Reviewer's report

Title: New place of living, eroding resilience and psychological distress among Somali Refugees: A qualitative and quantitative study

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Reviewer: Touraj Ayazi

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Review of:
New place of living, eroding resilience and psychological distress among Somali Refugees: A qualitative and quantitative study. Warfa et. al.

I have enjoyed reading this manuscript. It was a very interesting reading. I have some comments which I write in the boxes below and upload as an attachment.

Minor essential revisions are marked as: (1)
Directionary revisions are marked as: (2)

- The Reference section needs to be revised: several styles have been used in the reference list. One style (according to the Journal’s standard) should be applied. (1)
- The reference to literature in the text are mostly given in square brackets, but in some cases without square brackets (for example page 9. Same style should apply for the whole text. (1)
- The layout for sub heading is not consistent: some are in bold, other in bold and italic, and some in capital letters other not. Need to be revised. (1)
- The title of the manuscript does not reflect the aim of the study. (2)
- Different layout and format are used for the tables. Some of the titles are incorrect and imprecise. Reference is made in the text to non existing tables. (1)

Background
Page 5:
“Whilst primarily aimed at understanding the effects of trauma, an alternative model proposed by [17] may provide a richer explanation…”

Should be ‘Whilst primarily aimed at understanding the effects of trauma, an alternative model proposed by Silove [17] may provide a richer explanation…’ (1)

Page 7:
“The purpose of the paper is to discern from a Somali perspective the range of factors which may reduce or help adaptation and resilience and thereby contribute to increased psychological distress or better psychological wellbeing”
I think this section reflects only a part of the purpose of the manuscript as it is mentioned in the abstract. Nothing here on comparing UK and US samples. (2)

Ethical Consideration

“Informed written consent was received from the research participants.”
The sentence should not be written in bold style. The same sentence is repeated latter in page 10. (1)

Research Methods

Page 9:

(1)

“Previously it was thought too difficult to engage asylum seekers and refugees in ..”

- Previously as opposed to now?

I have difficulty understanding the way the study has been conducted.
The data is “partly emerged from a secondary data” (page 9). It is unclear what part of the data is novel and which part is secondary.

For the survey, the 146 participants from London seem to be identical sample as a previous study (Bhui et al, 2006). What about the 24 participants from US?

If I am not mistaken the qualitative part, the focused group discussions, has taken place prior to the quantitative part (the survey) (refer to: page 14 “we used the above focus group method to prepare the sampling framework for the follow up survey”.)

When exactly did the data gathering for the qualitative part of the study take place?

Focus Group

Page 10:

- Clarification needed on what the authors mean by “professional” versus “lay” participants. And the purpose of having such categorization? (2)

Also more information on the focus groups:

- The selection criteria for the samples? (1)
- The dates /period of conducting the discussions? London 2001? And in the US? (1)
- Who led the discussions? (2)
- The professionals’ focus group consisted of both male and female participants but not the lay focus groups. Reason? (2)
- Why more participants in UK than in US? (2)
- The table 2 (page 10) which suppose to present the core questions is missing. (1)

- Table 1A and 1B (page 11 and 12): the sum of the participants is 47, while in page 10 the number of focus group participants is 48. Needs clarification. (1)

Survey Design
Recruitment, sampling and instruments:

Page 13:
“…we used a number of research tools”
- What other tools than MINI was used? (2)

What was the sampling frame? (2)

“We also used demographic questionnaire which taps on social and environmental conditions such as age, gender, city of residence, duration of residence in country of refuge, legal status, education, employment, experiences of discrimination, separation from family.”

- “duration of residence in country of refuge” and “experiences of discrimination” is missing in the Results, tables and Discussion. (1)

“The Somali version of Mini-International Neuropsychiatric Interview (MINI) questionnaire which has been used in 42 other languages and has good validity and reliability measures [25, 12].”

- This sentence can be misunderstood as if the Somali version of MINI has been used in 42 other languages. (2)

Page 14:
Are both quantitative data sets (UK and US) secondary data? (2)

Are both qualitative data sets (UK and US) secondary data? (2)

Are both quantitative data sets (UK and US) gathered prior to the qualitative data sets (UK and US)? (2)

Page 14:
Recruiting the participants for the quantitative survey was based on information from members of focused group, how does this recruitment make your sample bias? (1)

Qualitative Results
Three themes are presented under this section:

1. “Domestic political discourse about immigration, erosion of resilience and psychological distress”
2. “Unmet expectations, material conditions and poor resilience”
3. “Pre-migration social status, loss of homeland and psychological distress”

The section “Professional and lay Somalis from Minneapolis and London linked various Psychological…” seems to summarize all three themes and should be moved right under “Qualitative Results”. (2)

In this part of the manuscript (“Qualitative Results”) the results are discussed and are being related to other literature as well. For instance:
- page 17 “Here, it is important to notice how the above participants are using social common…”
- page 18: “Rousseau et al [26] previously proposed that many…”
- page 21: “… are supported by Fullilove’s [27] theoretical explanation for the disruption…”

(2)

The section’s under-title should be changed to, ‘Results and Discussion’ to reflect the content. Perhaps a short sentence about how the results and discussion are being dealt with within the same section should be given. (2)

Page 16:
“Like their London counterparts, the Minneapolis lay groups also noted the…”. “lay groups” should be change to lay group. According to table 1B, page 12, there is only one lay group from US. (1)

Page 20:
The title of the theme: “Pre-migration social status, loss of homeland and psychological distress” is written in bold and italic. The other two under titles are only in bold. Same font should be applied. (1)

Page 22:
“These focus group discussions and narratives of psychological and social problems were crucial before we carried out the follow up survey.”

Also in page 25:
“..some of the qualitative components were to strengthen the methodological design of the survey”

Need more explanation on what are the concrete points/components extracted from the focus group discussions and in what ways these specific points were integrated/influenced the survey/survey design, advantages and disadvantages. (1)

Survey Result
The title and numbering of the tables should be corrected. The tables are not numbered consecutively. There are two 1a-tables (page 11 and 32) and two 1b-table (page12 and 33). (1)

Table 1a and 1b (pp 32 and 33) should be merged together as both dealt with demographic characteristics of the participants. (2)

Title of table 1a (pp 33) should be corrected (this table does not include “the prevalence of mental health problems”). (1)

Page 24:
“Other reasons for leaving Somalia included risk to own life or lives of family members or threat of oppression due to political or clan affiliation as well as economic reasons (See Table 1, above).”

This table is missing. (1)

Also in Page 33:
In the table 1b (pp 33), the last row, reference is made to “Other reasons for leaving home” but these other reasons are not specified. (2)

Page 24:
“We carried out further logistic regression modeling to examine associations between mental health outcomes and demographic, social and other characteristics”

- “further” should be omitted. (2)
- What are the other characteristics besides the sociodemographics? (1)

Page 25:
“Almost all of them were Muslim and spoke a common Somali language. The majority of them (70%) also arrived in the host nations as a result of the civil war and had experienced similar traumatic events in the country of origin, and new social adversities in the UK”

Was traumatic event experienced measured? Instrument used? Results? (1)
Were they asked about spoken language(s)? (1)

Page 25:
“The findings suggest that Somali refugees living in London and Minneapolis …”

Should be modified to, for instance, ‘The findings suggest that our samples of Somali refugees living in London and Minneapolis’. The findings cannot be generalized to Somalis refuges living in the two cities. (1)

Page 26:
“…for example, the acculturation model [14] because of the…”
Should be modified to: “….for example, Berry’s acculturation model [14] because of the….”.(2)

Page 26:
“The stigma attached to an existence as ‘refugees’ contributed…”

Should be modified to: “The perceived stigma attached to an existence as ‘refugees’ contributed…” (2)

Page 26:
“It was not only the unemployed or those with language problems and limited skills who were finding it difficult to integrate into the host nations but also participants with professional skills who were fluent in English and were in a better situation to take control of their lives.”

I assume the authors are building on the participants’ understandings /explanations of their situations and not presenting facts? If correct, the sentence should be modified to emphasize the participants’ point of view: for example: ‘According to the participants’ understanding, it was not only the unemployed….’ (2)

Page 26:
“The qualitative data identified themes related to a loss of identity and status, poor socio-economic conditions and loss of former socioeconomic position, changes to gender roles, challenges to masculinity and thwarted aspirations; all seen as related to psychological distress”

These sound like results and should be moved to Result section. (2)

Page 27:
“Somali refugees living in London were five times more likely to report major depression and four times more likely to have any mental disorder. This was a surprising finding given the demographic similarities between the London and Minneapolis Somalis”

- Should be: the London and Minneapolis Somali samples. (1)
- There are important differences between London and Minneapolis Somali samples: employment status, legal status, seeking asylum, and family separation. So the finding that the London sample is “five times more likely to report major depression…” is not surprising. (1)

Page 27:
The sentence: “Social problems reported included unemployment, social isolation and language barriers” does not seem to relate well with the rest of the section. (2)

There is no report on social problems in the manuscript. (2)
“Both our comparative quantitative and qualitative results are in accord with previous national studies which identified the relationship between factors in the post-migration environment and psychological well-being”

- I wonder if the authors should refer to relevant studies (even from other countries) and preferably to work of other authors (rather than references number 4, 12, and 22). (2)

“These findings are consistent with several other national refugee studies, for example, see Bieser et al [13].”

- The publishing year for this reference is 2001 and not 2002. (1)

In relation with Porter & Haslam’s (2005) study it is stated:

“Whilst the negative domestic political discourse about immigration and controlled migration might undermine the resilient nature of economic migrants and refugee groups, the comparison between the integration and socio-economic experiences of economic migrants and refugee populations should be treated with caution.”

- I wonder if this point should be clarified further. This is the first time the authors mention and distinguish between economic migrants and refugees. Is it to understand that the study participants are defined as refugees as opposed to economic migrants? If so, it should be clearly stated earlier in the manuscript together with definitions of both groups. (2)

- And it would be interesting to read how “the integration and socio-economic experiences” of refugees versus economic immigrants may differ related to their mental health, since it is brought up in the manuscript. (2)

Needless to say that length of stay in host country is an important variable.

The authors mention the variable: “period of stay” in table 2, page 33. There is, however, no information on this variable otherwise neither in the Method nor in the Results. (1)

Reference is also made in page 28: “…inclusion in the labour market at any level, in the period immediately after arrival in the host country, has…”. The variable is not dealt with otherwise. (1)

“Here, we call for the adoption of policies which assist refugees in the labour market and educational system because of the positive effects of these factors
on mental health.”

This sentence should go under another heading (for instance Recommendation) than Discussion. (2)

Page 28-29:

“Moreover, there has also been an ongoing debate as to the extent to which the use of khat is associated....”

Although the issue of Khat use /abuse is important, I wonder if it is appropriate to bring it in under discussion since the issue has not been mentioned previously, either in qualitative or quantitative part or not even in Introduction. (2)

Page 28:

“Therefore, country specific integration policies help to…”

- “Therefore” should be omitted. (2)

Page 28:

The comparison between “country specific integration policies” brought up in this section is interesting. However, it is difficult to draw a conclusion based on the result of this study. It is not straightforward to compare the two samples. One thing is the issue of size of n, the other is the process of sampling and randomization .... The two samples in UK and US are probably in two different stages of their stay in the host countries (no information is provided about the length of stay). They have, as mentioned by the authors, different entering approach to the host country (what are these besides seeking asylum?). ‘family reunification scheme’? And what does this status (entering the country via family reunification) bring about of opportunities or disadvantages compare to asylum seekers? Does the different entering approach (seeking asylum or not) imply different reason for migration/different reason for leaving home? (2)

In the Qualitative Results, similarities in the two samples’ experiences in the host countries are emphasized (also mentioned by the authors). It would have been very interesting to know how the authors would interpreted these similarities or expression of the similar experiences. (1)

It would be interesting to read what the authors perceive as the limitations of the study. (1)

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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' below.