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The coping strategies of syrian adolescent refugee in Malaysia: A case study

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Abstract

In this paper qualitative approach was utilized to interview 11 Syrian adolescent refugees, 9 parents and 2 teachers in Malaysia. In-depth interviews were conducted to explore the participants' coping strategies with war experiences and the difficulties they face in Malaysia. The results showed participants used religious beliefs and spiritual coping, cognitive strategies such as developing positive attitudes, acceptance coping, and use of hope as coping strategies. Social support, socialization and social media were among the most significant external resources for coping strategies. Activities and enhancement of self-skills are the most important factors for personal coping with disasters and war trauma.

Keywords: Syrian Adolescent Refugees, Coping Strategies, Socialization, Religious Beliefs.

Las estrategias de coordinación del refugiado adolescentes sirio en Malasia: Un estudio de caso

Resumen

En este documento se utilizó el enfoque cualitativo para entrevistar a 11 adolescentes sirios, 9 padres y 2 maestros en Malasia. Se realizaron entrevistas en profundidad para explorar las estrategias de afrontamiento de los participantes con las experiencias de guerra y las dificultades que enfrentan en Malasia. Los resultados mostraron que los participantes utilizaron creencias religiosas y afrontamiento espiritual, estrategias cognitivas como desarrollar actitudes positivas, afrontamiento de aceptación y uso de la esperanza como estrategias de afrontamiento. El apoyo social, la socialización y las redes sociales se encontraban entre los recursos externos más importantes para las estrategias de afrontamiento. El apoyo social, la socialización y las redes sociales se encontraban entre los recursos externos más importantes para las estrategias de

afrontamiento. Las actividades y la mejora de las habilidades personales son los factores más importantes para hacer frente a desastres y traumas de guerra.

Palabras clave: refugiados sirios adolescentes, estrategias de afrontamiento, socialización, creencias religiosas.

1. INTRODUCTION

Syrian predicament has been documented as one of the most dramatic cases of displacement in human history. The seven years of the Syrian conflict have broken the record, with no end in sight; half of the country's population 13.5 million are in need of humanitarian assistance. More than 5.5 million have crossed the border searching for safe shelters for their families. Most of them (4.8 million), are refugees in neighbouring countries, and the rest is finding their way to other countries such as European countries, Canada, USA, and Malaysia after long journeys habitually afflicted with additional suffering. Unfortunately, 8.6 million of affected Syrian are children and adolescents (UNICEF, 2015) and about and about 2.5 million are missing out on education (USA TODAY, 2018). Syrian refugees began arriving in Malaysia in 2012 (MSRI, 2013), but there is no exact statistic that reflects the actual number of Syrian in Malaysia, as many of Syrian families adjourned their registration in UNHCR. However, the estimated total number until 2017 is 5000 (Wikipedia, 2017). But only 2900 were registered with UNHCR (UNHCR, 2018). MSRI (2013) clarified that Syrian refugees in Malaysia rely solely on the support from charitable Non- Government Organizations (NGO) are like MSRI". Happily, in 2015, the Malaysian government provided shelter and education, access to a maximum of 3,000 Syrian refugees in Malaysia, which help those parents to work legally in

Malaysia as they are considered as a permanent resident in Malaysia until the end of the war in Syria (BBC News, 2015). Nonetheless, many of them refused to apply for the Malaysian permanent residential visa, because if the war is ended they must go back to Syria. As most of them believed that

Their places in Syria were completely destroyed and there is no life or future in Syria after the war, and their life will be better and their children will have a good life and future in the resettlement countries.

However, the majority of Syrian refugees' parents in Malaysia have exhausted their savings and they are increasingly challenged to find a good job with a salary that can cover their needs (Mayberry, 2014). As many of them are working in vocationally jobs with very low salary, besides, those who are registered under UNHCR in Malaysia are not allowed to work because they are not considered as residents. Therefore, many of them are living in poverty or confronting economic hardships. Consequently, refugee adolescents are affected by their parent's situation and economic problems, and facing many challenges, not only war trauma, but also poverty, limited education opportunities, insecurity and instability. Besides, they need to adjust to the new society with a different culture, norms and language (Mayberry, 2014). Therefore, they need to employ various coping strategies or mechanisms to overcome their catastrophic experiences and deal with their stress and adjust to their new society. As a novel strategies, the participants clarified that there were two main parts to develop coping strategies, the first part related to the individual personality, such as personality, belief, spirituality and religiosity, and the second part related to external coping including

socialization, media socialization and social help. The participants saw more potential in social life and society. They were spending long hours socializing since they need to feel connected with their families and relatives as they had been while still living in Syria. Since the Syrians had grown up in a collective society, they entertained close ties with their extended family members.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. War Impact on Syrian Adolescent

Thousands of Syrian children have lost one or both parents, their siblings, friends, in addition losing their homes, schools, and more importantly their sense of security and stability. Sadly, instead of playing and attending school, many Syrian children have been forced to become breadwinners of their families or taken up the role of caregivers of their younger siblings. Hundreds of girls are forced to early marriage. Additionally, most of them suffered from malnutrition, insufficiency of shelter, education, and healthcare (VASYR, 2017; Jordan, 2016; Mercy Corps, 2014; UNICEF, 2014; Siriwardhana & Stewart, 2013).

The sudden changes in people live as they exposed to a war forced to leave their homes and being refugees considered as a harmful life experience. As a result of exposure to various painful and distressing events and experiences, they are experienced a number of psychological disordered and traumas (Tempany, 2009; Conley, 2001, Yilmaz et al., 2013; Yüziak et al., 2014; Kalenik et al. 2018). Each of those

complications posed multiple traumatic problems of refugees, particularly to children and teenagers. Several studies have established that “war is one of the most potent traumatic experiences known to man” (Solomon et al., 2009). Moreover, a long-term crisis would cost adolescents more than grown adults in terms of health problems, psychological issues, and loss of learning opportunities, but it could lead them to crucial psychological problems (Silove, et al., 2014; Tempany, 2009; Al-Mashat et al., 2006; Conley, 2001; American Psychiatric Association, 2013; 2000).

According to Pai et al. (2013), it is a misfortune that the majority of refugees have been diagnosed with one or more serious symptoms of war, namely Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). PTSD has also been associated with grief, sleep disturbance Pai et al. (2013), it is a misfortune that the majority of refugees have been diagnosed with one or more serious symptoms of war, namely Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). PTSD has also been associated with grief, sleep disturbance, severe anxiety, depression, avoidance and fear (Hall et al., 2014; Tempany, 2009; Al-Mashat et al., 2006; Pai et al., 2013). Furthermore, refugees may experience isolation, death wish, humiliation, loss of identity, hopelessness, loss of meaning in life and loss of faith. Besides, sensitivity to injustice, discrimination, guilt, helplessness, hyperarousal symptoms, and learning problems such as difficulties in understanding, focusing and memorizing, in addition to the behavioural.

2.2. Coping Strategies

Coping is defined as the processes of reducing the stress of adverse effects and overcoming the difficulties encountered. Coping is a cognitive and behavioural effort used by individuals to manage and reduce social or environmental sources of stressors (Pahud et al., 2009). In other words, the coping process is considered as the pathways to resilience. The notion of coping refers to self-regulatory responses that take place in stressor-induced situations such as war, losing of the beloved one, etc. Additionally, Benson, et al (2011) asserted that the teenagers' flexibility to cope with a disaster is improved during the adolescent developmental period. Furthermore, culture possesses a great implication informing the children and adolescents' disaster stressors, acceptance and coping strategies (Benson et al., 2011; Pahud et al., 2009).

Refugees and immigrants utilize various coping strategies to cope to help them to adjust and to feel adequate in the new society. Therefore, much research has been done to conceptualize coping and to explore and define the types of coping strategies people created and demonstrated to deal with their problems and hardships. Several studies were conducted to explore the coping strategies for refugees from different nations such as Bosnia, Palestine, Afghanistan, Somalia, Ethiopia... etc. Those studies found that refugees employed commonalities coping strategies, which categorized into two main factors; personal and external coping processes. A person's coping process consists of a person's beliefs, thoughts, and spiritual concerns such as personal achievements resilience, self-efficacy, and aspirations. External coping process refers to the relationship and community, such as a sense of belonging, safety and freedom, and family reunification (Prati & Pietrantonio, 2009; Adelowo, 2012; Pahud et al., 2009; Goodman, 2004; Ai, et al., 2003; Worthington, 2001). Studies

confirmed the importance of supportive relationships, socialization, spiritual concerns, and designing of an especial intervention program for exile refugees are among the most important factor that can help refugees to obtain positive coping process, especially among traumatized refugees (Prati & Pietrantonio, 2009; Adelowo, 2012; Ai et al, 2003; Worthington, 2001). Additionally, studies proved that child's education, financial assistance, and housing are considered as the most essential community support factors for refugees coping process. Referring to adolescents, close relationships with peers, avoiding problems, ventilating feelings and religiosity are the most assigned coping strategies (Thabet et al. 2014; Goodman, 2004)

Moreover, Goodman (2004) and Worthington (2001) emphasized the importance of the cultural context which needs to be understood and counted when we study traumatic population and explore the coping strategies.

On the other hand, Syrian refugee studies which conducted with those who are living outside the camps in Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt showed differ coping strategies. All of those studies concluded that Syrian refugees adapted negative coping strategies to overcome the income-expenditure gaps after they exhausted their savings (VASYR, 2017; 3 RP progress report 2017; Jordan, 2016; Mercy Corps, 2014; UNHCR, 2013; UNICEF, 2014). Those negative strategies are; receiving support from the humanitarian organizations and the host community, borrowing money from relatives, buying on credit and incurring debt, delaying rental payments, limiting the number of meals or portion sizes throughout the

day, selling household goods and productive assets. Moreover, reducing essential non-food expenditures

such as education and health needs. At the same time, many of those families are resorting to child labour in order to meet the family's basic needs, increase their income, or to cut the education costs (Jordan, 2016). Another negative coping strategy is the girls' early marriage to reduce the family cost, as affirmed by Jordan (2016) the Syrian youngest

married almost increased four times in 2016 than in the previous year. As a result, large percentages of Syrian refugee children have dropped out of school. Additionally, Andres-Vinas et al., (2015) study clarified that the host countries with restrictions on earning a legal income were the reason behind the adapting of negative coping strategies. However, almost all the literature about Syrian refugees are concerned more about the negative coping mechanism than the positive ones (VASYR, 2017; 3 RP progress report 2017; Jordan, 2016; Mercy Corps, 2014; UNHCR, 2013; UNICEF, 2014).

Therefore, from the coping studies, we can conclude that coping strategies developed by refugees could be negative or positive strategies. All of the Syrian refugee studies that conducted with Syrian who are living in transit countries showed negative coping, while other studies that done with refugees whose living in resettlement countries reflected positive coping strategies. This difference could be referred to as the type of life the refugees lived. Thus, refugees who have just arrived in resettlement countries may cope better emotionally and are more successful in adjusting to the new society than those still living in transit

countries such as the Syrian refugees in Malaysia who are waiting for their chance to move to one of the resettlement countries.

The innovation of this study is to reconnoitre the impact of the traumatic events on Syrian adolescent refugees in Malaysia as well as to explore their coping strategies. As the researcher found no published study conducted with Syrian adolescent to explore the kind of coping skills that they develop to cope with their war and trauma new life (Schweitzer et al., 2014). Western concepts of PTSD, intervention programs, and coping strategies may not be in coherence with any other cultural idioms of distress. Therefore, there is a need to explore the influence of culture and religion from the adolescent refugees' viewpoint and beliefs.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative case study approach in order to obtain a comprehensive set of data for analysis.

3.1. Participants

A purposive sampling technique that includes the snowball method was utilized throughout the process of data collection. The sample was made up of 11 participants among Syrian adolescent refugees aged between 14 and 19 years old who have experienced the war while living in Syria and faced expulsion and presently. They are living in Malaysia and

have been registered at UNHCR in Malaysia. Religion, socio-economic status, race, and political affiliation are not considered in the sample characteristics. Moreover, nine of the participants' parents and two teachers who are also refugees and they are studying in NGOs school were also interviewed.

3.2. Research Instrument

In-depth face-to-face interviews were utilized as a data collection tool. A set of 12 open-ended and semi-structured questions were designed from the protocol that permits the respondents to provide their perceptions, points of view, and offering insights into the topic of study. The interview questions were revised by three scholars and edited by a qualified editor to ensure their correctness and accuracy. The questions were then translated into Arabic and again revised by an expert.

3.3. Research Procedure and Data Analysis

The data were collected by the researcher herself within a period of 3 months. The researcher's interview and the respondent's responses were recorded using two recording sets; Sony IC and Samsung mobile. The recorded interviews were transcribed *verbatim* into narrative text manually by the researcher.

The narrative text data organized into concepts and themes. The concepts and themes were scrutinized and grouped into categories or super

themes. The extracted main ideas and conceptual themes were assessed by inter-rater readability check. Later, the major extracted themes were used to generate the study findings.

For credibility and consistency, multiple data source was employed to validate the findings that arise from the study. Consistency was initiated through the use of inter-rater reliability, which is employed to confirm the proportion of agreement among the raters. Inter-rater reliability is calculated using the Reliability Index based on the raters' evaluation of the themes. Two inter-raters were chosen from in the Faculty of Education at the International Islamic University Malaysia proficient in this area of research who developed the themes from the main ideas. On average, the two ratings combined was producing 93.21%, which is to be considered as good reliability encouraging the undertaking of a study.

In this study, the adolescents' interests were safeguarded by ensuring informed consent signed by their parents or caretakers, and all applicable research ethics were maintained.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Before exploring the various coping strategies that emerged in this study, it is important to highlight the major problems that negatively impacted the Syrian adolescent refugees living in Malaysia. In order to determine their suffering, the participants were questioned how they are adjusted and to which extent they felt adequate in the new society. They were asked about the distress they experienced and the challenges they

faced in the new society. The first and the foremost common stressor was the fact that they were away from Syria, the sorrow they felt, separated from their relatives and close friends, the loss of their community, education problems, language barriers, immobility, instability, and the financial difficulties they faced. These findings are similar to studies done with Syrian refugees in Lebanon and Jordan (3RP progress report 2017; Jordan, 2016). Other problems had a lesser effect on them, such as feelings of insecurity in Malaysia, difficulties in adjusting to the Malaysian society, ethical problems such as disrespect, discrimination, and humiliation. The family could exercise a negative effect if the parents were unemployed or engaged in conflict with each other.

With regard to coping, the major themes of coping mechanisms can be divided into two central parts which are: A) **Personal coping strategies** and B) **External resources for coping**. Each one of these central themes consists of many major themes. Further explanation of those themes will be explored below.

A) Personal coping strategy

Three major themes that emerged which are: i) Development of positive attitudes; ii) Fostering talents and activities; iii) Use of hope for coping, and iv) Spiritual coping.

i) Developing of positive attitudes

Personal coping refers to the individual resources which are traits, attitudes, and beliefs. According to the interview transcripts, the

participants had developed many positive attitudes and attributes, such as, for example, patience, flexibility, control of fear and sadness, and independence. They stated: “I am a cheerful person and I laugh a lot. I laugh to forget and to be able to raise my daughter (2011)”, “First, to be patient, control fear and sadness (2011)”.

ii) Fostering talents and activities

The participants fostered their talents by practising and learning and tried to get involved in many activities such as sport, or creating and maintaining their own YouTube channel. They believed that these activities were helping them to have fun and to forget their problems. They narrated: “To cope with my new life, I keep myself busy with my studies or anything all the time (2012)”, “I like painting and also I like dancing and singing, I use them to forget about my problems (2013)”. Parents believed that their youngest personalities grow to maturity early as they adapt to communicate easily with people from diverse cultures, “They’ve become more mature, they know how to accept others and adapt to them (2012)”. Participants’ teacher supported parents’ views, as she confirmed: “To cope, some of them have registered in the Gym or sports centre and they spend long time training (2011)”.

iii) Use of hope for coping

Respondents stressed the importance of hope and dreams in the process of coping as they stated: “To adapt, I plan for my future (2012)”, “I’ve realized that I must help myself. So I started to set goals, for example, I decided to study to improve my English because it’s important

for my future (2012)”. The two teachers agreed with the participants that they have hope as one of them confirmed that the Syrians were always optimistic and that it was a common characteristic among them. Irrespective of where they found themselves, they could live and find their way. Additionally, he asserted that they have the hope to accomplish their future goals and they translated this fact from the effort they invested in continuing their studies. They need jobs in order to pay their school fees and even if they are homeschooling, they make sure to receive high marks and better results.

iv) Spiritual coping

Eight of them confirmed that their conscious spirituality and religiosity rose significantly and became stronger after the war. At the same time, they confirmed that their religiosity helped them to cope with all obstacles they faced after the war. More female than male participants emphasized the importance of religious and spiritual coping with the life of refugees, as they were now more committed to their religion in terms of praying and reciting and memorizing of the Holy Qur’an.

On the contrary, one male participant admitted that not only war was behind his low level of faith and his lack of commitment to religion, also the death of his father after they had come to Malaysia. He narrated: “My spirituality went like 50% down after my father passed away. I was thinking that God wasn’t with me anymore. He didn’t even look at me. Even it felt like kufr (2013)”.

B) External resources for coping

The major themes for external resources 1) Supportive relationship, 2) Social media and 3) Seeking society support.

i) Supportive relationship

Close relationships with family, relatives, neighbours and friends can render significant support and help the adolescents to cope with challenges and war trauma, as many studies clarified.

Likewise, loss of significant ones such as parents can change an adolescent's life completely. Only two among the respondents in this study their father passed away one year after their arrival in Malaysia, probably due to excessive stress and exhaustion as he had worked a hard job to feed his family. After his death, both participants had started working to support the family. The eldest son suffered under strong negative emotions and felt not very little hope. At the same time, he felt burdened by the great responsibility of being the breadwinner of the family. This great change made his life unstable and he had a hard time trying to cope. He narrated: "When the negative thinking has come to me, I'm just feeling like I'm so weak I can do nothing, I'm just a refugee is stupid, who cannot continue his life, who doesn't have money, who don't have someone to take care of him. Sometimes I don't sleep or eat, just thinking about my life a lot of times. Sometimes I feel so lonely; I don't want to talk to people (2012)"

Respondents clarified that parents could influence their children's coping negatively or positively. One of them explained that when parents discussed problems in front of their young children, they were affected by

those problems. Another participant affirmed that family relationship is very important as narrated: “The most important thing for the refugees of my age, honestly having good family ties because when the relationships within the family are not good, there will be more emotional problems besides the alienation caused by the family (2011)”

The participants’ answers showed that relatives, neighbours, and friends also played a significant role in the coping process of adolescents, especially their Arab neighbourhood. This extended circle of caring adults greatly supported the adolescent refugees’ ability to adjust in the new society. They shared: “There are also some good neighbours who help us to get adopted. I feel a little bit more accepted because we are living with Arabs. I feel like I’m back in Syria. I see older women as my aunts. They make me feel at home (2011)”.

However, none of the male participants mentioned their neighbours and instead, They focused on their friends whom they thought played a significant role in coping and adjusting. Similarly, the female participants had the same opinion about the importance of friends and relatives, as one stated: “I socialize more to get adapted. It's important for refugees to make friends to help him to stop feeling lonely (2014)”. Parents and teachers as well affirmed that they and their children were coping in this society mainly because of their friends and their Arab neighbours and the other Arabs they got to know here. They shared: “Thanks to Allah, He who grants us with good and kind neighbours around us, and that’s the only thing that makes us feel comfortable and accepted in this country. Unfortunately, most of the parents believed that their ignorance of the Malay language was barring them from dealing with Malaysians.

ii) Social media

Social media such as WhatsApp, Facebook, free chatting and free calls like IMO and WeChat has a significant positive impact on the Syrian adolescent refugee's life. They repeatedly mentioned that the most important thing was to be able to communicate with their relatives who were still in Syria or those who had moved to other countries "I've expanded my social media communication widely, that's most important. I occupy my time completely by connecting with my friends through Facebook and WhatsApp (2011)". Both teachers agreed with the participants about their heavy reliance on social media to keep connected with their relatives and making new friends. However, teachers believed that social media bear both positive and negative effects because it has a negative impact on their study.

iii) Seeking social support

Social support is divided into two main parts which are psychological or well-being support and material support. Refugees are facing many challenges such as poverty and unemployment.

Almost all of the participants kept repeating that they felt alienated or cut off from their homeland, sad, and lonely. They mentioned: I'm in pain, isolated and separated from my homeland. Anyone who lives as a refugee like us will have the same feeling. Another participant felt suffering as she mentioned "There are so, so many psychological effects that can't be treated easily (2013)" I'm suffering as a refugee. Additionally, their teachers agreed with their Syrian students as they

clarified that they are suffering from war trauma and are psychologically unstable. Thus, focusing on the psychological and mental treatment of the refugees was in the teacher's opinion more important than their education. She narrated: "Mental and psychological stability is more important and essential than education (2013)".

Therefore, believed that they need support in many aspects to improve their well-being and life to adjust to the new society. They share their needs and give some suggestions for intervention to improve their lives. They asserted in the need for psychological intervention and social activities to help them to adjust to the new society. Besides, the material support which includes financial support and education as one of the participants summarized their needs: "As a refugee, he's just starting his life from scratch. He needs a lot of help in many aspects, social, humanitarian, psychological, and financial. Anyone who can help should contribute. It is very necessary to help them. People should put themselves in the shoes of these refugees (2013)".

Commonly, all of the participants were seeking a sense of belonging, respect and acceptance. They confirmed: "Emotional stability is another thing. So, feeling safe and feeling that society respects him. To feel that you have a value and you exist, and feeling that the society in which you live respects you are important", "People should make refugee feel that he's not a refugee but give him the sense of belonging. (2012)". In addition, another respondent supported the idea and suggested a solution by stating: "School activities and some trips, to make them feel positive, we need something to change us. Like, give us some happiness or some positive thinking. Teachers and parents confirmed that family and

society possessed the moral responsibility towards those children and adolescent refugee. One of the teachers explained: “to reduce the students’ negative pressure, they need to engage positively in the community as much as possible. (2011)”

Substantially, they repeated that financial help, education and jobs for them or for their parents constituted their most indeed needs. They stated: “First, is to live in peace and find a job, then education is very important. If the country offered job opportunities, that would be amazing. Also maybe financial aid (2013)”. Another one said, “For me, and refugees in my age the first thing is education and entertainment in the first place, the third need is security (2011)”. Some parents believed that if their children’s future was secure here in Malaysia by providing them with schools and accepting them at the universities, in fact, that all what they need and they won’t have to think of travelling to resettlement countries. One of them stated: “For example, if they will give discounts of the college fees for refugee students, we’d stay here until our own country’s situation has become stable and we don’t think about travelling to resettlement countries (2012)”. Teachers emphasized more in providing special schools for Syrian refugees, as one stated: “To establish a school for Syrian students are most important, to gather all Syrian students in one environment, this is a substantial factor to help them to achieve their future goals and to have hope (2012)”.

4.1. DISCUSSIONS

Successful coping constitutes the ability of the individual to manage and reduce social or environmental sources of stressors (Adelowo, 2012). As the coping process is considered the 'pathways to resilience', the adolescents' flexibility to cope with a disaster is improved during the adolescent developmental period (Benson et al., 2011). Almost all coping studies duplicated each other and have almost the same findings (Adelowo, 2015; 2012; Prati & Pietrantonio, 2009; Pahud et al., 2009; Goodman, 2004; Ai et al., 2003; Worthington, 2001). The findings of all these studies are found to be congruent with the present study's findings involving Syrian adolescent refugee population. Therefore, it can be concluded that religiosity, socialization, community support constitutes highly significant adjustment and coping themes devised by refugees and immigrants in general, irrespective of the population's age, gender, cultural and religious background (Thabet et al., 2014; Prati & Pietrantonio, 2009; Adelowo, 2015; 2012; Pahud et al., 2009; Goodman, 2004; Worthington, 2001). Similar to Adelowo (2012), Goodman (2004), and Worthington (2001) studies that investigated the coping mechanisms of Bosnians and Sudanese refugees who had been exposed to war and resettled in the USA, the two major factors of the coping process are found to be the personal coping process (positive attitudes such as hope and optimism as well as spiritual coping) and the external copying process (supportive relationships and community help). So the current study duplicated the coping strategies that emerged from those two studies.

Likewise, this study replicated the findings of Ai et al. (2003) as both asserting on the importance of parental and community support and encouragement which play a significant role in the coping process. It is important to clarify that Ai et al. (2003) study is considered as one of the

earliest studies that investigated the coping strategies of Muslim refugees and the influence of religion on their attitudes. The current study considered as one of the first studies that investigated Muslim Syrian refugees coping strategies. Their findings can help explain the reasons behind the Syrian refugees' negative adjustment in Malaysia, as the study revealed that lower education levels were negatively correlated with religious coping.

On the other hand, the results of this study are contradicted with negative coping mechanisms that employed by Syrian refugees who are living outside camping in Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt at the present time (VASYR, 2017; 3 RP progress report 2017; Jordan, 2016; Mercy Corps, 2014; UNHCR, 2013; UNICEF, 2014). Even though Syrian refugees who participated in this study are living an unstable life in transit country (Malaysia) similar to those who are living outside the camping in Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt. This finding could be referred to many reasons, for example, this study employed adolescent sample, while most of the studies with Syrian refugees were conducted with an adult. Another reason might be snapped back to the families' economic situation, parents' education and the opportunities that offered to refugees in the shuttled country, for instants, Malaysian economic and job opportunities are far better than that found in Lebanon or Jordan. Another reason, the number of refugees and particularly the Syrian refugees in Malaysia are vastly small in comparison with those in Jordan or Lebanon. However, all studies about Syrian refugee population are commonly insisting on their need for communities' assistance and support, offering education chances for their children, and financial support or jobs for the parents.

Socialization and supportive relationship considered as significant coping strategies for Syrian adolescent refugees, and their parents as well as their teacher. As known Syrian refugees come from a collectivist society in which children and adolescents are nurtured and grown in small and extended families which means that their life is connected and influenced greatly by the society's culture and norms. This interaction influences their attitudes, perception, future plans and hope. Accordingly, using of ecological system as a framework in order to study this population could help create an applicable method for working with refugee and immigrant adolescents who have come from similar collectivist societies. Additionally, this study discovered that family and community support can be supportive and protective to adolescent or can become a risk factor that leads to negative outcomes. Risk factor, that caused by an ongoing stressor for adolescence as a result of an inability of parents to meet their basic needs such as food, and school.

Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and free video calls were playing a substantial role in the coping process utilized by Syrian adolescent refugees in Malaysia. These factors were not emerged in most of the previous studies, maybe because of their time social media was not familiar and available to all like the present time. In fact, all present studies that carried out using adolescent population clarified the significant role of media in all of their life aspects

such as education, entertainment, and socialization. Making friends and hung out with a friend also considered a common feature for youth development span, and this fact significantly appeared in the present study as the respondents believed that it as one of the most important.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the research question four concerned the coping strategies among Syrian adolescent refugees. The participants clarified that there were two main parts to develop coping strategies, the first part related to the individual personality, such as personality, belief, spirituality and religiosity, and the second part related to external coping including socialization, media socialization and social help. The participants saw more potential in social life and society. They were spending long hours socializing since they need to feel connected with their families and relatives as they had been while still living in Syria. Since the Syrians had grown up in a collective society, they entertained close ties with their extended family members. Moreover, they asserted that spirituality and socialization were a very important factor in coping and overcoming their war experiences and also important in accepting and adjusting to their new life. Parents and teachers supported the participants' views about their importance of socialization and media in the adolescents' life and also confirmed the role of the society in helping them to cope with their trauma (Pratolo, 2019).

6. LIMITATION AND FUTURE RESEARCHES

Part of any research work of the discussion of its limitations that deserve to be highlighted. To begin with, the sample for this study was limited to a group of Syrian adolescent refugees residing in Malaysia, and thus the findings cannot be generalized to include all Syrian adolescent refugees, neither those in Malaysia nor those living in refugee camps in

other parts of the world. Secondly, the information gathered on the participants' based on their own personal perceptions and beliefs. It is possible that a mixed method would have better suited this type of inquiry. Furthermore, the conceptualization and certain generated themes about coping that have been revealed in this study may be transferable and applicable to other populations, particularly Arab populations. Since most Arabs share similar cultures, traditions and belief systems, the findings can be directly applied to other Syrian and Arab refugees and immigrants in different counties. Thus, it is recommended to Expand the research into other Syrian adolescent refugees in other countries such as Lebanon, Egypt and Jordan explored the similarities and differences in the coping strategies. Likewise, to conduct comparative research between other Syrian adolescent refugees who live in camps and those living in transit countries to survey the similarities and differences in their coping strategies. Additionally, there is a need for more studies to conceptualize instruments to assess the impact of coping and to create intervention and treatment therapy programs based on attitudes, morality and ethics of the sample.

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