

Impact of Syrian Refugees Crisis on Al-Mafraq Hosting Community: Lessons for Intervention with Social Work Profession

Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative research is to explore the impact of Syrian Refugees crisis on Al-Mafraq hosting community in an attempt to develop specialised interventions within social work profession. Eight focus group discussions were conducted from April to October 2018; 100 participants have been selected from stratified random sample according to gender. A broad overview of the literature on the Syrian refugee crisis in Jordan has demonstrated that large bulk of reports; reviews and studies have investigated refugee needs and experiences. Furthermore, most studies conducted in Jordanian hosting community focused on its socio-economic implications and few studies have explored the impact of this crisis on Jordanians. Therefore, in this research, we argue that not only should attention be given to refugees' services and experiences, but that further, attention should be directed to the experiences of the hosting community; *a population that is not often studied*. Findings reveal that Jordanians in Al-Mafraq Governorate have been experienced different sorts of difficulties as a result of the Syrian refugees crisis and its socio-economic implications; they have developed feelings of alienation, interpersonal conflicts, symptoms of frustration and despair, fear, anger, hatred, jealousy, low self-esteem and hopelessness.

Key words: Syrian crisis, refugees, social work, Jordanian hosting community, alienation, inter-personal conflict, hopelessness.

Introduction

According to UNHCR latest reports, *"Jordan has the second highest share of refugees compared to its population in the world, 89 refugees per 1,000 inhabitants"* (UNHCR: 2018:1). However, the kingdom is not a signatory to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention and its 1967 protocol; does not have any refugee law or any separate legal document

or even an organisation to address refugee issues. Instead, the government depends heavily on *ad-hoc* policies for welcoming and accepting refugees, especially those related to Arab brotherhood (Anabtawi: 2012). Despite that, it is still committed to adhering to international laws and customs, especially the principle of *non-refoulement*, which is recognised as an essential principle of customary international law. In some cases, the Government of Jordan has the right to reject the entry of refugees as stated in the 1951 Refugee Convention, which states in article 33(2) that it is permissible to lawfully expel individuals who represent a danger to the national security of the host country, and individuals who are recognized, after being convicted of a serious crime by a court of law, as a danger to the community of the host country (Cited in: Badalic: 2019).

The Government of Jordan has been very conscious of the severe implications that large-scale refugee populations can have on its economy (Al-Wazani: 2014). It was predictable that as a result of the large influx of Syrian refugees, the country may experience long-term economic, social, political and environmental problems (International Rescue Committee: 2013). According to the recent Housing and Population Census conducted in 2016 by the Jordanian Department of Statistics (DOS), there are nearly 1.4 million Syrian refugees in Jordan, 83% of whom are living in urban settings (DOS: 2016). Of these refugees, 85% are living in off-camps; 23.5% are women, 53% are children and 18% are under five years of age (DOS: 2016).

Significance of the Research

Continuing political debates surrounding the Syrian refugees' crisis and its consequences for the Jordanian community attest to the significance of this research. Syrian crisis has been described as; "*one of the greatest humanitarian challenges the international community has faced in recent years*" (Harvard Field Study Group: 2014: 1). In its reports, UNHCR (2015) indicates that this crisis is the world's single largest refugee crisis for almost a quarter of a century under its mandate. Eight years after the beginning of the Syrian refugee crisis, an exploration of the impact of Syrian refugees' crisis on Al-Mafraq hosting community is clearly needed.

Research Rationale

The motivation for this research came from the researchers' desire to explore the impact of Syrian refugees' crisis on Al-Mafraq hosting community. Most bulk of research in Jordan in this field focus on refugees rather than their hosting; (Carrion: 2015). while others shed light on the socio-economic implications of the crisis in Jordan (Al-Wazani: 2013, Mercy Corps International: 2013, Al-Wazani: 2014, United Nations Development Programme: 2014). Some focused on educational issues (Bataineh& Mommani: 2017). While other researches are statistically oriented; such as UNHCR annual reports. Some scholars addressed the impact of Syrian refugees on Jordan as a receiving state through the development of a comprehensive analytical framework for the acceptance of refugees (Alshoubaki & Harris: 2018).

International Rescue Committee (2013) and Al-Wazani (2014) have revealed that the Syrian refugee crisis has significantly impacted the stability of Jordan. Acosta and Chica (2018) argue that tensions have been emerged between Syrian and Jordanians in relation to scarcity of resources; as Jordan has few internal resources (such as water and oil); its economy is based on tertiary service (banking and tourism) and relies heavily on oil imports. Several recent studies have addressed the impact of the refugee crisis on the labour market; Al-Wazain's (2014) study of the "Socio-Economic Implications of Syrian Refugees on Jordan" presents a comprehensive perspective to understand the situation. Other studies have reported on the experiences of Syrian refugees, highlighting their social, economic and mental health problems (Mercy Corps International: 2013, UNHCR: 2014).

According to Mercy Corps International (2013) and the Jordanian DOS (2016), 76% of the Syrian refugees in Jordan have settled in three main governorates: Amman, Irbid and Al-Mafraq. In Amman—the capital city of Jordan—there are about 435,000 registered refugees from Syria, which represents one-third of the refugees in Jordan, there are 90,000 Syrian refugees in Irbid and 400,000 in Al-Mafraq Governorate. What makes Al-Mafraq Governorate an interesting case in point is that Syrian refugees comprise 52% of the total population of Al-Mafraq Governorate (constitute %129 of the Jordanian hosting community). Accordingly, this research aims to explore the

impact of Syrian Refugees crisis on Al-Mafraq hosting community in an attempt to develop specialised interventions within social work profession. Thus, it is proposed to carry out an in-depth research of how Syrian refugees' crisis has impacted Al-Mafraq hosting community; there are two main objectives of this research:

The first is to explore the experiences of Jordanians living in Al-Mafraq Governorate; an exploration to different aspects of living conditions in order to assess how Syrian crisis interact and influence experiences.

The second seeks to develop a theoretical understanding of Syrian crisis and its influence, which will be generated by the data.

Literature Review:

In light of research aim and objectives, the purpose of this section is to review available literature. Thus, this section is divided into two parts. The first reviews published reports and researches regarding socio-economic implications of Syrian crisis in Jordan. The second reviews different experiences between refugees and hosting communities.

Impact of Syrian crisis on the Jordanian socio-economic situation

The presence of refugees has created controversial debates over its positive or negative implications. Taking into consideration Jacobsen (1996) analysis of policies in Developing Countries in accepting refugees, it can be argued that international assistance, investments, and remittances can play key role in shaping policy responses in Developing countries. According to Jordan Investment Commission reports (2019), Syrians have their contributions into the Jordanian economic sector; their main investments are in industrial and agricultural sectors. Following table presents Syrian investments in Jordanian economy from 2013 to 2018.

Table (1): Amount of Syrians investments in Jordanian economy

Year	Investment in Jordanian Dinar JD
2013	144.2 million
2014	110.2 million
2015	30.8 million
2016	44.9 million
2017	5.6 million
2018	13.1 million

- Source: Jordan Investment Commission: 2019

The above table explains the Syrians investments in the Jordanian economy; it is noticed that their investments have declined sharply over years and this may refer to the difficulties the Jordanian economy face.

Regardless of the contributions of the international assistance accompanied refugees, it is obvious that there is a contrast between government requirements and funds allocated for different sectors. Following table shows funding status for each sector according to the Jordan response plan 2018.

Table (2): Jordan Response Plan (JRP) 2018 Funding Status/sector

Sector	JRP 2018 Requirements	Funded	%
Education	\$328,789,723	\$158,093,631	48.08%
Energy	\$76,957,925	\$10,601,797	13.78%
Environment	\$8,134,800	-	0.00%
Food Security	\$196,593,170	\$203,267,655	103.40%
Health	\$168,802,713	\$134,712,488	79.80%
Justice	\$19,065,000	\$4,361,543	22.88%
Livelihood	\$110,912,602	\$140,473,410	126.65%

Local Governance	\$70,198,103	\$43,134,888	61.45%
Shelter	\$24,291,570	\$10,579,201	43.55%
Social Protection	\$351,282,748	\$302,938,056	86.24%
Transport	\$13,635,000	-	0.00%
Wash	\$212,990,000	\$102,502,743	48.13%

- Source: Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation 2019/ Jordan Response Plan for the Syrian Crisis 2019

It is obviously clear that international assistance received from donors were insufficient especially in education and health sectors. What is more, there are two neglected sectors which did not have any funds such as environment and transport. Additionally, it is observed that funds are less than requirements for each sector; which may put heavy burden on the Government of Jordan.

Several studies have been conducted on Syrian refugees in Jordan to examine their experiences and impact on the country's socio-economic situation. Of these, a study conducted by the Economic and Social Council in Jordan (Al-Anani: 2011–2013) concludes that Syrian refugees have exerted great pressure on many sectors of Jordanian society, including education where 14,000 Syrian students are enrolled in Jordanian public schools. In addition, the cost of providing health services for Syrians reached JD 15.924.000 in 2012. It is important to note that over the past five years the Syrian refugee crisis has greatly increased the demands placed on the government of Jordan. In his analytical study of the socio-economic implications of Syrian refugees on Jordan, Al-Wazani (2014) identifies many imperative indicators; arguing that: *“The burden strained the infrastructure, education, health and other sectors subsidized by the budget, which in effect, led the government to more borrowing from internal and external sources to meet the increased spending finance”* (2014: 26).

As a result, the government has raised prices on goods and services and has increased the taxes that Jordanians have to pay. This has led Al-Wazani to describe 2013 as a

year that was *“far from ideal for the natural economy.....it witnessed the largest increase in the prices and taxes.....”* (2014: 25).

Others indicate that the *“government incurred a total cost of \$81.4 million in enrolling 78,531 Syrian children in public schools. The funding needed to enroll Syrian students and to maintain the infrastructure for local students reached \$257 million in 2015”* (Fakih and Marrouch: 2015: 2).

According to IRC (2013), high unemployment in Jordan can be considered to be a major problem the government has faced, but it is not necessarily attributed to the presence of Syrian refugees. Stave and Hillesund (2015) found that outside the refugee camps in Amman, Irbid and Al-Mafraq, more than 40% of the work in the construction industry, 23% work in the wholesale and retail trade and the repair industry, 12% work in manufacturing and 8% in the accommodation and food service industry is carried out by Syrians. In her research paper; ***“Syrian Refugees in Jordan Confronting Difficult Truths”***, Carrion (2015:4) argues that *“municipalities lack sufficient capacity and funding to deliver and maintain essential services for the tens of thousands of new residents, the arrival of whom has created a need to build new roads, expand the electricity infrastructure and collect much more waste”*.

Refugees and hosting community

Studies have investigated the relationship between refugees and their hosting communities; Several scholars maintain that refugees are not only a political threat to host communities, but they are also an economic burden. It can be argued that *“received countries exert substantial efforts to maintain law and order, and they are also confronted with economic challenges due to the need to provide humanitarian assistance to refugees, such as the port congestion in Albania. The accumulation of these conditions causes a weakened ability to govern”* (Deppler & Kincaid, 1999 cited in Alshoubaki & Harris: 2018: 158). Several studies have examined the effect of refugees’ presence on received countries environmental problems such as desertification, deforestation, water scarcity, and famine. Gomez & Christensen (2011) reported that the receiving of refugees is accompanied with negative effects

on natural resources, ecosystem, and hovel growth. According to the researchers, the influx of refugees entails several damaging environmental practices such as cutting trees for the purposes of settlement, construction, and firewood.

In their research on refugees in the Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya, Kirui and MWaruvie (2012) conclude that the Kenyan Somalis feel that refugees get more attention than they do because of the international assistance they receive. Refugees have been perceived as enemies by their hosting community; they are taking milk and honey while the host population starves in their mother land (Kirui and MWaruvie: 2012). Alix-Garacia and Saah (2008) argue that the large influx of refugees from Burundi and Rwanda from 1993 to 1994 had a great impact on Tanzania, when a large increase in the price of non-aid food items coincided with the arrival of the refugees. Al-Sharmani (2004) cites how refugees have been described as bread stealers in Egypt and argues that refugees in Egypt are responsible for prevalent problems such as crime and unemployment. Additionally, Goldenziel (2010) notes that Iraqis in Jordan were viewed as threat because they are believed to be responsible for many problems, such as inflation.

In the case of Jordan, the country received many refugees in different eras, including Palestinian refugees in 1948, Iraqi refugees in 1990 and 2003, and Syrian refugees in 2011. Several studies were conducted to assess the effect of the tempestuous condition in the Middle East on the economic growth of Jordan. Saif & Debartolo (2007) investigated the impact of the Iraqi refugee influx after the Iraq invasion in 2003 and how they impacted economic growth. They found that, during the Iraqi refugee influx, the country witnessed an increase in food prices, petroleum, and property; however, they underestimated the role of Iraqi refugees on the rise of inflation. When they split up inflation by governorates, the inflation rate of Amman, where most of the Iraqi refugees resided, was less than the inflation rate across the country. In a recent study about the impact of refugees in Jordan economics, Lozi (2013) evaluated the impact of refugees on the Jordan economy by the major macroeconomic indicators, including unemployment rate, foreign direct investment, and food pricing. He indicated that the increase of inflation in years 2010-2012 was

caused by food prices increasing; the massive influx of refugees led to an increase in the demand of food, thus increasing food importation by 11%. Before the influx of Syrian refugees, Jordan was trying to control food prices, but after the steep influx of refugees, Jordan was unable to control prices, and subsidies decreased. Moreover, the inflow of Syrian refugees, in addition to the Iraqi refugees, put greater pressure on Jordan's public services and budget. An increase in the demand on public services caused an increase in government expenditure. Regarding the high unemployment rate in Jordan, Jordanians argued that Syrian refugees were working illegally without work permits. The majority of Jordanians believe that Syrian refugees have political and social impacts on Jordan; an increasing concerns that the tension will rise between Syrian refugees and their hosting; as young people start work or university, with the Syrians competing even more intensively against Jordanians for university places, jobs and public resources (Carrion: 2015).

It is said that at the beginning of the crisis, Jordanians showed a great deal of solidarity towards refugees, but as the crisis becomes more and more protracted, this has been decreasing, and *tensions* have been rising between both communities, especially around competition for resources. Studies reveal that distress levels among Syrian and Jordanians are high; IMC and Sisterhood is Global Institute (2015) pointed to the extent of mental health and psychosocial concerns among the refugee population and host communities. They have concluded that: *"An increased expression of distress as respondents reported the high levels of fear (33.5% of Syrians and 20% of Jordanians), anger (47% of refugees and 25% Jordanians), hopelessness (32% refugees and 19% Jordanians) and an inability to perform essential daily activities (33% refugees and 25% Jordanians)"*.

Simpson and Abu Zayed (2019) explored how Syrian refugees have transformed the city of Irbid; they concluded that *"refugee-host relations have ebbed and flowed, from welcoming in 2012, to anxiety about scarcity and security in 2016..... , these trends include rapid depletion of regional water resources, increased urbanization and its associated social changes, and shifting job opportunities for refugees, Jordanians, and other migrants as Jordan modernizes and globalizes its economy"* (Simpson & Abu Zayed: 2019: 4).

Contrary to the approaches outlined above, it is useful to keep in mind the argument of Dettmer et al (2015) concerning refugees. They note that the influence of refugees (either positive or negative) mainly depends on how the hosting communities perceive their presence in relation to the economic situation. As has been documented from several cases, refugees can also be seen as active agents and contributors to the host community's economic capacity; this was the case, for example, with the Palestinian refugees in Jordan in 1948. Despite their influx posing challenge to the Jordanian economy and regime; they have been an asset to the country's economic situation (Chatelard: 2004). The presence of Iraqi refugees in Jordan (2003-2009) facilitated the influx of international assistance, money transfers, and investments of wealthy Iraqis (23% have been considered wealthy refugees) which all contributed to the Jordanian economy (Anabtawi: 2012). Despite their investments (see table 1); Syrians investors in Jordan has little contribution to the Jordanian economy compared with the greatest humanitarian challenge the crisis posed. Quite the opposite, some scholars argue that Syrian refugees in Germany have been perceived as active agents and contributors to their host community's economic capacity (Nie: 2015).

Geographical context: Al-Mafraq Governorate

The three Jordanian governorates most affected by the crisis (Amman, Irbid and Al-Mafraq) are facing a critical situation, not only because of the large number of Syrian refugees, but also because of the heavy burden these refugees place on each governorate's socio-economic structure. Available figures announced by the Jordanian Ministry of Interior (MOI: 2016) indicate that the number of Syrian refugees in Al-Mafraq Governorate -which is located near the Syrian border-outnumbers the number of Jordanians in the hosting community. Home to 310,000 Jordanians, Al-Mafraq hosts 400,000 Syrians, which constitute 129% of the Jordanian hosting community.

The governorate is located in the eastern part of Jordan, sharing borders with three countries: Iraq to the east, Syria to the north and Saudi Arabia to the south. It has always maintained a strategic position, as it is situated at the crossroads of

international routes linking the Kingdom of Jordan to the Republic of Iraq via the Karama entry point, which is located 285 km from the governorate's centre. It also contains the Jaber Borders crossings into the Arab Republic of Syria, located 20 km from the governorate's centre (Al-Wazani:2014). The governorate is made up of four districts that are further divided into 18 municipalities, eight of which border Syria. Economically, Al-Mafraq Governorate relies heavily on budgeting and funds allocated to it from the national budget; suffering from poverty and unemployment rate reached to 14.5% (DOS: 2013). According to the International Labour Organization report (ILO: 2016:16); *"the poverty rate of the Governorate, at 19.2%, exceeds the general poverty level in the Kingdom, which stands at 14.4%. The Governorate has 6 poverty pockets: Ruweished District, Salhieh District, Deir Al Kahef District, Um Al Qutain District, Um Al Jmal District and Sabha District"*.

The report also provides detailed description to the situation in Al-Mafraq Governorate in relation to Inflation Indicators. The Governorate's inflation rate of 5.45% in 2012 exceeded the general inflation rate in the Kingdom of 4.77%. This indicator significantly increased as a result of the Syrian crisis to become 8.92% at the end of 2013 (ILO: 2016: 16). Regarding income and family Spending Indicators; the percentage of middle-class families in the Governorate, at 14.1%, is much lower than the national average of 41%. The average family size is 5.9, while the average annual household income in the Governorate is 7276.3 JD compared with the Kingdom's average of 8824 JD. The average annual household expenditure level in the Governorate is 7674.7 JD, which is lower than the general average of the Kingdom of 9626 JD. The analysis of household expenditure indicates the following trends (ILO: 2016:16):

- 39% on food items
- 23% on housing and utilities
- 16.2% on transportation and communications
- 22% on clothing, shoes, tobacco and cigarettes

- 6% on education and healthcare

Methods

The qualitative methodology of focus group discussions and observation were selected for this research in order to “focus on the meaning rather than the numbers” (Miller and Brewer 2003: 239). In this research, Qualitative methods were used to address a social problem (Russell-Bernard: 2013), tools used in qualitative methods facilitate an in-depth understanding of the issues being investigated; focus group discussions were selected for this research promoting participants to generate data in a natural environment (Russell-Bernard: 2013). The researchers sought to conduct focus groups for many reasons. First; in focus group, individuals will often argue with each other and challenge each other’s views which in turn generates more realistic accounts of what do they think because they were forced to think about it and revise their views. Second, focus groups reduced the time and duration of research as many participants took part in one session rather than the time which would be spent if the researchers depend on individual interviews. Third, the large size of each focus group (10-14 participants) helps the researchers to collect more views, data, and perceptions regarding the host community views which would not be able to collect form interviews in light of the limited time the researchers had to conduct the research.

Notwithstanding the significance of qualitative methods in research, they may be too subjective; findings may imply a degree of bias, and mistaken perceptions about what is significant and important (Bryman: 2012). Therefore, researchers were conscious while conducting the research to remain impartial not only while gathering data but also in the analysis process.

Sampling:

A stratified random sample according to gender was selected from Jordanians living in Al-Mafraq Governorate/ city centre who were registered in two local NGOs; AlKeram Organization (4062 beneficiaries) and Al-Asayel Organization (1760

beneficiaries) aged between (30-50 years old). Random sampling offers each unit of the population an equal opportunity of inclusion in the sample and cancels out biases (Bryman: 2008). The total population of this sample (5822) was all Jordanians registered in these organizations. As the total population was too large to survey in full, a stratified random sample was selected according gender considerations in order to explore their points of views regarding the Syrians. The decision to separate male from female participants while conducting the research was /due to cultural traditions which recognize that undertaking research dependent on mixed groups is less favourable. Mixed groups may deter females from expressing their feelings and views openly because of the traditional structure of this rural community. Sample was chosen by determining the population sampling frame; Jordanians living in Al-Mafraq Governorate/ city centre registered in the abovementioned local NGOs (5822) in total. In order to increase representativeness of sample, participants were selected according to registered numbers of beneficiaries in each organization. Sample size decided by 100 participants. The following table provides detailed numbers of Jordanians registered and sample size of each stratum.

Table (3): Numbers of Jordanians and sample size

Number of registered participants Alkeram Organization and sample size of the strata	Number of registered participants Al-Asayel Organization and sample size of the strata	Total sample	Number of groups Each group consists (6-8)
812 Male $100/5822*812=$ 14 participants	750 Male $100/5822*750=$ 13 participants	Male 27 participants	Male 2 groups
3250 Female $100/5822*3250=$ 56 participants	1010 Female $100/5822*1010=$ 17 participants	Female 73 participants	Female 6 groups

70 participants	30 participants	100 participants	8 groups
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- *Source: Records of AlKeram and Al-Asayel Organizations (2018)*

By using a table of random numbers, 100 Jordanians were selected to participate in the research; each group consists between (10-14) participants. Fieldwork was conducted from April to October 2018 and took place in local NGOs where participants already registered. Focus group discussions were unstructured and used topic guide to cover all the themes identified in the research. Participants were asked about their own perceptions and beliefs about the presence of Syrians. They gave informed consent before sessions; were informed of the purpose of the research; asked for permission to record the sessions and they were given an explanation for why they were being recorded; discussions were confidential, and no direct benefits would be provided to participants, emphasising that their participation would assist the researchers in understanding more about their situation. Each session lasted an average of 1.5 to 2 hours. Discussions were conducted in Arabic upon participants' usual language and transcribed; the transcripts were subsequently translated into English by professional translator in order to ensure accuracy and avoid misinterpretations.

Analysis:

Data was analyzed using inductive thematic analysis; emergent themes were product of in-depth reading of the transcripts until the researchers become able to identify key themes and organized them according to the most dominant. Once the transcriptions of the group discussions were completed, the researchers began to look at the responses of each group and then classified these according to themes; searching for themes was undertaken by looking for topics which re-emerged several times. The analysis process consisted of generating lists of all the different themes mentioned by participants and the number of different participants who mentioned each problem. In order to maintain confidentiality, groups were coded and the participants were

assigned numbers. Groups from one to six (1 to 6) refer to women, while groups seven and eight (7 &8) refer to men.

In order to establish the credibility of the qualitative research (Bryman: 2012); detailed presentation of the adopted methods, access to field work, recruiting participants, sampling, data collection and analysis have been discussed in detail. In securing the transferability of the data, the researchers tended to provide thick descriptions by presenting as many quotations as possible from participants' accounts.

Limited by the seven months duration of investigation and the large number of discussions, this paper discusses some salient aspects drawing on the words of the participants in order to present a thorough description of their experiences.

Findings:

Alienation or feeling of not belonging emerged as one of the foremost themes during the group discussions along with the possibly subsequent inter-personal conflicts; which led to experiencing psychosocial problems, such as anxiety, jealousy, feelings of hatred and low self-esteem.

Alienation

The feeling of not belonging was clear among participants; one participant explained: *"It worries me; I am in my country, but I don't feel familiar"* (G8: pt6). Another described the different way they related to the public space:

"Going to the market is not the same; I remember we used to know everyone, but not anymore; now I feel estranged. All I see around are unfamiliar faces; the shops are full of Syrians" (G8: pt1).

Many of the participants mentioned the feeling of alienation when describing their situation in Al-Mafraq. Due to the existence of large number of Syrians, Jordanians feel displaced. One participant explained how, on his wedding day in Al-Mafraq he wrote on a placard stating: *"Celebrations of displaced Jordanians in Al-Mafraq"* (G8:

pt3). This succinctly describes how many Jordanians perceive the presence of Syrian refugees in Al-Mafraq; they feel as if Jordanians are a minority, which, in turn, reinforces their feelings of not belonging. Some participants described how they were thinking of taking action. One said: *"I must leave the neighbourhood to anywhere away from the Syrians"* (G7: pt6). Another stated: *"I am leasing my house; I cannot live around the Syrians"* (G7: pt5). While a third wanted to leave the governorate and, in addition, felt unsafe: *"I must leave Al-Mafraq to protect my children, myself..."* (G7: pt3).

One 32-year-old male participant was particularly vocal regarding his feelings of alienation: *"I refuse to stay in Jordan. Syrians come to my land, all NGOs working for them. They took my rights in my country...I have the right to be resettled such as Syrians; they destroy everything here and will be resettled in a third country and left Jordanians [to] live on ruins..."* (G8: pt 5).

A number of Jordanians came to similar conclusions and have been leaving Al-Mafraq. Some participants described how shops, roads and neighbourhoods were being named after Syrian people and places such as Bashar Al-Assad Avenue, Homs Area, Damascus Gate and Soldiers Avenue which, in turn, has intensely increased the Jordanians' feelings of alienation. It was evident that the Jordanians' feeling of alienation is connected to the hard-economic conditions in which they are living and the scarce resources in the area. One participant explained: *"Syrians came to my country, shared my land, my food, and caused prices to rise"* (G8: pt2). Another stated: *"They are competing with us ... they want to take over my country... I must leave, my living conditions are unbearable"* (G7: pt3).

Some participants made it clear that they don't belong because they can't find a job; one stated: *"I don't belong here anymore; I can't find a job to secure my future. I don't have any property, and so I have nothing to lose"* (G8: pt6). The belief that Syrian refugees took all the available jobs was also voiced: *"They took our jobs; they own houses and land and they ask for little money and work for long hours"* (G7: pt3). One participant asked: *"How can I feel that I belong to this area if I do not have job? I do*

not have money to buy [a] house for my family; nothing here belongs to me” (G8: pt 4).

Jordanians argue that the more traditional tribal and rural characteristics of the local community, of which they are proud, are changing. Calm neighbourhoods are becoming busy, noisy, crowded areas with overcrowded apartment blocks. In this regard, one participant stated: *“Al-Mafraq is not the same; it has so many apartment buildings now, which was never the case, all filled with so many Syrians” (G3: pt5).* Another said: *“Syrians have [a] lifestyle which is new to us; they sleep in the day and socialise at night” (G1: pt6).*

Inter-cultural relationships

Relations between Jordanians and Syrians are also changing from being friendly to unfriendly. One participant stated: *“They don't respect their neighbours; they cause trouble; they scream, talk loudly, always causing chaos” (G5: pt3).* Another noted that Syrians are responsible for the increased garbage in their neighbourhood: *“They leave the buildings dirty, put their garbage everywhere” (G2: pt2)*

The Jordanians also commented on the outgoing behaviour of Syrian women, which is strange to Al-Mafraq's more traditional and tribal rural community. One participant stated: *“Our girls rarely go to the market, but Syrian girls are all over the place even at night” (G4: pt5).* Some Jordanian women discussed the way the Syrian way of life is influencing them: *“Syrian women gather every morning over coffee to talk and gossip and we are trying to do the same” (G3: pt1).* Others highlighted the impact the presence of Syrian women is having on Jordanian men: *“Jordanian men are enjoying the company of their female Syrian neighbours” (G5: pt4).* This is likely to be one of the reasons for inter-personal conflicts between husbands and wives. The participants in Al-Mafraq city centre considered the female refugees to be behaving unethically, for example, stating that prostitution is very common. The women feared that their sons and husbands would become sexually involved with Syrian girls. As one participant explained: *“Now, prostitution is prevalent in Al-Mafraq.....police found*

many places in the city designated for sex work" (G4: pt1). The use of drugs has also increased in Al-Mafraq; participants noted that this is not a new problem and that it existed before the refugee crisis as there are many smugglers in this border area, however, as one participant stated: *"Drugs now are widely expanded in our territory....we cannot say that Syrians are responsible for that, but the problem became worse with them"* (G8: pt11).

Evident in many of the participants' accounts is that the sense of alienation has contributed to, if not directly led to feelings of hatred: *"I hate them", one participant announced* (G3: pt2). This was conferred by other participants in statements such as: *"At first I felt pity, but now I hate them"* (G1: pt6) and *"at first, I helped some Syrians, but now if I have anything to give, I will help a Jordanian"* (G7: pt1).

Inter-personal conflicts

The presence of Syrian refugee women in Al-Mafraq has been seen to be the cause of daily conflicts between husbands and wives amongst the Jordanian community. The accounts from the women participants revealed that polygamy and marital infidelity are more common since the arrival of the Syrian refugees, as are the growing number of unmarried Jordanian women. They believe that Syrian refugees are searching for better lives, especially the divorced and widowed women, and they are hoping to find a Jordanian man who will take care of them and provide financial support for their families. As one participant explained: *"I feel scared when my husband goes out.....every day I think that he will come home and [have] a new wife in his hand"* (G2: Pt 3).

These inter-personal conflicts were cited as being daily occurrences in the women's lives triggered by their anxieties when their men leave home to work or engage in other activities. There was consensus from the women in three groups that these topics were the main things they are always talking about; one participant stated:

"Every time Jordanian women gather, they talk about the same topic....how can they protect their husbands from Syrian ladies...they caution each other to keep an eye on

their husband's mobiles, check their pockets, their clothes, not to leave at night.....women do not feel comfortable...they are always scared and feel disappointed”(G2: pt 6).

Some participants had good relationships with their Syrian neighbours, but these were marred by the fears of trying to steal their husbands or sons. One participant noted: *“The only way for Syrian women (to survive) is to search for a man to marry, despite the age, married or not”* (G5: pt1).

One participant pointed to the fact that Syrian women have a different lifestyle: *“They always take care of themselves; they always use make up, wear new clothes, go to [a] beauty salon, cook every day for their husbands.....they have [a] different way of life from Jordanians...and this pushes many husbands to marry Syrian ladies”* (G4: pt 5).

According to participants, polygamy has become widespread in Al-Mafraq, as many Jordanian men have the desire to marry a second time and they choose a Syrian woman. This, in turn, has greatly influenced Jordanian females' relationships with their husbands. When discussing polygamy, it seems that, from the men's point of view, there was agreement that the Syrian refugee crisis can be seen as a blessing. In contrast, the women described the Syrian refugee crisis as a curse. The accounts from the male participants revealed that, in the light of unemployment and poverty, young men prefer to marry a Syrian female rather than a Jordanian female, even as a first wife. Consequently, the number of unmarried Jordanian women has increased. The participants cited a variety of reasons for this decision: *“Jordanian men marry [women] from Syria with [a] very low cost....no dowry, no wedding party, no separate home is needed...instead, she will stay with you in [your] family house and provide care for your parents”* (G7: pt5). One participant asked: *“Why [would] you have to pay JD10,000 to get married [to a Jordanian], while you can marry [a] Syrian female without any cost?”* (G8: pt1). Others compared Syrian and Jordanian females; for example: *“Syrians are more beautiful; they speak in a nice way, and they can cook better, and accept to live with your family”* (G8: pt12).

Wedding bargains are common in Al-Mafraq; some Syrians who have daughters announced that if a Jordanian man is looking for a bride, he can marry a beautiful Syrian female with only JD 500. In this regard, one participant stated: *“After [the] Friday sermon, the Imam in the mosque present wedding offers.....Syrian families just want to protect their daughters from being harassed or engaged in sex work; therefore, they decided that the best way to protect them is by getting married [to] Jordanians”* (G8: pt5). This encourages many Jordanian youth to choose a Syrian wife instead of a Jordanian wife. Consequently, female Jordanians have fewer opportunities to get married; leading to problems such as low self-esteem, depression and jealousy and creates an emotional void. It was clear from discussions that the presence of Syrian refugees in Al-Mafraq city centre has put more pressure on Jordanian families in inter-personal relations, in particular those regarding marriage.

Psychosocial Problems

Findings revealed that many Jordanians had experienced psychosocial problems. Feeling of alienation, unemployment, poverty, polygamy, and marital infidelity are fundamental problems that are clearly affecting their experiences. Participants reported suffering from a variety of problems, including frustration and despair, fear and anger. Difficult experiences and a lack of security are factors that significantly contribute to the participants' feelings of alienation. As one participant explained: *“[I am] frustrated...I am nothing...I am useless...I do not have [a] future here....I think I have to leave Al-Mafraq”* (G8: pt1). Participants expressed a variety of fears which were exacerbated by their sense of uncertainty for the future. As one participant said: *“What will happen for us....we (Jordanians) do not know where we are going with the crisis”* (G7: pt3).

Jordanian women have developed feelings of jealousy, anger, hatred and resentment. They hold grudges against Syrian women and the way their arrival has impacted their socio-economic situation. The female participants resented the Syrian women who they believed used their relief coupons to buy clothes and accessories in order to attract the attention of men, whereas they needed to prioritise the household

spending on family living expenses rather than on clothes, beauty salons and makeup. As one participant explained:

"I am working, but I cannot do [what a] Syrian female [does]....I cannot spend my allowance on clothes and beauty salons....I have to help my husband [with] living expenses" (G3: pt5).

Another stated:

"I feel jealous [of] them ... Syrian girls wear new clothes and have[a] new mobile phone. They take care of themselves....They chase Jordanian men while we are watching...I feel low self-esteem" (G2: pt 5).

The increase in polygamy, reduction in number of Jordanian women getting married and feelings of alienation in their own home town had emotionally influenced all the women who took part in the focus groups. Some spoke of loneliness, others of an emotional void.

It remains unclear as to whether this will have a long-term influence on the psychosocial of Jordanian women in the hosting community. Reducing the opportunities Jordanian women have to marry in the present economic climate where Syrian women are being accepted *with no dowries* may result in additional problems in the longer term. The moral and ethical boundaries of men and women in the host community could eventually shift as they seek to meet their sexual needs outside the marriage relationship. This could ultimately have a long term influence on the entire community. One participant talked about her daughter, saying:

"I do not know when this situation will end ... my daughter suffers from [an] emotional void ... despair ... and frustration.... No one knocks [on] our door to marry her" (G4: Pt6).

Low self-esteem was a common theme amongst both the male and female focus groups. For the women, the pressure of comparing themselves to Syrian women and having fears about being replaced in the marriage by a Syrian woman impacted their

self-confidence. Some spoke of changing their way of life to be similar to the Syrian women. One female participant stated: *“Our women [are] trying to do the same”* (G2: Pt4).

Men, on the other hand, spoke of not being able to offer their families what they need in light of the current difficult economic situation and how this reduced their self-esteem. For both the men and the women; low self-esteem is exacerbated by their sense of no longer belonging to the area in which they have grown up.

The gendered difference in the participants’ response is worth noting however. While the men tended to agree on the point that the presence of Syrian refugee women could be seen as blessing, especially in relation to economic issues, such as the reduction in the expense of dowries, the women felt that female Syrian refugees have created a strong threat, both in relation to marital infidelity and polygamy and in opportunities for marriage for Jordanian women.

Discussion and Conclusion

Findings of this research share many of the perspectives which have been cited in literature (Al-Wazani: 2014, Al-Anani: 2011-2013, IMC & Sisterhood is Global Institute: 2015). This research shines a spotlight on the experiences of people in host communities, a population that is not often studied. It is based on the stories shared during group discussion involving (100) Jordanians and their expressions of the experiences that have shaped their daily lives since the arrival of Syrian refugees in 2011. Exploring and understanding the experiences of hosting Jordanian community is essential in order develop specialised intervention within social work profession.

This research presents evidence that the existence of large number of Syrian refugees in Al-Mafraq Governorate has negatively influenced/impacted members of the local community. Findings reveal that Jordanians have been negatively influenced by the

crisis due both to the cultural and socio-economic situation. Feelings of alienation and an increase in inter-personal conflicts among local residents have led to feelings of hatred, anger, low self-esteem, despair and frustration. While there is a great concern to provide interventions for Syrian refugees in Jordan, decision makers and service providers should also face the significant challenge of addressing psychosocial problems among the hosting community. Great emphasis should be given to the role of social work intervention with hosting community in order to alleviate from developing further psychosocial problems. Not only Syrian refugees are in need for assistance and intervention, but also their hosting community. In the following section, we explain how interventions can be used as a guideline in social work. A Primary role for social workers working in refugees' crises is to remember that not only refugees need intervention and help, but also their hosting community. They should understand how Syrian refugee crisis has changed Jordanians situation and status. It is important for social workers to ask about Jordanians specific needs and conduct assessments to their problems. This research concluded that pressure and distress can be resulted through material support (economy, housing, practical help) and these aspects should be taken into consideration from policy makers and service providers. Jordanians inner stress (psycho-social) can be worked by changing the balance of the conflicting forces within the client by using following techniques:

Venting; by allowing the client to express suppressed feelings which have 'locked' their thoughts and feelings and influenced behavior. Corrective relationship; relationship between the social worker can be related to the mother/child relationship. In a safe atmosphere, which the social worker is responsible for, the client is given the possibility to go through previous experiences. And examine current personal interactions that the client is involved in: the main strategy here is reflection.

Social worker mission is to help hosting community; **Hollis (1970) formulates the principles for psychosocial work as follows** (cited in Hutchinson and Oltedal: 2014: 42)

1. The social workers have to care about the client, accept and respect him/her.

2. The client's need is the focus.
3. The understanding of the client must be scientifically founded and objective.
4. The social worker must respect the client's right of self-determination.
5. There are cases where one has to take the responsibility so that the client does not hurt them self or others.

This research has a number of implications for future research in this field. The agenda proposed for more research into impact of refugee crises on the Jordanian community. What is more, there is potential to build on the outcomes of this research and conduct a comparative case study into how service providers have perceived the needs of hosting communities, not only refugees. Consequently, the researchers recommend further research in this area in order to effectively inform the policies of hosting governments, international agencies and NGOs to consider the needs and experiences of their own population in their agendas and programmes.

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