

Saved but Not Settled Family Separation and UK Refugees Critical Review

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Applied Social Research – Critical Review on ‘Saved but Not Settled: The Impact of Family Separation on Refugees in the UK’

The research was done by Oxfam, which is an International Association of 20 different organizations that are working together around the globe in more than almost 90 countries with an aim to make a future that is free from poverty, and the Refugee Council, which is considered as one of the foremost charities in the UK, who work with the refugees. This report was written by Beaton, Musgrave, and Liebl, with support provided by Ross, Orton, Tsegazghi, Wilson, Dobson, Cairns, and Dennis. The research was done during the summer of 2017. The research was published by Oxfam GB for Oxfam International in January 2018. Although the fund provider of the present research was not mentioned in the report, according to the Oxfam International website, Oxfam provides funds for conducting research.

This research was conducted to inform the UK's policy regarding refugees. This report highlights the UK policy of how the refugees who, after their arrival to the UK, wanted to get their family members to join them in the UK face conflicts, harassment, or abuse by the restricted approach of the UK. The UK has a policy according to which only those refugees who are adults can apply for their spouse and their children who are under 18 and were part of their nuclear families before leaving their homes. However, the parents, siblings, children, and grandparents who have crossed the age of 18 are not considered family. It does not matter how much dependent or closed they are. So, this research was conducted to investigate how this ongoing forced separation from loved ones and family reunion affects the refugees' ability to integrate into the UK successfully (UK Home Office, 2016; UK Home Office, 2018).

The research question of the present study includes the perceptions of Refugee Council staff regarding the experiences of refugees related to family separation and integration. The aim of the present social research was to find out how refugees are facing family reunions and forced separation from the family due to UK policy and how it affects them to integrate there without their loved ones. This work provides an insight into the challenges faced by the group of resettled refugees even after recognition by the Home Office; although they have been saved, they were restless and needed long-term integration support rather than short-term (UNHCR, 2013).

Authors have highlighted the international law that acknowledges the fact that families are allowed to be protected, and after this clarification, it is left to the individual states to define what it means to be 'family' to them. Authors have further clarified that in the UK, the government definition of family excludes adult siblings, grandparents, and all those children who are over 18 years of age. They have elaborated on this issue that it is the UK's responsibility to give rights to all child refugees that would be no less than adult refugees. The argument has been set by focusing on 'The Refugee Family Reunion Policy' and how refugees are suffering in the UK not only to sponsor their left family but also in the provision of leaves. Moreover, the UK has given some loose ends to refugees in that they might sponsor their families that are not covered by the refugee family reunion policy, but for this very purpose, they have to prove dependency and be able to show that these family members need care and supervision that is not given properly. However, these restricted requirements have forced displacement drastically and have made it difficult for families to find safety in the UK. After reviewing the literature and all the theoretical frameworks, including what laws and policies explain this issue, the authors decided to conduct a qualitative study using a survey designed by Refugees Council Staff who support resettled refugees who came through the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme and Gateway Protection Program (UK Home Office, 2016; UNHCR, 2013).

Primary data was collected in July/August 2017, during which structured telephonic interview calls were made to the Refugee Council staff who were dealing with resettled refugees. The reason behind conducting interviews with Refugee Council staff rather than the refugees themselves was the sensitivities that were involved in asking the clients directly to talk about their family members who were separated from them, and obviously, it was quite a distressing subject for the refugees. The Refugee Council was a central party and a delivery partner for the local authorities who were providing long-term support to the resettled refugees. This survey design provides great insight to the researchers about the issues of resettled refugees, and if any other methodology or research design was used, then it would have created many problems. For example, if resettled refugees were interviewed rather than the Refugee Staff Council, then it would be a source of distress for them to talk about their separated families.

Qualitative interviews were conducted to collect the data, and for this purpose, Resettlement team managers of Refugee Council offices in Hull, Hertfordshire, Leeds, and Sheffield were approached and asked to identify at least one member of their teams so that they could be interviewed. This technique helped in ensuring the geographic spread, and in this way, data was collected from refugees who were coming either through the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme or Gateway Protection Program. Six staff members were identified and interviewed, but before conducting interviews, these six staff members were asked to identify up to 10 clients who have gone through the separation and reunion issue so that they could be talked about during the interview. So, a total of 44 case studies were discussed during the study. The researcher was informed about their basic demographic details prior to conducting interviews. Two males and four females Refugee Council staff were approached, three of them were resettlement team managers while the rest of them were projected workers. All six interviewees have extensive experience in dealing with refugees.

The aim of the interview, as mentioned earlier, was to investigate the perceptions of Refugee Council Staff, who were dealing directly with resettled refugees, to enquire about the experience of refugees related to family separation and integration into the new society. In the present study, the researcher identified the key indicators related to integration by Agar and Strand, including social connections, foundation, facilitators, and means and markers. The interview schedule consisted of 20 questions that were divided into three sections. The first section includes questions regarding the perception of refugees' experiences of the family reunification process. The second section includes five scenarios that were presented to interviewees related to family separation, and then they were asked to give details related to each scenario they have ever experienced. The third section includes the question from interviewees about the influence of separation from the family members and then their reunification. All the names of clients were altered to maintain confidentiality, and the client's home location was not revealed. Informed consent was also taken from the clients so that their stories could be shared. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed. Thematic analysis technique was used to identify major themes, and then major findings were reported. Proper themes emerged, and it was a milestone for the UK government to refocus on the policies made for refugees. The wider integration literature likewise emphasizes social connections, access to institutions, and long-term support rather than treating legal recognition alone as complete integration (UNHCR, 2013).

The title of the report was 'Safe but Not Settled,' whereas the name of the report was 'The Impact of Family Separation on Refugees in the UK.' The wider literature on securitization also shows how migration and humanitarian protection can become framed through security-oriented policy rather than solely through protection and integration (Bourbeau, 2013; Watson, 2009).

References

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