principal Investigator(s)**

Vjosa Hyseni

**Email:** [u1010570@uel.ac.uk](mailto:u1010570@uel.ac.uk)

**Telephone:** 07402259645

#### **Project Title:**

**The lived experiences of Syrian Forced Migrants in the United Kingdom and the Implications for Clinical Interventions.**

### **PARTICIPANT DEBRIEF SHEET**

Thank you for offering me your valuable time to take part in my research! I am sorry that the nature of the study has exuberated your distress today, but I would like to remind you of your rights and the study's on-going commitment to your wellbeing.

Please note that in the event suicidal ideation is disclosed, your confidentiality will be breached and the researcher's supervisor (DoS) will be contacted for further assistance and guidance. It is important to remind you that the DoS will be informed should suicidal ideation arise at any stage, including if you contact the researcher after the interview has taken place. The researcher deems this necessary as part of an on-going commitment to your safety and the public. You will also receive a follow-up call from the researcher a week after the research interview. The purpose of the call is to check on your wellbeing and ensure you have sufficient information on support services available to you (e.g., hotline numbers, clinic resources). The nature of events will be fully documented and stored in the researchers secure cabinet at home. The researcher's supervisor will also be emailed a detailed account of the incident and management protocol.

I would like to also remind that your data will be immediately discarded (including our audio recording) and will therefore not be used in the write-up of the study. Should you have any concerns or questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Alternatively, if you have any questions or concerns about how the study has been conducted, please contact the study's supervisor Dr. Claire Marshall, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ. Telephone: (0)20 8223 4553 Email: C.Marshall@uel.ac.uk ] or Chair of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Sub-committee: Dr. Mary Spiller, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ. (Tel: 020 8223 4004. Email: m.j.spiller@uel.ac.uk.



## Appendix I: Crisis management plan

### Plan A:

The following procedure will be followed if participants report suicidal thoughts with intent to end life.

If the above disclosure is made, the interview will be immediately terminated and participants will be sensitively informed on the loss of confidentiality. The researcher will express a genuine care and empathy for the participant's life before contacting the supervisor (via text) who will arrange for emergency services to arrive at the scene (the supervisor would have been given 1+ weeks notice on location/time of interview and will be also be reminded a day before the interview). The researcher will stay with the participant until emergency services arrive. Whilst waiting for emergency services, the researcher will ask open, exploratory questions about what has helped the participant cope in the past:

- 1) Could you tell me what has prevented you from acting on your suicidal thoughts so far?
- 2) Is there anything that helps you self-soothe? (The participant would be asked further prompts in order to help him/her connect with protective factors i.e. what aspect of '.....' helps you? What do you associate with this object/experience?)
- 3) Would we be able to practice mindfulness, which is a form of meditation and will help you keep calm?

The nature of events will be fully documented and stored in the researchers secure cabinet at home. The researcher's supervisor will also be emailed a detailed account of the incident and management protocol.

### Plan B:

The following procedure will apply to participants who disclose suicidal thoughts but with no active/intent to end life.

The interview will be immediately terminated on the basis that it might exuberate suicidal thoughts and cause unnecessary emotional pain. This is in adherence with BPS principle of responsibly which stresses the need for researchers to minimize risk and 'do no harm' (BPS, 2009). However, confidentiality will not be breached if there is no intent to end life and there are sufficient protective factors in place. Further screening will take place in order to assess whether confidentiality should be breached. This decision will be on the basis of the nature, severity and frequency of suicidal thoughts. The quality of protective factors (e.g. relationships with friends/relatives) will also inform my decision.

Participants would be asked questions such as:

- 1) Could you tell me about your distressing thoughts?
- 2) On a scale of 0 (unaffected) to 5 (highly distressed), how distressed are you by your thoughts?
- 3) Could you tell me what has prevented you from acting on your suicidal thoughts so far?
- 4) Is there anything that helps you self-soothe? (The participant would be asked further prompts in order to help him/her connect with protective factors i.e. what aspect of '.....' helps you? What do you associate with this object/experience?)
- 5) Would we be able to practice mindfulness, which is a form of meditation and will help you keep calm?
  
- 6) Are we able to come to a mutual agreement that you will not act upon your suicidal thoughts? Could you make that commitment to me? If the participant agrees, and has protective factors in place, confidentiality will not be breached, and appendix F will be completed with the participant. This will be countersigned by both parties and will be placed in the researcher's locked cabinet at home.

The nature of events will be fully documented and stored in the researcher's locked cabinet at home. The researcher's supervisors will also be emailed with a detailed account of the incident and management protocol.



## **Appendix J: Interview schedule**

**Research title:** The lived experiences of Syrian Forced Migrants in the United Kingdom and the Implications for Clinical Interventions.

Name of researcher: **Vjosa Hyseni**

### **Questions:**

- 1) What has life been like in the United Kingdom?
- 2) What has the experience of resettlement in the UK been like for you?
- 3) What kinds of concerns do you have in the UK?
- 4) Could you tell me more about what that is like for you?



## RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS WANTED

Are you a Syrian Forced Migrant that has fled the on-going conflict in Syria OR know someone who has?

If so, please take part in my research, which aims to analyse your story as you experienced it. Your voice is a valuable addition to psychological literature, with implications to clinical interventions.

Your participation will help grow insight and improve clinical work and research.

If you would like to help bring change by participating, please call me on 07402259645 or email:

[u1010570@uel.ac.uk](mailto:u1010570@uel.ac.uk)

### **To participate you must be:**

- A Syrian Forced migrant due to on-going Syrian War.
- 18+ years old
- Some knowledge of English
- 

Unfortunately, you are unable to take part if you are experiencing suicidal thoughts as the research may cause unnecessary emotional distress.

## Appendix L: Ethics Approval

School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee

### NOTICE OF ETHICS REVIEW DECISION

For research involving human participants

BSc/MSc/MA/Professional Doctorates in Clinical, Counselling and Educational Psychology

**REVIEWER:** Mary-Jane Budd

**SUPERVISOR:** Claire Marshall

**STUDENT:** Vjosa Hyseni

**Course:** Professional Doctorate in Counselling Psychology

**Title of proposed study:** The lived experiences of Syrian Forced Migrants in the United Kingdom and the Implications for Clinical Interventions.

#### DECISION OPTIONS:

1. **APPROVED:** Ethics approval for the above named research study has been granted from the date of approval (see end of this notice) to the date it is submitted for assessment/examination.
2. **APPROVED, BUT MINOR AMENDMENTS ARE REQUIRED BEFORE THE RESEARCH COMMENCES** (see Minor Amendments box below): In this circumstance, re-submission of an ethics application is not required but the student must confirm with their supervisor that all minor amendments have been made before the research commences. Students are to do this by filling in the confirmation box below when all amendments have been attended to and emailing a copy of this decision notice to her/his supervisor for their records. The supervisor will then forward the student's confirmation to the School for its records.
3. **NOT APPROVED, MAJOR AMENDMENTS AND RE-SUBMISSION REQUIRED** (see Major Amendments box below): In this circumstance, a revised ethics application must be submitted and approved before any research takes place. The revised application will be reviewed by the same

reviewer. If in doubt, students should ask their supervisor for support in revising their ethics application.

**DECISION ON THE ABOVE-NAMED PROPOSED RESEARCH STUDY**

*(Please indicate the decision according to one of the 3 options above)*

Approved

**Minor amendments required** *(for reviewer):*

**Major amendments required** *(for reviewer):*

**Confirmation of making the above minor amendments** *(for students):*

I have noted and made all the required minor amendments, as stated above, before starting my research and collecting data.

Student's name *(Typed name to act as signature):* Vjosa Hyseni

Student number: 1010570

Date:

*(Please submit a copy of this decision letter to your supervisor with this box completed, if minor amendments to your ethics application are required)*

**ASSESSMENT OF RISK TO RESEACHER** *(for reviewer)*

Has an adequate risk assessment been offered in the application form?

YES / NO

Please request resubmission with an adequate risk assessment



If the proposed research could expose the researcher to any of kind of emotional, physical or health and safety hazard? Please rate the degree of risk:

HIGH

Please do not approve a high risk application and refer to the Chair of Ethics. Travel to countries/provinces/areas deemed to be high risk should not be permitted and an application not approved on this basis. If unsure please refer to the Chair of Ethics.

MEDIUM (Please approve but with appropriate recommendations)

LOW

**Reviewer comments in relation to researcher risk (if any).**

**Reviewer** (*Typed name to act as signature*): M-J Budd

**Date:** 12/7/18

*This reviewer has assessed the ethics application for the named research study on behalf of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee*

**RESEARCHER PLEASE NOTE:**

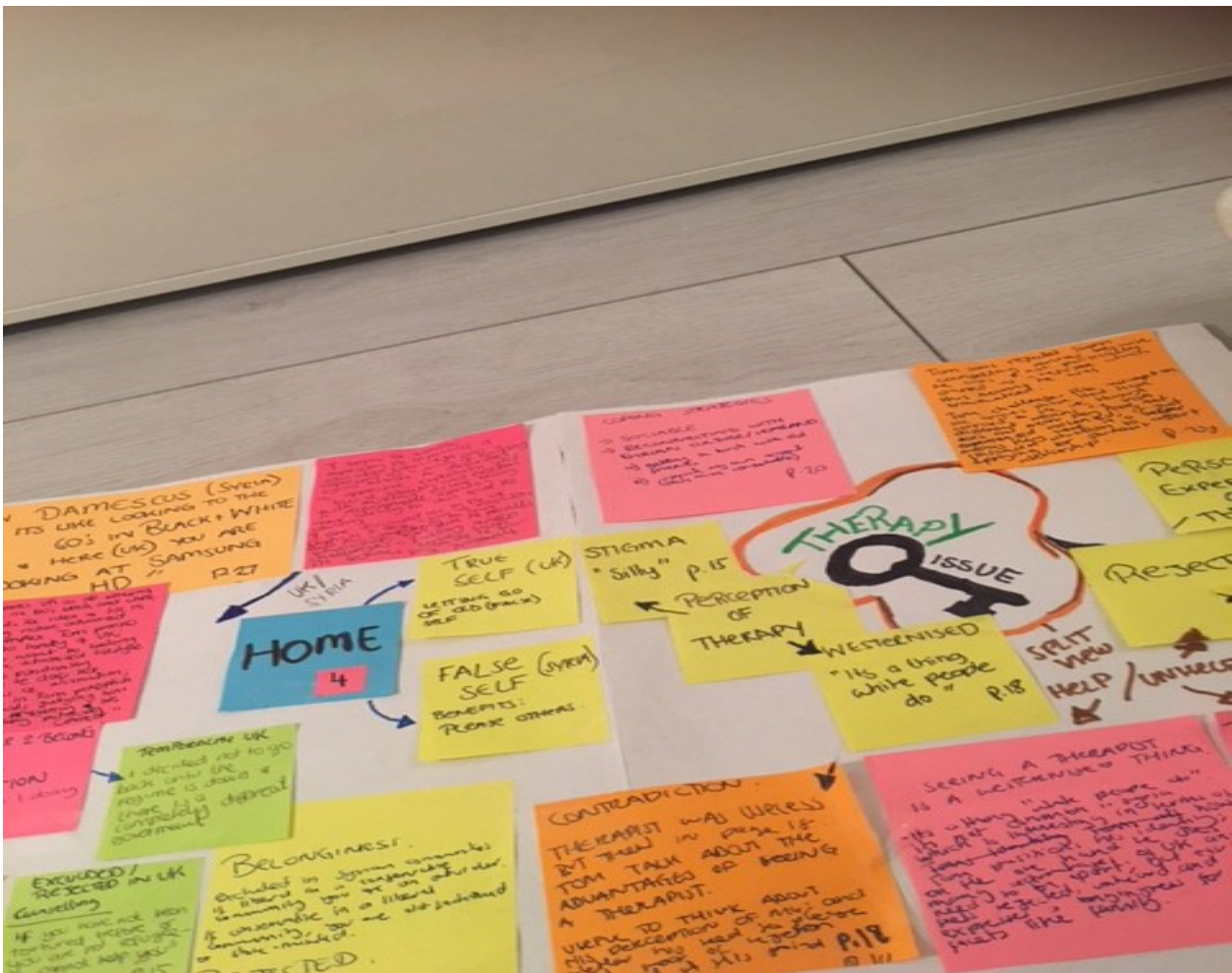
For the researcher and participants involved in the above named study to be covered by UEL's Insurance, prior ethics approval from the School of Psychology (acting on behalf of the UEL Research Ethics Committee), and confirmation from students where minor amendments were required, must be obtained before any research takes place.

For a copy of UELs Personal Accident & Travel Insurance Policy, please see the Ethics Folder in the Psychology Noticeboard

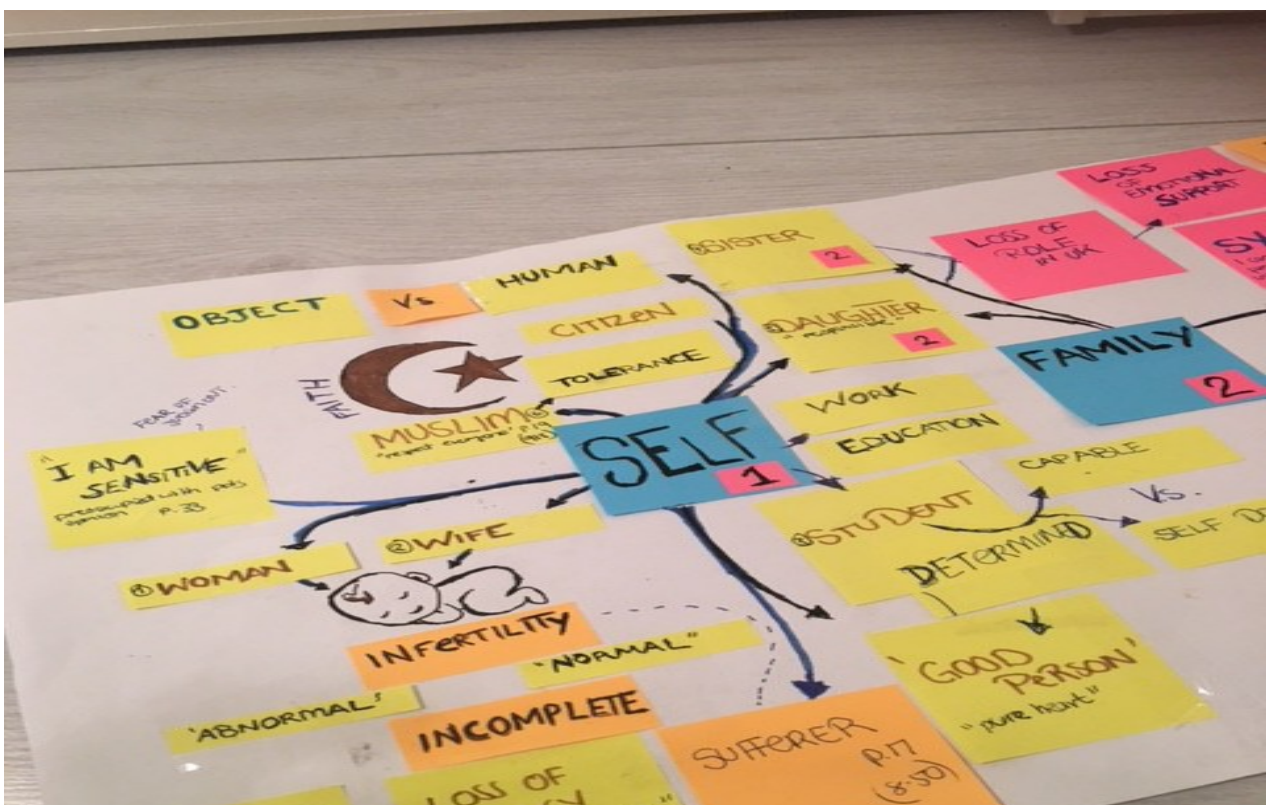
## Appendix M: IPA analysis: Themes from each participant graph



**Appendix N: IPA analysis: Themes from participant 1**



**Appendix O: IPA analysis: Themes from participant 3**



Appendix: P: IPA analysis: Annotated transcript

606 oldest in family for example. We meet, we sit  
 607 together, we talk together. We laugh, we have a lot of  
 608 fun and that's it. Here no... we doesn't find that..  
 609 because by the time you back from work it is 6  
 610 o'clock, and if you have college after 6 o'clock, then  
 611 you come back at 10 o'clock. That's what I am doing  
 612 now.  
 613 R: you come home at 10 o'clock?  
 614 M: 9.30pm/ 10.00pm yeah... because I have job.. and  
 615 after the job I want to go to college to complete my  
 616 education- that's what makes my life hard a little bit  
 617 here. R: what makes your life hard is that you're  
 618 doing quite a lot.. you are studying, you are working,  
 619 you are coming home at 10 o'clock, and it seems as  
 620 though you are coming home to an empty house? Not  
 621 with family.. under one roof?  
 622 M: no family house.. I come to family house.  
 623 R: you come to a family house? Okay so who do  
 624 you....  
 625 M: my wife and my daughter.  
 626 R: ok.. so there is still family under one roof?  
 627 M: yeah but its just my wife.. just only my wife. I  
 628 hope that me and my wife to live with my parents  
 629 because it is really.. i love this point but I can't do it  
 630 We are missing that  
 631 R: you are missing that  
 632 M: we don't have more time.. and my wife here to,  
 633 for example to go to rest here... or visit any place. To  
 634 enjoy life here... because we are both busy here.  
 635 R: ok! And what does your wife do here?  
 636 M: She is doing A-levels here, but she is studying  
 637 full-time as she had more time.  
 638 R: okay, and something you mentioned there was it is  
 639 a dream of yours to have had your parents to live with  
 640 you and your wife ...  
 641 M: (I hope that (smiles) I hope they will be able to  
 642 come to me.. not exactly sitting in one home but we  
 643 are going to see each other every day.  
 644 R: this is a dream of yours? For them to come to the  
 645 U.K and to be under one roof?  
 646 M: of course! We hope that! But it is impossible for  
 647 them to come and be here.  
 648 R: it is impossible?  
 649 M: yes, impossible!  
 650 R: how do you know it is impossible?  
 651 M: you know now with Syrian people, if you live in  
 652 Syria cant go anywhere.. there is no country that  
 653 accepts you to come in. For example, it is not really  
 654 easy to come to England because I have been on my  
 655 way...and in my journey, It is not easy to come here

work commitments in UK hinders ability to connect and spend time with family

This is an important value for participant

balancing oneself as a parent: one cannot be family

self as doing a great lot multiple roles and responsibilities

reduced family cohesion

LONGING FOR FAMILY COHESION

more isolated experience in the UK. missing family

multiple roles and responsibilities in the UK

says "I can't do it" does this mean he can't accept a reality without

"we don't enjoy life because we are too busy here"

"hope vs impossible"

some that family cohesion is permanently changed

IMPACT OF BECINGENY ON FAMILY COHESION

not easy to come to the UK.

Pursuing ambitions is described as being hard due to busy schedule

hopeful for family reunification in UK.

656 that is why I am feeling eve.ry minute.. I try to (  
 657 speech unclear) in England because I doesn't arrive  
 658 here easy by airport to come in here by plane. There  
 659 are no countries that will acce t S rian eo le for  
 660 example to meet my family in another country.  
 661 R: there isn't another country that will accept your  
 662 family?  
 663 M:No!  
 664 R: so how do feel towards the world if you know.  
 665 you're saying that they're not going to welcome or  
 666 support your family? How do you feel emotion

rejected  
by  
global  
community

667 to 'R  
 668 M: if I want to say that.IIhate it\I feel really upset. f'tvvJ:

669 ta:n g ogbu t I c ann o t d o a n 2:'. - -

671 Rwhen you say you are what makes 'of,- ?  
 672 you angry, what exactly makes you upset and angry? o<.. cl un

673 M: it makes you sad like that (becomes tearful).. carry h c,:M  
 674 on

675 R: It seems that you were saying countries not  
 676 welcoming towards Syrians. You mentioned that o.Jl.,  
 677 Arab countries are not welcoming.

678 M: I don't know why arab countries are doing like 'v.,>V,... J/i  
 679 that. Not exactly with Syrians people.. each together. p.II' T/ k,  
 680 IJ,ey doesn't support the people. For exam u,.,,  
 681 there is any problem in Syria, it should be the arab

682 country that should invite Syrian people to their  
 683 country. To support them, and to do anything for  
 684 them. Not exactly Europe or England or America to  
 685 support. For example, Syrian people - that is why the  
 686 arab people choose Europe and England going to be  
 687 like refugee and never ever come back. For me, I am  
 688 not going back to Syria because I hate it - if I still  
 689 there, I told you, I am going to be a child now - I am  
 690 not going to do anything. I am not going to carry on  
 691 with my life

reports a  
sense of  
rejection;  
seems to  
feel rejected  
by the  
world.

NO PROSPECTS  
STALLED  
DEPENDENT  
ON OTHERS  
"SELF AS "CHILD"

692 R: so the U.K gives you an opportunity to grow.. o  
 693 develop and to fulfill your dreams?

694 M: yes!

695 R: Whereas in Syria you can't?

696 M: no you can't! Jam going to tell you another point

696 (laughs)

697 R: Please do...

698 M: still in Syria. I am not going to have a house -

699 I am not going to HAVE CAR- I am not going to be

700 name O'mtrnot going to b.. many things?

701 R: Why?  
 702 M: (laughs) because.. there is nothing to support you  
 703 to do it like that. For example, if you want to get  
 704 married, you will need more to get married. If you

dis supported  
by Arab  
countries  
strongly  
rejects  
Syria;  
dependent  
on others  
for support  
but  
independent  
in UK

increase in demand  
autonomy in UK -  
self is dependent  
on others (family)  
in Syria, but  
self is independent  
in UK.

autonomy  
affects whether he is  
married  
has helped  
so he UK  
get P with family.

more

705  
 706 But married you are going to need home to live in.  
 707 everything, it is not going to be coming easy. You  
 708 have to work hard to get a home. For example, my  
 709 father he is an electric engineer in Syria and my  
 710 mother she is a teacher, but until build our home...  
 711 they take about 20 years to spend the money- spend  
 712 the money and after that they build the home. It is not  
 713 cheaper to get easy life. Here in this country, in  
 714 England, I can find this point. Easy to get your life..  
 715 R: Is easier to get your life?  
 716 M: Yes, it is easier than Syria. You can for example,  
 717 house and benefit going to support you if you doesn't  
 718 work - In Syria no! Or if you are going to be 18, you  
 719 can have work, or a job - you can support yourself or  
 720 you can study; or you can do many things here. You  
 721 have many choices.. just build your plan for the future  
 722 and choose the way you are going to get yourself.  
 723 R: You mentioned that coming to the U.K it gives you  
 724 an opportunity and it also helps you with many thing,  
 725 like finding a partner because to find a partner you  
 726 must be able to have a house, and you must be able to  
 727 support her. Are these all common ideas- are women  
 728 expected to help the man build a house or how does it  
 729 work?  
 730 (Mustafa's phone starts ringing, he mutes this)  
 731 M: can you repeat the question please.  
 732 R: I was just saying that you know.. coming to the  
 733 U.K, it helps you not only develop as an individual  
 734 but it can also help you get married and find a partner  
 735 because the country support you more than Syria  
 736 would support you.  
 737 M: yes the country here supports you if for anything,  
 738 but if you are going to be in Syria it is not going to  
 739 support you. You have to support yourself and it is  
 740 not easy to get money because before the war, Syrian  
 741 people - you can find it.. they work in gulf countries..  
 742 you know gulf ... Saudia, Kuwait... they are working  
 743 there and if there is no working there they work in  
 744 private businesses but who has lots of money not like  
 745 who is living in village.  
 746 R: I guess I was just trying to understand you know..  
 747 when you mentioned that coming the U.K it gives you  
 748 more opportunity than Syria.  
 749 M: yes  
 750 R: ok! Is there anything else you wanted to add to  
 751 that?  
 752 M: No  
 753 R: ok! Would you be able to tell me more about erm..i  
 754 mean I am not necessarily implying that there are  
negative experiences to the U.K but have you had

UK offers choices  
 UK offers support  
 UK helps one develop myself

describes establishing oneself as 'easy' (compared to UK)

LIFE IS EASIER IN UK COMPARED TO SYRIA.

seems to have a different experience to P3. who mentioned that men and women are expected to help with

more CH-101Q.i  
 1 1/4 H1,IP,  
 (On off")  
 n. 1/2 IA

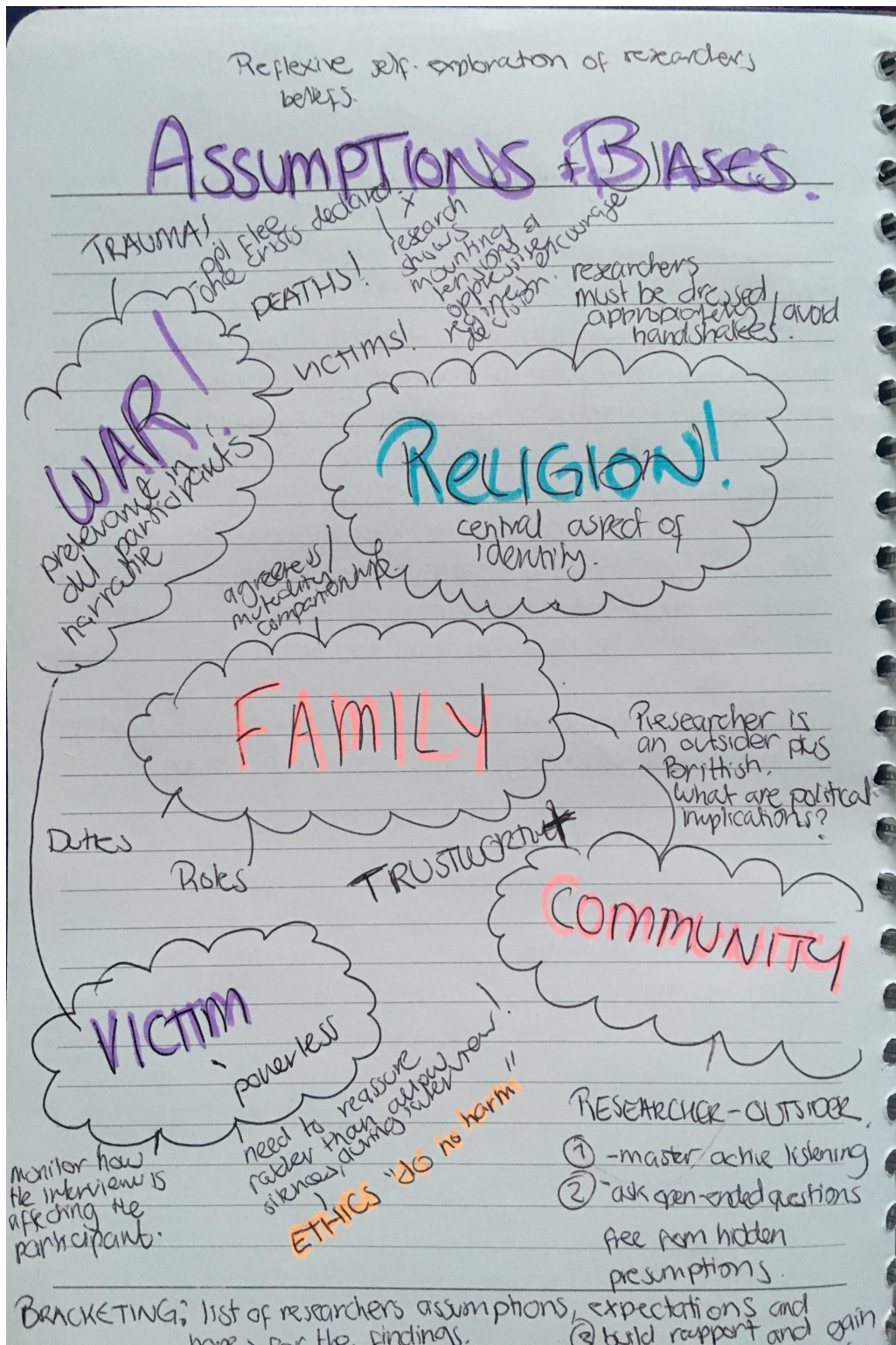
UK as supportive, offering financial assistance and economic + academic opportunities to build oneself.

this praise he might be getting because in England there are a lot of jobs unlike Arab countries

4... of J..1  
 0); 1-(V  
 (G) 0.0  
 0) "I.e. ...  
 Syria.

SYRIA you have to support yourself; this is uncomfortable given role of men is provide and send money to

**Appendix Q: Initial assumptions and preconceptions of target population**



## Appendix R: Literature Search strategy

The information I need is:	<p>(1) To understand the experiences of Syrian migrants in their resettlement context.</p> <p>(2) To understand what kinds of concerns Syrians have in their resettlement context</p> <p>(3) To understand the kind of coping mechanisms/strategies Syrians have used to cope with their experiences in their resettlement context.</p>
Databases used to search for information included:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Web of Science, PsychInfo, Psycinfo</li> <li>• PsycArticles</li> <li>• EBSCO</li> <li>• EBSCOhost Web</li> <li>• APA PsycArticles</li> <li>• APA Psycinfo</li> </ul>

The search strategy was to combine searches using synonyms phrases which tapped into four domains: (1) methodology, (2) population under study, (3) migratory stage and (4) field domain

<b>Population under study terms:</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Syrian AND</li> <li>2. (forced migrants OR refugee/s OR migrant/s OR asylum Seeker/s OR externally displaced NOT internally displaced</li> </ol>
<b>Methodology terms:</b>
1. AND (qualitative OR interpretative phenomenological analysis OR IPA OR phenomenology
<b>Migratory Stage terms:</b>
1. AND (post-resettlement OR post displacement OR assimilation OR accult*)
<b>Domain terms:</b>
1. AND Psychology OR/AND Psych* OR/AND Counsel*



Data base searched	Search terms used & limits applied	Number of results	Comments on results	Date of search	Next search date
Ebsco Host	"Syrian migrants" AND resettlement ) AND "empirical research")	1,017	Search found 6 relevant articles but search is limited to pathology.	15/10/2021	15/02/2022
Ebsco Host	"Syrian migrants" AND resettlement ) AND "qualitative research")	318	Type of research changed from quantitative/empirical to qualitative. Search found 7 relevant studies but some are limited to adolescents and children	18/10/2021	15/02/2022
Ebsco Host	"Syrian migrants" AND resettlement ) AND "qualitative research") AND Adulthood	322	1 word change. Adulthood inserted in search to extract articles pertaining to children and adolescents from search. 14 studies identified as being relevant for abstract assessment. However, some of the identified articles are specific to a particular experience i.e caregiving.	18/10/2021	18/02/2022
Ebsco Host	Syrian migrants" AND resettlement advantages OR hope OR benefits) AND "qualitative research")	310	All of the identified articles speak on challenges that come with resettlement. Search opened to include studies that highlight advantages associated with resettlement. Article by Pablo (2018) on "Welcome and hope, fear, and loathing..) seemed particularly relevant but it's the public opinion on Syrians thus irrelevant.	06/12/2021	21/02/2022
Ebsco Host	Syrian migrants" AND resettlement advantages OR hope OR benefits) AND "narrative")	68	Search opened to find studies based on different qual methods. 16 relevant, 4 duplicates	15/02/2021	03/03/2022

Ebsco host	Syrian migrants" AND resettlement advantages OR hope OR 1benefits) AND "thematic")	139	19 relevant, 15 duplicates (leaving 4)	18/12/2021	15/03/2022
Ebsco host	Syrian migrants" AND resettlement advantages OR hope OR 1benefits) AND "phenomenological")		<p>10 studies identified for assessment including:</p> <p>1) Kuo, B. C., Granemann, L., Najibzadeh, A., Al-Saadi, R., Dali, M., &amp; Alsmoudi, B. (2020). Examining Post-Migration Social Determinants as Predictors of Mental and Physical Health of Recent Syrian Refugees in Canada: Implications for Counselling, Practice, and Research. <i>Canadian Journal of Counselling and Psychotherapy</i>, 54(4), 778-802</p> <p>2. Utržan, D. S., &amp; Wieling, E. A. (2020). A phenomenological study on the experience of Syrian asylum-seekers and refugees in the United States. <i>Family process</i>, 59(1), 209-228</p>	27/12/2021	15/03/2022