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THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL SUPPORT ON DAILY STRESSORS AND LIFE SATISFACTION OF AFGHAN REFUGEE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT
This study explores the significant relationship between daily stressors, social support, and life satisfaction among Afghan refugee students in Balochistan, shedding light on the psychosocial challenges they encounter during the resettlement process. The research focuses on key daily stressors, such as academic pressure, language barriers, discrimination, financial instability, and family-related challenges, and examines their influence on social support and overall life satisfaction. Utilizing purposive sampling methods, the study successfully engaged 340 participants aged 15 to 29 from refugee schools in Quetta city, Balochistan, adhering to specific inclusion criteria. The findings indicate that while daily stressors can negatively affect both social support and life satisfaction, social support plays a crucial role in mitigating these negative impacts. These insights highlight the potential to strengthen social support networks and resilience among Afghan refugee students. By focusing on enhancing these support systems, we can positively influence their life satisfaction and facilitate smoother integration into host communities. Promoting a supportive environment can effectively alleviate the adverse effects of daily stressors, ultimately fostering a more fulfilling experience for these students.
Key words: *refugees, daily stressors, social support, life satisfaction.*

INTRODUCTION
Since the early days of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Pakistan has taken an unusually welcoming approach toward Afghan refugees. In fact, the country grants refugees fundamental rights; however, only Pakistani nationals are protected in their freedom of movement under the 1973 constitution (Grare & Maley, 2011). Research on the issue of Afghan refugees facing prolonged refugee status (PRS) is limited. However, there is renewed optimism for the remaining Afghan community in Pakistan, thanks to the increased interest from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and similar organizations in addressing the challenges associated with prolonged refugee status and seeking solutions. After living in Pakistan for more than 20 years, Afghans have managed to establish livelihoods. Nevertheless, as refugees, they often face criticism from both local communities and government authorities regarding their commercial activities.

These stressors may impact the concentration and engagement of refugee students in class and hinder their ability to interact with others, ultimately affecting the overall educational environment. Research indicates that post-resettlement stressors, such as perceived discrimination, interpersonal relationships, acculturative stress, and daily challenges, play a significant role in predicting the psychosocial functioning of young refugees (Bronstein & Montgomery, 2011; Ellis, MacDonald, Lincoln & Cabral, 2008; Ellis et al., 2010).

DAILY STRESSORS

Daily stressors refer to the unpleasant, upsetting, and aggravating demands that individuals encounter in their daily lives, particularly in the context of long-term relationships and responsibilities (Kanner, Coyne, Schaefer & Lazarus, 1981). For Afghan refugee students, these daily stressors play a crucial role in shaping their resettlement experiences and overall psychosocial well-being. The challenges they face include academic stress, language barriers, discrimination, financial instability, lack of a support system, and family-related pressures. Such stressors can hinder their ability to focus and engage in class, which adversely affects their educational environment.

Research indicates that post-resettlement stressors—such as perceived discrimination, interpersonal relationships, acculturative stress, and everyday challenges—are significant predictors of the psychosocial functioning of young refugees (Bronstein & Montgomery, 2011; Ellis, MacDonald, Lincoln & Cabral, 2008; Ellis et al., 2010).

Academic stress often leads to feelings of inadequacy, performance pressure, and uncertainty about the future. Understanding the nuances of academic stress is essential, as it can significantly affect students' life satisfaction and perceptions of social support (Berry, Phinney, Sam & Vedder, 2006). Financial stress impacts various aspects of life, including academic performance, family dynamics, and access to social support networks. It is vital to explore how financial instability affects social support for Afghan refugee students to gain a holistic understanding of their well-being (Gade et al., 2019).

Many refugees face financial difficulties in their new environments, particularly regarding finding suitable employment and achieving financial security. Factors hindering their job search may include visa issues, inadequate communication skills, a lack of recognition for degrees from their home countries, discrimination, insufficient professional skills, and other mental or physical barriers (Krahn, Derwing, Mulder & Wilkinson, 2000). These stressful circumstances can vary in severity, including lack of access to basic necessities such as food, water, and shelter; unsafe or overcrowded living conditions; and limited livelihood opportunities (Kiragu, Rosi & Morris, 2011).

Consequently, much of the literature suggests implementing similar instructional strategies to support refugee youth. These strategies include providing comprehensive support for language learning, using diverse, international teaching methods, and creating a welcoming learning environment.

SOCIAL PROVISION AMONG AFGHAN REFUGEE STUDENTS

Social provision is a crucial concept in the lives of Afghan refugee students, reflecting the extent and quality of social support available to them as they face the challenges of resettlement and education in host countries. For these students, who have often endured displacement, conflict, and upheaval, the availability of social support can significantly impact their psychosocial well-being and adaptation to new environments (Anderson, 2001). This concept includes various supportive resources such as emotional support, practical assistance, informational guidance, and companionship, all of which help them cope with daily stressors and cultivate a sense of belonging (Lipson et al., 2017).

Research shows that receiving social support from personal and social networks is essential for reducing stress, maintaining well-being, and ultimately achieving self-sufficiency and happiness. In difficult times, social support allows individuals to manage stress more effectively and enhances their confidence in dealing with chronic challenges that are important for the adaptation process. A strong sense of belonging, the presence of a community with shared ethnicity, and well-established support systems like friends and family can help immigrants expand their social networks over time and open doors to external opportunities and support (Simich et al., 2005).

Social support can also protect individuals from the harmful effects of stress by influencing their evaluation and coping processes (Lazarus & DeLongis, 1983; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). It affects feelings of loneliness and affiliation among immigrants and refugees (Kelaher et al., 2001). Key sources of social support include home, close friends, relatives, and someone specific who can assist individuals and alleviate their stress (Clara et al., 2003).

LIFE SATISFACTION

Life satisfaction refers to an individual's overall contentment with their entire life, rather than just being satisfied with specific circumstances or situations (Oztop & Kinaci, 2016). It is a complex concept significantly influenced by the unique and often challenging experiences of refugee students. Refugee students typically face numerous obstacles, such as traumatic experiences before their departure, anxiety about losing their homes, and difficulties in adapting to a new school and cultural environment. These challenges can adversely affect their overall quality of life, which encompasses emotional, social, and intellectual well-being.

Research shows that refugee students experience higher levels of life satisfaction when they can adjust and find stability in their new surroundings. Positive life satisfaction among refugees is linked to several factors, including mental health, social support, and successful adaptation to their host communities (Lonnqvist, Leikas, Mahonen, & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2015).

Diener, Harter, and Arora (2010) found a clear correlation between happiness and economic security and stability. Life satisfaction is positively connected to good jobs, which enhance financial stability. However, upon moving to a new country, refugees often struggle with language proficiency and face challenges in adjusting to their new environment. Therefore, it is essential to research the factors related to life satisfaction in this vulnerable population.

While the positive changes experienced by ex-refugees have not been extensively studied, it is noted that low life satisfaction is associated with limited proficiency in the language of the host country (Watkins, Razee, & Richters, 2012). Additionally, employment opportunities are positively correlated with language skills (Hebbani, 2015), and having a job contributes to greater life satisfaction (Matsuo & Poljarevic, 2011). Improvements in education and skills are also linked to increased life satisfaction among individuals who have immigrated and relocated to a new country (Botha, 2014; Mansourian & Rajaei, 2018).

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) proposed that, in order to assess the significance and interpretation of a situation regarding satisfaction, individuals conduct primary and secondary evaluations of a stressor almost simultaneously as part of the cognitive appraisal process. According to the theory of social support presented by Gala and Francis Cullen (1994), social support plays a crucial role in enhancing life satisfaction and mitigating the negative effects of stressors. This theory suggests that people utilize the informational, practical, and emotional support provided by their social networks to cope with stress.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Sirin, Plass, Homer, Vatanartiran, and Tsai (2018), Afghan refugee students face a variety of daily stressors that can significantly impact their psychosocial well-being and ability to access social support networks. Academic challenges, such as adapting to a foreign curriculum and overcoming language barriers, represent substantial obstacles for these refugees.

Arredondo, Fawcett, Cigrand, Grant, Miyakuni, and Adams (2024) documented additional stressors in their research on African refugees in the United States, noting that discrimination can take many forms and can undermine the self-esteem and sense of belonging among Afghan refugee students.

Porter and Haslam (2015) emphasize that emotional support from family, peers, and community networks plays a crucial role in mitigating the negative effects of these daily stressors. Furthermore, Norris and Aroian (2018) highlight the importance of instrumental assistance—such as help with daily tasks and navigating bureaucratic systems—in enabling refugees to adapt to their new environments.

According to Anderson (2001), demographic factors can significantly influence the nature and extent of social support available. For example, age, gender, and education level may affect individuals' access to these support networks. Understanding these demographic disparities is essential for creating targeted interventions and support systems that address the unique needs of Afghan refugee students and promote equitable access to assistance.

A study conducted by Jasinskaja-Lahti, Liebkind, and Perhoniemi (2006), along with research by Newman, Bimrose, Nielsen, and Zacher (2018), analyzed representative adult refugee samples from Finland, Russia, and Estonia, involving a total of 2,360 participants. Their findings indicate that social

support plays a significant role in influencing the well-being of refugees, both directly and indirectly. Hanley et al. (2018) noted that Syrian refugees living in Canada experience easier integration and job searching due to strong social support from family and friends. Conversely, research conducted in Turkey in 2011 among Syrian female refugees revealed a low level of social support.

Refugees who receive support from family, friends, and other significant individuals are better equipped to cope with stress and adapt to their new surroundings. Aziz and Yıldırım (2020) emphasized that there has been a growing academic focus on identifying protective factors that contribute to resilience and coping resources among refugees, aiding their adjustment to a new host country.

Additionally, a two-year longitudinal study by Bajwa, Abai, Couto, Kidd, Dibavar, and McKenzie (2019) involving refugees in Canada demonstrated a positive correlation between psychological resources—such as hope, self-efficacy, resilience, optimism—and overall life satisfaction.

A study by Brailovskaia, Schonfeld, Kochetkov, and Margraf (2019) examined Russian and American refugees and found that resilience was significantly positively correlated with life satisfaction. Conversely, one-dimensional happiness was negatively associated with feelings of hopelessness, nervousness, and stress. This survey contrasted various aspects of psychological well-being and overall satisfaction.

Additionally, Colic-Peisker (2009) demonstrated a positive correlation between a sense of belonging and life satisfaction among refugees, highlighting the important relationship between social support and life satisfaction. Hope and resilience emerged as consistent strong determinants of both flourishing and overall life satisfaction.

Research conducted by Dogan, Dikec, and Uygun (2019), as well as Kim (2011) and Hamarat (2002), focused on refugees in Turkey and discovered that life satisfaction improves in correlation with increased social support. Furthermore, a study on social support and life satisfaction among refugee women in South Korea revealed that women with higher levels of social support reported greater life satisfaction. This study also found that stress negatively affects life satisfaction, indicating an inverse relationship between life satisfaction and stress levels.

Murray (2010) and Berry (2008) studied Sudanese migrants in Australia and identified significant sources of dissatisfaction, including discrimination and challenges related to employment. Various resettlement-related stressors, such as social isolation, language barriers, and cultural differences, contribute to psychological distress among refugees.

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According to Colic-Peisker (2009), refugees who experience prejudice and discrimination at work report lower life satisfaction. Economic challenges and a lack of resources in host countries mean that many refugees struggle to secure stable residency, which is a major source of psychological distress. Research by Szymanski and Lewis (2016) indicates that female refugees tend to face more severe outcomes than males when dealing with stressors. In their study, Kurdish women migrating from the eastern and southeastern regions of Anatolia to the west showed a strong connection between their psychological health and the levels of depression and anxiety they experienced. Additionally, Yildirim, Aziz, Vostanis, and Hassan (2022) conducted a study on immigrants in Spain to explore the relationship between social support, sense of community, immigrant health, and life satisfaction. They found that a stronger sense of community was linked to increased social support from local friends. Higher life satisfaction was associated with social support from both friends and family who are native to the area. Furthermore, greater life satisfaction correlated with a stronger sense of community. Importantly, while higher life satisfaction was linked to fewer symptoms of illness and improved mental health, no direct correlation was found between a greater sense of community and these health variables. These findings suggest that life satisfaction among immigrants may be significantly influenced by their integration into the community and the support networks they have with native family and friends.

The existing research presents a gap in the comprehensive examination of the relationship among daily stressors, life satisfaction, and social support specifically among Afghan refugee students. While the literature recognizes the significant challenges these students face—such as academic stress, language barriers, discrimination, and financial instability—it does not fully explore how these stressors collectively influence their life satisfaction and access to support networks. This study aims to address this gap by thoroughly investigating these critical dimensions, highlighting the complex connections between daily stressors, social support, and life satisfaction.

This research has important implications for both academic and humanitarian fields. It enhances our understanding of the intricate interplay between daily stressors, life satisfaction, and social support among Afghan refugee students, shedding light on the psychosocial challenges they encounter during resettlement. The findings can inform the creation of evidence-based support programs tailored to meet the unique needs of this population, ultimately improving their resilience and facilitating their successful integration into host communities.

OBJECTIVE OF THE RESEARCH

1. To examine the influence of social support on the daily stressors faced by refugee students.
2. To assess the effects of daily stressors on refugee students.
3. To evaluate the level of life satisfaction among refugee students.

METHODS

The present research employed a cross-sectional design and included 340 students aged 15 to 29 from various educational backgrounds to obtain a representative sample. The researchers distributed questionnaires among refugee students at each school. The purpose of the questionnaire was explained to the participants, who then completed it as part of the study.

The questionnaires consisted of a demographic information form, the Afghan Daily Stressor Scale by Kenneth E. Miller (2016), the Social Provision Scale by Cutrona and Russell (1987), the Satisfaction with Life Scale by Diener et al. (1985), and an interview guide.

The inclusion criteria for this study targeted Afghan refugee students currently enrolled in educational institutions in Baluchistan. Questionnaires were administered in Dari, Pashto, Urdu, and English, and participants were required to be proficient in at least one of these languages. Non-refugee students who were not enrolled in refugee schools, as well as those unwilling or unable to provide informed consent, were excluded from the study.

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RESULTS

The gender distribution of the participants shows that a majority are male, making up 58.5% of the sample, while female participants account for 41.5%. This imbalance in gender representation may affect the experiences and coping mechanisms related to stressors and support networks, as gender often intersects with societal norms and expectations.

In terms of age, most participants are younger, with 86.7% falling within the 15 to 19 years age bracket. This youthful demographic suggests that the sample primarily consists of adolescents and young adults, who may face unique challenges associated with migration, education, and adjusting to a new environment. Many participants are enrolled in fields such as medical health professions and engineering, but a significant majority (79.4%) are studying other disciplines.

When it comes to marital status, an overwhelming 87.9% of participants are unmarried, while only 12.1% are married. Employment status reveals that a notable 62.4% of participants are unemployed, with smaller percentages engaged in part-time (29.7%) or full-time (7.9%) employment.

Regarding residency, the majority of participants identify as refugees (91.2%), while a smaller portion has asylum status (3.2%) or falls into other categories (4.6%).

Table 1 Correlation among afghan daily stressors, social support and life satisfaction of refugee students. (N=340)

Variables	M	SD	LSS	ADS	SPS
LSS	10.7176	5.15222	1	.413	.704**
ADS	55.4299	9.02924		1	.654*
SPS	7.0618	14.50315			1

p<.05, p<.01***

Research indicates that a higher level of social support (SPS) is positively associated with greater life satisfaction (LSS), as shown by a strong correlation coefficient of .704** ($p < .01$). This suggests a significant relationship between the two variables. In contrast, daily stressors (ADS) are negatively correlated with life satisfaction, with a correlation coefficient of $r = .413$ ($p < .05$), indicating that increased daily stressors are linked to lower life satisfaction among refugee students. Interestingly, there is also a significant positive correlation between daily stressors and social support ($r = .654^*$, $p < .05$). This implies that higher levels of social support may help mitigate the negative effects of daily stressors on life satisfaction.

TABLE 2
Multiple Linear Regression Analysis showing of daily stressor will affects the social support and life satisfaction of refugee students. (N=340)

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	8.74	1.767		-5.755	.000
	ADSS	.5.49	.031	.017	.313	.000
	SPS	6.88	354	.005	-004	.000

*p<.001****

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The results indicate that daily stressors have a significant negative effect on life satisfaction, with a coefficient of 5.49 ($p < .001$). This means that for every one-unit increase in daily stressors, life satisfaction decreases by 5.49 units. In addition, social support has a statistically significant positive effect on life satisfaction, with a coefficient of 6.88 ($p < .001$). This suggests that while social support enhances life satisfaction, its impact is less substantial compared to the effects of daily stressors.

TABLE 3
Mean, Standard deviation, t-value and scores Analysis of daily stressor, on Social Support and life satisfaction with respect to gender of Afghan Refugee Students (N=340)

Variables	Male (n=98)		Female (n=242)		*t(338)*	*P*	95% CI		*d*
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*			*LL*	*UL*	
LSS	21.9714	5.53984	20.7839	6.43762	-1.770	.034	-2.50	.238	0.452
ADS	54.3551	9.85797	56.1827	8.34383	1.830	.000	-.137	.254	0.456
SPS	63.5036	7.88447	63.5253	8.91681	.023	.654	-1.82	.385	0.654

Note; *LSS=Life Satisfaction, ADS=Daily Stressor, SPS= Social Support Scale*
p<.05, p<.001***, p>.05*

Female participants have slightly lower average scores for life satisfaction (M = 20.78, SD = 6.44) compared to male participants (M = 21.97, SD = 5.54). This difference is statistically significant, with a t-value of -1.77 (p = .034), suggesting that females report lower levels of life satisfaction. On the other hand, male participants report slightly higher average scores for daily stressors (M = 54.36, SD = 9.86) than female participants (M = 56.18, SD = 8.34). This difference is also statistically significant, with a t-value of 1.83 (p = .000), indicating that females perceive lower levels of daily stressors.

TABLE 4

Mean, Standard deviation, t-value and scores Analysis of daily stressor, on Social Support and life satisfaction with respect to education of Afghan Refugee Students (N=340)

Variables	Matriculation (n=98)		Intermediate (n=242)		*t(338)*	*P*	95% CI		*d*
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*			*LL*	*UL*	
LSS	10.4417	4.71408	11.3800	6.05160	-1.533	.007	-2.14	.265	0.329
ADS	55.5210	8.64230	55.2062	9.95923	.289	.086	-1.82	2.45	0.304
SPS	1.5000	.72030	1.7800	.91652	-3.005	.000	-.463	-.096	0.841

p<.05, p>.05, p<.001****

Students at the intermediate education level exhibit higher mean scores for life satisfaction *(M = 11.3800, SD = 6.05160)* compared to those at the matriculation level *(M = 10.4417, SD = 4.71408)*, with a statistically significant t-value of *-1.533 (p = .007)*, indicating that intermediate-level students report higher levels of life satisfaction. Interestingly, students at the intermediate level report significantly higher mean scores for social support *(M = 1.7800, SD = .91652)* compared to those at the matriculation level *(M = 1.5000, SD = .72030)*, with a statistically significant t-value of *-3.005 (p < .001)*, indicating that intermediate-level students perceive greater levels of social support.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the present study are similar to those of a research study conducted by Miller and Rasmussen (2010), which examined the psychological adjustment of Sudanese refugees resettled in the US. Their results indicated a strong negative relationship between perceived social support and daily stressors. This suggests that as daily stressors increased, the availability of social support decreased. The study highlights the challenges that migrants face in obtaining and maintaining supportive social networks while dealing with constant stressors. Similarly, Murray et al. (2018) investigated the effects of daily stressors on the mental health of adolescent Syrian refugees living in camps. Their findings also revealed a negative correlation between perceived social support and daily stress levels, leading to a decline in participants' life satisfaction. The present study underscores the crucial role that social support plays in mitigating the negative impacts of daily stressors on the well-being of refugee communities. The negative association between daily stressors and social support supports the first hypothesis of my study.

The findings of study align with previous research (Miller & Rasmussen, 2010; Murray et al., 2018) that highlights the negative effects of long-term stressors on the general well-being and life satisfaction of refugee populations. Furthermore, the study reveals a negative relationship between daily stressors and life satisfaction among Afghan refugee students, indicating that an increase in stressors is associated with lower life satisfaction. Specifically, there is a significant inverse relationship between daily stressors and life satisfaction among these students. This indicates that as stress levels rise, life satisfaction tends to decrease. The results suggest that an increase in the frequency and severity of everyday stressors can lead to a decline in overall life satisfaction for these students.

The findings of the present study align with those of Sirin et al. (2018). The results indicate that daily stressors have a significant negative impact on the life satisfaction of refugee students. Specifically, when refugees face various stressors, their ability to

perceive social support diminishes, leading to lower life satisfaction. Afghan refugee students experience daily stressors that significantly and adversely affect their life satisfaction and access to social support.

Similarly, the study by Alfadhli and Dury (2018) on Iraqi and Egyptian refugees shows that they have lower levels of life satisfaction due to numerous challenges and a lack of social support in their daily lives. This is consistent with the findings of the current study, as Afghan refugees in Pakistan also reported various challenges and difficulties in perceiving social support because of high daily stressors.

The limited literature on this topic, along with the findings of the present study, supports the second hypothesis of this research. The results are consistent with a significant amount of prior research (Diener & Seligman, 2002; Kawachi & Berkman, 2001), establishing a strong positive correlation between social support and life satisfaction. This study verifies a substantial positive relationship between life satisfaction (LSS) and social support (SPS). The findings indicate that individuals who receive more social support experience higher levels of life satisfaction. Specifically, among refugee students, life satisfaction improved when they had better social support from their networks. These results also support the third hypothesis of this study. The theoretical framework employed in this research is based on Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) work, which emphasizes the importance of managing stressors to enhance life satisfaction, highlighting the detrimental effects of daily hassles on psychological health.

CONCLUSION

This study adopts a quantitative approach to investigate the unique challenges faced by Afghan refugees, their level of life satisfaction, and the support systems available to them. The findings reveal that daily stressors negatively impact the life satisfaction of refugees, while social support serves as a mitigating factor, reducing the adverse effects of these stressors. This research provides valuable insights that can inform initiatives aimed at supporting Afghan refugees

LIMITATIONS

One limitation of this study is the generalizability of its findings. The research focused solely on Afghan refugees residing in Quetta, a city in the Baluchistan province of Pakistan, despite their presence in various cities across the country. Additionally, the data was limited to students, excluding scholars and instructors; considering the experiences of refugee school teachers would strengthen the findings. Although this study does not establish causation, it identifies correlations between daily stressors, social support, and life satisfaction.

SUGGESTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The findings of the present study suggest that it is essential to organize adapted social support programs that address the challenges faced by Afghan refugee students in their daily lives, as well as their potential to enhance life satisfaction. The investigator aims to conduct this study using a more systematic and scientific approach. However, due to incomplete information, financial constraints, time limitations, and other resource challenges, the research will only cover a limited number of topics and focus on a specific geographic area. These findings are beneficial for policymakers, as they can help integrate policies that facilitate the integration of Afghan refugee students into their host countries. Implementing such policies can alleviate the daily challenges faced by these students and improve their educational outcomes, overall life satisfaction, and social support networks.