

SECTION XVIII. PSYCHOLOGY AND PSYCHIATRY

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UNDERSTANDING CAREER DEVELOPMENT NEEDS AND CAREER COUNSELING STRATEGIES FOR REFUGEES

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According to the UN Refugee Agency, by the end of 2021, 89.3 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide due to persecution, conflict, violence, or human rights violations. As of May 2022, 100 million individuals were forcibly displaced worldwide. This accounts for an increase of 10.7 million people displaced from the end of the previous year, propelled by the war in Ukraine and other deadly conflicts.

Given these statistics, career counselors need to understand refugees' unique career development needs to help them gain employment and build successful careers. This article will explore strategies for career services providers to better support refugees' career development process.

When establishing a career counseling relationship with a refugee, it is crucial to be mindful of mental health aspects and issues the client may have. The client might have experienced extensive trauma, including the violence and death of loved ones; the client had to leave their life behind. Such traumatic events might cause mental health concerns, including depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), suicidal thoughts, and others. When working with refugees, it is essential to show empathy and genuine interest in hearing the client's story if they are willing to share. Additionally, it is vital to develop multicultural competence and utilize multicultural counseling skills. Career counselors should not make any assumptions and proceed with caution and care.

The second factor career counselors should explore is a refugee's life before becoming a refugee. This exploration might include their past jobs and interests. It is widespread when refugees cannot keep their occupations due to licensure requirements in a new country. Examples might include occupations such as doctors, nurses, teachers, counselors, and others. It is vital to guide refugees through these changes and help them find their ground. Strategies might include exploring aptitudes, skills, interests, and values through taking career assessments to find new possible careers so refugees can gain employment in a new country. However, a prevalent issue is the underemployment of such refugees due to no possibility keep their occupations. A helpful strategy would be exploring a local job market with refugees to help them better understand current trends and opportunities. Refugees might not be familiar with the local job market, current openings, and unique details about a job market in a new country. Additional issue refugees might face is an adaptation to a new language, which might also be a barrier to career development.

Refugees adapt to new circumstances in different ways. Some might assimilate faster than others, adjust to a new language and culture, and socialize. Some refugees might be resistant to adapting because of inner conflicts and experienced traumatic events, while others might be in the middle. Working with refugees, it is essential to help them adapt through individual counseling sessions and advocacy work. Assisting refugees in finding ways to learn a language might help them adjust faster and in a more efficient manner.

Each refugee's story is unique, and career counselors play a significant role in helping refugees find a safe life and employment in a new place. Working with refugees, it is essential to be empathetic, express genuine interest and care, and be mindful of cultural differences and possible mental health concerns.

References:

- [1] Refugee statistics. USA for UNHCR. (n.d.). Retrieved October 6, 2022, from <https://www.unrefugees.org/>
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