Author’s response to reviews

Title: Migration experiences, employment status and psychological distress among Somali immigrants: A mixed-method international study

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Author’s response to reviews: see over
Re-Reviewer 2’s report

The manuscript has been considerably improved. The diagram in the Methods is very helpful.

- Thank you for more helpful comments. As with the first reviews, we found the suggestions valuable and edited the paper accordingly.

There are however some major and minor issues which need clarifications + some corrections:

Page 9:

“How did you feel when you first arrived in the UK?”
- Should be: UK/USA

- Correction accepted. See the qualitative questions on page 9.

Number of focus groups in UK and USA?

According to The diagram (Page 7):
5 London qualitative focus groups (2001)  
3 Minneapolis focus groups (2003-2004)  

- While in Table 1A and 1B: 6 focus group in UK and 2 in USA.

- In total, 6 groups from the UK, and two from London. See page 7 for the correct diagram.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Page 11:

“This process of thematic identification was repeated using [13], a qualitative software package..”

- The name of the software package should be mentioned? (especially since SPSS is rightly mentioned for quantitative analysis)

- Suggestion accepted. Nvivo is mentioned on page 12, see first paragraph.

Quantitative Survey Design (sampling & methodological challenges)

Page 14:

“To maintain the validity and reliability of the original instrument, a scientific steering group was set up to guide the translation process [9]…..questionnaire was adopted [20].”
- The author should consider the necessity of giving a detailed account here. Reference on details of this process ([9] and [20]) would be enough.

Page 14:

- We have addressed the cultural adaptation of the MINI in more detail. Since MINI has not previously been used or validated for use among Somali refugees and because of the substantial conceptual, cultural, contextual and linguistic differences between the English and Somali languages, we used Flaherty et al’1 (1988) content, semantic, technical and conceptual dimensions to translate and validate MINI for Somali. See pages 14, 15 and 16 for the new paragraphs. However, we do not want to repeat more detailed information in this paper as we have already cross-referenced the validation work.

“This offers a comprehensive and accessible system for analyzing quantitative data.”

- The sentence can be omitted.

- This sentence is omitted

- It is desirable to mention the specific SPSS version which was used.

- Suggestion accepted. SPSS 10 is mentioned, see end of page 15.

Qualitative Results & Discussion

The aims of the study are stated as the following:

Page 5:

This study aims to compare two samples of Somali refugees drawn from two urban settings in the UK and USA. The analyses investigate the similarities and differences in the perceptions and levels of socio-economic and psychological problems among these two samples of Somali refugees.

Page 7:

However, cross-national comparative studies can improve our understanding of which local factors are mediating or moderating influences on health status, as these conditions often vary in different countries.

Page 7:

We wanted to know if Somali refugees living in the UK and USA face the same social and mental health problems, as well as examining if or how contextual and environmental differences between the UK and USA would have any
effects on the levels of social and mental health problems of the two samples of Somali refugees living in these two countries.

The short summery at the end of “Qualitative Results & Discussion” section (page 21) is helpful.

- Many thanks again for the useful suggestions

It seems that the UK and US participants’ experiences and their understandings are very much similar to each other. This is interesting and should be stated even more clearly.

The authors should explicitly deal with these similarities (lack of differences?)

- Similarities and differences between the two groups/samples are dealt within the analysis section and in the discussion. For example, see pages 16 and 18 where both London and Minneapolis groups found their new identity as refugees devalued their past and current social and professional status and life experiences.

- Towards the end of the qualitative section, we have added a new paragraph referring to the similar perceptions of the London and Minneapolis experiences. See page 23, paragraph one.

In the Discussion: what does it mean that Somalis in the both locations have similar perceptions of their experiences? (despite of the differences in the risk factors/mental health statuses among the two locations (page 27))

- The main discussion on page 27 also starts with explanations of how both groups have similar perceptions of difficult life experiences, as well as the multiple barriers and risk factors they face in the host nations. We talked how the London participants had experienced more social and unemployment problems than the Minneapolis group.

- The findings of the qualitative and quantitative studies are not mutually exclusive but complement each other.

Survey results

- Page 22: The results here are presented uniformly from the top of the Table 2. I suggest that the authors prioritize the most important results (for instance, the difference between UK and USA groups in the level of employment, length of stay, and immigration status, seeking asylum on the entree), bring these forward in the text so at the more important results can be built upon in the next part of the article.

  - Suggestion accepted, see page 24, paragraph 1. Second paragraph now focuses on employment and immigration differences.

“…higher proportion of employed participants from Minneapolis were doing
manual jobs (67% vs. 8%, =73.2, P#0.000)”
- Details (the values) of the variable “employment” are not presented in the Tables/text. If the authors chose to have the above sentence, more information needs to be added. Or clarify that the variable “employment” was dichotomized.

- Employment variable was dichotomised into skilled and not skilled. This variable is now included in the Table 2.

Prevalence & Predictors of psychological problems
Page: 23. “The prevalence rates of current major depression, suicide ideation and current agoraphobia were higher among the London respondents compared with the Minneapolis participants (27% vs. 7%, =8.23, P#0.004; 8% vs. 11%,=5.24, P#0.022); and 11% vs. 0%, =5.24, P#0.022).”

- Suggestion: all statistically significant differences should be included in the Table 2: please add in agoraphobia.

- Values of agoraphobia current are now inserted in Table 2.

The rates of Major Depression and PTSD are extremely high for both groups (according to table 2). These extreme rates have not been mentioned in the Discussion. The authors should try to explain the unusual high rates of these diagnoses, and discuss these in the Discussion and probably in the Limitation (any issues with the reliability of the use of MINI here?).

- This was due to a typing error. The correct values are as follows:

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>London % (n)</th>
<th>Minneapolis % (n)</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>P value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Major Depression Current</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>73.4 (105)</td>
<td>93.5 (43)</td>
<td>8.23</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>26.6 (38)</td>
<td>6.5 (3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttraumatic stress disorder</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>86.0 (123)</td>
<td>95.7 (44)</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>14.0 (20)</td>
<td>4.3 (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- These rates are higher than those of the general populations but are comparable with those of refugee populations.

Table 3:
The following is my main concern which influences my understanding of the
results and discussion related to this part of the study:
I find this table not so very reader-friendly. I struggle in making sense of the presented results of the regression analysis in the text as well (see table 3 at the end of this attached document).
- I assume that all data from the two locations has been entered to one set of regression analyses (as opposed to having two sets two sets of (identical) regression analyses have been carried out, one for UK and one for USA?
- The processes behind the regression analysis /analyses should be clarified (more than what is done in the present text / table). The reader should be (easily) able to read:
  a) A list of all explanatory and outcome variables which were included in the analysis.
  b) If some variables are not included in the analysis at all, an explanation needed for why this variable is left out. For instance the variable “Seeking asylum on entry” does not seem to have been included in the regression analysis.
  c) Variables which were entered at each stage of the regression analysis.
  d) For each stage of the analysis: the consequences of entering a variable (group of variables) on the association with the outcome variables (in form of odd ratio).

- We have clarified Table 3 accordingly (see below). This Table presents the unadjusted and adjusted odds ratio for location (London vs. US). Adjusted for age and gender, and then other risk factors (Marital Status, family separation, legal status, employment etc) were each added to the models at successive steps. Due to lack of space, where there were two similar variables for example, asylum seeking and legal status, we included one of them in the final analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Aggregated Disorders OR (95%CI)</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>Mental OR (95%CI)</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>Major Depression OR (95%CI)</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>London/Minneapolis</td>
<td>3.696 (1.46-9.30)</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>5.187 (1.52-17.70)</td>
<td>0.009</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex and age*</td>
<td>4.158 (1.61-10.69)</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>5.951 (1.71-20.70)</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status**</td>
<td>4.187 (1.61-10.83)</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>6.153 (1.74-21.69)</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Education ***</td>
<td>5.423 (2.01-14.60)</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>7.764 (2.13-28.21)</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Separation****</td>
<td>4.690 (1.64-13.38)</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td>5.310 (1.36-20.63)</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of legal Status*****</td>
<td>4.407 (1.49-12.95)</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td>4.673 (1.16-18.75)</td>
<td>0.030</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment ******</td>
<td>2.419 (0.70-8.34)</td>
<td>0.162</td>
<td>2.372 (0.51-10.95)</td>
<td>0.269</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period of stay**********</td>
<td>2.562 (0.73-8.89)</td>
<td>0.142</td>
<td>2.278 (0.48-10.71)</td>
<td>0.297</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Adjusted for sex and age +
** marital Status +
***Education +
**** Family separation +
*****Legal Status +
****** Employment +
*******Period of stay

Table 3: Stepped model adding key explanatory variables in a model predicting the association between location, aggregated mental disorders and depression.
What about interaction effect(s) of the explanatory variables on the outcome variables? Length of stay and legal status, for instance?

- While interaction analyses would have been beneficial, smaller numbers in the sub-group cells would not permit enough interaction analyses. We have addressed the issue of the small sample size in the limitation section.

Regression analysis:

Page 24:
“When we added marital status, education status, experience of family separation and legal status in models predicting the association between location and major depression and then aggregated mental disorders, the odds of major depression were still higher among the London group, and so were the odds of aggregated mental disorders. However, the odds of major depression and aggregated psychological disorders among the London participants were attenuated and no longer statistically significant when we controlled for whether the respondents were employed and for length of stay in the host country”-

Employment and length of stay were entered at the final step? From the note under Table 3, I understand that marital status, education status, experience of family separation and legal status together with employed and for length of stay were entered in one step (the final step). (Please refer to my previous point about the variables in the regression analysis).

Page 26: “After adjustment for sex, age and marital status, Somali refugees living in London were five times more likely to report major depression and four times more likely to have any mental disorder.”

- Should be “After adjustment for sex and age, Somali refugees living....”. According to the note under Table 3, only sex and age are being adjusted here and not marital status.

- We hope that Table 3 is now much clearer. It shows that, although family separation, legal status, and length of stay all play some role, employment is the only clear explanatory variable. We have mentioned this point in discussion.

- An almost identical sentences are found in the Result section (page: 24: “When adjusted for sex and age, participants living in London were....”). The authors should consider omitting the ones in the Discussion.

- We have rephrased these sentences as follows: (see page 27, second paragraph)
“Both the quantitative and qualitative results supported previous national studies which identified the relationship between factors in the post-migration environment and psychological well-being [22]. There were differences between the London and Minneapolis samples; after adjustment for sex and age, Somali refugees living in London were more likely to report major depression and any mental disorder. Compared with respondents from Minneapolis, Somalis living in London experienced more problems of family separation, legal uncertainties and were more likely to be unemployed than Minneapolis respondents. These seemed to be important differences, and predictors for different risks of mental disorders in participants of the two cities, with employment status having most of the impact by reducing the odds of major depression by a significant amount.”

Page 29:

“The professional focus groups and the Minneapolis lay discussion participants combined men and women and this may have influenced the content”.

- In which way?
- Or: the lay focused groups contained only of men/women: reason and how this may have influenced the content?

- We added the following sentence to clarify this point (See page 29, last paragraph, line 5):

“For example, we do not know if the narratives of the combined male and female discussion groups would have been different from those of the single gender focus groups; and how, if any, this might have influenced the qualitative results”.

The following two presentations from qualitative and quantitative part of the study appear inconsistent with each other and need explanation:

- “The narratives of the participants suggest that it was not only the unemployed or those with language problems and limited skills who …..risks of psychological distress” (page 25)

- “This supports the notion that employment is a key determinant of psychological wellbeing for refugee populations.” (page 26).

- We rewrote this statement as follows (see page 27, last paragraph):

“Although employment is a key determinant of psychological well-being for refugees, it is also dependent upon several other factors such as recognised legal status, access to language education and validation of previous
professional qualifications. This understanding of the multiple effects of different risk factors suggests that adaptation and integration can best be achieved through policies which seek to enhance the safety, support and positive identity of refugees and which seek to reduce threats to these factors”.

Page 27/28:
“Country-specific integration policies help to .... been awarded, the individual can then access the same welfare and support systems as British citizens.”

This has little/no relevance to the “Limitation” section.

- Statement deleted.

Page 28: “For example, once in the....systems as British citizens”

Page 28: “For example, compared with the Somalis ....an alien culture.”

These two paragraphs are account of the policies in the two locations (with no references given). It has a propagandistic tone. The matter is complicated and I suggest that it should be omitted.

- We have now deleted both paragraphs.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field
Quality of written English: Acceptable
Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.
Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests
Response to Reviewer 2’s report.

This paper reads much more clearly now & will be an important contribution to the literature.

- Many thanks for your very helpful suggestions and comments.

Some remaining "Minor issues not for publication":

Background

# United Nations & consider “this”...convention (to avoid sounding as though there are two of them.
# ‘granted refugee status’ – would prefer to see the word ‘recognised' used here.

- Suggestion accepted, see page 3, last paragraph,

# Last paragraph in this section: “limitations of the study...paper”. Remove – not needed here.

- Suggestion accepted, sentence removed.

Research methods

# “NHS ethics committees” – be more specific – if multi-centre then name the IRAS system by name (for international audience)

- Suggestion accepted. See page 6, first paragraph, line 6.

# Just before list of questions: “open-ended”

- Correction accepted. See page 9.

# Last line before Outcome Measures: “46 4 per cent”

- Correction accepted, see page 13, paragraph one, last line.

# Quotation : “he is like that rubbish binf”

- Correction accepted, see page 17, quotation 2.
Discussion

# Reference to Herlihy, Scragg & Turner, 2002 – thanks for the citation, but I don’t think we really said that! Maybe in Psychology of Seeking Protection (2009)? Otherwise, omit. A ref. to a Steel/Silove paper might be more appropriate.

- This reference is omitted from Discussion.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field
Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published
Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.
Declaration of competing interests: 'I declare that I have no competing interests'