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The Barriers to Education among the Palestinian Refugee Children in Malaysia[1]

Halangan Pendidikan di Kalangan Kanak-kanak Pelarian Palestin di Malaysia

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Abstract

This paper addresses the barriers that prevent Palestinian refugee children from obtaining education during their transition in the host country, Malaysia. It creates awareness among the Palestinian refugee community about this critical issue which threatens the future of their children who might spend many years without receiving adequate learning opportunities. The present study is based on a qualitative approach which is commonly used to explore recent phenomenon and provide an in-depth understanding of human behaviours and beliefs based on their points of view. It collected data employing semi-structured interviews with 30 Palestinian refugee families moving from Iraq, Syria and the Gaza Strip, and currently residing in Malaysia, waiting to be resettled in a third country through the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) office in Kuala Lumpur. Using thematic analysis technique, the research shows that there are economic, institutional and parental challenges preventing the Palestinian refugee children from receiving education in Malaysia. Also, it reveals how such challenges lead to negative psychological impacts among the parents and their children. Moreover, it is found that the parents did not play an adequate role in utilising potential alternative pathways to education. Finally, it offers a realistic solution to return these children to a viable education.

Keywords: refugee children, education, UNHCR, MSRI, Palestinian, Malaysia.

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Abstrak

Artikel ini membahaskan cabaran yang menghalang kanak-kanak pelarian Palestin daripada mendapatkan pendidikan semasa tempoh peralihan perpindahan mereka di Malaysia. Ini merupakan isu kritikal yang mengancam masa depan dan peluang pendidikan kanak-kanak pelarian Palestin, yang mungkin berlanjutan sehingga bertahun-tahun. Artikel ini didasarkan kepada pendekatan kualitatif yang biasa digunakan untuk mengkaji fenomena terkini dengan memberi pemahaman yang mendalam mengenai tingkah laku dan kepercayaan berdasarkan pandangan masyarakat. Kajian mengggunakan kaedah pengumpulan data melalui wawancara separa struktur dengan 30 pelarian Palestin yang berpindah dari Iraq, Syria dan Semenanjung Gaza, dan kini tinggal di Malaysia, sementara menunggu untuk ditempatkan semula ke negara ketiga melalui pejabat Pesuruhjaya Tinggi Pertubuhan Bangsa-Bangsa Bersatu untuk Pelarian (UNHCR) di Kuala Lumpur. Dengan menggunakan teknik analisis tematik, hasil penyelidikan menunjukkan terdapat cabaran ekonomi, institusi dan keibubapaan yang menghalang kanak-kanak pelarian Palestin daripada menerima pendidikan di Malaysia. Selain itu, ia mendedahkan bagaimana cabaran sedemikian membawa kepada kesan negatif dari sudut psikologi di kalangan ibu bapa dan anak-anak mereka. Didapati juga para ibu bapa yang tidak memainkan peranan bagi mendapatkan pendidikan yang sepatutnya untuk anak-anak mereka. Akhir sekali, artikel ini menawarkan penyelesaian yang realistik untuk kanak-kanak tersebut mendapat pendidikan yang berdaya maju.

Kata Kunci: kanak-kanak pelarian, pendidikan, UNHCR, MSRI, Palestin, Malaysia.

Introduction

The number of refugees is rapidly increasing. Presently, there are 25.4 million refugees globally; 19.9 million are officially registered at the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) while 5.4 million Palestinian refugees are under the mandate of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA).[2] Statistically, 85% (16.9 million) of the world refugee population is hosted in developing countries and the number of forcibly displaced people is on the rise globally.[3] Children constitute 51% (6.4 million) of the refugee population and according to the Refugee Education Management Information System (REMIS), only 61% of them attend primary education while 23% go to secondary school.[4] Educators, world leaders, policymakers and decision-makers

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[2] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2017* (Geneva, UNHCR, 2017), 2. retrieved from http://www.unhcr.org/en-my/statistics/unhcrstats/5b27be547/unhcr-global-trends-2017.html

[3] Ibid.,

[4] Kimberly Roberson, *Refugee Education Data and Statistics* (Geneva, Switzerland: UNHCR, 2018), 7.
Retrieved from http://www.oecd.org/education/school/3C-KRoberson.pdf

agree that education for refugee children paves the way to a brighter future at the personal, family, community, country and global levels as it equips them with vital skills and knowledge, and saves them from being socially marginalised.[5] Children are usually the most affected by immigration.[6] A refugee is very likely to spend 20 years in refuge, struggling to meet basic survival needs and fulfil dreams.[7]

In the fourth item of the 2016 Agenda for Action for Children, Migration and Displacement, UNICEF officially asks world leaders to "keep all refugee and migrant children learning".[8] In 2016; however, 3.5 million refugee children attended zero school days while they were supposed to attend 200 days.[9] As Dryden-Peterson put it, refugee children are "caught between the global promise of universal human rights, the definition of citizenship rights within nation-states, and the realisation of these sets of rights in everyday practices".[10]

Palestinian Refugees: Historical Background

The 1948 Israeli war in Palestine, *al-Nakba*, was a turning point in the life of the Palestinians when their society came under the Israeli occupation rooting out and transferring hundreds of thousands of them to different countries.[11] The United Nations' statistics showed that about 750,000 Palestinians were forcibly dismissed from Palestine to live as refugees in humiliating refugee camps inside Arab countries such as Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Iraq as well as inside the Palestinian territories in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.[12] This number of Palestinian

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[5] UNICEF, *Education Uprooted: For Every Migrant, Refugee and Displaced Child, Education* (New York: UNICEF, 2017), 6.
Retrieved from https://www.unicef.org/media/files/Education_Uprooted_DIGITAL.pdf

[6] Frances Pine, "Migration as Hope: Space, Time, and Imagining the Future," *Current Anthropology* 55, no. 9 Suppl. (2014): S65-S104.

[7] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Missing out Refugee Education in Crisis* (Geneva, Switzerland: UNHCR, 2016), 3.
Retrieved from http://www.unhcr.org/57d9d01d0

[8] *Ibid.,*

[9] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Left Behind Refugee Education in Crisis* (Geneva, UNHCR, 2017), 8.

[10] Sarah Dryden-Peterson, "Refugee Education: The Crossroads of Globalization," *Educational Researcher* 45, no. 9 (2017): 473–482.

[11] Randa Farah, "Palestinian Refugees, the Nation, and the Shifting Political Landscape," *Social Alternatives* 32, no. 3 (2013): 41-47.

[12] Charles K. Rowley and Jennis Taylor, "The Israel and Palestine Land Settlement Problem, 1948–2005: An Analytical History," *Public Choice* 128, no. 1-2 (2006): 77-90.

refugees that began in 1948 with less than a million has reached almost 6 million.[13] From that year up to the present, the Palestinian society has grown in an abnormal atmosphere that negatively affects the society, socially, economically, politically and psychologically.[14]

Conflict and widespread insecurity in Arab countries brought about terrifying consequences against the Palestinian refugees who have stayed in refugee camps since 1948. After the civil war in Iraq in 2006, for example, they became targets of arbitrary arrests, violence, discrimination and ruthless killings. The UNHCR documented a significant number of Palestinians tortured by different armed groups. The unusual situation spread fear among them especially after receiving verbal and written messages to stop sending their children to schools and leave the country.[15] Similarly, the civil war in Syria which started in March 2011 has significantly affected the life of the Palestinian refugees, killing thousands of them.[16] According to UNRWA, the conflict resulted in the fleeing of 110.000 Palestinian refugees to neighbouring countries or Europe and the internal displacement of 280.000.[17]

The Gaza Strip also witnessed a series of cruel Israeli military attacks, resulting in people's displacement. In 2008, a comprehensive Israeli military campaign brought about a significant number of causalities among Palestinians[18] and significant destruction in the Strip's infrastruc-

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[13] United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), *UNRWA in Figures* (Geneva, UNHCR, 2017).
Retrieved from https://www.unrwa.org/resources/about-unrwa/unrwa-figures-2017
[14] Moshe Shemesh, "The Palestinian Society in the Wake of the 1948 War: From Social Fragmentation to Consolidation," *Israel Studies* 9, no. 1 (2004): 86-100.
[15] Gabriela Wengert and Michelle Alfaro, "Can Palestinian Refugees in Iraq Find Protection?" *Forced Migration Review* 26 (2006): 19-21.
[16] BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, *Survey of Palestinian Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons* 2013-2015, Vol. VIII. (Bethlehem:, Palestine, 2015). Retrieved from http://reliefweb.int/report/ occupied-palestinian-territory/survey-palestinian-refugees-and-internally-displaced-persons-3
[17] al-Magdal, "Multiple Displacement and the Issue of Protection," al-Magdal , March 30, 2017). Issue no. 59.
Retrieved from https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/al-majdal-59.pdf
[18] Julia Fitzpatrick, "Gaza on their Minds: The Effect of "Operation Cast Lead" in Mobilizing Palestinian Action," *The Fletcher School Online Journal for issues related to Southwest Asia and Islamic Civilization* (2011).
Retrieved from https://www.ciaonet.org/attachments/17895/uploads

ture.[19] In 2012, another Israeli war killed and injured hundreds of Palestinians. Over 20,925 Palestinians became displaced from their homes.[20] The most devastating Israeli war on Gaza erupted in 2014 killing 2,149 Palestinians, displacing 461,643 families to seek refuge in UNRWA schools and other shelters[21] and demolishing homes, schools, mosques, hospitals as well as cemeteries. Above all, a tight blockade was imposed by Israel and created a humanitarian crisis in Gaza, forcing Palestinians to flee to save their lives.[22] [23]

Wars against Palestine have destroyed not only the people's life and infrastructure, but also damaged its internal structures including education. This situation has forced thousands of Palestinians to either flee or migrate for resettlement to sympathetic countries. The resettlement journey has exposed them to countless uncertainties. While some took the adventure and dealt with smugglers to travel to Europe illegally via death boats, others sought asylum in Asian countries such as Malaysia as they were encouraged by the policy of visas upon arrival and the existence of a UNHCR office to register asylum seekers until their resettlement in a third country. Based on UNHCR statistics of June 2018, there are 780 Palestinian refugees in Malaysia waiting to be resettled in a third country.[24]

Eid (2018) displayed the general image of Palestinian refugees in Malaysia and showed that their life is mainly characterized by uncertain-

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[19] Internal Displacement Monitor Centre (DCM) & The Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, *Under Fire: Israel's Enforcement of Access Restricted Areas in the Gaza Strip* (Geneva: Internal Displacement Monitor Centre, 2014).
Retrieved from http://www.pchrgaza.org/files/2014/palestine-under-fire-report-en.pdf
[20] Ibid.,
[21] Aiman Abboushi, The Israeli War on Gaza: 2014: Year of Tension and Aggression (The Organization of Islamic Cooperation – Information Department, 2015).
Retrieved from http://www.oic-oci.org/oicv3/upload/media/special_reports/en/gaza_spe cial_report_nov_2014_en.pdf
[22] Zarifa Ali and Rana Barakat, A Narration without an End: Palestine and the Continuing Nakba (Birzeit University: Ibrahim Abu-Lughod Institute of International Studies, 2013).
Retrieved from http://ialiis.birzeit.edu/en/node/415
[23] Carol Migdalovitz, Israel's Blockade of Gaza, The Mavi Marmara Incident, and its Aftermath (Library of Congress Washington DC: Congressional Research Service, 2010).
Retrieved from https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/R41275.pdf
[24] UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *Figures at a Glance in Malaysia* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2017).
Retrieved from http://www.unhcr.org/en-my/figures-at-a-glance-in-malaysia.html

ty and instability from 1948, *Nakba*, till the present. Based on this study, the Palestinian refugees which moved from Iraq, Syria and the Gaza Strip commonly identified their stay in Malaysia as transitional rather than stable and experrsed that they experience displacement for the second time.[25]

In "The Palestinians: Seventy Years of Refuge and Displacement", Eid and Diah (2018) also discussed that some Palestinian refugees were forced to move from one destination to another and lead unstable living conditions- socially, economically and psychologically. When they came to Malaysia, they registered themselves as refugees under the protection of UNHCR which will organize their resettlement in a third country. However, they do not have the right to choose the country to resettle in or the family members to join. Consequently, they described their life as a kind of displacement especially when family members started to be scattered in different countries around the world.[26]

The residence of the Palestinian refugee families in Malaysia is considered illegal by the Malaysian government and the UNHCR cards are not approved by the state to be official documents to legalise getting jobs or sending children to public schools. Badrasawi, Ahmed and Eid (2018) discussed that refugee children become victims of political conflict especially when they are forced to leave learning seats. The study examined two cases related to education experiences among Syrian and Palestinian refugee children in Malaysia and found that they confronted social, economic and psychological berries preventing them from pursuing their education.[27]

In Malaysia, educational programs for refugee children are run by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) which has been operating in Malaysia since 1975 to assist migrants.[28] However, it is not officially recognised by the Malaysian government. Rather, Malaysia offers the

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[25] Iyad Eid and Norazzura Mohammad Diah, "The Palestinians: Seventy Years of Refuge and Displacement," *Journal Al-Tamaddun* 13, no. 2 (2018): 161-174.

[26] Ibid.,

[27] Kamal Badrasawi, Iman Ahmed and Iyad Eid, "Exploring Ways to Provide Education in Conflict Zones: Implementation and Challenges," *Intellectual Discourse*, 26, no. 2 (2018): 567-594.

[28] UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *Submission by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' Compilation Report* (Universal Periodic Review: Jordan, March 2013). Retrieved from http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/513d9a0e2.pdf

organisation 'oral permission' to work on its land. Consequently, UNHCR lacks the power and authority to implement official program for migrants in Malaysia compared to its offices in other countries.[29]

Even though refugees face challenges such as unemployment, low language proficiency, cultural differences which culminate in the development of psychological pressures and anxiety among them,[30] [31] some tend to utilise personal and physical resources to help them reduce the effects of difficult experiences that hinder their stability. This enables them to better control their life and adjust better to life changes caused by transition or resettlement.[32]

Methodology

To obtain the data, the relevant data have been collected by semi-structured interviews with 30 Palestinian families. An interview was also conducted with the executive manager of the Malaysian Social Research Institute (MSRI). An in-depth interview is a purposive conversation which supports research to explore particular themes related to its objectives. The Palestinian families in the study were selected using purposive sampling which is "a sample selection technique implemented by researchers who are familiar with the target population",[33] so that it may "investigate the experiences of a particular group of people and, at the same time, justify the reason why they choose the sample in this way"[34] [35]

The families have been living in Malaysia for more than five years, and they are registered at the Office of the United Nations High

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[29] Dina Imam Supaat, "The UNHCR in Malaysia: The Mandate and Challenges," *South East Asia Journal of Contemporary Business, Economics and Law* 5, no. 4 (2016): 23-29.

[30] Morton Beiser and Feng Hou, "Ethnic Identity, Resettlement Stress and Depressive Affect Among Southeast Asian Refugees in Canada," *Social Science & Medicine* 63 (2001): 137–150.

[31] Louise Racine and Yixi Lu, "Refugees Resettlement in a Canadian Mid-Sized Prairie City: Examining Experiences Of Multiple Forced Migration," *International Journal of Human Rights in Health Care* 8, no. 3 (2016): 173-186.

[32] Maïté Pahud, Ray Kirk, Jeffrey D. Gage and Andrew R. Hornblow, "The Coping Processes of Adult Refugees Resettled in New Zealand," (UNHCR Research paper No. 179, 2009). Retrieved from http://www.unhcr.org/4b167d769.pdf

[33] Earl Babbie, *The Practice of Social Research* (Australia: Wardsworth, 2001), 179.

[34] John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Traditions* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1998), 118.

[35] Earl Babbie, *The Basics of Social Research* (Belmont, California: Wardsworth, 2014), 200.

Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and waiting for resettlement in a third country. They fled from the horror of conflicts in Iraq, Syria and the Gaza Strip. The interviews were mostly administered with the head of the family whether male or female.[36] Each interview lasted between 60 to 90 minutes. All the 30 interviews were recorded, transcribed and translated from Arabic to English. After categorising and coding the data, similarities and differences across participants highlighted the common barriers to education upon transition in Malaysia.

Conceptual Framework

People tend to migrate for seeking security from conflicts[37] and resettle in a new environment which grants them more desirable opportunities including education for their children.[38] Even though education is usually ranked as a secondary driver for migration, the literature identifies it as a significant factor in bringing about a better life.[39]The journey of refuge often involves multiple transitional destinations, imposing long-term waiting without predictions about the future among asylum seekers who become overwhelmed by feelings of uncertainty.[40] When it comes to formal education, their children face numerous challenges which limit their access to adequate learning environments. Such barriers include legal restrictions, economic conditions, institutional procedures, parents' language and poor learning environment and discrimination.[41]

Legal Restrictions

For better understanding, it is very important to distinguish between a migrant and refugee. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) 1951 convention and its 1967

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[36] Monique Hennik, Inge Huuer and Ajay Baily, *Qualitative Research Methods* (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2011), 9.

[37] World Bank Group, *Forcibly Displaced: Toward a Development Approach Supporting Refugees, the Internally Displaced, and Their Hosts* (The World Bank: Washington, DC, 2017).

[38] Susan S. Chuang & Catherine Tamis-LeMonda, "Gender Roles in Immigrant Families: Parenting Views, Practices, and Child Development," *Sex Roles* 60, no. 7-8 (2009): 451-455.

[39] Evie Browne, *Evidence on Education as a Driver for Migration.* K4D Helpdesk Report (Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies, (2017).

[40] Sander Kramer and Julia Bala Kramer, "Managing Uncertainty; Coping Styles of Refugees in Western Countries," *Intervention* 2, no. 1 2004): 33-42.

[41] Sara Dryden-Peterson, *The Educational Experiences of Refugee Children in Countries of First Asylum* (Washington: Migration Policy Institute, 2015).

protocol, a refugee is "a person who is outside his or her country of nationality or habitual residence; has a well-founded fear of being persecuted because of his or her race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion; and is unable or unwilling to avail him- or herself of the protection of that country, or to return there, for fear of persecution".[42] On the other hand, a migrant is the person who voluntarily moves to live in another country, expecting better living conditions in terms of job, security, and freedom. He/She has the choice to return to his/her homeland whenever he/she decides so.[43]

The policies of Malaysia after independence enact strict laws against the resettlement of refugees. Following its independence in 1957, Malaysia did not sign the 1951 Convention to be an open country receiving refugees[44] [45] [46] mainly because developing countries in Asia are not financially capable to meet the needs of refugees including healthcare, education and well-being.[47] Nonetheless, numerous waves of migrants from Indonesia, the Philippines, Myanmar, and Bosnia arrived in Malaysia between the 1970s and 1990s.[48] [49] [50] [51] During the last two decades,

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[42] UNHCR, "Note on UNHCR's Interpretation of Article 1.2 of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees" December 2010.

[43] John U. Ogbu, "Voluntary and Involuntary Minorities: A Cultural-Ecological Theory of School Performance with Some Implications for Education," *Anthropology & Education Quarterly 29* (2009): 155-188.

[44] Ibid.,

[45] Ali Idris, "Malaysia and Forced Migration," *Intellectual Discourse* 20, no. 1 (2012): 31-54.

[46] The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and Suara Rakyat Malaysia (SURAM), *Undocumented Migrants and Refugees in Malaysia: Raids, Detention and Discrimination.* (2008) Retrieved from https://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/MalaisieCONJ489eng.pdf

[47] Dina Imam Supaat, "The UNHCR in Malaysia: The Mandate and Challenges," *South East Asia Journal of Contemporary Business, Economics and Law* 5, no. 4 (2016): 23-29.

[48] UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *Submission by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' Compilation Report* (Universal Periodic Review: Jordan, March 2013). Retrieved from http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/513d9a0e2.pdf

[49] Dina Imam Supaat, "The UNHCR in Malaysia: The Mandate and Challenges," *South East Asia Journal of Contemporary Business, Economics and Law* 5, no. 4 (2016): 23-29.

[50] Ali Idris, "Malaysia and Forced Migration," *Intellectual Discourse* 20, no. 1 (2012): 31-54.

[51] Penelope Mathew and Tristan Harley, *Refugee Protection and Regional Cooperation in Southeast Asia: A Fieldwork Report.* This report is part of the ARC Funded Research

the number of migrants in Malaysia ranged between 4 to 5 million, coming from different countries including the Middle East.[52] The country intended to temporarily receive this flow of migrants on the basis of humanitarian assistance and sympathise with them for being Muslims.[53] [54]

Literature shows that there are many reasons that caused Malaysia to follow this strict policy against migrants. First of all, it considers the existence of migrants as a financial burden which requires the country to establish and run various organisations to support them. In addition, Malaysia views the heavy presence of migrants as a threat to its national security and any tolerance to this will encourage others to come to the country.[55] Based on these reasons, the Malaysian government has decided to deal with the migrant issue only on the basis of humanitarian assistance and understanding the migrants' crisis in terms of a 'case-by-case' basis rather than a formal contact with international organisations.[56] Thus, the rapid increase in the number of refugees creates a burden on the host country such as Malaysia which has been a transitional destination by a significant number of refugees encouraged by the policy of visa upon arrival.

Economic Barriers

Because the number of international immigrants has increased significantly, the governments of host countries are unable to provide comprehensive programs to ensure the well-being of children.[57] The Pal-

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Project, Regionalism, Responsibility and Refugees (Discovery Project 120102224). The Australian National University, 2014).

[52] UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *Submission by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' Compilation Report (* Universal Periodic Review: Jordan, March 2013). Retrieved from http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/513d9a0e2.pdf

[53] Ibid.,

[54] Ali Idris, "Malaysia and Forced Migration," *Intellectual Discourse* 20, no. 1 (2012): 31-54.

[55] Penelope Mathew and Tristan Harley, *Refugee Protection and Regional Cooperation in Southeast Asia: A Fieldwork Report*. This report is part of the ARC Funded Research Project, Regionalism, Responsibility and Refugees (The Australian National University, 2014). Discovery Project 120102224.

[56] UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR*), Submission by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' Compilation Report* (Universal Periodic Review: Jordan, March 2013). Retrieved from http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/513d9a0e2.pdf

[57] Frances Pine, "Migration as Hope: Space, Time, and Imagining the Future," *Current Anthropology* 55, no. 9 Suppl. (2014): S65-S104.

estinian refugees in Turkey, for example, did not receive humanitarian aid provided by the Turkish government or from international organisations such as UNRWA and UNHCR. Because of the high cost of living in Turkey, parents accepted work for low wages to survive. They ignored their children's education because they could not offer them the necessities for schooling.[58]

Refugee children are very likely to suffer because of the low socio-economic status of the family which makes their parents unable to meet their basic needs. It can also negatively affect their cognitive abilities and behaviour, particularly in early education.[59] Economic pressures force refugee parents to work for long hours. Meanwhile, their children are left physically, emotionally and educationally isolated from the parenting process. These feelings of isolation make them depressed, and when they become teenagers, they develop social and psychological problems.[60]

Studies of refugee families showed that unemployment and financial hardships made the families suffer from food shortage and live in crowded houses. They also hindered them from securing education for their children. This situation affected their children psychologically and lowered their self-esteem. As a result, they isolated themselves from their surroundings and limited their social interaction. Needless to say, the children developed difficulties in terms of learning the new language, academic achievement and cognitive stimulation at home.[61] [62] [63] [64]

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[58] BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, *Survey of Palestinian Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons* 2013-2015, Vol. VIII (Bethlehem, Palestine, 2015). Retrieved from http://reliefweb.int/report/ occupied-palestinian-territory/survey-palestinian-refugees-and-internally-displaced-persons-3

[59] Rashmita S. Mistry, Jeremy C. Biesanz, Nina Chien, Carollee Howesc and Aprile D. Benner, "Socioeconomic Status, Parental Investments, and the Cognitive and Behavioral Outcomes of Low-Income Children from Immigrant and Native Households," *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 23 (2008): 193–212.

[60] Roland Fleck and Dorothy Fleck, "The Immigrant Family: Parent-Child Dilemmas and Therapy Considerations," *American International Journal of Contemporary Research* 3, no. 8 (2013): 13-17.

[61] Morton Beiser and Feng Hou, "Ethnic Identity, Resettlement Stress and Depressive Affect Among Southeast Asian Refugees in Canada," *Social Science & Medicine* 63 (2001): 137–150.

[62] Rashmita S. Mistry, Jeremy C. Biesanz, Nina Chien, Carollee Howesc and Aprile D. Benner, "Socioeconomic Status, Parental Investments, and the Cognitive and Behavioral Outcomes of Low-Income Children from Immigrant and Native Households," *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 23 (2008): 193–212.

Institutional Barriers

Besides economic challenges, there are institutional barriers which hinder refugee children from having educational opportunities. Interestingly, when refugees leave their countries, they hope for better living conditions including quality education for their children.[65] However, their journey towards resettlement often includes many transitional destinations where they might be gathered in refugee camps which do not provide educational facilities. During this time, their children face disruption in their education as what happened with Burmese refugee children in Thailand before their resettlement in the USA. This caused them to struggle with learning difficulties after resettlement.[66] It is also important to understand that refugee children come from different social and cultural backgrounds and have various educational systems and learning experience.[67] These circumstances negatively affect their learning and constitute a real challenge to host countries which attempted to deal with them by running short-term programs to offer quick solutions for the increasing number of refugee children. To overcome these challenges, the host countries started to run long-term programmes which proposed engaging parents in the educational process to help their children.[68]However, some schools do not have the financial capability and resources to let parents become involved in the educational programs,[69]

[63] Zeynep Isik-Ercan, "Education of Young Burmese Refugees in the Midwestern United States," *Oxford Monitor of Forced Migration* 1, no. 1 (2011): 26-30.

[64] Zeynep Isik-Ercan, "In Pursuit of a New Perspective in the Education of Children of the Refugees: Advocacy for the 'Family'," *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice*, Special Issue, Autumn (2012): 3025-3038.

[65] Tanvir M. Anjum, Cecilia Nordqvist and Toomas Timpka, "The Hopes of West African Refugees during Resettlement in Northern Sweden: A 6-Year Prospective Qualitative Study of Pathways and Agency Thoughts," *Conflict and Health* 6, no. 1(2012): 2-8.

[66] Zeynep Isik-Ercan, "In Pursuit of a New Perspective in the Education of Children of the Refugees: Advocacy for the 'Family'," *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice*, Special Issue, Autumn (2012): 3025-3038.

[67] Micere Keelsa and Cybele Raverb, "Early Learning Experiences and Outcomes for Children of U.S. Immigrant Families: Introduction to the Special Issue," *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 24 (2009): 363–366.

[68] Tanvir M. Anjum, Cecilia Nordqvist and Toomas Timpka, "The Hopes of West African Refugees during Resettlement in Northern Sweden: A 6-Year Prospective Qualitative Study of Pathways and Agency Thoughts," *Conflict and Health* 6, no. 1 (2012): 2-8.

[69] Zeynep Isik-Ercan, "In Pursuit of a New Perspective in the Education of Children of the Refugees: Advocacy for the 'Family'," *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice*,

hire interpreters to translate the required educational role or even provide childcare during meetings with teachers.[70]

Parental Language Barriers

Language proficiency constitutes another obstacle when it comes to communication between school and refugee parents. During meetings with teachers, the parents relied on their children for translation.[71] When their children need academic support at home, the parents are less likely to help them with the new language. As a result, their children perform poorly at school.[72] Parents' lack of language proficiency created a new gap between them and their children especially those who were born in the new environment after resettlement.[73] Furthermore, lack of language proficiency make refugees dependent on others which lowers their self-esteem and causes them to isolate themselves from their surroundings by limiting their social interaction.[74]

The literature also shows that refugee children struggled with feelings of alienation due to their inability to communicate with their peers in the new environment.[75] Differences in cultural norms and values are additional challenges that can affect the academic achievement of refugee children. Somali children, for example, did not interact with the secular educational system in New Zealand.[76] Muslim refugee children in

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Special Issue, Autumn (2012): 3025-3038.

[70] Hassan Haji Ibrahim, David Small and Michael Grimley, "Parent/School Interface: Current Communication Practices and their Implication for Somali Parents," *New Zealand Journal of Education Studies* 44, no. 2 (2009): 19-30.

[71] Ibid.,

[72] Min Zhou and Carl L. Bankston, *The Experience of Vietnamese Refugee Children in the United States* (New York: Eric, 2000), 57.

[73] Hassan Haji Ibrahim, David Small and Michael Grimley, "Parent/School Interface: Current Communication Practices and their Implication for Somali Parents," *New Zealand Journal of Education Studies* 44, no. 2 (2009): 19-30.

[74] Morton Beiser and Feng Hou, "Ethnic Identity, Resettlement Stress and Depressive Affect Among Southeast Asian Refugees in Canada," *Social Science & Medicine* 63 (2001): 137–150.

[75] Lynn McBrien, "Educational Needs and Barriers for Refugee Students in the United States: A Review of the Literature," *Review of Educational Research* 75, no. 3 (2005): 329-364.

[76] Hassan Haji Ibrahim, David Small and Michael Grimley, "Parent/School Interface: Current Communication Practices and their Implication for Somali Parents," *New Zealand Journal of Education Studies* 44, no. 2 (2009): 19-30.

the USA also experienced obstacles in terms of communication with their counterparts because of their dress and *hijab*.[77]

Poor Learning Environment and Discrimination

Inadequate educational experiences characterised by receiving insufficient materials hindered refugee children from obtaining quality education. Lack of sufficient educational resources is attributed to discrimination from staff against refugee children which negatively affects their assimilation and leads to their frustration, anxiety and dropping out of school.[78] [79] A study on the Burundian refugee community in the USA found that refugee families did not receive adequate support to help their children learn English. As a result, their children remained with limited language proficiency which hindered their educational achievement and adjustment to the new society.[80]

Research Findings and Analysis

Based on the current study, it is found that there are challenges to education experienced by the Palestinian refugee children in Malaysia. They are based on the economic, institutional and parental challenges.

Economic Challenges

The reviewed literature shows that the economic status of refugees forces them to work for long hours in order to cover the basic needs of their families such as food and monthly rent. The results of the current study show that some of the Palestinian refugee families are not able to send their children to school because they cannot afford it while they can hardly meet their basic needs. Other families are forced to send their children to work because the father is absent or sick. The low economic status of the families is reflected in the nature of their jobs as workers in Arab restaurants. Their income is hardly enough to meet the basic needs

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[77] Lynn McBrien, "Educational Needs and Barriers for Refugee Students in the United States: A Review of the Literature," *Review of Educational Research* 75, no. 3 (2005): 329-364.

[78] Yatta Kanu, "Educational Needs and Barriers for African Refugee Students in Manitoba," *Canadian Journal of Education* 31, no. 4 (2008): 915-940.

[79] José A. Villalba, "Addressing Immigrant and Refugee Issues in Multicultural Counselor Education," *Journal of Professional Counseling, Practice, Theory and Research* 37, no. 1 (2009): 1-13.

[80] Allison Daniel Anders and Jessica Nina Lester, "Refugee Status and Economic Subjugation: Government Agencies and Faith-based Organizations Tracking Families into Low Wage Labor," *International Education* 43, no. 1 (2013): 7-33.

and certainly not education. This situation causes them describe the future of their children as ambiguous and unpredictable. For them, providing education to their children is a significant challenge during their transition in Malaysia.

When asked about childrearing, Emad spontaneously explained how economic challenges deprived his son from continuing his education and expressed his increasing concerns about his son's future in the following account:

> *"I am very worried about the future of my son. He spends most of his time aimlessly hanging out in the street with his friends. I am really uncertain about his future. I wanted to enrol him in school but schools in Malaysia are very expensive".*

In another case, Sharif, who has four children all of school age, helplessly points out that his children have never received any formal education mainly because he cannot afford schooling expenses. In this regard, he says,

> *"We moved between numerous countries and finally arrived in Malaysia where my children are growing up without hope to join any formal educational programme because schools' charges are very expensive. Unfortunately, my children spend most of their time surfing the Net. Presently, my two little children go to an Iraqi woman who lives in the same apartment building to learn Arabic letters so that they can start reading. Undoubtedly, I am dissatisfied with their education, but I have no other options."*

Fadi has a similar ambition of providing better education to his two daughters. However, the dramatic changes in his life made him a displaced father and unable to meet their most essential needs.

> *"Before the civil war in Syria, I was able to meet the needs of my family and spent my free time with my children. Today, I am very worried about my daughters because they stay at home without schooling. I cannot send them to school because I cannot afford the costly fees".*

Hazim believes that sending his children to school solves their most urgent psychological issues, yet at many times he faces schooling debts. He said:

> *My children used to study for free at UN schools in Gaza. However, regular Israeli wars forced us to flee for the*

safety of our children. In Malaysia, it is very challenging to pay for school fees. Last year, I registered them in one of the Arabic schools, but I couldn't settle the due amount. As a result, my children were forced to leave the school.

While some Palestinian refugee families expressed that their economic status makes them unable to afford school fees, others view education for their children as a second priority due to their health, unemployment or age. Children of such poor refugee families do not go to school; rather, they are more likely to work where they are exposed to exploitation and physical and verbal abuse.[81] In such cases, parents depend economically on their children to cover the family's basic needs. For example, Ayman planned a better education for his children, but he believes that his plans are now only dreams. He said:

"After I had become sick, I stopped going to work. Two of my young sons stopped their secondary school to work in a restaurant. They work for more than 12 hours a day and come back home very late. The whole family depends on their payment to cover the basic needs such as utility bills, food and rent".

In another case, Omar and his brother were forced to quit school after their father had migrated illegally to Europe in the hope of a family reunion one day. In this regard, Omar said:

"I lost hope in going back to school. I wish I could study again, but I cannot because I have to work. During our stay in Malaysia, we struggle with critical living situations. My brother and I stopped school to work in restaurants with humiliating conditions working for more than 13 hours per day for a pay which is hardly enough to meet our basic needs such as the bills, food and the flat rent".

Institutional Challenges

Besides the economic challenges, there are institutional factors which prevent refugee families from sending their children to school. The present study shows the extent to which NGOs do not provide satisfying solutions to the problem of schooling for refugee children. The Malaysian Social Research Institute (MSRI) for example, is one of 11 im-

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[81] Saeb F. Al Ganideh and Linda K. Good, "Understanding Abusive Child Labor Practices in the Shadow of the Arab Spring," *Journal of Children's* Services 10, no. 1 (2015): 76-91.

plementing partners of UNHCR and provides humanitarian, psychological and educational support for refugees of various linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The refugee parents believe that they have to send their children to its school within the few available and affordable options. Many of their children go to the MSRI School even though the parents claim that it lacks 'adequate academic and human resources'. Asma, for example, sends her children to MSRI because for her, it is 'the best available option'. However, her children are disappointed with the school and demanded to join a regular school, but she cannot afford it. In this regard, she said:

> *"My children always ask me with frustration to go to a normal school like other kids because they cannot adapt to the school system and environment as the school combines students of different ages, educational levels, social backgrounds and gender in one classroom".*

In another case, Ameer points out that he sends his three young sons to the MSRI School even though he believes that NGO schools are not a satisfactory option. He says:

> *"When I visited the school, I found that teachers are mainly refugees who volunteered to teach refugee children. These teachers do not have sufficient teaching experiences. And the most critical challenge is the school is not recognised by the Ministry of Education in Malaysia. Despite these challenges, I believe that this school is good for keeping my children away from the streets".*

To verify the situation, an official interview was conducted with Mrs. Lia Saed, the executive manager of the Malaysian Social Research Institute (MSRI), and she referred that MSRI seeks to provide refugee children with educational programs despite the challenges ahead. The Palestinian refugee parents are dissatisfied with the school as they expect it to practice a system similar to national or international schools. In this regard, she says,

> *"MSRI started with two classes to provide education for few refugee children. However, the number of refugee students rapidly increased and almost reached 140. With limited space and resources, we managed to open six more classes to absorb the students, putting students from Standards 1 and 2 together, Standards 3 and 4 together and Standards 5 and 6 together, recruiting refugee teachers and volunteers to teach the children. Parents express*

their dissatisfaction with our limited support and re-sources. However, I believe despite all the challenges and limitations, what we offer is better than leaving children hanging out in the streets".

Parental Challenges

The Palestinian refugee parents have low awareness of the importance of being involved in the educational process provided by NGO schools. Therefore, they do not practically play a role in encouraging their children to go to school despite the unfavourable learning environment or school system. For them, staying in Malaysia is temporary and their children's education can start after resettlement. They think that it is a waste of time to send children to a school where their educational achievement will not be certified.

Furthermore, the parents did not think about home-schooling or providing informal education to their children through which they can refresh their study skills. They view that the hardships they face in Malaysia are temporary and when they are resettled in Europe, for example, they will be granted basic human rights including education for their children. These hopes are common among refugees. They originate from their pressing need for stability. However, a study on the West African refugees in Sweden revealed that such hopes were not fully attained, and recommended further research to determine why host countries respond slowly to the needs of refugees.[82] Asma expressed that she is willing to endure all the hardships in Malaysia because she knows that such a tiring life will come to an end once the family arrives in Europe. She pointed out that:

"We lived in Iraq for tens of years but, unfortunately, we never enjoyed rights like the locals. Now, I believe the day has come to start a new life in Europe by obtaining new passports which offer us stability and allow us to obtain good education for our children".

Waleed also remarked:

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[82] Tanvir M. Anjum, Cecilia Nordqvist and Toomas Timpka, "The Hopes of West African Refugees during Resettlement in Northern Sweden: A 6-Year Prospective Qualitative Study of Pathways and Agency Thoughts," *Conflict and Health* 6, no. 1 (2012): 1-8.

*"All I wish from going to Europe is securing my sons' fu-
ture. Gaining European passports will allow them to con-
tinue their education".*

In this regard, Mrs. Lia Saed blamed parents for their preference
to wait for resettlement in order to start their life, forgetting that they are
likely to spend many years in transition while their children are out of
school. She said,

*"The organisation encourages students to keep coming to
school and continue their education rather than waiting
for resettlement because if they stop coming, they are like-
ly to have a two- or three-year gap in their education. As
a result, they might become too old to join the grade
which matches their academic level and fail to continue. I
believe that the MSRI School, with all its challenges and
limitations, is better than leaving children hanging out in
the streets".*

The previous discussion presented the three important barriers
(economic, institutional and parental), preventing the Palestinian refugee
children from going to school in Malaysia. These issues have negatively
affected the children and their parents and put them under huge psycho-
logical pressure. The informants commonly described themselves as
'nervous' or 'psychologically exhausted'. Sharif, for example, said,

*"When I think about my children's education, I become
nervous. I feel very sad about my children because they
cannot read or write".*

Amani helplessly said:

*"The whole family undergoes psychological pressures es-
pecially because my daughters cannot attend school. Dur-
ing my difficult psychological stress, I isolate myself from
my husband and children in a locked room. At this time, I
feel that I do not want to talk to anyone. My mind is very
preoccupied, thinking about my children's future. I only
sleep for about 4 hours at night".*

Discussion and Recommendation

Refuge is one of the most common issues affecting millions of
people around the world. Previous studies showed the role of political
instability in forcing people to migrate from conflict-affected zones.

The current paper is based on fieldwork which examined the eco-
nomic, institutional and parental factors that prevent the Palestinian refu-

gee children from obtaining education. These obstacles are common among refugees around the world. However, this research highlighted how the Palestinian parents have not had an effective role encouraging their children to pursue education. The literature showed that Burmese refugee parents motivated their children to continue their education even though they did not have the necessary skills, the ways or the "resources" to help them continue their education before resettlement. They participated in different school programs with their children. This has proven to be an effective means to assist them perform well.[83] Another study showed that the Somali refugee parents collaborated with teachers to improve the educational performance of their children. Furthermore, the children attributed their academic achievement to the positive role of their parents.[84]

The systematic analysis of the Palestinian parents' responses revealed that the parents did not give education a priority, marginalising all possible available options such as schooling services offered by the Malaysian Social Research Institute (MSRI). In addition to the economic barrier (that they could not pay for transportation to school), they justified that lack of accreditation and documentation of educational achievement did not encourage them to send their children to learn at this NGO school. Furthermore, they had misperceptions that their children will start to be involved in systematic educational programs once they obtain resettlement in a third country, ignoring the fact that their children are growing up with increasing years of being out of school. As referred earlier by the executive director of MSRI, parents should not keep their children at home waiting for an unpredictable resettlement. A study of Somali refugees in Kenya (Dadaab camps) found that the Somali refugee students used local sources such as family to overcome obstacles and created efficient workable educational pathways for them.[85] In this sense, the educational needs of refugee children are best met by the involvement of parents in the educational experiences of their children. They

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[83] Zeynep Isik-Ercan, "In Pursuit of a New Perspective in the Education of Children of the Refugees: Advocacy for the 'Family'," *Educational Sciences*: *Theory & Practice*, Special Issue, Autumn (2012): 3025-3038.

[84] Hassan Haji Ibrahim, David Small and Michael Grimley, "Parent/School Interface: Current Communication Practices and their Implication for Somali Parents," *New Zealand Journal of Education Studies* 44, no. 2 (2009): 19-30.

[85] Sarah Dryden-Peterson, Negin Dahya and Elizabeth Adelman, "Pathways to Educational Success among Refugees: Connecting Locally and Globally Situated Resources," *American Educational Research Journal* 54, no. 6 (2017): 1011–1047.

have to utilise all possible educational opportunities, supervise their academic work and progress, and familiarise themselves with the content of learning materials.[86]

The participating parents in this study did not think about educational alternatives which could develop the study skills of their children such as home-schooling. Interestingly, many of the participants had a degree in higher education and some of them worked as teachers.

In contrast, the Bosnian refugees who experienced tragedies during the war in their country were fully aware of the value of education wherever they moved. Accordingly, their teenage children were determined to improve their status through education during their transitional stay in the USA.[87] Immigrant Chinese parents had a unique parental involvement by spending extra time and effort, working with their children at home reading textbooks and workbooks.[88] In some cases, grandparents become a significant source of support whether emotionally by bringing the family together or socially by taking care of the children while parents are busy with paid work.[89] Close intergenerational relationships lead to cultural continuation and cooperation represented by carrying out numerous responsibilities including tutoring.[90]

Childrearing refers to the development of children socially, economically and psychologically. It is a social role usually taken by the parents of the child. Literature shows that there is a correlation between family closeness and childrearing. That is, the closer the parents, the more they are satisfied with upbringing their children.[91] Deep analysis of the responses provided by the parents during the interviews revealed a kind of contradiction between their beliefs, hopes and practices. When

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[86] Ibid.,

[87] Jacqueline Mosselson, "Roots & Routes: A Re-imagining of Refugee Identity Constructions and the Implications for Schooling," *Current Issues in Comparative Education* 9, no. 1 (2006): 20-29.

[88] Micere Keelsa and C. Cybele Raverb, "Early Learning Experiences and Outcomes for Children of U.S. Immigrant Families: Introduction to the Special Issue," *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 24 (2009): 363–366.

[89] Arnith Ben-David and Yoav Lavee, "Migration and Marital Distress: The Case of Soviet Immigrants," *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage* 21, no. 3-4 (1994): 133-146.

[90] Xiaolin Xie, and YanXie Xia, "Grandparenting in Chinese Immigrant Families," *Marriage & Family Review* 47, no. 6 (2011): 383-396.

[91] Noriel Elumba Lim, *Family Closeness, Parental Role Fulfillment and Immigration Stress: A Study on Filipino American Young Adults' Satisfaction with Parental Upbringing* (Doctoral dissertation. University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, 2011). Retrieved from http://hdl.handle.net/2142/26364

they were asked about childrearing while in transition, they commonly identified it in terms of providing education for their children. They justified that their critical economic status did not give them the potential to pay for education costs. For them, obtaining education becomes a hope that cannot be fulfilled in Malaysia. Even though the NGO school run by MSRI is free of charge, the parents tended to irrationally criticise its system and describe it as useless as long as it does not officially document the academic achievement of their children.

The literature narrates successful attempts for providing education for refugee children. For example, displaced refugees from Peshawar, Pakistan and Afghanistan managed to reorganise themselves a few weeks following their displacement. They collected tents donated by NGOs, trained young people from the refugee community and established an open school. One of the most important lessons which refugees must learn from their experience is that these groups had the motivation and encouragement to receive training to work as teachers or in any skills needed.[92]

By examining various initiatives implemented by refugee communities, the researchers took practical measures to create full awareness among the parents, find support from the Ministry of Education in Palestine and the official representative of the Palestinians in Malaysia (the Palestinian Embassy in Kuala Lumpur). They implemented an initiative aimed at creating educational opportunity and returning children to a learning environment. Initially, they met the educated parents and discussed with them the negative situation of leaving children without education, and proposed to form a parental council. Then the parental council had an official meeting with the Palestinian ambassador, Dr. Anwar Al-Agha, who welcomed the idea and facilitated the following steps. The initiative was based on the suggestion of providing e-learning through which the children would learn the same curriculum taught in schools in Palestine. The embassy opened classes inside the embassy and divided the students into their appropriate academic levels. Video conference was suggested to be used to present the lessons for the students under the supervision of volunteer educated refugee parents. In the end of the year, the students could sit for final exams inside the embassy also under the

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[92] Margaret Sinclair, "Education in Emergencies," in Jeff Crisp; Talbot Ed., Ed. Christopher and Daiana Cipollone (Ed.), "Learning for a Future: Refugee Education in Developing Countries" (Geneva; UNHCR, 2001).

supervision of the parents' council and a representative from the Ministry of Education. Exam papers would be sent to the Ministry of Education in Palestine to issue certificates for students documenting that they would move to the next grade or level.

Conclusion

This paper described the educational experiences of the Palestinian refugee children in Malaysia. It first highlighted the historical background of the Palestinian refugees and focused on the source of their consistent instability and uncertainty, represented by the *Nakba*. Then it discussed their challenging experiences in Iraq, Syria and the Gaza Strip which forced them to flee and seek resettlement in a third country through UNHCR in Malaysia, where they stay as a transitional destination. After that, it reviewed the living circumstances of the Palestinian refugees during this transition. In particular, the paper displayed the economic, institutional and parental barriers which hindered their children from obtaining education.

The study also shed light on the inadequate parental role among the Palestinian refugees in Malaysia. Finally, a reasonable solution has been proposed to return these children to the track of education. The advantage of this solution is supported by the fact that their educational achievement will be documented and accredited by the Ministry of Education in Palestine. In this case, they can proceed with their educational journey after resettlement with the minimal gaps in school age.

At this juncture, particular concerns must be addressed on the wellbeing of refugee children. Many parents and guardians are apprehensive to continue their uncertain and unpredictable life in Malaysia. They are particularly worried about the future of their children, especially that relates to education. They believe in giving education – both for boys and girls – but apparently it is not easily available for them due to policy related matters and educational cost. Many children especially daughters stay at home without schooling. This situation is not good, as it brings towards consequential chains of problems, for example in the case of child workers whereby these children ended up having to work at restaurants and other business outlets.

At the same time, refugee parents must also start to reorient their thinking perspective that resettlement to Europe—an opportunity that they wish to have—is not easily attainable, just for everyone. Since staying in Malaysia may not be a temporal basis, Malaysian Government has to ascertain the educational situations of Palestinian refugee children in

Malaysia are well taken care of. As the old proverb says, problems beget problems.

In the nutshell, this paper is based on the common authentic experience of the Palestinian refugee children in Malaysia and presents their urgent educational needs. It contributes to the body of literature by providing insights related to their educational experience while in transition in Malaysia. It discusses the barriers which deprive them from their right to education; a current issue common between millions of refugee children around the world. For this, the paper proposes a reasonable solution to these children by offering them educational opportunities which help them to fill the gaps in the years they have been forced away from school and develop their study skills before resettlement.

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