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## 主 論 文 の 要 旨

論文題目

An Analysis of Refugee Resilience: Evidence from the Lived Experiences of Resettled Syrian Refugees in Canada

(難民のレジリエンスに関する分析：カナダに再定住するシリア難民の生きた経験から得る証左)

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## 論 文 内 容 の 要 旨

The purpose of the research is to rethink the way we view and study refugees that focuses on individuals, their stories, and their subjective lived experiences as they adjust to their new life in Canada. By letting the voices of individuals be heard, researchers, policy makers, and Canadians can better understand the strengths of refugees, the struggles they face, and how we can help them thrive in their new lives. Research that focuses on the challenges and negative experiences of refugees raises awareness of specific needs but leave questions of resilience unanswered. Former Syrian refugees in British Columbia (BC) face obstacles during resettlement, but they also show resourcefulness and independence in rebuilding their lives. Refugee studies is about more than politics, policy, passiveness, and objectivity. Refugees are people with unique and challenging experiences who are actively seeking to regain control over their future and thrive after resettlement. Consequently, the extent of the unique and subjective strengths and areas of resilience among Syrian refugees is a question that is explored in this dissertation.

In this dissertation, I provide evidence of people's subjective lived experiences of resettlement and themes of resilience that help them overcome the challenges of displacement and resettlement. Thus, the research questions and objectives of this study address the themes of resilience and the ways people actively create a positive future during resettlement. The following research questions guided the study:

**Main research question:** What are the lived experiences of former Syrian refugees in BC?

**Research question 1:** What factors contribute to resilience?

**Research question 2:** What challenges to resilience do refugees face?

**Research question 3:** How does resilience contribute to well-being during integration?

In answering these questions, the study also addresses several research objectives. The first objective was to identify the dimensions, or themes, of resilience among resettled Syrian refugees in BC. The second objective was to explore each of these themes of resilience in greater depth. The third objective was to recognize the ways resilience contributes to well-being. And the fourth objective was to relate the findings of this study to the broader discussion of refugee acceptance and international cooperation.

### *Approach and Methodology*

Within an interpretivist paradigm, our individual human realities and understandings are made up of subjective experiences. In interpretivism, researchers seek to understand a socially constructed reality inside a defined context (Willis, 2007). Within an interpretivist lens, the lived experiences, perceptions and understandings of individuals are crucial in deciphering a phenomenon (Thanh and Thanh, 2015). Thus, the epistemological belief of reality is that it is a social construct, and knowledge is subjective and must be interpreted. The goal of interpretivist research is to generate new knowledge that is transferable to other populations or contexts. The purpose of qualitative research is to help researchers understand people, situations, and social and cultural contexts (Myers, 2009). Rather than ending up with numbers and statistics, it is inductive and ends up with rich narratives and descriptions of the data (Domegan and Fleming, 2007). This was an appropriate methodology for this study because while the focus was on lived experiences and resilience, interviews were open to development as participants emphasized what was meaningful to them. This approach contrasts with previous refugee studies which focus on policy or objective measures of refugee movement. In moving away from a study that implies refugees are “objects,” this research approaches refugee studies seeking subjective lived experiences and meaning. Thus, this research was phenomenological and quantitative, and it used thematic analysis to discover the themes of resilience as they emerged from the participants’ responses to interview questions. A subjective approach like this puts the attention back on refugees and their subjective lived experiences while highlighting their strengths in recovering and thriving after resettlement.

Two interview participants were recruited through a religious organization and a friend prior to leaving Japan. After arriving in Canada, most participants were recruited via snowball sampling, while the remaining participants were recruited via family friends and non-profit resettlement services. Participants were given informed consent sheets in both English and Arabic at the time of the interview. In total, 26 people were interviewed, 11 of whom were men and 15 women. Ages ranged from late teens to late 50s, with the average age for men 30 and for women 35. Eighteen people were married, seven were single, and one

was widowed prior to the Syrian war. Twenty-one people were Sunni and 5 were Christian. At the time of the interview, average length of time in Canada was 14 months. The shortest time was one year two months, and the longest time was two years eight months. Ten participants were from Dara' a, six from Homs, four from Damascus, three from Latakia, two from Aleppo, and one from Idlib. On the journey from Syria to Canada, participants had stayed in Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Libya, and Turkey. On arrival in Canada, 18 people were government-assisted refugees, four were privately sponsored refugees, and four were blended visa office-referred. 11 interviews were conducted in English and 15 in Arabic with the assistance of an interpreter.

As the research was interpretive and focused on thematic analysis, interviews were semi-structured and open-ended. Interview questions focused on experiences of resettlement, identity, community, personal strengths, and society. Examples of some of the interview questions include: Who are your closest friends in Canada, and why are these relationships important to you? How do you express yourself creatively? How do you keep a positive attitude through difficult experiences? And, what are your goals for the next five years in Canada? Interviews were voice recorded and transcribed by myself. Interviews were transcribed within one to two days of the interview with field notes to record reflections, insights, or emerging themes. Recorded interviews, transcripts, and field notes were available only to me to protect individual identities. The data was analyzed by myself using thematic analysis (Nowell, et al. 2017). Categories were identified within each interview then compared against other interviews to distinguish significant themes, which then become the themes used throughout the results section of this dissertation. Prior to submission, extracts from interview transcripts were shared with the participants who shared their email addresses to confirm the contents and allow opportunities for amendments to their statements.

### *Main Findings*

The findings of this research show us that the lives of refugees are not burdened with challenge after challenge, but that people can see the positive aspects of their situation and take advantage of opportunities and resources to improve their lives. The result of resettlement in Canada isn't a painful existence wherein individuals face obstacles daily that interfere with integration. Rather, people can find meaning and purpose in their experiences, can gain confidence and independence, and can feel a sense of accomplishment. There is plenty of room for resilience to manifest in Canada, due in part to the social environment, community support, and the respondents' personal characteristics. The current body of research focusing on the challenges people face is not evenly balanced against refugees' resilience and ability to improve their lives, and their subjective experiences tell a rich and detailed picture of positive resettlement.

In this dissertation, I argue that while Syrian refugees are not free of obstacles to resettlement and integration, through their subjective lived experiences they show a great degree of resilience in overcoming obstacles and improving their lives. This dissertation identifies seven themes of resilience within the three broad categories of society, interpersonal, and individual. The main findings are:

#### Society:

- Places in the physical environment can promote emotional healing, stress release, community engagement, and nostalgia.
- Women are eager to make use of new rights and freedoms they didn't have in Syria; both men and women are finding opportunities for entrepreneurship and self-sufficiency in the face of unemployment challenges.

#### Interpersonal:

- Family is the initial foundation of resilience for newcomers, and participants stress the importance of keeping a positive attitude, being more patient, and their appreciation for family members throughout their experiences.
- Syrians and Arabs provide a source of emotional support through shared experiences, ethnic identification, a common language, familiar food and culture, and serve as a bridge to better understand Canadian society.
- Non-Arabs and Canadians expose Syrians to the diversity of Canadian society, can help with the functional aspects of resettlement, and provide close understanding of Canada.

#### Individual:

- Personal characteristics, such as optimism, being open to personal transformation, and having the ability to adapt and grow when confronted with change are indicators of personal resilience and ease of integration.
- Creativity and artistic expression is a valuable outlet for processing one's emotions, describing experiences, assessing past experiences, introspection, and personal growth.

From these findings, I found three consequences of resilience among participants that helped them better appreciate themselves and their experiences. These are:

- Sense of self: is a more accurate and complete assessment of oneself, one's experience, and their current situation which contributes to greater self-confidence, independence, and autonomy.
- Sense of purpose: means participants can put their experiences into context, have more

compassion for others, increased empathy, and can find purpose in helping others overcome challenges even when they also face them.

- Sense of mastery: is the feeling that participants have overcome hardship in a positive way and have confidence in their ability to overcome future challenges; they have achieved their goals and feel self-assured.

This PhD dissertation holds original and valuable conceptual and methodological contributions. The attention to lived experiences compensates for the missing data on Syrian refugee resilience and helps create a more complete image of Syrian refugee resettlement. It encourages further research that uses subjective experiences of refugees to explore emerging themes, strategies, and contributing factors of resilience in the years and decades following resettlement in Canada.