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Book Reviews

Spoken English does matter: Findings from an exploratory study to identify predictors of employment among African refugees in Brisbane[35]

Aparna Hebbani
University of Queensland
a.hebbani@uq.edu.au

Megan Preece
Children's Health Queensland Hospital and Health Service
megan.preece@griffithuni.edu.au

Abstract

This article presents findings from an exploratory survey aimed to identify predictors of employment for Sudanese, Somali, and Congolese former refugees living in the greater Brisbane area in 2009-2010. Quantitative data was collected from 56 participants (25 employed and 31 unemployed men and women). We found that only spoken English language proficiency increased the odds of being employed. Interestingly, we found no statistical significance between employment and demographics (i.e., age, gender, or marital status), length of residence in Australia, time spent in refugee camps, English proficiency (reading, writing or numeracy), or level of education. We discuss the implications of these findings and suggest improvements to policies along with ways to assist refugee employment.

Introduction

Over the past 50 years, Australia has resettled over 750,000 refugees. Recently, the annual number of refugee places has been on the rise -

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from 12,000 in 1998–99 to 13,799 in 2010–11 (DIAC, 2011). Arrivals earlier in the decade were mostly from Europe; however, recent arrivals are largely refugees from Africa, Middle East, and Asia; these regions continue to be a key focus of Australia's Humanitarian Program.

There is a considerable amount of social science research on Australian settlement of refugees. Recent research has focused on the employment context, an issue that many researchers (especially economists and sociologists) consider crucial for successful adjustment by immigrants, with a secondary focus on refugee trauma, and acculturation challenges (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury 2003, 2007; DIAC, 2011a; Hugo, 2011; Marlowe, 2011). While some researchers have looked at the positive contributions and resources made by refugees (see Refugee Council of Australia, 2010; Skrbis & Chiment, 2011), there are others who have painted a picture of unemployment, underemployment (Correa-Velez & Onsando, 2009; DIAC, 2011a; Hugo, 2011), stigma and discrimination, poor self-concept, low self-esteem, intergenerational/interpersonal family conflict, language difficulties, financial hardships, mental health issues, and difficulty acculturating into Australian society.

Refugees and the Employment Context

In many ways, successful integration equates with successful settlement. Ager and Strang's (2008) conceptual framework sought to "provide a coherent conceptual structure for considering, from a normative perspective, what constitutes the key components of integration" (p. 170). As depicted in Figure 1, the framework included four key themes with a total of 10 interdependent domains of successful integration.

Of these ten domains, two markers and means are of particular significance to this study namely employment and education, as is one facilitator, language and cultural knowledge (important in building social connections). Employment, in turn, affects other aspects of a refugee's life such as providing economic self-sufficiency, feeling of self-worth and self-efficacy, reduced domestic stress, increased psychological well-being, and reduced rates of mental illness , and presents an opportunity to build on host language skills (Sulaiman-Hill & Thompson, 2012). The conceptual framework is not without critique – Phillimore and Goodson (2008) urged reconsidering the relationships between the domains; they posited that the flow from one domain to another was crucial to the integration processes and went on to

specifically use the example of one such crucial relationship between employment and local language acquisition.

Figure 1. A conceptual framework defining core domains of integration
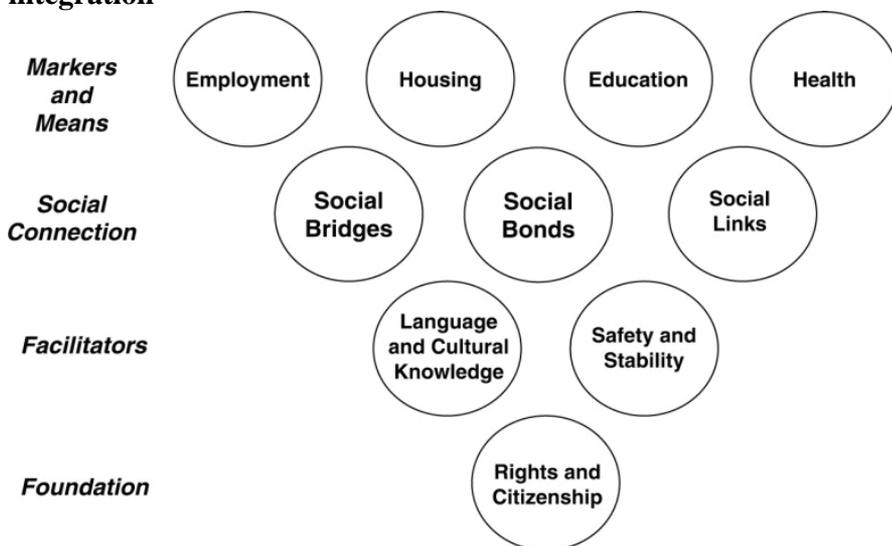
Unfortunately, evidence suggests that refugees encounter significant difficulties in social and employment settings (see Colic-Peisker & Tilbury 2007; Hugo, 2011; Milner & Khawaja, 2010). Hugo (2011) reported that in the initial years, refugees have negative experiences with employment. Much of the past research has indicated that barriers to refugee employment can include factors such as host language proficiency, acculturation problems, non-recognition of overseas qualifications, lack of education, lack of work experience, no proof of past qualifications, and discrimination (AHRC, 2010; Colic-Peisker, 2005, 2009; Colic-Peisker & Tilbury 2003, 2006, 2007; Fozdar, 2012; Hebbani & Colic-Peisker, 2012; Hugo, 2011; Tilbury & Colic-Peisker, 2006). All of these factors are also represented within Ager and Strang's (2008) framework on domains of integration. In addition to the aforementioned factors, there are other socio-demographic variables which have been found to impact refugee employment such as age, place of settlement, and length of residence (Refugee Council of Australia, 2010).

Just as Ager and Strang's (2008) framework grouped language and cultural knowledge as one domain, Berry's (2005) theoretical

framework of acculturation also stressed the important role played by host language acquisition in acculturation, albeit not explicitly within the employment context, but in general. Berry (2005) defined acculturation as, "the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members" (p. 698). Acculturation may be influenced by age, economic resources, desire to adapt, the support of family and community, cultural norms and values, as well as an ability to address psychological barriers such as their trauma (Bemak & Chung, 2002; Berger, 2004; Yakushko, 2008b).

While acculturation is a long-term process, it can, for instance also entail "learning each other's languages, sharing each other's food preferences, and adopting forms of dress and social interactions that are characteristic of each group" (p. 699). For example, improved English language proficiency has often been viewed as a progressive indicator of adjustment and integration of immigrants into employment in Canada (Noels & Berry, 2006). Similarly, Dhanji's (2009) Australia-based study with Sudanese refugees also stressed the importance of English proficiency in employment.

Language skills have also seen noted as a primary factor in immigrants' and refugees' career development and job success. For example, a report by the Center for Workforce Success (2007) of the Manufacturing Institute showed that employers in industries who typically hired immigrants and refugees, saw language skills as a main factor in their overall work performance (Yakushko, 2008). Faced with such challenges as part of adjusting to a new home country and culture, many refugees take up low-paying employment that is below their expertise or qualifications (i.e., underemployment) (see Hebbani, 2014). On the flipside, one could assume then that if the barriers listed above were lifted/remedied, refugees would be better placed to secure employment. For example, if refugees improved their English language proficiency, or worked towards furthering their educational qualification, over time, they would stand a better chance of being employed.

A few studies which have investigated barriers to employment have shown mixed results. In a study of predominantly Turkish male migrants in Canada, Aycan and Berry (1996) found that due to low local language proficiency, lack of Canadian work experience, and difficulty getting qualifications recognised, led to the inability of this cohort to integrate into the workforce within the first six months of arrival. More recently,

a 2011 US-based study by Codell, Hill and Woltz with Burmese, Iraqi, and Bhutanese refugees found that in addition to better English speaking skills, those refugees with more education were more likely to find meaningful employment (i.e., work that is competitively obtained, paying above minimum wage, and not time-limited). However, they also found that there was a negative correlation between time spent as a refugee and securing meaningful employment. In other words, for every year spent as a refugee there was a corresponding decrease in the ability of finding appropriate employment. They postulated that spending protracted lengths of time in refugee camps might be disadvantageous to refugees as compared to those refugees who spent less time living in a refugee camp.

Similarly, an Australia-based longitudinal study by Correa-Velez, Barnett, and Gifford (2013) with 233 male refugees (most were from Sudan, Burma, Iraq, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Rwanda) living in south-east Queensland found that region of birth, time spent in Australia, seeking employment through job service providers and informal networks, and owning a car were significant predictors of employment, whereas English language proficiency and having completed tertiary education in Australia were not significant predictors of employment. Focusing on time spent in Australia, Hugo (2014) also found that the longer refugees had lived in Australia, the more their workforce participation numbers converged with those of the Australian population.

Given this backdrop, we were keen to explore predictors of employment for recent refugee arrivals in Queensland, Australia. The findings presented in this article are from a study within the greater Brisbane region with male and female, employed and unemployed Congolese, Sudanese, and Somali former refugees.

Method

From late 2009-late 2011, we gathered quantitative data from unemployed and employed Sudanese, Somali, and Congolese former refugee men and women settled in the greater Brisbane area in Queensland, Australia. Access Community Services Limited (ACSL) a local refugee settlement services provider, assisted with recruiting participants from the various communities through their bilingual and bicultural assistants (BBAs) and contacts with local Sudanese, Somali, and Congolese community leaders. BBAs from Somali, Sudanese, and Congolese communities were inducted into the research project and trained in data collection procedures during a day-long workshop

conducted by the research team. As part of this workshop, they were informed about the research aims, methods, and participant selection criteria, and had an opportunity to discuss the survey questions.

Data Collection

Overall, 56 participants from three African communities (Somali, Sudanese, and Congolese) volunteered to complete a brief survey (25 questions) which was constructed to gather nominal and ordinal self-report data on demographics (age, gender, marital status, year they left their home country, name of refugee camp, length of stay in Australia), languages spoken, English language skills (speaking, writing, reading, and numeracy), educational history (in home country and Australia), and past/current employment history (in home country and Australia).

Survey completion sessions were organised at either ACSL offices, or after community meetings; these sessions were organised to be homogenous with respect to birthplace group, gender, and employment status (i.e., employed/unemployed by men/women). At each session, members of the research team and BBAs from the respective communities assisted participants with interpreting and translating survey items and responses as and when required.

Limitations

There were a few limitations present in the current study; despite these limitations, this study makes a valuable contribution to existing literature on the refugee employment context as it explores the significance of specific facilitators on refugee employment amongst participants from three African communities. First of all, as the data were difficult to collect, the researchers decided to not select a very stringent significance level (which is .01 or .001- means that we are sure that the chance of error is 1 in 100 or 1 in 1000) therefore, as we are relying on .05 (a less stringent level - the chance of error is 5 in 100) , which is giving us a significant result, but on the other hand we are not sure if this is accurate (i.e., could be an exaggeration).

Second, our total sample comprised of only 56 participants – this meant that conducting the same set of analyses within each ethnic group was not feasible. Using the current study as a starting point, future research with a larger sample of employed and unemployed men and women could address each of these limitations and enable researchers to develop a rank order of which variables are predictors of employment in Australian refugee populations. Thus, our sample size was too small to

carry out a multiple regression even though technically it could be done, but the results may not be reliable or meaningful.

Third, this study was restricted to a sample of Somali, Sudanese, and Congolese refugees settled in Brisbane, Queensland. Queensland is considered a politically conservative state in the country (see McKay, Thomas & Kneebone, 2011), and hence, results might vary in studies conducted in other major cities which is accustomed to settling many more refugees (such as Melbourne in Victoria and Sydney in New South Wales). With this in mind, the results cannot be generalised to the entire refugee population in Australia.

Data Analysis

Quantitative survey data gathered all three refugee communities were analysed using IBM SPSS version 21. An alpha level of .05 was used for all statistical analyses.

Results

Table 1 below presents an overview of participants' demographic information (n = 56). Across the three ethnic groups, we recruited 32 females and 24 males. On average, participants had spent 10.44 years as a refugee (SD = 5.44) and had been in Australia for 5.13 years (SD = 3.39)[36].

Most participants came to Australia via refugee camps in Kenya (Kakuma), Ethiopia, Egypt, or Malawi. Almost 80 percent of participants had completed the AMEP[37] and **Table 2** illustrates the self-report data on English language proficiency. The primary language spoken at home by Sudanese participants was Dinka, most Congolese participants spoke either Swahili and/or French at home, whereas most Somalis spoke Somali at home.

With regards to participants' level of education, **Table 3** shows us that a significant proportion of participants had undertaken vocational training or a university degree.

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[36] n = number of participants; SD = standard deviation

[37] AMEP stands for the Adult Migrant English Program. This is a program offered by the Australian government free of cost to humanitarian entrants which comprises of 510 hours of English language training; see Yates (2010) for suggestions for improving the AMEP program. Yates, L. (2010). Language training and settlement success: Are they related? Report published by AMEP Research Centre, Macquarie University, Sydney: NSW.

Lastly, as **Table 4** illustrates, on the whole, we had more unemployed participants (31) than employed participants (25) – except for the Sudanese which had slightly more employed than unemployed participants; this sample reflects reality of refugee employment with more humanitarian entrants being unemployed than employed (Hugo, 2011). We found that: (a) one third of Somalis were working as machinery operators and drivers, while another third were working in the community and/or personal service sector (the work classifications are taken from the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations), (c) the Congolese participants were equally employed in the community and personal service sector and as labourers, and (d) a majority of Sudanese were working as labourers followed by many also in the community and personal service sector.

Roughly equal proportions of the employed Somali participants reported working full-time versus working part-time or casually. On the other hand, most Congolese participants indicated that they were working part-time or casually, whereas most Sudanese participants reported that they were working full-time. Many women were employed in aged care, child care, meatworks and cleaning services, whereas men were concentrated in labour intensive industries such as factory/dockhands work. In short, a majority of the participants were located in the secondary labour market, although a minority worked in white-collar jobs in migrant services, as depicted in **Table 4** below.

Predictors of Employment

We sought to examine whether certain personal characteristics, refugee experiences, self-assessed English proficiency, or education level, predicted employment in our sample.

Personal characteristics. There were no significant associations[38] between employment status and participants' gender, age, marital status, or ethnic group.

Time spent in refugee camps and time since arrival in host country. There was no significant relationship[39] between the length of time spent

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[38] Employment status and gender ($\chi^2(1) = 1.54$, $p = .21$, Cramer's $\varphi = .17$), employment status and age (Fisher's exact test $p = .26$), employment status and marital status (Fisher's exact test $p = .91$), and employment status and ethnic group ($\chi^2(2) = 2.64$, $p = .27$, Cramer's $\varphi = .22$).

as a refugee before arriving in Australia and employment status, nor was there a significant relationship between refugees' length of residence in Australia and employment status.

English language proficiency. There was no significant relationship between employment status and AMEP course completion. There was, however, a positive relationship between *spoken* English proficiency and employment status. Refugees who indicated greater proficiency in spoken English were more likely to be in paid employment. There were no significant relationships between reading English proficiency, written English proficiency or numeracy and employment status. Correlations between employment status and self-reported English proficiency are presented in **Table 5**.

Level of education. As seen in **Table 6**, there was no significant association between employment status and level of education.

Discussion
Previous research into refugee employment has established many factors which act as barriers to employment. Therefore, this study attempted to pinpoint predictors of employment for employed and unemployed Sudanese, Somali, and Congolese former refugees.

Spoken English Proficiency
The only factor that was found to be a significant predictor of employment was *spoken* English proficiency; thus, refugees who indicated greater proficiency in spoken English were more likely to be employed. This finding is in line with Berry (2005) who posits that learning the host language plays an important role in acculturating into the host culture, and also with Ager and Strang (2008) and Hugo (2011) who noted the importance of learning the host language as part of the overall integration process and learning local language as facilitating settlement. While we know that learning a foreign language is not easy, especially as one grows older, we suggest that this is one area refugees can focus on to increase their chances of employment. Even Hugo's (2011) report cited census data as indicating that as English spoken proficiency increased, the unemployment rate decreased. This result also addresses the critique by Phillimore and Goodson (2008) urging

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[39] Length of time spent as a refugee before arriving in Australia ($\rho = .07$, $p = .64$); refugees' length of residence in Australia ($\rho = .21$, $p = .14$).

consideration of the relationships between the domains namely the crucial relationship between employment and local language acquisition. Thus, referring back to Ager and Strang's (2008) conceptual framework, we can say that the domain of language proficiency is indeed a facilitator towards the marker of employment and might be the first step in the right direction.

On the other hand, however, our finding does contradict Correa-Velez' et al.'s (2013) finding that English language proficiency was not a significant predictor of employment. However, Correa-Velez' study did not demarcate the different aspects of English language proficiency into speaking, reading, writing, or numeracy. Therefore, this study demonstrated that by investigating all different aspects of English language proficiency, we were able to pinpoint spoken English as a predictor of employment.

Keeping the Australian job hiring procedures in mind (i.e., requiring verbal communication with the employer), it makes sense that demonstrating *spoken* English language competency would play an important role in the communication processes with an employer, for example either in person during an interview or via a telephone call. English spoken with a strong (African) foreign accent is likely to be an immediate identifier of 'difference' and might thereby influence interviewers' perceptions of whether the refugee candidate is employable or not. For example, a large linguistic distance between African languages such as Dinka, Arabic, Somali, Swahili and/or French (for Francophone Congolese) and Australian English may lead to a high degree of hesitation in making decisions around employability (see Hebbani & Colic-Peisker, 2012). Therefore, the explicit issues that make job interviews difficult and securing a job unlikely—a lack of spoken English proficiency coupled with a strong 'foreign' accent can clearly mark many of these former refugees as 'the other' (Hebbani & Colic-Peisker, 2012).

Based on our verbal interactions with participants as part of the survey completion sessions, we found that even those participants' who had completed the 510 hours of AMEP, struggled with communicating with us in English. Our participants realized that improving English language proficiency was crucial to their gaining employment,– but for many they had to decide whether they would take up any job they could find in order to quickly earn money to support their family here (and back home in their country of origin through remittances) (Kifle, 2009) or whether to delay such employment, and invest in their future by

taking more English language training in order to have a better chance at higher paid employment.

Additionally, it could also be the case that even though one may have completed the AMEP course, unless one practices English and/or increases communication with a predominantly English speaker, they might be forgetting what they learnt. If participants stayed within their own ethnic enclave, they are more likely to speak in their native language rather than English – this could be a disadvantage. Other than conversing in English at the grocery store, for example, they might have reduced opportunities to practice their English speaking skills, and hence might forget what they learnt in classes. Referring back to Agar and Strang's (2008) domains of integration, one can say that while it is important for refugees to build social bonds with members of their own ethnic enclave, it is also equally beneficial to build social bridges with the local host community resulting in increased opportunity to facilitate English conversations.

Length of time in refugee camps and in Australia

We found no significant relationship between the length of time spent as a refugee (in refugee camps) and employment status. This finding contradicts Codell et al.'s (2011) study who found a detrimental relationship between time spent as a refugee in camps and employment. However, at this point, we can only speculate the reason for this discrepancy and hence, this warrants further research. We also found that length of time in Australia was not a significant predictor of employment. This finding contradicts from both Correa-Velez et al.'s (2013) study where they found that time spent in Australia was a significant predictor of employment, as well as Hugo (2011) who said that over time, the employment outcome of humanitarian settlers converges towards that of the total (local) population. Their findings do not bode well for refugees as one would ideally like to see them gain employment fairly quickly upon arrival as they acculturate and settle in the new country, as unemployment can lead to financial difficulties and cause mental stress (Aycan & Berry, 1996; Hebbani, 2014).

Education and employment

Even though Ager and Strang (2008) stated that, "Education clearly provides skills and competences in support of subsequent employment" (p. 172), we found that education was not associated with employed status. This finding slightly mirrors findings from Correa-Velez et al.'s (2013) study that gaining *tertiary* education in Australia was not a

significant predictor of employment – since we had relatively few participants with Australian tertiary education, we were unable to run statistical analysis to test this relationship with the current sample. It is, however, in line with Hugo's (2011) report which found that "humanitarian entrants with higher levels of education still experienced higher unemployment rates than those with the same level of qualification who were born in Australia," (p. 29) but this gap narrowed with the second generation of humanitarian migrants.

Variables not predicting employment

Participants' age, marital status or gender, were not significant predictors of employment. We can view these results in a negative light, but we can also view these results as encouraging as it indicates that while factors such as age, gender, and marital status are hard to change, they do not seem to affect refugees' employment outcomes. Even Hugo's report (2011) found that women experienced greater difficulty than men in entering the job market. Thus, we cannot confidently explain this finding without further research with a more robust sample. employment.

What more can be done to facilitate employment?

In terms of future policy for facilitating refugee employment, our initial findings have a direct impact on programs which offer English language proficiency in Australia. The AHRC (2010) report stated that the English language training allowance was even more inadequate for linguistically and culturally distant groups such as Africans (also see Dhanji, 2009). We support this position; 510 hours of AMEP may be insufficient for some refugees in terms of learning a new language and in terms of preparation for the employment context/processes (see Grace & Abderlkerim, 2012; Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, 2012). Migrants for whom English is a second language (such as those in our study) might find it more beneficial to have this course taught by bilingual teachers. Also, perhaps more focus is needed on improving their speech via oral communication activities.

Another course that offers to improve communication in the employment context in Australia namely Settlement Language Pathways to Employment and Training (SLPET); this is a national program, to be completed after AMEP, provides an additional 200 hours of English tuition and includes up to 80 hours of a work experience placement (see Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, 2012, 2013). It seems

like a win-win program, as it not only is tailored towards improving English language proficiency in the workplace, but also gives students some local work experience. Interestingly, not one participant in our study mentioned having completed this course.

In addition to the SLPET course, another opportunity to consider is encouraging refugees to undertake voluntary apprenticeship work placements; such a program will have a three-fold benefit: a) it will give refugees local work experience, b) increased interpersonal communication between refugees and mainstream Australians is an opportunity to increase interactions in English, and, thus, refugees can build fluency in spoken English, and c) it is an opportunity for Australian employers to see value in, and build relationships with refugees, thereby breaking down any barriers they might have regarding refugees. The Federal Government should fund such innovative programs to enable the refugees to gain employment and make an economic contribution to their new home country.

Conclusions

Our quantitative data revealed that there was only one factor that predicted employment namely spoken English proficiency. However, we are cognizant that despite good spoken English proficiency and Australian educational qualifications, some former refugees still struggle to find meaningful employment which is at par with their employment history and/or educational qualifications. Thus, English language proficiency is just one part of the big picture which can at times instantly lead to 'othering'; but one must also be cognizant the socio-political context within which the settlement is taking place as it may well be that there are other external factors (e.g., communication of host nationals with refugee populations and/or their attitudes towards refugee populations) that may impede employment for these former refugees. For instance, it might be the case that visible difference, religious difference, in addition to difference in accent and speech, negative framing of refugees in the media, as well as some level of perceived discrimination (from members of the host community) might still negatively impact employment outcomes (see Fozdar 2012; name deleted to maintain the integrity of the review process). Perhaps once on the road to acculturation, as refugees acculturate and become 'more Australian' in terms of improving their spoken English language competencies, improved communication will result in securing meaningful employment.

Table 1: Participant Demographics

Variable	Somali (n = 16) % (n)	Somali (n = 16) M (SD)	Congolese (n = 13) % (n)	Congolese (n = 13) M (SD)	Sudanese (n = 27) % (n)	Sudanese (n = 27) M (SD)
Gender						
Female	56.3% (9)		69.2% (9)		51.9% (14)	
Male	43.8% (7)		30.8% (4)		48.1% (13)	
Age						
Under 20 years old	15.4% (2)		10.0% (1)		0.0% (0)	
20 to 29 years old	30.8% (4)		10.0% (1)		42.3% (11)	
30 to 39 years old	15.4% (2)		50.0% (5)		26.9% (7)	
40 to 49 years old	23.1% (3)		10.0% (1)		26.9% (7)	
50 to 59 years old	7.7% (1)		20.0% (2)		3.8% (1)	
60 to 69 years old	7.7% (1)		0.0% (0)		0.0% (0)	
Marital status						
Single	37.5% (6)		23.1% (3)		29.6% (8)	
Married	50.0% (8)		53.8% (7)		66.7% (18)	
De facto	0.0% (0)		0.0% (0)		0.0% (0)	
Divorced	6.3% (1)		0.0% (0)		0.0% (0)	
Separated	6.3% (1)		7.7% (1)		0.0% (0)	
Widowed	0.0% (0)		15.4% (2)		3.7% (1)	
Length of time spent as a refugee (years)		11.00 (4.76)		7.08 (3.23)		11.69 (6.24)
Length of residence in Australia (years)		4.96 (0.49)		3.69 (1.25)		4.85 (2.58)

Table 2: English Language Proficiency

Variable	Somali (n = 16)		Congolese (n = 13)		Sudanese (n = 27)	
	% (n)	M (SD)	% (n)	M (SD)	% (n)	M (SD)
English course completion (e.g., Adult Migrant English Program)						
No	25.0% (4)		7.7% (1)		22.2% (6)	
Yes	75.0% (12)		92.3% (12)		77.8% (21)	
Spoken English proficiency (0 = *poor* to 5 = *excellent*)		3.40 (1.45)		2.92 (0.86)		3.11 (1.22)
Poor	6.7% (1)		7.7% (1)		11.1% (3)	
Average	33.3% (5)		15.4% (2)		18.5% (5)	
Good	6.7% (1)		53.8% (7)		33.3% (9)	
Very good	20.0% (3)		23.1% (3)		22.2% (6)	
Excellent	33.3% (5)		0.0% (0)		14.8% (4)	
Reading English proficiency (0 = *poor* to 5 = *excellent*)		3.64 (1.22)		3.00 (0.85)		3.19 (1.27)
Poor	7.1% (1)		0.0% (0)		11.1% (3)	
Average	7.1% (1)		33.3% (4)		18.5% (5)	
Good	28.6% (4)		33.3% (4)		29.6% (8)	
Very good	28.6% (4)		33.3% (4)		22.2% (6)	
Excellent	28.6% (4)		0.0% (0)		18.5% (5)	
Written English proficiency (0 = *poor* to 5 = *excellent*)		3.50 (1.35)		3.00 (0.95)		2.89 (1.25)
Poor	7.1% (1)		8.3% (1)		18.5% (5)	
Average	21.4% (3)		16.7% (2)		14.8% (4)	
Good	14.3% (2)		41.7% (5)		37.0% (10)	
Very good	28.6% (4)		33.3% (4)		18.5% (5)	
Excellent	28.6% (4)		0.0% (0)		11.1% (3)	
Numeracy (0 = *poor* to 5 = *excellent*)		3.54 (1.33)		3.58 (1.00)		3.44 (1.19)
Poor	7.7% (1)		0.0% (0)		3.7% (1)	
Average	15.4% (2)		8.3% (1)		18.5% (5)	
Good	23.1% (3)		50.0% (6)		33.3% (9)	
Very good	23.1% (3)		16.7% (2)		18.5% (5)	
Excellent	30.8% (4)		25.0% (3)		25.9% (7)	

Table 3: Participants' education levels

Variable	Somali (n = 16)		Congolese (n = 13)		Sudanese (n = 27)	
	% (n)	M (SD)	% (n)	M (SD)	% (n)	M (SD)
Education						
No education	12.5% (2)		0.0% (0)		0.0% (0)	
Some education	87.5% (14)		100.0% (13)		100.0% (27)	
Level of education						
Lower primary or less	15.4% (2)		7.7% (1)		0.0% (0)	
Primary	7.7% (1)		0.0% (0)		7.7% (2)	
Year 10	0.0% (0)		7.7% (1)		0.0% (0)	
Year 12	7.7% (1)		7.7% (1)		15.4% (4)	
Vocational training	46.2% (6)		69.2% (9)		65.4% (17)	
Bachelor's degree	23.1% (3)		7.7% (1)		11.5% (3)	
Other	0.0% (0)		0.0% (0)		0.0% (0)	

Table 4: Data on participants' employment

Variable	Somali (n = 16)		Congolese (n = 13)		Sudanese (n = 27)	
	% (n)	M (SD)	% (n)	M (SD)	% (n)	M (SD)
Employment status						
Not in the workforce	62.5% (10)		69.2% (9)		44.4% (12)	
Employed	37.5% (6)		30.8% (4)		55.6% (15)	
Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations						
Managers	0.0% (0)		0.0% (0)		0.0% (0)	
Professionals	16.7% (1)		0.0% (0)		13.3% (2)	
Technicians and trade workers	0.0% (0)		0.0% (0)		6.7% (1)	
Community and personal service workers	33.3% (2)		0.0% (0)		26.7% (4)	
Clerical and administrative workers	0.0% (0)		50.0% (2)		0.0% (0)	
Sales workers	0.0% (0)		0.0% (0)		0.0% (0)	
Machinery operators and drivers	33.3% (2)		0.0% (0)		13.3% (2)	
Labourers	16.7% (1)		50.0% (2)		40.0% (6)	
Hours worked per week						
Fewer than 34 hours (part-time or casual)	50.0% (3)		75.0% (3)		33.3% (4)	
Greater than 35 hours (full-time)	50.0% (3)		25.0% (1)		66.7% (8)	
Level of difficulty looking for employment (1 = *very easy* to 5 = *very difficult*)		4.00 (0.97)		3.81 (1.08)		3.81 (1.36)

Table 5: Pearson product-moment correlations between employment outcomes and English proficiency variables

Variable	Employment status	Spoken English proficiency	Reading English proficiency	Written English proficiency	Numeracy
Spoken English proficiency	.42**	-			
Reading English proficiency	.2	.69***	-		
Written English proficiency	.26	.73***	.87***	-	
Numeracy	.06	.51***	.58***	.62***	-

$N = 48$, * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 6: Number of employed and unemployed participants for each level of education

Employment status	Lower primary or less	Primary	Year 10	Year 12	Vocational training	Bachelor's degree	Total n
Not in the workforce	3	3	1	2	13	5	27
Employed	0	0	0	4	19	2	25
Total n	3	3	1	6	32	7	52

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