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Impacts of Immigration Detention on Sub-Saharan Africa Asylum Seekers in the United States

Felix Vescovi Ogunsuyi
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Walden University

College of Health Sciences and Public Policy

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Felix Vescovi Ogunsuyi

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Walden University
2022

Abstract

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States

by

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MPhil, Walden University, 2020

LLM, The University of Manchester, 2011

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

Walden University

[November] 2022

Abstract

Detaining asylum seekers has become an established practice in many countries. There is a large body of research suggesting that immigration detention causes asylum seekers harm. However, the focus of these studies has been on diagnosable disorders and mental health, with no descriptive understanding of how detention and resettlement are experienced and conceptualized by asylum seekers. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine how formerly detained asylum seekers from sub-Saharan African countries perceive the impact of detention on their resettlement experience in the United States. Ager and Strang's conceptual framework of refugee integration was used as the study's conceptual framework. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews of 12 formerly detained asylum seekers from sub-Saharan African countries who were currently living in the Los Angeles, California, area, and were adults aged 18 or older. Thematic and content analysis of interview data yielded four themes: (a) generalizations about immigration detention, (b) challenges from detention experience during resettlement, (c) support relied on during resettlement, and (d) meaning of resettlement. The viewpoints of this underrepresented group may address the existing gap in the research. The findings of this study may also inform policy makers and administrators about the impact of detention on formerly detained asylum seekers' resettlement process. Using the study findings, policy makers and administrators may be able to devise strategies to enhance positive social change through relationship-building among asylum-seeking stakeholders to increase asylum seekers' integration success and quality of life.

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Dedication

The word of God says, “who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?” (Lamentations 3.37). First, to God Almighty who created me for His own use. I thank you, Savior Lord Jesus, for writing this experience into my mandate. For my father who taught me that there are three groups of people on this planet—the few who makes things happens, the many who know what is happening, and the overwhelming majority who knows nothing of what is happening—and encouraged me to be, if not in the first group, at least in the second group. For my mother whom I am full of kind memories. For the most valuable babies, Chloey, Page, Audre, and Hazel, who are like air to me; without you guys I cannot breathe. Thank you, sweetest ones, for giving me the strength to carry on through each emotionally charged section of this dissertation. For all my siblings, family and friends who provided support and encouragement.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables	v
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study.....	1
Background.....	3
Problem Statement	8
Purpose of the Study	10
Research Question	11
Conceptual Framework.....	11
Nature of the Study	12
Definitions.....	14
Assumptions.....	17
Scope and Delimitations	18
Limitations	20
Significance.....	21
Summary	22
Chapter 2: Literature Review	24
Introduction.....	24
Literature Search Strategy.....	25
Conceptual Framework.....	26
Literature Review.....	32
Overview of the U.S. Asylum-Seeking Process	34
Immigration Detention in the United States	36

The ATD Program and the Role of Corporate Lobbies in U.S. Asylum	
Management.....	41
U.S. Government Policy for Asylum-Seekers’ Resettlement.....	46
Summary.....	53
Chapter 3: Research Method.....	56
Introduction.....	56
Research Design and Rationale	57
Role of the Researcher	61
Methodology.....	63
Participant Selection Logic.....	64
Instrumentation	66
Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection.....	68
Data Analysis Plan.....	72
Issues of Trustworthiness.....	74
Credibility	75
Transferability.....	76
Dependability	77
Confirmability.....	77
Ethical Procedures	78
Summary.....	80
Chapter 4: Results.....	82
Introduction.....	82
Setting.....	83

Demographics	83
Data Collection	84
Participant Recruitment	84
Semistructured Interviews	85
Data Analysis	86
Evidence of Trustworthiness.....	87
Credibility	88
Transferability.....	88
Dependability	89
Confirmability.....	89
Results.....	90
Theme 1: Generalizations About Immigration Detention	91
Theme 2: Challenges From the Detention Experience During Resettlement	95
Theme 3: Support Relied on in Resettlement	97
Theme 4: The Meaning of Resettlement.....	101
Summary	102
Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations	104
Introduction.....	104
Interpretation of the Findings.....	105
Theme 1: Generalizations About Immigration Detention	105
Theme 2: Challenges From the Detention Experience During Resettlement	106
Theme 3: Support Relied on in Resettlement	107
Theme 4: The Meaning of Resettlement.....	109

Appropriateness of Ager and Strang’s Conceptual Framework of Refugee Integration for This Study	109
Limitations of the Study.....	111
Recommendations.....	113
Recommendation 1: Provision of Mental Health Services for Formerly Detained Asylum Seekers	113
Recommendation 2: Research on Gender Disparities in Trauma Resilience Among Formerly Detained Asylum Seekers	113
Implications.....	114
Conclusion	115
References.....	117
Appendix A: Interview Protocol.....	182
Appendix B: Recruitment Flyer.....	186

List of Tables

Table 1. Themes and Subthemes in Interview Data 90

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Detaining asylum seekers, including those from sub-Saharan African countries, has become established practice in many countries including the United States, Australia, United Kingdom, Italy, Mexico, and Turkey (Hvidtfeldt et al., 2020; Sansus et al., 2020; Canetti et al., 2016; Cornelisse, 2010; Amnesty International, 2009). The process of detaining asylum seekers is often seen merely as an occurrence of immigration law enforcement (Cornelisse, 2010). The public at large sees this phenomenon as an appropriate and an expected response of a sovereign state to those who have breached the state's national and territorial sovereignty (Peutz & De Genova, 2010; Bloch & Schuster, 2005; Walters, 2002a). However, this territorial response has been found by many researchers to produce long-term socioeconomic and psychological harm to asylum seekers in their host countries (Puthooppambal et al., 2015; Cornelisse, 2010). These negative impacts are often perceived merely as the unfortunate but foreseeable consequence of uninvited immigrants.

The research problem that this study addressed is that formerly detained asylum seekers from sub-Saharan African countries living in the United States face a range of resettlement challenges stemming directly from their immigration detention experience. There is now a large body of research suggesting that immigration detention causes asylum seekers socioeconomic and psychological harm (Posselt et al., 2020; Kang et al., 2019; von Werthern et al., 2018; Popescu, 2016; Mainwaring, 2012; Robjant et al., 2009; cf. Filges et al., 2018). For example, many researchers have found that asylum seekers are susceptible to a lack of access to primary health care (Kang et al., 2019), hunger

(Carney & Krause, 2020), lack of housing (Ziersch et al., 2017), unemployment (Samaddar, 2015), and mental health problems (Hedrick et al., 2020; von Werthern, et al., 2018). Although there is a large body of research on the impact of detention on asylum seekers' resettlement process, existing studies have examined the consequences of immigration detention mostly in terms of diagnosable disorders and mental health symptoms (Filges et al., 2018; von Werthern, 2018). Interestingly, none of the existing literature reviewed on this topic provide a descriptive picture of how community integration is experienced and conceptualized by formerly detained asylum seekers from sub-Saharan African countries.

Due to a lack of sufficient studies on this topic, it is not known to what extent the experience of detention impacts formerly detained asylum seekers' resettlement experience. Because the narratives of formerly detained asylum seekers remain largely excluded from the literature, this study will help to fill this gap by examining how formerly detained asylum seekers from sub-Saharan African countries perceive the impact of detention on their resettlement experience. Understanding how formerly detained asylum seekers perceive the impact of immigration detention on their resettlement experience through the prism of integration principles could benefit policy makers as they contemplate the impact of detention on formerly detained asylum seekers during their resettlement process.

In this chapter, I briefly reviewed background information of how formerly detained asylum seekers perceive the impact of immigration detention on their resettlement experience. I then stated the research problem and the need to study it,

followed by the purpose of the study. The research question, conceptual framework, and nature of the study are also addressed. After defining key terms that was used in this study, I then explained the assumptions, scope and delimitations, and limitations of this study. I also described the significance of the study to the public administration field. The last section summarized the main points outlined in the chapter.

Background

In the United States, asylum seekers apprehended at the border or inside the country can be detained by one or more federal government agencies for weeks, months, or years before or during their asylum proceedings (Haas, 2012; Silverman, 2010). Recent studies suggest that each year the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), through Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), arrests and detains hundreds of thousands of asylum seekers in the civil immigration detention system. For example, Saadi et al. (2020) shows that in 2019 CBP and ICE detained over 400,000 people in the 200 immigration jails across the country, with a total average daily population of 55,000.

Many studies including those of Luan (2018) and Longazel (2016) have shown that detention conditions of asylum seekers are often similar to those of prisons or jails. For example, detained asylum seekers are held in secured facilities, wear prison uniforms, and are subjected to strict control of time and movement. Indeed, the leaders of many local jails contract bed space to ICE (Luan, 2018).

The immigration detention system, unlike criminal jails or prisons, operates under civil law. Consequently, many constitutional protections available under criminal law do

not exist in the detention system. For example, asylum seekers can be detained indefinitely. There is no federal right to legal representation for detainees, and most asylum seekers are not entitled to government-appointment lawyers, which greatly reduces their chances of winning their case (Eagly & Shafer, 2015).

Recent studies indicate that physical abuse and sexual assault in detention centers are frequently ignored. Merton and Fialho (2017) found that the DHS received 33,126 complaints of sexual and physical abuse from January 2010 to July 2016 but investigated only 570. Merton and Fialho's finding is consistent with studies showing that rape and sexual assault are often underreported in immigration detention due to fears of retaliation, social isolation, language barriers, and knowledge that allegations are not seriously investigated (Ibrahim et al., 2019; Ryo, 2019; Brenner et al., 2016).

Furthermore, there is significant fragmentation of responsibility and accountability among the agencies managing the immigration detention system. To buttress this assertion, Saadi et al. (2020) argued that the policies and procedures that govern health care in ICE and CBP detention settings are unevenly applied across the various detention settings, and quality assurance is often subcontracted to for-profit vendors. This fragmented system of care operating without clear or transparent oversight may be falling short of both human rights and other legal standards.

The Immigration and Nationality Act (1952) sets forth several instances where a detained asylum seeker may be assessed for release. According to a 2010 document from United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) 2022 Interim Final Rule requires Asylum Officers to consider the asylum applications of certain individuals

subject to expedited removal who established a fear of persecution or torture during their required credible fear screening. According to article 1(a)(2) of the 1951 United Nations' Convention, an individual will be found to have a credible fear of persecution if they establish that they have been persecuted or have a well-founded fear of persecution or harm on account of their race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion if returned to their country. Congress incorporated this definition into United States immigration law in the Refugee Act of 1980.

Following the USCIS directives, ICE authorities determine whether the detained individual is eligible for release, and if so, may utilize one of several options to release the individual. ICE may release an individual on their own recognizance, meaning that the individual signs paperwork committing to appear for scheduled immigration court hearings (Patler et al., 2018). ICE may also release a detained asylum-seeker on orders of supervision. Orders of supervision contain additional conditions of release such as electronic monitoring (i.e., wearing a GPS ankle monitor), periodically reporting to an ICE officer in person or by telephone, and travel restrictions. Conditions of supervision may involve ICE's Intensive Supervised Appearance Program.

According to Fischer et al. (2019), ICE may also require someone to post a monetary bond, similar to bail in the criminal context, to secure release. ICE may also release a detained asylum seeker on parole, which is a permission to reside in the United States for a finite period of time. In addition, ICE may place a parolee on an order of supervision requiring them to meet certain conditions to remain on parole (Fischer et al.,

2019). These conditions, used separately or in conjunction with one another, are collectively referred to as *alternatives to detention* (ATD).

According to DHS, as of August 2019, roughly 100,000 people were enrolled on an ATD at any given time. ATDs cost an average of \$4.04 per day, as of 2015, and have been shown to work with over 95% of individuals to ensure appearance for their final court hearings (Marouf, 2017). Although ICE's 2010 parole directive and increased use of ATD programs have improved release opportunities after credible fear findings, the parole directive is not codified in regulations (Saadi et al., 2020; Schriro, 2009). As Marouf's (2017) study shows, ICE does not have uniform procedures to determine bond amounts, and it extensively uses ankle bracelets without individually assessing an asylum seeker's nonappearance risk.

Generally, asylum seekers participating in ATD programs can live with family members, be active in their host community, and work if they are granted the legal authorization to do so as they wait for the outcome of their application. During this period, asylum seeker applicants live in a state of insecurity (Kerwin, 2012; Whelan et al., 2010). In addition to often receive inadequate support from family and friends, asylum seekers live in fear of not only the possibility of learning about unfavorable outcomes of their applications, but also of being arrested, being deported, and being exposed to violence (Kalt et al., 2013). Asylum seekers also may hire immigration attorneys who charge exorbitant legal fees (Nalumango, 2019). Asylum seekers also need to renew their work authorization documents yearly, sometimes with high renewal fees (Nalumango, 2019). This vulnerable group of people may likely also face discrimination

from potential employers based on their foreign education and work experience and/or for not speaking English or Spanish (Kalt et al., 2013).

The gap in the literature that I identified is that though there exists a large body of research suggesting that immigration detention causes asylum seekers socioeconomic and psychological harm, there are, to date, no examinations of how the nature of that experience relates to asylum seekers' future psychological well-being, relations with others, and quality of life on their resettlement experience. Formerly detained asylum seekers' resettlement experience has not been subject to detailed examination in existing studies (de Ruigh et al., 2019). Therefore, little is known about their perception of the role that detention plays in their resettlement process (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Niemi et al., 2019; von Werthern, 2018).

In this study, I attempted to discover and give meaning to the experiences of asylum seekers from sub-Saharan African countries through their own narration. I used Ager and Strang's conceptual framework of refugee integration to understand integration issues relating to the resettlement experience of asylum seekers from sub-Saharan African countries who were formerly detained. The importance of this study lies in the potential insight that its findings may provide into the challenges faced by formerly detained asylum seekers in their resettlement experience. A key aim was to recommend culturally sensitive policy-change that can be included in asylum seekers' resettlement programs.

Problem Statement

The problem that this study addressed is that formerly detained asylum seekers face a range of resettlement challenges stemming directly from their immigration detention experience. There are many possible factors contributing to this problem, among which is a global surge in apprehension of asylum seekers (Yacobi, 2011). Although there is now a large body of research suggesting that immigration detention causes asylum seekers socioeconomic and psychological harm (Posselt et al., 2020; Kang et al., 2019; Popescu, 2016; Mainwaring, 2012), none of the existing literature reviewed has examined how the experience of immigration detention from the standpoint of formerly detained sub-Saharan African asylum seekers affects their daily lives after release. These range of resettlement challenges, mostly stemming directly from detention experience, make it difficult for asylum seekers to fully integrate into their host communities (Sansus et al., 2020; Kang, et al., 2019).

Although many studies have shown that the ATD program boasts significant advantages over the use of detention, the involvement of for-profit companies in the management of the program introduces the possibility that a profit motive is driving the decision-making (Pittman, 2020). The commercialization of asylum seekers' detention services does not only disengage the government from its human rights obligation (Lethbridge, 2017) but also reduces any meaningful integration benefits to the asylum seekers' resettlement process (Edwards, 2011). For example, some critics argue that corporate lobbies influence ICE to expand the classes of immigrants placed on an ankle monitor (Pittman, 2020). Such lobbying could explain ICE's shift from using intensive

and overly restrictive supervision, including ankle monitors, on high flight risk immigrants to using it for asylum seekers who have a low flight risk (Eagly et al., 2018).

The stigma that accompanies wearing an ankle shackle that costs an asylum seeker \$420 per month and the overly restrictive check-in requirements that involve long travel time and hours-long delays make it extremely difficult for ATD participants to find regular employment and meet necessary family and community obligations (Pittman, 2020; Nalumango, 2019). Many studies have shown that asylum seekers participating in ATD receive little if any orientation to the immigration process they are navigating. For example, Pittman (2020) found that ATD participants lack any formal guidance on the standards for imposing or removing electronic monitoring.

Despite an increasing number of asylum seekers from sub-Saharan African countries, including many torture survivors experiencing detention (Yaron et al., 2013), none of the existing literature reviewed on this topic provide a descriptive picture of how resettlement is experienced and conceptualized by this population after release from detention. Due to a lack of sufficient studies on this population, it is not known to what extent the experience of detention impacts their resettlement process. In conducting this study, I sought to address this gap in the literature. I aimed to facilitate a holistic approach to the phenomenon by examining how formerly detained asylum seekers from sub-Saharan African countries perceive the impact of United States detention on their resettlement experience.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine how formerly detained asylum seekers from sub-Saharan African countries perceive the impact of detention on their resettlement experience in the United States. Due to a lack of sufficient studies on this population, a study was warranted on the growing phenomenon (Utržan & Wieling, 2020; Kang et al., 2019). Using Ager and Strang's conceptual framework of refugee integration, I sought to describe and interpret how sub-Saharan African asylum seekers experience United States immigration detention and how the experience impacts their resettlement process.

By examining asylum seekers' perspectives on the impact of detention on their resettlement experience, I sought to explore the extent to which immigration detention may cause challenges to this marginalized population in their resettlement process (Hynie, 2018). To achieve this goal, I sought to develop a descriptive picture of how resettlement is experienced and conceptualized by formerly detained asylum seekers from sub-Saharan African countries. This study may lead to broad insight into the challenges faced by asylum seekers in their resettlement experience. This study also aimed to recommend culturally sensitive policy change that could address the underlying challenges.

Research Question

The central research question of this study was, How do formerly detained asylum seekers from sub-Saharan African countries living in Los Angeles, California, perceive the impact of detention on their resettlement experience?

Conceptual Framework

Little is known about how formerly detained asylum seekers in the United States perceive the impact of detention on their resettlement experience. An evaluation of the limited literature on the detention of asylum seekers suggests that formerly detained asylum seekers experience challenges during their resettlement process (Pittman, 2020; Nalumango, 2019). Numerous studies have shown that those who manage the detention and resettlement process seem to face the challenges of making the best decisions against the background of territorial sovereignty and a wider commitment to universal human rights (Chikowore, 2018). It is apparent that the detention and resettlement of asylum seekers into their host countries poses a dilemma to those who manage the process.

To understand the complex nature of the impact of detention on formerly detained asylum seekers' resettlement experience, I used Ager and Strang's conceptual framework of refugee integration to explore integration issues relating to the resettlement experience of asylum seekers from sub-Saharan African countries who were formerly detained. Although *integration* is a widely used term, its understanding varies considerably as it has been identified as a "chaotic concept" (Robison, 1998, p. 118). The definition of refugee integration implicit within Ager and Strang's framework is that an individual or group is integrated within a society when they achieve socioeconomic outcomes

equivalent to other wider members of the host communities in a manner consistent with shared notions of nationhood and citizenship (Ager & Strang, 2010, 2004).

Ager and Strang's framework specifies 10 core domains that shape the understanding of the concept of integration. The specified core domains include achievement access across the sectors of employment, housing, education, health and practice regarding citizenship and rights, and processes of social connections within and between groups in the community (Ager & Strang, 2004). The framework also includes barriers to successful integration for refugees including language, cultural knowledge, fear, and instability (Ager & Strang, 2008). Although Ager and Strang's model is relatively new, it provides a basis for structuring academic debate and dialogue with practitioners and policy makers trying to address the challenges faced by formerly detained asylum seekers in their resettlement process. Thus, I used the Ager's model as a lens to explore integration issues relating to resettlement experience based on perceptions of asylum seekers from sub-Saharan African countries who were formerly detained. I provided a detailed evaluation of Ager and Strang's framework in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

I used a phenomenological approach to examine and understand the impact of immigration detention on asylum seekers' resettlement experience. Phenomenology is a qualitative design that allows for exploration of the human experience, and it is often applied to shed light on a particular phenomenon (Slabbert, 2017; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). Through this process, the researcher may construct the universal meaning of the event, situation, or experience and arrive at a more profound understanding of the

phenomenon under study (Kocalar & Bilgili, 2020). Using the phenomenological approach, I aimed to ascertain perceived reality from participants' narratives of their detention experiences and to produce in-depth descriptions of their resettlement process. I conducted in-depth, individual interviews in which participants responded to preset, open-ended questions (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Participants in this study were formerly detained asylum seekers from sub-Saharan African countries living in Los Angeles, California, who were adults age 18 and older. Coastal cities including Los Angeles have long been viewed as the gateways for immigrants starting new lives in the United States (Price, 2017; Franklin et al., 1998). The United States Census Bureau data of 2019 suggests that most United States asylum seekers live in just 20 major metropolitan areas, with the largest populations in Los Angeles. In 2017, the State of California passed a law that declares the state a sanctuary state, meaning the state would not dispatch its own law resources to aid in federal immigration enforcement efforts (California Value Art, 2017). The large number of asylum seekers living in Los Angeles and the dynamic relationship between the city and asylum seekers made the location suitable for selecting participants in a study on the perspectives of the asylum-seeking phenomenon.

I used purposive and snowball sampling to select participants. Purposive sampling is the intentional selection of a study's participants based on their ability to explicate a particular phenomenon (Campbell et al., 2020; Rai & Thapa, 2015). In snowballing sampling, a researcher asks participants in a study to assist in identifying other potential subjects (Baltar & Brunet, 2012). By using these two sampling techniques, I was able to

recruit and select participants who met the criterion for inclusion in the study based on their specific characteristics (Lens et al., 2018). I then analyzed the data collected by using computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software.

Definitions

To facilitate the understanding of this study, I defined the following terms as they are used in this study:

Alternatives to Detention (ATD): An intensive supervision program for asylum seekers that includes bond, electronic monitoring, home checking, ICE check-ins, and a family case management program (Nowrasteh, 2018; Sampson & Mitchell, 2013).

Asylum: A protection granted to foreign nationals already inside a host country or arriving at its border who meet the international law definition of a refugee (Paquet & Xhardez, 2020). The United Nations' 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol define a refugee as a person who is unable or unwilling to return to their home country due to past persecution or a well-founded fear of being persecuted in the future "on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion" (Article 1(a) (2)).

Asylum Seekers: Persons seeking protection from persecution or serious human rights violations in another country (UN Convention, 1951, 1967). In the context of this study, the term *asylum seekers* refers to asylum seekers apprehended at the border or inside the United States and detained by one or more federal government agencies before being released into a community-based ATD program.

Corporate lobbies: Organizational bodies working to influence the decision-making of governments with regard to specific legislation or other governmental activities (Grey, 2018).

Cultural knowledge: One's knowledge about some cultural characteristics, history, values, beliefs, and behaviors of another ethnic or cultural group (Wang, 2016).

Deductive disclosure: A phenomenon that occurs when the traits of individuals or groups make them identifiable in research reports (Kaiser, 2009). Such disclosure is of particular concern to qualitative researchers because of confidentiality concerns.

Detention: The practice by immigration authorities to detain non-U.S. citizens for unlawful entry to the United States, while their claims for asylum are received (and prior to release into ATD program), until their cases are heard or they are deported (Saadi, 2020; USCIS, 2015).

Diagnosable disorders: Mental illnesses that may lead to impairment in functioning that limits or interferes with one or more major life activities (American Psychiatric Association, 2020; Americans with Disabilities Act, 990).

Federal government agencies: Special government organizations set up for a specific purpose such as the management of resources, financial oversight of industries, or national security issues (U.S. Congressional Research Service, 2018). These organizations are typically created by legislative action but could initially be set up by presidential order (William & Lewis, 2002).

For-profit vendors: Private organizations with which the United States contracts to detain immigrants, with the goal of making money (Trætteberg & Fladmoe, 2020).

Integration: The integration of an individual or group within a society when they achieve socioeconomic outcomes equivalent to other wider members of the host communities in a manner consistent with shared notions of nationhood and citizenship (Ager & Strang, 2010, 2004).

Psychological harm: A form of mental or emotional pain or injury that may result in stress, social withdrawal, depression, or anxiety (American Psychiatric Association, 2020).

Sub-Saharan Africa: Geographically and ethno culturally, the area of the continent of Africa that lies south of the Sahara. According to the United Nations (2010), it consists of all African countries and territories that are fully or partially south of the Sahara. Although the United Nations' "geoscheme" excludes Sudan from its definition of sub-Saharan Africa, the African Union's definition includes Sudan but instead excludes Mauritania (Ekwe-Ekwe, 2011). The United Nations' geoscheme is a system which divides the countries of the world into regional and subregional groups (Acosta et al., 2020).

Territorial sovereignty: In international law, a state's possession of full control over all affairs within a particular territory or geographical location (Oleksandr, 2020). Establishing whether a particular geographical area is sovereign is often a matter of diplomatic debate (Krasner, 2001).

Universal human rights: Rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status, according to the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the

General Assembly in 1945 and 1948, human rights include the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to work and have education.

Assumptions

Qualitative researchers have various philosophical assumptions grounded in ontology, axiology, and epistemology. Ontological assumptions are concerned with the variables of reality and the relationship between them (Creswell, 2013). First, I assumed that reality is subjective (Munro & Hardie, 2019; Du Plooy, 2001; Nagel, 1979) in the sense that participants would express the same experience in different ways. Having experienced immigration detention and the ATD program, I was prepared to relive the same experience through the stories and narrations of the participants in this study.

Axiological assumptions allow researchers to directly immerse themselves in the framework of the study in an observers-participants or participants-observers manner (Ormston et al, 2014). This means that, per the nature of qualitative studies, the researcher is the data collection tool whose experiences are framed in the same social-cultural context as those of the participants (Bourke, 2014; Watkins, 2012). The second assumption in this study was that my experience, political stance, and socioeconomic background were critical variables that might influence the research process (Collins & Stockton, 2018). For example, having experienced the phenomenon under study myself, I was excited to relive the experience through the stories of others. I believe that personal experience with the phenomenon under study, recounted through a reflective commentary

on the participants' perspectives would play a significant part in the process of the data analysis.

Epistemology concerns how knowledge can be generated through participants' views of the study phenomenon (James & Busher, 2009). Maynard (1994) observed that epistemology has a significant impact on the way researchers carry out their research studies. For example, researchers make the epistemological assumption that establishing rapport with participants and interviewing them in a familiar environment could result in the participants feeling comfortable enough to provide rich data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Creswell, 2013). The third assumption in this study was that my position as a formerly detained sub-Saharan Africa asylum seeker would assist me in connecting with the participants. This expectation concurs with studies that indicate that people tend to be open toward those with whom they share some degree of commonality (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Scope and Delimitations

In this study, I explored how formerly detained asylum seekers from sub-Saharan African countries living in Los Angeles, California, perceive the impact of detention on their resettlement process. Because the narratives of formerly detained asylum seekers from sub-Saharan African countries remain largely excluded from the literature (de Ruigh et al., 2019), I aimed to give a voice to this population. Due to the scope of this study, the selection of participants was limited to adult formerly detained asylum seekers from sub-Saharan African countries living in Los Angeles, California, who speak

English. I specified this inclusion criterion because language could be a barrier to collecting rich data from non-English-speaking participants.

The primary objective of this study was to yield rich data that could lead to important public policy recommendations pertaining to asylum-seeking practice. Because this study would be appraised through a public policy lens, I initially considered using the advocacy coalition framework propounded by Sabatier and Weible (2007). The framework, which comprises three major theories (advocacy coalitions, policy change, and policy-oriented learning), posits that the policy process is a space for competition between coalitions of actors who promote ideas and beliefs about policy issues and solutions within different policy subsystems (Sabatier & Weible, 2007; see also Pierce et al., 2017). I reasoned that the advocacy coalition framework might not be the most appropriate conceptual framework to understand the complex nature of the impact of detention on participants' resettlement experience and their integration process into their host countries. Instead, I selected Ager and Strang's integration model because it seemed better suited to addressing the study's research question.

I acknowledge that the diversity of the participants' social-cultural and religious backgrounds could have led to different interviewees narrating similar events and experiences in different ways (Mampane & Omidire, 2018). These possibilities could have resulted in data having social-cultural and religious perspectives. During the data collection, I was mindful of issues that could hamper the study's transferability. One of the ways to address this issue would be the use of "thick description," which involves

providing the background information necessary for understanding the values, motivation, and meanings that emphasize social interactions (Ponterotto, 2006).

Limitations

The ethical integrity of this research study was paramount. One limitation of this study is that it involved a hidden and vulnerable population, and this dynamic was a concern that may affect the possibilities of accessing potential participants. Also, given the nature of in-person interviews, there was a possibility that participants could feel pressured to overstate or understate their answers for various reasons (Mampane & Omidire, 2018). To address this limitation, I developed a comprehensive safety plan and provide access to help-lines which will go beyond the dominant approach of maintaining confidentiality. This strategy included Kaiser's (2009) alternative approach that provides practical guidelines to the use of detailed data that might lead to 'deductive disclosure'. The above efforts ensured that the participants were not exposed to any additional dangers or issues.

Another limitation of this study was that, notwithstanding the substantial size of the study's population, its sample was limited due to constraints associated with the selected research design. For example, the selection of the study's participants was limited to formerly detained asylum seekers from sub-Saharan African countries who speak English only. The exclusion of other formerly detained sub-Saharan Africa asylum seekers who do not speak English may limit the transferability of the study's results. In addition, a relatively small sample of participants drawn from a common geographic location further limits the results of the study (Squires et al., 2020).

Whether it is intentional or not, many believe that researchers always bring certain beliefs and philosophical assumptions to their study (Collins & Stockton, 2018; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The challenge lies on the one hand, recognizing these assumptions and beliefs, and on the other hand, deciding whether researchers will keenly integrate those beliefs and assumptions into their studies (Bourke, 2014; Guba & Lincoln 1994). I was cautious of these limitations and other challenges that were likely to arise throughout this study, and as such I took adequate ethical measures to reduce the potential bias that might have existed in this study. The third limitation of this study is the fact that I have experienced immigration detention and participated in the ATD programs. This dynamic may create biases that may influence both the study's data collection and data interpretation. To attend to this limitation, steps were taken to help ensure that the study's findings are the result of the experiences and ideas of the participants and not my preference (Patton, 2015). To this end, beliefs underpinning decisions made and methods adopted are acknowledged within the study's report (Kezar, 2002).

Significance

This study is significant because it is one of a kind, focusing on how formerly detained asylum seekers perceive the impact of immigration detention on their resettlement experience. A comprehensive review of the current literature provides limited guidance in understanding the experience of immigration detention from the perspective of formerly detained asylum seekers and the consequences of the experience on their resettlement process (Hedrick et al., 2020; Bo-hmelt et al., 2019). Because the narratives of formerly detained asylum seekers remain largely excluded from the

literature, this study begins to fill this gap by examining how formerly detained sub-Saharan Africa asylum seekers perceive the impact of detention on their resettlement experience.

Another reason this study is significant is that it gives a voice to a population that is not typically studied. The findings of this study could also benefit policy makers as they contemplate the impact of detention on formerly detained asylum-seekers during their resettlement process. As the importance of community support is often trivialized, particularly when it comes to asylum seekers who experienced detention and ATD programs, it is vital for policy makers to examine what can be done to enhance relationship-building amongst asylum-seeking stakeholders in order to increase asylum seekers' integration success and quality of life.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine how formerly detained asylum seekers in the United States perceive the impact of detention on their resettlement experience, through the lens of Ager's refugee integration model. I used the phenomenological research methodology to collect data through in-depth, individual interviews. The aims of this study are two-fold. One is to seek reality from formerly detained asylum seekers from sub-Saharan African countries' narratives of their detention experiences and the second is to produce in-depth descriptions of their resettlement process.

The research problem this study addresses is that formerly detained asylum seekers from sub-Saharan African countries living in the United States face a range of resettlement challenges stemming directly from their immigration detention experience

(Bouhenia et al., 2017). Despite the need to understand and address the impact of detention on asylum seekers, existing literature reviewed on the topic provides at best a limited guidance in understanding how community integration is experienced and conceptualized by formerly detained asylum seekers from sub-Saharan African countries. This study starts to fill this gap.

The significance of this study is to inform various actors in the asylum-seeking process about the challenges faced by formerly detained asylum seekers in their resettlement experience. The results of this study contributes to positive social change as understanding how formerly detained asylum seekers in the United States perceive the impact of detention on their resettlement process may inform practitioners and policy makers trying to address the challenges faced by asylum seekers in their resettlement process. Successful implementation of the insight and strategies derived from this study may help improve asylum seekers' prospect of achieving socio-economic outcomes equivalent to other wider members of the host communities (Ager & Strang, 2010). In Chapter 2, I reviewed selected literature on the impact of detention on asylum seekers' resettlement process in the United States. In chapter 3, I outlined the research design for this phenomenological study. The methodology applied in the data collection and analysis process were presented, and the rationale for the choice was also discussed. Chapter 4 of this dissertation provides a detailed report of the results of the study, which include the main themes and subthemes that emerge from the data analysis. Chapter 5 finally, discusses the limitations of the study, and presented recommendations for future research, as well as the study's implications for social changes.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The failure of immigration policies to foresee and avert the rising impact of asylum seeking in the United States has created an ideal situation for renewed public and political discussion about the relationship between the state and asylum seekers. Recent studies on this topic including that of Briskman (2020), Utržan and Wieling (2020), and Eagly et al. (2018), suggest that there has been a surge in concern and resentment towards asylum seekers and a perceived need to detain them as an appropriate and expected response of national and territorial sovereignty. In light of this changing landscape, researchers have become increasingly interested in analyzing the impact of detention on asylum seekers' life after release from detention. For example, meta-analyses by Posselt et al. (2020), Juárez et al. (2019), Bentley et al. (2019), and Chen et al. (2017) shown that the territorial response of detaining asylum seekers appeared to produce long-term psychological harm to formerly detained asylum seekers in their resettlement process. The research problem this study addressed is that formerly detained asylum seekers from sub-Saharan African countries living in the United States face a range of resettlement challenges stemming directly from their immigration detention experience. The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine how formerly detained asylum seekers in the United States perceive the impact of detention on their resettlement experience.

Recent studies have found that after release from detention, asylum seekers may experience significant difficulty adjusting to a host culture, and this difficulty may persist even after many years following resettlement (Muriithi, 2020; Stabin, 2020; Bentley et al., 2019). A systematic review by Lofaso et al. (2021) confirmed a relationship between

interpersonal difficulties and detention during asylum seekers' resettlement process.

Across the reviewed studies, there is consistent evidence that the experience and nature of detention influence formerly detained asylum seekers' future well-being, relations with others, and quality of life. Though there is an increasing interest in understanding the impact of detention on asylum seekers, many of the studies have focused mostly on mental health issues. As Niemi et al. (2019) observed, few researchers have taken the socioeconomic impact of detention on asylum seekers into consideration. As the literature review that follows will show, there is a lack of robust research on the impact of detention on asylum seekers' resettlement.

In this chapter, I reviewed literature on the study topic. The chapter begins with an overview of the literature search strategy. A discussion of Ager and Strang's (2004, 2008, 2010) model of refugee integration, which formed the conceptual framework for this study, follows. I presented the rationale for my choice of Ager's framework. This is followed by a discussion of how Ager's concept has been previously used and how this study benefitted from the model. An extensive review of the literature about the United States asylum-seeking process follows. The chapter concludes with a summary of the themes from the current literature.

Literature Search Strategy

To find relevant literature for this study, I searched the Walden University Library databases SAGE Premier, ProQuest Central, and LexisNexis. Of the databases, SAGE Premier and LexisNexis were the most useful. The search results from these two sources were valuable in pointing to leads on themes retrieved from research works. Other search

sources that I used to search relevant literature include Google Scholar and the websites of the United Nations and United States government agencies that engage with asylum-seeking issues. The main search terms and combinations of search terms that I used to locate articles for this literature review included *sub-Saharan Africa*, *asylum seekers*, *U.S. immigration detention*, *alternative to immigration detention*, *formerly detained asylum seekers in the U.S.*, and *asylum seekers resettlement programs*. By using these search terms and combinations, I was able to explore how formerly detained asylum seekers from sub-Saharan African countries living in Los Angeles, California, perceive the impact of detention on their resettlement process. The search resulted in 1024 records of peer-reviewed sources on the impacts of immigration detention on asylum seekers published from 2003-2021, with 75% of these generated within the past five years.

Conceptual Framework

I used Ager and Strang's (2004, 2008, 2010) refugee integration model as the study's conceptual framework. Widely viewed as a seminal work, Ager and Strang's model is salient to asylum seekers' resettlement, both in terms of public debate and policy objectives. Ager and Strang's (2002) early start of the refugee integration model was an analysis of existing definitions of the term *integration*. The analysis showed that, although the term *integration* was marred with contested definitions and significant variation in its usage, there were a number of recurrent themes in existing definitions that reflect the key themes of full and equal citizenry. Through the analysis of the recurrent themes, Ager and Strang proposed a conceptualization of refugee integration. The framework presents integration in a contextual consideration of perceptions of what

successful integration really means. In other words, Ager and Strang's framework encompasses central spheres and associated themes for examining and measuring access and achievement of asylum seekers and immigrants within education, employment, health and housing, and social connections.

In formulating the refugee integration model, Ager and Strang (2002, 2004) reviewed existing definitions of the concept of integration and found that there is no one accepted definition of refugee integration (Castles et al, 2001; Robinson, 1998). In analyzing what Robinson (1998) termed as a "chaotic concept" (p. 118), Ager and Strang identified a more conceptually meaningful basis from which to understand the concept of refugee integration. To achieve this aim, Ager and Strang structured their concept around 10 key distinct but interrelated domains that are crucial to refugee integration. Within each of these 10 domains a series of indicators are suggested against which progress towards integration might be assessed. The definition of refugee integration implicit within Ager and Strang's framework is that an individual or group is integrated within a society when they achieve socioeconomic outcomes equivalent to other members of the host communities in a manner consistent with shared notions of nationhood and citizenship (Ager & Strang, 2004, 2010). Ager and Strang's (2004) 10 core domains that shape the understanding of the concept of integration include achievement access across the sectors of employment, housing, education, health, and practice regarding citizenship and rights, and processes of social connections within and between groups in the community. It also mentions barriers to successful integration in the host country for

refugees including language, cultural knowledge, fear, and instability (Ager & Strang, 2008).

A premise of the refugee integration model is that social connections and relationships are the core mechanism for achieving meaningful integration (Platts-Fowler & Robinson, 2015; Cheung & Phillimore, 2013). In other words, integration is brought about through a considerable diversity of expectations between the newcomers and the members of their host community. For example, Ager and Strang (2004) found that some people expect an absence of conflict and tolerance of others as indicative of successful integration (see also Puma et al., 2018; Hynie, 2017; Li et al., 2016). Others see meaningful integration as friendliness, participation in shared activities, and equality of access to services (Crawley et al., 2016). What this means is that the integrating members see a sense of belonging that includes having close ties with family members and committed friendships within and across the groups making up the community as crucial to successful integration.

I conducted a literature review as a starting point in understanding key elements inherent in Ager's integration framework. The literature review provided a map of how Ager's concept has been used and applied in previous research studies. The map described a recurrent theme of integration generally characterized as a geographical phenomenon (Cresswell, 2004; Gieryn, 2000; Taylor, 1999; Tuan, 1975) where social interactions and relationships are formed and repeated (Gregory & Urry, 1985).

In previous studies, Ager's concept of integration is understood to be a two-way process that involves change for both the newcomers and the members of their host

communities. Early conceptualizations of this process focused on issues of social harmony, socio-economic equality, and the right of refugees to maintain their original culture and identity, whilst participating freely in their adopted society (Bulcha, 1988; Bernard, 1973). As shown below, the literature review highlights previous studies' focus on the importance of recognizing integration as a phenomenon grounded in what Hynie (2018) described as space and place. This means that despite integration occurring under the same conventional processes it may evolve differently in different places and different settings.

A major body of literature has emerged documenting the resettlement process of asylum seekers and refugees, by constructing the conceptualizations of integration as a two-way process involving change for the newcomers and the members of their host communities. Numerous studies, particularly that of Berry (1988 & 1992a), suggest that integration is understood as a situation in which newcomers may maintain their identity but become part of wider society to the extent that the newcomers and the host population can live together in an acceptable way. However, what Berry's assertion failed to address is the question of what might be deemed acceptable for the newcomers and the host population. Answering the question of what might be deemed acceptable to the newcomers and the members of the host community, Kuhlman (1991) opined that a value judgment that is dependent upon social and cultural norms could be the yardstick to measure what is acceptable to the newcomers and the host population. Following Kuhlman's logic, integration is therefore recognized as being context-specific where social and physical environment, including material conditions and opportunities for

engagement are key. Another important assertion Kuhlman made is the recognition that asylum seekers' settlement can create social and cultural impacts for the host nation and that any definition of integration should consider these effects.

Integration has been explored through research, policy, and practice as a framework for gauging the extent to which refugees successfully navigate the economic, social, and cultural dynamics of their new country; however, the definition and assessment of integration remain elusive (Puma et al., 2018; Hynie, 2018). Various attempts have been made to bridge theorizations of integration and its practicalities through a focus on key indicators. Perhaps the most notable attempt is that of Ager's refugee integration framework (2004, 2008 and 2010). Ager's framework is an organizing device that focuses attention on a series of factors or indicators that both inform the outcomes of the integration process. Through this process, the framework addresses issues of equality, cultural connections, relations with the host community, and safety and security (Hynie, Korn, & Tao, 2016; Phillimore & Goodson, 2008). Ager believed that such understandings provide a tool for planning and evaluation relevant to local community integration projects and policy makers and those working in the field of asylum seekers resettlement.

This study used the refugee integration model as the conceptual framework, because it defines the issues highlighted in this study's research problem regarding challenges asylum seekers face in their resettlement process. For example, existing integration models outline how policy and public attitude affect the process of integration at various levels including equitable access to opportunities and resources, involvement

in community activities, and feelings of security and belonging in their new homes (Hynie, 2018; Hynie et al., 2016; Ager & Strang, 2008). As Hynie (2016, 2018) notes, these interrelated levels of integration can influence each other in a way that any change in one level can provide for a change at the other level. Hynie's rationale reiterates previous studies' assertion that integration is a process where both the receiving communities and the newcomers can change each other (Strang & Ager, 2010; Castles et al., 2002; Smith, 2008). Hynie's holistic integration work that builds on Ager's influential model strengthens the emphasis on changes within the social context and on the interrelationship between the various levels of integration.

While Ager's model was used to guide this study's discourse, emphasis is placed on the changes that may affect integration within the social context and on the interrelationship between the various aspects of integration. These influencing changes as argued by Hynie (2016) can shape both the newcomers and the host community's everyday experiences including institutions and organizations that deal with the newcomers' complex needs. As demonstrated in detail under each theme of the literature review that follows, the interrelationship between the changes that influence integration is not surprising. For example, studies have found that newcomers with limited language skills or poor mental health will have a greater difficulty securing employment or gaining access to education (Li et al., 2016; Bogic et al., 2015; Kearns & Whitley, 2015). These limiting changes could be argued to be influenced and perpetuated by the host country's policy direction and the social context that the newcomers found themselves in.

Although a body of literature exists that has documented the integration experiences of asylum seekers and refugees in different operative processes, there is still a lack of robust research on a broader conceptualization of asylum seekers' integration (Utržan & Wieling, 2020; Niemi et al., 2019; Kang et al., 2019). For example, the narratives of formerly detained asylum seekers particularly that of sub-Saharan African remain largely excluded from the literature. As the literature review that follows shows, none of the existing literature reviewed provide a descriptive picture of how community integration is experienced and conceptualized by, for instance, formerly detained asylum seekers from sub-Saharan African countries. The literature review findings suggested that the broader aim of this study, which is to contribute to the conceptualization of asylum seekers' resettlement process could best be managed through the framework suggested by the refugee integration model. As a result, Ager's influential and comprehensive model for integration detailed above was the most appropriate conceptual framework to guide this study.

Literature Review

This section provides a critical assessment of the sources I gathered surrounding this study's topic. The aim was to identify a gap in the literature that this study attempts to address. The organizational pattern of this section takes a thematic approach that arranges the literature around the challenges formerly detained asylum seekers living in the United States faced during their resettlement process. The reason for this approach was to aid me synthesize and critique the sources as the common themes that connect them are discussed. The purpose of this study was to understand the perspective of

formerly detained asylum seekers from sub-Saharan African countries living in the United States, and how the detention experience impacts their day-to-day living during their resettlement process. Interestingly, no existing literature examines sub-Saharan African asylum seekers and their detention experience in the United States, a phenomenon which this study explores.

As the thorough review of the literature revealed, even the few studies published on sub-Saharan Africa immigrants living in the United States focus on individuals who entered the country as family members of United States citizens or lawful permanent residents. Other studies on this population examined members of the group who entered the United States through its diversity visa program, which requires applicants to have at least a high school education (Capps et al., 2012). For example, Hamilton's (2019) study that examined African socioeconomic outcomes between Africans with legal residence and higher education in the United States and the native African American citizens. The focus on legal residence and higher education achievers and the exclusion of asylum seekers may help to explain why Hamilton's finding shows that African immigrants outperform African Americans on several socioeconomic outcomes.

Hamilton's analysis of the population from the socioeconomic and professional performance excludes the group's most vulnerable members who have experienced immigration detention and face various challenges during their resettlement process. Although existing literature such as Hamilton (2019) examined the sub-Saharan Africa population living in the United States from a different perspective, the critical analysis and empirical facts presented in the studies provided me with insightful background of

the group and its intergroup relations. Mangum (2020) who reviewed Hamilton's work re-emphasized Hamilton's claim that the sub-Saharan African group is the chief driver of Black population increases in several United States states and that the group members' higher education and better health have helped to alter the stratification patterns among United States Blacks.

DHS (2019) data show an uptick in the number of sub-Saharan African asylum seekers apprehended by the United States Border Patrol since 2010. According to Reiter et al. (2020), the Asylum seekers from sub-Saharan African countries suffer the prison-like conditions of United States detention six times as often as the detention population at large. Interestingly, this part of the population is not gaining attention in the social research field. I hope this study draws more attention to this important phenomenon that steers United States integration discourse. The next subsection provides an overview of the asylum-seeking process in the United States.

Overview of the U.S. Asylum-Seeking Process

The United States system of asylum-seeking underpins the legal mandate of the 1951 Refugee Convention and exudes the nation's source of openness and generosity to those dispossessed in other parts of the world. This system has ambitious goals and diverse responsibilities that allow those fleeing war, persecution, and environmental catastrophe to reach protection (Dutt & Kohfeldt, 2019), and to promote their successful integration in their new home (Kerwin, 2012). According to the president of the United States' report to Congress on proposed refugee admissions for fiscal year 2021, the nation

has accepted more than 3.8 million refugees since the passage of the Refugee Act in 1980.

While generous in many respects, the United States asylum-seeking process has faltered in many aspects and stranded hundreds of thousands of bona fide asylum seekers in precarious situations for lingering periods. As the 2021 United States Department of State's record shows, there are over 1.1 million asylum seekers who are awaiting adjudication of their claims inside the United States. The government entities and non-governmental organizations that manage the asylum-seeking process often collaborate inadequately with one another (Grandi, 2020; Jones et al., 2017). In addition, policy makers and policy administrators have not come to terms with the complexity and the tension between the program's objectives of accepting the most vulnerable asylum seekers and ensuring their successful integration while preventing illegal and terrorist infiltration (Kerwin, 2012). Over the past 20 years, particularly with the post-9/11 immigration-related security measures, the United States government has prevented countless bona fide asylum seekers each year from entering or staying in the United States (Kerwin, 2012).

At a time when many millions of those in need of international protection are at an unprecedented high (Dempster et al., 2020; Guterres, 2020), a long-term risk posed by COVID-19 has created the adoption of emergency laws and policies that reverted the democratic and human rights' principles that characterized the United States' asylum-seeking process. To contain the spread of the coronavirus pandemic, the United States government has fully or partially closed its borders making no exception for access for

asylum seekers as they are turned away at the border or are transferred to unsafe third-world countries (Triggs, 2020). Not only has the United States national and local response to COVID-19 led to the denial of fundamental asylum seekers' rights (Bayu & Gondar, 2020; Ramji-Nogales & Goldner-Lang, 2020), but it has also resulted in the unnecessary and disproportionate use of immigration detention and discriminatory restrictions on access to health care and social services to the most vulnerable (Mahler et al., 2020; Triggs, 2020).

The 2020 Human Rights Watch's report shows that Western countries' governments have taken advantage of the COVID-19 pandemic to adopt restrictive policies intended to deter migrants from leaving their countries to seek asylum. For example, in 2019, the Trump Administration responded to the surge in asylum seekers coming illegally to the United States with a series of policy changes. These policy changes included the Remain in Mexico program which required asylum seekers to wait in Mexico until their cases are adjudicated in the United States (Garrett, 2020; Couzo, 2020). President Joe Biden, however, has started to reverse some of the Trump administration's immigration policy that restricts individuals from seeking asylum in the United States (Johanson, 2021).

Immigration Detention in the United States

The last 30 years have witnessed a dramatic increase in the number of asylum seekers detained in the United States both in incidence and duration. Congress gave ICE nearly \$3 billion for fiscal year 2021 to detain about 500,000 non-U.S. citizens in over 200 immigration detention facilities across the country (Lopez et al., 2021). Every state in

the United States now has at least one detention facility with Texas and California, having the highest numbers (Ryo & Peacock, 2018). Numerous studies and records from government agencies and other organizations tasked to serve the needs of the people fleeing war or persecution show that the United States government in 1973 detained a daily average of 2,500 of migrants seeking protection. By 1994, the daily number of the detainees rose to about 7,000 (Macías-Rojas, 2016), the number surged to around 34,000 daily by 2009 (Krogstad et al., 2019). In 2019 a daily average of 55,000 detainees were recorded (Saadi et al., 2020; Ryo, 2019), and as of 2020 the number had risen to over 60,000 per day (Lopez, et al., 2021). As of April 2022, the CBP's monthly record of illegal immigrants' apprehension at the United States southern border shows a 234,000 encounter.

The number of individuals including women and children who are fleeing violence or persecution in their home countries in search of safety abroad (Hassan & Nellums, 2021) provide a critical reason for the heightened surge in immigration detention (Bendavid et al., 2021; Searle & van Vuuren, 2021). Also, there are two main domestic reasons why the numbers of United States immigration detention continue to increase. They include an effort by the United States government to deter overall migration by detaining individuals who cross illegally into the United States (Kolås & Oztig, 2021; Chishti & Bolter, 2020; Gramlich & Noe-Bustamante, 2019). The other reason is a need for the correction industrial complex to keep as many immigrants detained for longer periods in order to maximize their profits (Sturmhoefel Warnberg, 2021).

An extensive body of literature has analyzed the individual impacts and collateral consequences of the mass incarceration that now characterizes the United States asylum-seeking system, with more strident arguments emerging over the last four years. As Patler and Golash-Boza (2017) note, immigrant detention imposes severe burdens on immigrants and their households and levies significant costs to society, including financial as well as social capital and community well-being costs. The authors further argued that asylum seekers in detention pending adjudication are often without many basic constitutional protections. Saadi et al. (2020) suggest that within immigration detention centers, there are now increasing reports and recognition of civil and human rights abuses, including preventable in-custody deaths. Ceciliano-Navarro and Golash-Boza's (2021) similar research on the impacts of detention describes how detention experiences have long-lasting emotional and financial impacts on victims' immediate and extended family members.

The current findings on the impact of detention on asylum seekers mentions a system that is legally classified as civil yet mirrors the criminal custody model that holds detainees in punitive, prison-like conditions (Luan, 2018; Longazel, 2016). Because the detention system operates under civil law, many constitutional rights are not protected. For example, unlike in criminal law, most asylum seekers can be detained indefinitely, and they are not entitled to government-paid lawyers (Eagly & Shafer, 2015). Gilman (2016) argues that this lack of fundamental human rights protection impacts the asylum seekers' chance of winning their case.

There are numerous examples of punitive prison-like conditions in immigration facilities. For example, rape and sexual assault are often underreported by detainees due to fears of retaliation, stigmatization, language barriers, and the belief that claims are not taken seriously or thoroughly investigated (Saadi, 2020; Merton & Fialho, 2017).

Because some of the detention facility security officials manage the detention health care services, there is often a punitive attitude, rather than a therapeutic approach to mental health issues of the detainees (Fischer et al 2019). In detention, children and adults are held in crowded conditions stretched beyond maximum housing capacity without adequate sanitation or medical care (Bochenek, 2018). As the daily number of detainees grows, Saadi (2020) observed that detention overcrowding has become a risk to the health of detained migrants. Overcrowding has exasperated the system including the management of COVID-19 outbreaks across all United States immigration detention facilities (Meyer et al., 2020; Miller et al., 2020). Over 1200 COVID-19 cases have been confirmed across more than 50 facilities run by ICE. Of all the detainees tested for the virus, more than 50% have been positive (Openshaw & Travassos, 2021).

One of the criticisms leveled against the immigration agencies, particularly on ICE and CBP, is their lack of transparency around detention statistics (Ly et al, 2021; Kuo et al, 2020; Juárez et al, 2018). There is no evidence in the literature that the United States government supports any independent research on all aspects of immigration detention facilities. This is due in part to immigration detention generally characterized in the context of very problematic human rights (Minas, 2004). Without comprehensive data, it is difficult to accurately assess the physical conditions of these detention facilities.

Despite the lack of comprehensive data describing the physical conditions of immigration detention facilities, a handful of key facts are known. According to the DHS's (2019) record, many immigrants are detained for weeks, months, or even years while waiting for their cases to be resolved. Detention facilities are largely in remote areas, and the immigration courts and asylum offices are usually inside the detention facilities (Gill & Moran, 2016; Hiemstra, 2014). In some cases, the facilities are far from immigration courts (Koball et al., 2015; Griffiths, 2014). As a result, instead of seeing the immigration judge or asylum officer in person, detainees' interviews and hearings are conducted through phone or video conferences (Blue et al., 2020; Eagly & Shafer, 2020).

Living conditions for detainees are difficult at detention facilities. As numerous studies have shown, detainees are often transported to and from facilities in handcuffs and sometimes in shackles (Hartmann & Lehner, 2018; Cleveland et al., 2018; Human Rights Watch, 2016). Many of the detainees' personal belongings are taken away at arrival, and they are required to wear the facility color-coded jumpsuit uniform at all times (Luan, 2018; Longazel, 2016; Salyer, 2002). Some non-profit organizations including the American Civil Liberties Union, Human Rights Watch, and the National Immigrant Justice Centre have documented the humiliating conditions asylum seekers and other detained immigrants live in every day inside United States immigration detention facilities. These conditions include immigration officers and detention facility staff referring to immigrants by the number of their bed or their alien registration number (Briskman & Zion, 2014). Throughout the day, detention officers conduct several roll calls during which each detainee must stay next to his or her bed (Lima-Marín & Jefferis,

2018; 2019). Another condition that consistently surfaced in this literature review is that if a detainee is meeting with visitors or his or her attorney during mealtimes, the detainee might not be provided with food afterward (Fialho, 2016). During visiting hours in most detention facilities, detainees are allowed to see their visitors only through a plastic window and speak to them through an intercom system. In other facilities, detainees are only permitted to meet their visitors across a table with no or limited physical contact (Romero, 2021; Patler & Branic, 2017).

As the literature review has shown, the criminal norms found in immigration detention enforcement mechanisms make it difficult to safeguard some of the detainees' basic human rights. Further, the involvement of corporate lobbies in the management of immigration detention does not only disengage the government from its human rights obligation (Lethbridge, 2017) but also reduces any meaningful integration benefits to the asylum seekers' resettlement process (Pittman, 2020). As the subsection that follows will show, there is a systemic influence that corporate lobbies continue to have on the expansion of the immigration detention system. This system allows the for-profit organizations to exercise even more influence over policy makers and policy administrators in order to increase profitability.

The ATD Program and the Role of Corporate Lobbies in U.S. Asylum Management

In the past decade, researchers have paid more attention to the various ways that lines between criminal enforcement and immigration control have blurred in law and public discourse. For example, over the years, researchers have described and analyzed numerous immigration detention-related concerns including mandatory custody, lack of

uniformity in process, and application of criminal justice norms without the inclusion of many basic constitutional protective elements (Ricciardelli et al., 2019; Noferi, 2015; Schmidt, 1987; Taylor, 1997). As the number of immigrants detained, including women and children continue to grow, so is the pressure on the government to adopt community-based alternatives that are more dignified for immigrants and more cost-effective for the government (Hernández, 2019; Sinha, 2016).

Since 2004, Congress has appropriated funding to the DHS for an ATD program to provide supervised release and enhanced monitoring for asylum seekers and other immigrants subject to removal from the United States. As Singer's (2019) finding suggests, the national interest in ATD has increased in recent years due to several influencing factors. One of the factors is the involvement of private correction corporations and their lobbyists in the management of United States' immigration detention provisions (Hernández, 2019; Doty et al., 2013). Two prominent companies involved in the management of United States immigration detention including the ATD program are CoreCivic, Inc., formerly Corrections Corporation of America (CCA), and the GEO Group (Olivares, 2015). GEO and CoreCivic also have contracts with the United States Federal and State governments to operate nearly every aspect of the prison industry. These private corporations use the immigration discourse and the alarmism around it to preserve their \$4 billion annual profits in immigration detention alone (Burkhardt, 2019; Collingwood et al., 2018).

As already described in a fuller discussion in the background section of chapter 1, ICE has the discretion to release non-U.S. citizens, including asylum seekers in detention

on bond, parole, or on their own recognizance at no cost to the government (Fischer, et al., 2019). Most individuals released from immigration detention are subject to the conditions of an ATD program. This program is managed mainly by GEO Group and CoreCivic, the two largest United States private correction companies (Fischer, et al., 2019; Patler et al., 2018). As of December 2019, ICE reported over 100,000 individuals enrolled in the ATD program. Individuals enrolled in the ATD program are provided with varying levels of case management (Saadi et al., 2020; (Schriro, 2009).

ATD program case management is run through a combination of face-to-face and telephonic meetings, unannounced officer home visits, scheduled office visits, and court and meeting alerts (Haas, 2012; Whelan et al., 2010). ATD participants are also enrolled in various technology-based monitoring services. The monitoring services include telephonic reporting, location monitoring via ankle bracelets tracking, and the recently introduced mobile phone application that uses voice and facial recognition software to confirm identity and location of participants (Eagly et al., 2018).

The resulting expansion of immigration detention through the ATD program has led to ever-growing value and profitability for the private prison sector (Pittman, 2020). Gilman and Romero (2018) who studied the systemic impact that private prison companies have on the United States' immigration detention system note that the influence of private correction companies affect the very nature of United States immigration detention management. The United States government over reliance on private detention services to manage the growing detainee population has allowed these

companies to exercise even more power over policy makers and policy administrators (Gilman & Romero, 2018).

Several studies that have examined the role and involvement of CoreCivic and the GEO Group found that both companies spent over 90% of their lobbying dollars and campaign contributions in states that proposed bills that encouraged tougher and lengthier detention for immigrants (Pittman, 2020; Saldivar & Price, 2015; Woodfox & Sumell, 2011). Between 2008 and 2014, CoreCivic on its own spent over \$10,000,000 on lobbying with about \$9,000,000 spent on the DHS security Appropriations Subcommittee (Lethbridge, 2017; Doty & Wheatley, 2013). CoreCivic and the GEO Group are members of the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC). ALEC is a strategic partnership of more than 190 companies and about 2,000 state lawmakers which writes and encourages prison industry-friendly policy and legislation (Saldivar & Price, 2015; Cervantes-Gautschi, 2014). In 2013, both CoreCivic and the GEO Group were part of a lobbying campaign that prevented a policy proposal which would have given more than 10 million undocumented immigrants legal status in the United States (Carson & Diaz, 2015; Cervantes-Gautschi, 2014).

The CoreCivic and the GEO Group's lobbying dollars and campaign contributions show how private companies' interest shape policies that affect the rights of asylum seekers and other immigrants' resettlement in the United States (Lethbridge, 2017; Carson & Diaz, 2015; Cervantes-Gautschi, 2014). According to Gilman and Romero (2018), the detention or release decisions made by ICE in individual cases must account for the need to keep numerous detention beds full to satisfy the contracts made

with influential private prison companies. The authors also suggested that ICE regularly sets bond amounts at levels that are not correlated to flight risk or danger, but rather to the length of time that the individual must be held to keep the bed space full.

Gilman and Romero (2018) bring to attention the role of economic inequality in immigration detention management. The authors' work shows that release from immigration detention is largely controlled through the use of monetary bond requirements. This means that only individuals who are able to pay are most likely to be released. Looking at release from immigration detention through the lens of economic inequality connects the discourse to scholarly critiques of the privatization of public security (Rubenstein & Gulasekaram, 2018). For example, the debate around the justification and the fairness of requiring financial payment from the most vulnerable such as asylum seekers before they can gain freedom from immigration detention (Srikantiah, 2018). Doty and Wheatley's (2013) study that draws upon the insights of Foucault (1979) to examine the contemporary immigration industrial complex argued that the detention industrial complex functions as an economy of power that works to perpetuate the existing system and discourages any fundamental immigration reform.

Although data points to lower costs of ATD program and its high compliance rate compared to detention (Singer, 2019; Pittman, 2020), it would be incorrect to say that the ATD program is without any carceral purposes. As research studies have shown, while the ATD program conditions are more humane compared to detention, the program still serves containment purposes and promotes a criminalized immigration enforcement model (Chacón, 2014). As Noferi (2015) notes, the establishment of ATD has created

additional immigration enforcement challenges that reach beyond the detention dichotomy. For example, the restrictions that come with ATD programs make it difficult for asylum seekers to integrate into their new communities fully and easily. In addition, the systemic impacts that for-profit corporations have on the United States immigration de-incarceration policies continue to promote the Neoliberal market logics that now dictate the length of detention and the likelihood of release.

The literature review has shown that the experience of privatization of immigration services in the United States is dominated by two private companies. The literature review also revealed that the dependence of private correction companies on government contracts results in massive lobbying of government departments and other policy making settings. Despite the Neoliberal notion of freedom as an overarching social value, the market-oriented policies it promotes help companies such as GEO Group and CoreCivic to invest in human incarceration in order to drive the consumption that delivers them more prosperity. I concluded from the literature review that the ability of private actors to drive for a more securitized state because of profit has resulted in policy distortion that negatively impacts the population the policy disproportionately targets. The next subsection will describe how policies at the level of political bodies, institutions and community attitudes create an environment that can facilitate or hinder asylum seekers' resettlement process.

United States Government Policy for Asylum seekers' Resettlement

Neoliberal ideology plays a significant role in the United States' social organization by imposing market logic on public services and driving the nation's

cultural valorization. Stageman (2019) is convinced that neoliberalism is maintained by an authoritarian scheme of punishment built around the social control of the underclass. Among this underclass are the asylum seekers (Murphy, 2019). Stageman's work lays out the theory of the United States punishment market as an incremental approach to securing economic gain and political power and national security. In the context of security, for example, in an effort to strengthen the government's resolve to quell the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attack on American soil, the George W. Bush administration in 2002, through an act of Congress, created the DHS (Regan & Monahan, 2013; Garrett & Storbeck, 2011; Garson, 2006). With 22 government departments and agencies operating under its supervision, one of DHS's main functions was to ensure that those suspected of terrorism were excluded from the asylum-seeking process and removed from the United States (Nalumango, 2019; Pitt, 2011; Whitaker, 2007). Numerous studies have aligned the legislative security screening tool to the increase in the rejection of asylum applications that followed (Barkdull et al., 2012; Welch, 2004).

The focus of this subsection is on the ways that policies of asylum seekers and the public attitude in the United States support or hinder integration by affecting the social context. Social context is largely defined as a specific circumstance or general setting where individual or interpersonal behaviors are influenced frequently within the environment (Pettigrew, 2021; Horwitz, 2017; Given, 2008; Ferris et al., 1998). The literature review comes from a range of disciplines but a common theme that emerges is how policies shape asylum seekers' identities, stereotypes and interactions in ways that then affect community welcome. As this literature review will show, policies can affect

the social context by directly limiting economic and social participation and also by intentionally or unintentionally shaping community attitudes.

Over the past decades, many studies have analyzed the policy and public discourse surrounding the asylum-seeking process in the United States and found recurring messages of national security threats and the need to secure borders (Gryshova et al., 2019; Mountz & Hiemstra, 2014; Givens, 2010). The constructed policy messages including offshore detention such as the Trump Administration's 'Remain in Mexico' policy were used to reduce the number of unwelcome strangers (Garrett, 2020). Many of these recent studies that have shed light on the United States policies and initiatives that influence asylum seekers' resettlement experience suggests that public reactions to the constructed policy messages shape asylum seekers' ability to participate socially and economically in their new home (Kiehne & Androff, 2021; Dunwoody & Plane, 2019; Li et al., 2016; Ager & Strang, 2008; Castles et al., 2002). Hynie (2018) documented United States explicit immigration policies regarding asylum-seeker rights that limit their employment, access to education, and other social services. In Hynie's view, asylum seekers' ability to integrate into their new home is strongly conditioned by policies that shape their social and material context. Hynie's position depicts how asylum policies at multiple levels directly influence structural variables related to what Ager and Strang (2008) called the functional markers of refugee integration. These structural variables or Ager's functional markers include employment, health care, and housing (Miller & Rasmussen, 2017; Li et al., 2016). As the literature review that follows will show, the

policies that influence Ager's functional markers also shape public opinion in socioeconomic context.

President Obama's final years in office, which strictly prioritized enforcing immigration laws against unauthorized entry into the United States (Golash-Boza, 2018; Becerra, 2016) coupled with the zero-tolerance immigration policy that characterized the Trump administration (Pierce et al., 2018), and the current Biden Administration plan to send cash payments to Central Americans developed a 'hotspot' approach to asylum-seeking pathways into the United States. Some of the most controversial uses of the hotspot approach came from the Trump Administration (Schacher, 2020; Pierce, 2019). For example, the administration implemented a signature campaign promise to build a wall along the entire 2,000-mile US-Mexico border (Rivers, & Ross, 2020; Wright, 2019). Another hotspot approach that characterized the Trump Administration's immigration policy included DHS expansion of the Migrant Protection Protocols informally known as remain in Mexico policy where asylum seekers remain in Mexico for the duration of their asylum proceedings in the United States (Leutert, 2021; Blues et al., 2021; Garrett, 2020). The Trump Administration also ended the catch and release practice of the prior administration where migrants caught entering the United States without documents are released into the United States communities with a notice to appear in immigration court at a later date (Pierce et al., 2018).

Many authors have argued that the hotspot approach, particularly from the Trump Administration, emphasized using crisis framing and criminal processes including detention and the ATD program to discourage individuals from pursuing their asylum

rights (Famulari, 2020; de la Peña et al., 2019; Kandel, 2019; Greene, 2018). Pierce and Selee (2017) have also argued in a similar view that the Trump Administration focused on the illegality of the arrivals including the national security threats and the economic burden that come with them as a way to justify a punitive response and a law enforcement approach in order to reestablish control of the immigrant influx into the United States. DeBono (2018) sees such draconian immigration policies, especially those taken immediately after the 9/11 terrorist attack as a way to heighten public perceptions of asylum seekers as a threat to the security of United States communities. The author further argued that the process of crisis framing and criminalization facilitate the dehumanization of migrants. DeBono's argument underscores prior studies which suggest that the dehumanization of one population can reduce this population's prosocial behavior and increase its antisocial behavior towards the members of its host community (Kaibuku, 2016; Haslam & Loughnan, 2014; Esses et al., 2012; Castano & Giner-Sorolla, 2006).

In recent years, various studies increasingly draw attention to the long-term impact of United States immigration policies on asylum seekers in their resettlement experience. According to Murray and Marx (2013), United States asylum policies continue to shape host community attitudes through the impact of stereotypes, perceptions of threat, and lack of opportunities for positive interactions. Recent studies including that of Bansak et al. (2016) analyzing the challenges of asylum seekers' resettlement process suggest that public attitudes can impact asylum seekers' ability to form new social relationships with other groups in their new home. In similar studies,

Casati (2017) and Puma et al. (2018) imply that public attitude can also influence the willingness of political actors to develop and implement policies that meet asylum seekers' needs, thereby resulting in a cycle of reciprocal influence (Hynie, 2018; Bansak et al., 2016).

Empathy has been a recurrent theme proposed as a crucial factor in strengthening positive attitudes toward outgroups in order to reduce prejudice against them (Pedersen & Thomas, 2013). As Hynie (2018) notes, empathy could be salient in the ingroup attitudes toward asylum seekers as an outgroup. In Hynie's view, the prominence of empathy in the asylum seekers' discussion is due in part to the humanitarian feelings encompassing their rights and well-being. Political actors, organizations, and other stakeholders concerned with improving the life of asylum seekers often evoke empathic feelings in their efforts to galvanize votes, volunteers, and donations to assist asylum seekers in their resettlement process (Gomez et al., 2020; Vega, 2018; Pedersen & Thomas, 2013). It seems that the current liberal thinking in the United States has taken advantage of the empathy argument to frame any strict immigration policy as a viable way to save the lives of vulnerable migrants whose lives are at risk due to unscrupulous human traffickers (Lofaso et al., 2021). Most of the experts including Ramji-Nogales (2021) analyzing the Biden administration's new approach to the United States border crisis seem to suggest that the administration's approach rejects the notion that strict border control serves as a deterrence to migrants coming into the United States. Rather, the Biden administration's approach reflects the nation's compassion for and the need to safeguard the vulnerable individuals at risk.

Analyzing the empathy discourse, DeBono (2018) and others including McKay et al. (2012) raised concerns about how the empathy argument is classifying asylum seekers into those who are and those who are not deserving of empathy. The authors argued that the empathy rationale surrounding arriving asylum seekers serves to separate migrants into those who are vulnerable such as children and women, therefore deserving of protections and those who are not, therefore deemed not to need protection. The point to take away from DeBono and his colleagues' assertion is the categorization of asylum seekers into those who are and those who are not deserving of empathy maps into the general public belief that the majority of asylum seekers are not genuine. Other authors including Welch and Schuster (2005), and Esses et al. (2013) also made a similar argument.

Despite the evidence of financial burden as one of the challenges asylum seekers face in their resettlement process, Cea D'Ancona (2015) notes that the nature of the threat perceived by many immigrants may be associated more with symbolic threat rather than competition for resources. Stephan and Stephan (2017) described symbolic threat as the perception of the outgroup threatening the ingroup's values and norms. Although this threat can occur in the absence of any material threat (Stephan & Stephan, 2017; Voci, 2006; Bobo, 1983), other studies on the threat of asylum seekers in their new home suggest that the symbolic threats have a strong correlation with material threats (Molina & Preddie, 2020; Ben-Nun Bloom et al., 2015; Suhnan et al., 2012). The symbolic threat often linked with asylum seekers is that they will erode local beliefs and norms (Zorlu, 2017; Hartley et al., 2012). In the context of the United States asylum discourse, the

threat has been strongly linked to anti-Muslim attitudes (Bloom et al., 2015). That means, attitudes toward Muslim asylum seekers are more negative than attitudes toward asylum seekers of other religious groups (Obaidi et al., 2018; Czymara & Schmidt-Catran, 2017). Conversely, some studies have shown more resistance to the resettlement of sub-Saharan Africa newcomers than those from Asia or Europe. Thus, the negative attitudes towards the incoming threat are not limited to religion alone (Bose, 2018). Hynie (2019) suggests that policies intended to create more tolerant settings can activate feelings of threat, resulting in negative attitudes toward outgroups. A recent study conducted in Europe, for example, suggests that when policies that have historically supported religious practices happen to change toward religious openness, the members of the outgroups are blamed for the change (Helbling & Traunmüller, 2016).

The central theme of this literature review is that policies and public attitudes create social contexts that facilitate or impede asylum seekers' resettlement processes. What is clear from the literature review is that asylum seekers' integration is not as much about the ability and the willingness of the immigrants themselves, rather it is dependent on the interrelations between the newcomers and their social environments.

Summary

In this literature review, I attempted to show that many studies have been undertaken to highlight the challenges asylum seekers face in their resettlement process after immigration detention experiences in the United States. One of the central themes revealed in the literature review through the lens of Ager's integration model is that there is a correlation between immigration detention and the challenges formerly detained

asylum seekers face during their resettlement process. Another theme revealed in the literature review is that United States government immigration policies and the attitudes of the members of the host community create social contexts that influence asylum seekers' resettlement process. What is clear from the literature review is that asylum seekers' integration is broadly dependent on the relationships between the ingroup and the outgroup and the policies that shape this relationship.

The literature review also shows that some of the United States immigration policies, particularly the criminal norms found in detention enforcement, may be denying asylum seekers some of their basic human rights. As many of the authors in the literature reviewed argued, the involvement of for-profit organizations and their lobbyists in the management of the United States immigration detention program obfuscates the public domain setting that is the sole responsibility of the government. The literature review shows a recurrent emphasis on the notion that the current United States immigration detention system allows the corporate organizations to exercise even more influence over policy makers and the public debate in order to increase their profitability.

The literature review also shows that there is a lack of robust research on a broader conceptualization of the impact of detention on asylum seekers from sub-Saharan African countries' resettlement. Despite DHS's data that shows an uptick in the number of sub-Saharan African asylum seekers apprehended by the United States Border Patrol since 2010, there is no robust literature in the United States that exists on this specific topic. I hope that this study will attempt to bring to the fore formerly detained sub-Saharan African asylum seekers' dilemmas in their resettlement process.

From the literature review, it is recognized that integration for asylum seekers is context-specific where social and physical environment, including material conditions and opportunities for engagement, are key. Through the narrative of the members of the asylum seekers from sub-Saharan African countries, I applied the integration model, which Ager understood to be a two-way process that involves change for both the newcomers and the members of their host communities. Thus, the most promising policies that can aid asylum seekers' resettlement process are those that challenge stereotypes by creating opportunities for positive relationships between members of the ingroup and members of the outgroup. In Chapter 3, I outlined the research design that will enable the most effective method of answering this study's research question.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine how formerly detained asylum seekers from sub-Saharan African countries in the United States perceive the impact of detention on their resettlement experience. Studies included in the literature review in Chapter 2 of this study suggest that asylum seekers' integration is broadly dependent on the relationship between the in-group and the out-group and the policies that shape this relationship (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Kang et al., 2019; Cullerton, et al., 2018; Popescu, 2016; Mainwaring, 2012; Robjant et al., 2009). The literature review also indicates that there is a lack of robust studies on the impact of detention on the resettlement process of asylum seekers from sub-Saharan African countries in the United States. As such, I explored the extent to which immigration detention may cause challenges to formally detained sub-Saharan African asylum seekers during their resettlement process. Using Ager and Strang's conceptual framework of refugee integration, I sought to develop a descriptive picture of how resettlement is experienced and conceptualized by this population. This study may lead to broader insight into the challenges faced by asylum seekers in their resettlement experience. Another aim was to recommend a culturally sensitive policy change that could address the underlying challenges.

I began this chapter by introducing the research design for this qualitative phenomenological study, the purpose of which was to examine how formerly detained asylum seekers from sub-Saharan African countries in the United States perceive the

impact of detention during their resettlement process. As already discussed, the research method and design allowed for a deeper understanding of the lived experience of the asylum seekers and the meaning asylum seekers give to their experience. This chapter also includes information on the role of the researcher; participant selection logic; instrumentation; procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection; the data analysis plan; and issues of trustworthiness, including ethical procedures.

Research Design and Rationale

Careful design and rigor are crucial to the dependability of a study. As Bradshaw and Stratford (2010) argued, research that is poorly planned is likely to produce results that may not stand up to scrutiny. Thus, articulating a clear and concise research design that incorporates the study's purpose including the research question, method of data collection, and data analysis is fundamental to conducting a robust and useful research study (Tully, 2014).

This study's central research question was, How do formerly detained asylum seekers from sub-Saharan African countries living in Los Angeles, California, perceive the impact of detention on their resettlement experience? In Durdella's (2017) view, articulating and framing the research question is the starting point in developing a research design because this element provides significant clues about the substance the researcher is aiming to assess. Against this backdrop, a research design refers to the overall strategy that researchers choose to integrate the different components of the study in a coherent and logical way (Burkholder et al., 2016). According to Creswell and Creswell (2017) the philosophical assumptions the researcher brings to the study should

underpin the research design. Due to the philosophical orientations I brought to this study, the qualitative research design and the phenomenological approach were used to collect data.

Although a researcher's philosophical assumptions may remain largely hidden in research, they still influence the practice of research (Slife & Williams, 1995). Whether this is deliberate or not, Patton (2015) stated that researchers always bring certain beliefs and philosophical assumptions to their research study. Sometimes these beliefs and assumptions are deeply ingrained views about issues that need studying, what research questions to ask, or how to go about gathering data and analyzing the data (Collins & Stockton, 2018; Reiss & Sprenger, 2017). In Burkholder and Crawford's (2016) view, the difficulty lies, first, in becoming aware of these assumptions and beliefs and, second, in deciding whether they will be conscientiously incorporated into the research study. Often, at a less abstract level, these philosophical assumptions inform the research design (Creswell, 2009; Guba, 1990). Individual researchers often embrace a qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods research design due to these different philosophical orientations (Creswell, 2009).

There are debates in all disciplines about the degree to which a qualitative method or quantitative method is more useful to generate knowledge (Burkholder & Burbank, 2019; Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Patton, 2015; Grant & Osanloo, 2014). Some researchers use a quantitative approach that starts with a theory and tests that theory. This means that a quantitative approach focuses on how and why something works (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013; Sullivan, 2011; Angen, 2000). Other researchers apply a qualitative approach

including phenomenology, hermeneutics, ethnography, autoethnography, and narrative to uncover new ideas (Horrigan et al., 2016; Patton, 2015; Al-Saadi, 2014; Austin & Sutton, 2014;). Qualitative researchers examine things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of a phenomenon in terms of the values participants bring to it (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). In other words, qualitative research, broadly, is based on the methodological pursuit of understanding the ways that people view and experience the world and make meaning of that experience (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Erickson, 2011). Phillips-Pula et al. (2011) asserted that a qualitative approach with a face-to-face and open-ended interviewing approach to data collection provides researchers with the opportunity to give an unqualified evaluation of lived experience. Rather than knowledge that proceeds from theoretical deduction as in quantitative study, participants in a qualitative study are free to choose aspects of their experience upon which to comment. Through this process, unexpected data can be collected. The resulting data are richly descriptive and faithful to the participants' perspectives.

Phenomenology is an approach to qualitative research that focuses on the commonality of a lived experience within a particular group (Creswell, 2013). The roots of phenomenology are in the philosophical works of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger in which the authors discussed the philosophy of logic. The fundamental goal of the phenomenological approach is to arrive at a description of people's experience in their own terms (Prosek & Gibson, 2021; Neubauer et al., 2019; Mowat & Swinton, 2006; Benner et al., 1996; Kestenbaum, 1982). As Friesen (2012) asserted, making meaning from the perspective of being, with shared interactions with the world, is

arguably phenomenology's greatest asset. In the same viewpoint, Grossoehme (2014) contended that phenomenology may be the method of choice when a researcher wants to study what an experience means to a particular group of people. Through this process the researcher may construct the universal meaning of the event or experience and arrive at a deeper knowledge of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2013).

Because the central phenomenon of this study was the way asylum seekers experience, perceive, and give meaning to immigration detention and its impact on their resettlement, a phenomenological approach presented the best tools to answer this study's research question and, thus, was used. By applying a phenomenological approach to this study, I was able to explore issues related to individuals who have firsthand knowledge of the experience that I aimed to uncover. The importance of using a phenomenological approach to explore the challenges faced by formally detained asylum seekers during their resettlement process lies in its ability to increase broader insight of a phenomenon and provides an opportunity for how stakeholders may respond to issues discovered. As Lester (1999) argued, exploring the phenomenological approach in a research study, especially when focusing on the interpretive dimension of the approach, allows the researcher to inform, support or challenge the status quo (Frechette, 2020; Cope, 2011).

The reason that phenomenology was the most desirable approach to answer this study's research question is that it allowed the phenomenon under study to be examined in its natural setting. The approach allowed me to directly engage with the study (Ormston et al., 2014; Cohen et al., 2007; Crotty, 1998) in a participant-observer manner (Berkwits & Inui, 1998). Because a phenomenological approach is particularly effective

at uncovering deep issues and making voices heard, it was closely aligned with this study's central phenomenon, which is the experiences and perceptions of asylum seekers about immigration detention and its impacts on their resettlement.

Phenomenology presented an opportunity for me to expose the meaning of everyday lives of formerly detained asylum seekers during their resettlement process in the United States. However, I was cautious of Heidegger's warning that attention should be paid to presumption when using a phenomenological approach. To this regard, reflexivity was central throughout this study. Reflexivity generally refers to the examination of one's own beliefs and assumptions (Dodgson, 2019) and how these factors may influence the study.

Role of the Researcher

Some of the shared values and epistemological stances of qualitative researchers include conducting fieldwork using naturalistic engagement, paying careful attention to process and relationships, maintaining fidelity to participants, focusing on meaning-making, and placing primacy on inductive understandings and processes (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Denzin & Lincoln, 2013; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000). These multiple roles and relationships that exist between the researcher and the participants within and in relation to the research setting placed me as the primary instrument in this study (Maxwell, 2013). Therefore, my role in this study was to facilitate a link with the study's participants (Moen, 2006), and to ensure that they are no worse off than before the study (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Blustein et al., 2013). To achieve this, I put in place a well-thought-out strategy to ensure that the participants were protected, and that potential harm or risks

were effectively managed (Grady, 2019; Orb et al., 2001). For example, helplines, counseling resources, and other support services were provided for participants in case recounting their experiences brings up traumatic memories.

There is a consensus among social scientists that qualitative research, in essence, is highly reliant on subjective judgments that can potentially lead to bias (Neubauer et al., 2019; Yilmaz, 2013; Lamont & White, 2005). The axiology that I underwent the phenomenon under study himself will play a significant part in data collection and data analysis as demonstrated in Nalumango's (2019) study. As a participant-observer, I expected to share his direct general knowledge of the phenomenon in order to connect well with the study's participants (Khan, 2020; Simpson, 2007; Kawulich, 2005). These expectations could be justified based on studies that indicate that people tend to be attracted toward those with whom they share some degree of commonality (Schwartz, 2020; Echterhoff et al., 2009; Ji et al., 2000; Cabrera & Nora, 1994).

While my common characteristics with the participants helped in forming a researcher-participant trusting relationship that best maintained an open dialogue during data collection (Taylor et al., 2015; Watkins, 2012), I worked hard to identify potential positionality issues. For example, my role as an insider to the study's population including having common characteristics and shared experience with the participants was constantly guided against bias stemming from his preconceived views and beliefs about the phenomenon (Bourke, 2014; Mampane & Omidire, 2018). As Austin and Sutton (2014) note, recognizing this influence and its possible impacts on personal comportment will enable a greater self-inspection during the research process. In this study caution was

taken to ensure that I do not try to speak for the study's participants but allowed the results of data collected to reflect the actual experiences and voices of the participants (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Merriam, et al., 2001; Patton, 1990).

To achieve the above aim, I kept a reflexive journal during the data collection process to log day-to-day procedures, methodological decision points, and day-to-day personal introspections. It is a common practice for researchers to keep a reflexive journal during research studies (Silverman, 2013). Lincoln and Guba (1982) classic work described reflexive journals as part of an auditing process for research studies, with a specific aim of improving the reliability of that research and removing potential bias. Perhaps, in retrospect, keeping a reflexive journal played an important role in enhancing the ethical and the methodological rigor of this study (Vicary et al., 2016; Thorpe, 2010; Smith, 1999). To this end, beliefs underpinning decisions made and methods adopted will be acknowledged within the rest of this study's final report (Heng, 2019; Kapoulitsas & Corcoran, 2014; Kezar, 2002). Due to the sampling strategy that was adopted in the study's data collection process, I did not encounter any power differentials or any issues of conflict arising from personal relationships between and the study's participants. The study's sampling strategy which outlines specific procedures for how participants were identified, contacted, and recruited will be presented in the methodology section.

Methodology

A variety of research methods can be used in phenomenologically based research, including interviews, focus groups, surveys, observations, and textual or content analysis. Understanding the strengths and weaknesses of each of these methods helps me to make a

better decision on the most appropriate tools for collecting in depth information about a population of interest (Paradis et al., 2016). In choosing the most appropriate tool for collecting in depth data, Lester (1999) argued that emphasis should be placed on gaining maximum depth information rather than on the structure of the tool used. In this section, I outlined the research method used for this study including specific criteria for participant selection, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis.

Participant Selection Logic

A study's participants are generally defined as that part of a population that a researcher wants to generalize the findings of the study (Etikan et al., 2016; Patton, 2002). The participants in this study provided the data necessary to answer this study's research question. I used purposive sampling, which is the reliance on a researcher's own judgment to select participants, and snowballing sampling, where a researcher asks participants in a study to assist in identifying other potential participants. I used these two sampling techniques to identify and recruit 12 participants that meet the inclusion criteria based on their specific knowledge about and experience with the phenomenon under study (Lens et al., 2018). The inclusion criteria for the participants in this study were (a) individual residing in the Los Angeles, California, area, (b) adults age 18 or older, (b) English speaking, and (d) asylum seekers from sub-Saharan African countries who were also formerly detained in the United States. I described specific procedures for how participants were to be identified, contacted, and recruited for this study in the procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection sub-section below.

Purposeful sampling is widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest (Creswell et al., 2011). In addition to knowledge and experience, purposive sampling also helps researchers to determine participants' availability and willingness to participate in the study (Palinkas et al., 2015; Bernard, 2002; Spradley, 1979). The emphasis on accurately portraying the phenomenon means that large numbers of participants are not required. As evidence in the literature, relatively small sample sizes are required compared to most quantitative studies (Vasileiou et al., 2018; Grossoehme, 2014). For example, despite the use of small samples, purposeful sampling can aid a researcher to achieve heterogeneity in the sample population and at the same time enable the researcher to collect high quality data (Faber & Fonseca, 2014; Petersen, 2008; Guba & Lincoln, 1989), as it can be amended during information-gathering (Nakkeeran, 2016; Patton, 2002).

Defining the sample to be used in a study requires some consideration about what is likely to be needed to gain rich information about the phenomenon of interest. As Boddy (2016) attested, there are several debates concerning what sample size constitutes the right size for such endeavors. Most scholars argue that the concept of saturation is the most important factor to think about when mulling over sample size decisions in qualitative research (Mason, 2010). Saturation is defined by many as the point at which the data collection process no longer offers any new or relevant data (Guest et al., 2020; Walker, 2012).

While some experts in qualitative research avoid the issue of the right numbers of interviews, there is flexibility in what is suggested in existing literature. For example, in

phenomenological studies, Creswell (1998) recommends 5-25 and Morse (1995) suggests at least six. These recommendations can help researchers estimate how many participants they will need, but ultimately, the required number of participants should depend on when saturation is reached (Nascimento et al., 2018; Morse, 1995). This study with 12 proposed participants produced fruitful and applicable results. Because asylum seekers from sub-Saharan African countries are seen as a hidden population, that is, a group of people not easily accessible to researchers through standard sampling strategies (Matthews, & Cramer, 2008), and I hoped participants with whom contact has already been made used their social networks to refer other individuals who could potentially participate in the study, leading to a snowball effect (Sebók & Kacsuk, 2021; Heckathorn, 2011; Goodman, 1961).

Instrumentation

Instrumentation in research studies is defined as the process of developing, testing, and using research tools or instruments for gathering data on a study (Canals, 2017; Chenail, 2011; Geffken et al., 1994). A research instrument, therefore, is a device or a tool used by researchers to collect, measure, and analyze data relating to their research interests (Trigueros et al., 2017). The most used instruments by researchers in gathering data in qualitative research are interview, observation, and questionnaire (Pezalla et al., 2012; Salkind, 2010). Interview, for example, involves typically a face-to-face dialogue between a researcher and a participant with the aim to transfer participants' experience and viewpoint on a phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). In other words, interviews are especially practical for researchers to uncover the story behind a participant's

experiences and pursue in-depth information around a topic (Roberts, 2020; Creswell, 2012; McNamara, 1999). Because the aim of this study was to let formerly detained asylum seekers from sub-Saharan African countries in the United States tell their own story on their own terms, the research interview was the most appropriate data collection instrument for this study.

I used a semi-structured interview, which typically consists of a dialogue between a researcher and participants (DeJonckheere et al., 2018), as a framework in which the study's themes was explored. A semi-structured interview is used commonly in qualitative research, as it provides clear and unambiguous structure for the interview protocol (O'Leary, 2014; Bell & Waters, 2014). Interview protocol can be viewed as a guide for the interview process which includes: what the interviewer is to say at the beginning of the interview; how the interviewer introduces himself and the topic of the interview; how to collect participants' consent; how to ask questions that align with the research question; and what to say at the end of the interview (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012; Welch & Piekkari, 2006). I created the study's interview protocol to capture the participants' experiences, how they describe them, and how they make meaning out of them (Castillo-Montoya, 2016; Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

To create the study's interview protocol, I returned to the study's problem statement and brainstormed a list of open-ended questions that also aligned with the study's research question. The interview protocol I developed contained open-ended questions to uncover participants' thoughts and feelings about their immigration detention experience. The developed interview protocol also helped me to delve deeply

into how the participants' detention experience impacts their resettlement process. The flexibility that a semi-structured interview method provides allowed me to ask probing and follow-up questions to pull evocative responses from the participants (Greponne, 2021; Janesick, 2011; Patton, 2002). Asking probing questions during the interview elicited more information from participants and helped avoid only short answers. The goal of the research interview process was to get as much information as possible so that I can answer the study's research question (Janesick, 2011; Patton, 2002). To achieve this aim, I engaged the participants in conversation that encouraged unbiased and but truthful answers (Kvalve, 2008).

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

To recruit participants for this study, I posted a flyer on several sub-Saharan Africa Facebook group pages that operate in the Los Angeles, California, area asking for voluntary participants that met the study's inclusion criteria and who were ready and willing to participate in the study. My Facebook postings provided a clear description of the study's inclusion criteria and contact information for inquiries. The Facebook postings directed potential participants to contact me directly via phone or email to show their interest in participating in the study. I hoped that the Facebook postings led to snowballing where existing participants provide referrals to recruit more samples (Kirchherr & Charles, 2018). As Franz et al. (2019) show, Facebook is the least expensive and most efficient way to dip into participants' pool to recruit others to join a study. If satisfactory participants accept the invitation, the positive feedback may result in a sufficient sample size for the study. Upon confirming that they met the study's

inclusion criteria and that they were ready and willing to voluntarily participate in the study, I then engaged the potential participants in a brief preliminary conversation as part of the screening process for inclusion/exclusion in the study (Grigorovich, 2020).

Screening participants was about finding participants with the right combination of attributes that make them distinct and suitable for the study (Hornberger & Rangu, 2020), but also to represent the target population (Patino & Ferreira, 2018). While I used the screening process to recruit quality participants that provided insightful and honest answers, I also used the screening process to present the main study descriptions to the participants. The central purpose of the screening process was not only to find the right participants and manage expectations but also to ensure that the participants are properly informed to decide if they want to be or continue to be in the study. The screening process also helped me to ensure that the participants' privacy is protected (Saunders et al., 2015).

The data collection process involved one interview per participant. For each interview, the participant was encouraged to choose a comfortable and confidential location for the interview to protect their identities. The familiar environment, as it has been argued by many authors including Creswell (2013) did not only protect the participants identity but also helped the participants feel relaxed in order to provide rich data. To observe the health safety precautions recommended by the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2020) as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, I conducted all interviews using the Zoom video communications application. The interviews began with a brief introduction to the study's topic and then sought an

opportunity to address any process questions. The participants then were asked to reflect upon and describe their experiences in response to a series of open-ended questions I developed. The open-ended questions gave me the flexibility to ask follow-up questions and probing questions as a way to pull evocative responses from the participants (Connaway & Powell, 2010).

I followed the developed interview protocol in a topical trajectory and did not stray from the guide as appropriate (Blackstone, 2012). Each flowed differently, because each participant was expected to provide answers from their own perspective and to discuss issues they consider important. While the opening question was the same across all the interviews, after that, what the participant said shaped the direction of the interview. Here is where the researcher's skills and training came in, to be able to ask questions; listen to participants; and pick up on cues for follow-up questions, trying to uncover further depth and detail; and probes, which keep a conversation going while clarifying ambiguities (Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Moerman, 1988).

The semi-structured interviews lasted between thirty (30) to forty-five (45) minutes, and the data was collected using electronic voice recordings. I also kept field notes that recorded participants' impressions and reactions that took place during an interview. Before each interview began, I reminded the participants of their right to choose to stop being in the study at any time, and that all participants in this study would remain private. In thanks for participants' co-operation in the study, I offered a \$10 grocery store gift card to each participant who completed the interview. As many studies including that of Kang (2016) have shown, incentives for study participants not only

improve participants' response rate and demonstrate respect and appreciation for participants' time, but also can be seen as a means to create participants' intrinsic enthusiasm and motivation and cultivate a trusting relationship with the researcher.

At the conclusion of each interview, I transcribed the participants' statements of meaning and combined them into a few thematic statements that describe the participant's experience (Selmos & George, 2018; Grosseohme, 2014). After this, I checked-back with participants via email to ensure that the transcription accurately reflects their voice (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2011). I used a qualitative data analysis software tool -NVivo to keep information organized and to ensure that the participant's voice is captured accurately (Selimos & George, 2018; Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Chenail, 2009). Using qualitative data software not only facilitates the process of data collection (Patton, 2015) but also gives me ample time to uncover tendencies, identify themes, and derive conclusions during data analysis (Hilal & Alabri, 2013). As already discussed under the research design section of this study, a qualitative study creates room for in-the-field decision-making (Given, 2008). This flexibility helped me address any change that was expected during interviews, including when recruitment results in too few participants (Nalumango, 2019). To militate against this possibility, the study's sample size was treated as emergent, or subject to change. The change may include expanding the recruitment location from the Los Angeles area to cover the whole United States. Luckily, the sample size was more than expected and there was no need for any sample size modification.

Data Analysis Plan

Data analysis in qualitative research is defined as the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts and the field notes I gathered during the data collection (Grossoehme, 2014; Patton, 2002; Giorgi, 1985). This process was to help me bring order, structure, and meaning to the mass volume of information gathered (Wong, 2008; Marshall & Rossman, 1990). There are many different types of qualitative data analysis. Some of the most commonly used ones include content analysis, narrative analysis, grounded theory, and thematic analysis. Each of these data analysis methods serve different purposes and have unique strengths and weaknesses (King, 2004). For example, thematic analysis looks at patterns of meaning in a data set (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Rudestam & Newton, 2007). In other words, thematic analysis takes bodies of data which are often large and groups them according to similarities or themes. The grouping of these themes, also known as coding, helped me made sense of the data and derive meaning from it (Miles et al., 2014; Patton, 2002).

As evidence in the literature, thematic analysis can be useful for finding out about people's experiences, perceptions, or feelings. Therefore, thematic analysis was an appropriate choice for this study which aims to uncover and understand formerly detained asylum seekers' perception about immigration detention and how that experience impacts their resettlement process. Because thematic analysis is exploratory in nature, it is not uncommon for the research questions to be emergent through the analysis process (Miles et al., 2014). While this method can be seen as an accessible form of data analysis, especially for novice researchers (Nowell et al., 2017; Braun & Clarke, 2006), it can also

be seen as a weakness as it means that data needs to be re-reviewed each time a research question is modified or changed (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). In other words, thematic analysis can be time-consuming. To mitigate this concern, I budgeted extra time for unexpected modifications or changes.

Data analysis of this study took Braun and Clarke's reflexive thematic analysis approach which occurred simultaneously with the process of data collection for each participant (Xu & Zammit, 2020; Nowell, 2017). In the interviews, I listened for key concepts of the study's conceptual framework and asked probing questions to encourage participants to share more in relation to the two major topics the study is exploring. The data analysis started with me familiarizing myself with the data collected by reading and re-reading the data and became immersed and deeply familiar with the information gathered from each of the participants (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

The next step in the data analysis involved identifying important features of the data that might be relevant to answering the research question (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). This process is generally referred to as coding, where the researcher extracts and organizes the data into categories and draws out emerging themes (Elliott, 2018; Punch, 2014). The coding process led to generating initial themes that identified significant broader patterns of meaning (Elliott, 2018; Saldaña, 2016; Creswell, 2013). In this process, I organized data relevant to each candidate theme. The categorization of the data into themes made it easier for me to work with the data and review the viability of each candidate theme (Strauss, 1987). Reviewing the viability of each candidate theme means checking the themes against the dataset in order to

determine whether the participants told a convincing story (Creswell, 2015). This process helped me to determine whether the participants' narration answers the study's research question. After deciding on each of the informative themes, I wrote the results by contextualizing the analysis in relation to existing literature, particularly refugee integration upon which this study's conceptual framework was based.

Transcription software was used to ensure accuracy in data collection and coding. It is now a general belief that using transcription software can help researchers speed up their research process. In this study, used a GoToMeeting software to capture the narration of the participants during the interview, and auto-transcribe each narration as the interview is being conducted. After each interview, I ensured that the GoToMeeting transcription captures each participant's narration correctly. At the conclusion of the interview process, I used NVivo qualitative data analysis software to code the data and analyze it in the same space. While manual coding is still popular due to its perceived high accuracy (Nalumango, 2019), using qualitative coding software to automate the analysis is quickly becoming the desired choice (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020). Unlike manual coding and analysis which many believe is susceptible to bias, using analysis software is not only more consistent and more accurate but also, as in this study, save time and money (Conserve et al., 2018; Tessier, 2012; John & Johnson, 2000).

Issues of Trustworthiness

As qualitative research becomes more and more accepted and valued, it is vital that researchers conduct qualitative studies with rigor in order to yield meaningful and beneficial results. For qualitative research to be seen as trustworthy, Nowell et al. (2017)

maintained that researchers need to show that the study's data collection and analysis are carried out in a reliable, consistent, and in-depth manner. Nowell's view is consistent with previous positions including that of Lincoln and Guba (1985), Dixon-Woods et al. (2004), and Tracy (2010) which attested that, qualitative researchers could demonstrate their study's trustworthiness through recording, organizing, and disclosing the methodology and techniques used for the study's data collection and analysis. The disclosure of insightful information about the study's instrumentation, methodological, and analytical decisions allow readers to ascertain the study's credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Nowell et al., 2017; Goodson, 2010; Koch, 1994).

The multiple roles and relationships that existed between the participants and I within and in relation to this study setting, place me as the primary instrument (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Maxwell, 2013). Also, my personal experience with this study's phenomenon, recounted through a reflexive commentary, including reporting any potential bias that may influence the gathering and interpretation of the data played a significant role in the overall results of the study (Galdas, 2017; Bourke, 2014; Freire, 2000; Hall, 1990). However, being cognizant of the influencing factors and willing to fully disclose my positionality and subjectivities helped attain the study's credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility

Guba and Lincoln (1989) asserted that the credibility of a study is ascertained when readers can recognize the experience when confronted with it. In other words, credibility addresses the match between participants' view and the researcher's

interpretation of that view (Nowell et al., 2017; Tobin & Begley, 2004). To achieve the match between participants' view and the researcher's interpretation of those views, I endeavored to demonstrate that a true picture of the phenomenon under scrutiny is being presented and demonstrates that the study's findings emerged from the data and not from the researcher's own predispositions. I strived for this study's credibility by returning the data to participants to check for accuracy and resonance with their narration. This validation technique generally known as member checking (Korstjens & Moser, 2018) increased the credibility of the data that is presented in Chapter 4.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the measure of how useful the results of a study are for broader populations or situations (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Although transferability determines how the study's results are applicable to other similar studies, Tobin and Bagley (2004) argued that this process applies to only case-to-case transfer because the researcher cannot know the sites that may wish to transfer the findings. Therefore, the researcher is only responsible for providing thick descriptions, so that those who seek to transfer the findings to their own site can judge transferability by themselves (Kirk & Miller, 1986; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Against this backdrop, I included thick descriptive details to show that the study's results can be transferred to other studies. This effort also included adopting research methods that are well established and incorporating correct operational measures that helped in providing sufficient detail of the context of the fieldwork. This detailed information will help readers to decide whether the prevailing

environment is similar to their situation, and whether the findings can justifiably be applied to their setting in terms of transferability.

Dependability

To achieve dependability, Fritz and Vandermause (2018) stressed that great value should be placed on the rigor of the research process including the interview process from which an intimate conversation, key data, and interpreted results emerge. To achieve dependability in this study, I ensured that the whole research process is logical, traceable, and clearly documented (Fritz & Vandermause, 2018; Tobin & Begley, 2004). The consistency this process will provide may help readers to trace the source of the data and results of the study (Fusch et al., 2017). As it has been argued by many authors, when readers of a research study are able to assess the research process, they are in a better position to ascertain the dependability of the research (Castleberry, & Nolen, 2018; Koch, 1994).

Confirmability

Confirmability involves establishing that the researcher's interpretations and findings are clearly derived from the data. (Tobin & Begley, 2004). This means that I can give an unqualified evaluation of lived experience of the study's participants. Thus, the resulting data are richly descriptive and faithful to the participants' views (Castleberry, & Nolen, 2018; Koch, 1994). To establish confirmability in this study, I maintained reflexive notes that detailed the study's instrumentation. The reflexive notes also include rationale for the research method, researcher's positionality, and the operational measures of the fieldwork. Establishing confirmability will give readers confidence that the study's

findings are based on the participants' narratives and words rather than potential researcher biases (Moon, 2019; Forero et al., 2018; Anney, 2014).

Ethical Procedures

Ethical procedures outline a broader principle that underpins good research and the aspects of standard practice that researchers should adhere to when planning, conducting, and disseminating their research. The ethical process in a research project addresses, particularly, the nature of the power relationship between researchers and participants; informed consent and anonymity; and privacy and confidentiality (Lancaster, 2017). No wonder many qualitative research authors including Nunkoosing (2005), Allmark et al. (2009) and Ravitch & Carl (2016) view ethical procedures as the most important aspect in interview research. There is a general consensus among researchers that adhering to ethical procedures helps safeguard participants from possible psychological harm such as embarrassment or distress (Alexander, et al., 2018; Gunsalus Draucker et al., 2009; et al., 2007). Therefore, the consideration of ethical issues throughout all stages in this study was not just crucial in protecting the privacy of the participants but was also to ensure that the benefits from the study outweigh any potential risks (Arifin, 2018).

Throughout the data collection process in this study, I focused on four main ethical issues related to the interview process as outlined in Barrow et al. (2020): (a) reducing the risk of unforeseen harm, (b) protecting the participant's information, (c) educating participants about the nature of the study, and (d) reducing the risk of exploitation. The reason for focusing on these main ethical principles, as already

discussed in detail in the role of the researcher section, is that researchers have a great responsibility in ensuring that the participants of the study are not in any way exposed to additional dangers or distress (Sanjari et al., 2014; Speziale & Carpenter, 2011). In protecting the participants' information, for example, the data collected in this study is stored in a password protected computer and hard copies are locked in a personal file-cabinet. Only me as the researcher has the password and the key to the file cabinet. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by Walden University. I will thereafter destroy and dispose of the raw data in a manner consistent with the different regulations and additional standards from the qualitative research discipline. Adhering to these explicit ethical precautions as Meyer and Fourie (2021) maintained, ensures that participants are no worse off than they were before taking part in the study.

In interview research, the researcher's task is to gather data while listening and encourage participants to freely discuss their experiences and the meaning they connect to those experiences (Warren, 2002). When the interviewer listens and reflects personal information back to the participant, the process may develop into unforeseen harm to the participant (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). For example, a formerly detained sub-Saharan asylum-seeker during this study may unexpectedly express unpleasant or deep feelings when talking about his or her detention experience. Because such in depth discussion can pose psychological and other risks to both participants and the researcher (Fiske & Hauser, 2014; Holloway & Wheeler, 2010), trauma help lines and counseling resources were in place so that both participants and the researcher can use them if necessary.

Irwin (2013) emphasized the need for research participants' privacy protection, which should be treated with trust and a duty of care by researchers. It is on this basis that I designed the study's interview protocol, which is included in Appendix A. The interview protocol did not only strengthen the course of the interview but will also allowed responses to follow-up questions to clarify statements and observations (Janesick & Abbas, 2011; Turner, 2010). To mitigate any potential risks, I informed the study's participants of the voluntary nature of the study, including their right to choose not to participate in the study. Also, I informed participants of any potential risks in the study, and of their right to withdraw from participation at any time. As a result of these measures, this study did not pose more than a minimal risk to participants.

In conducting the study, I followed ethical guidelines pertaining to participant recruitment, data collection and analysis, and write-up and dissemination of the study's results (DiCicco-Bloom, 2004). Prior to participating in the interview, all participants were required to provide informed consent via email after reviewing the study's informed consent form. Before engaging with the participants and collecting data, I obtained approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board to proceed with the study (approval no.10-15-21-1007538). These ethical procedures helped ensure that I considered the needs and concerns of the study's participants and that trust was established between the researcher and the study's participants.

Summary

In this chapter, I outlined the research design for this phenomenological study which aims to understand formerly detained asylum seekers from sub-Saharan African

countries' perspectives on the impacts of detention during their resettlement process in the United States. The methodology applied in the data collection and analysis process is presented, and the rationale for the choice is discussed. In this chapter, I also described how the study will obtain trustworthiness including describing the role of the researcher and the concerns of its possible impact on the study. To mitigate these concerns, I outlined explicit ethical procedures for participants' recruitment, data collection, as well as the data analysis process. In Chapter 4, I provided a detailed description of the interview results.

Chapter 4 describes the setting of this study, the participants' demographics, and the process of data collection. The chapter also provides a detailed description of the data analysis methodology, as well as information about the ethical precautions used to address issues of trustworthiness. This process aimed to ensure credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the study. Thereafter, I presented a detailed explanation of the study's results. The chapter then concludes with a summary.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine how formerly detained asylum seekers from sub-Saharan African countries living in the United States perceive and conceptualize the impact of detention on their resettlement experience. Themes that emerged from the data analysis illustrate to what extent immigration detention impacts this population in resettlement. This study may lead to broad insight into the challenges faced by asylum seekers in their resettlement experience. The findings could be useful to policy makers as they contemplate the impact of detention on formerly detained asylum seekers during their resettlement process. The research question for this study was as follows: How do formerly detained asylum seekers from sub-Saharan African countries living in Los Angeles, California, perceive the impact of detention on their resettlement experience?

In this chapter, I describe the setting of the study, the participants' demographics, and the process of data collection. I also provide a detailed description of the data analysis methodology, as well as information about the ethical precautions used to address issues of trustworthiness. The ethical precautions taken were to ensure the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of this study. In this chapter, I also present a detailed explanation of the study's results. The chapter then concludes with a summary.

Setting

To recruit participants for this study, I posted a flyer (see Appendix B) on several sub-Saharan Africa Facebook group pages that operate in the Los Angeles, California, area, asking for participants who met the study's inclusion criteria. I engaged potential participants who confirmed that they met the study's inclusion criteria in a brief preliminary conversation as part of the screening process (see Grigorovich, 2020). Twelve adult formerly detained asylum seekers from sub-Saharan African countries living in the Los Angeles, California, area were selected as the study's participants. I conducted the interviews during the first 2 weeks of November 2021. To observe the health and safety precautions recommended by the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2020) as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, I conducted all interviews virtually using the Zoom video communications application.

Demographics

Twelve adult formerly detained asylum seekers from sub-Saharan African countries living in the Los Angeles, California, area participated in the study and served as a representative sample, to proportionally reflect specified characteristics exemplified in this target population across the United States. To participate in the study, four criteria had to be met: participants had to (a) be formerly detained asylum seekers from sub-Saharan African countries, (b) be adults aged 18 or older, (c) speak English, and (d) live in the Los Angeles, California, area. Participants included eight men and four women from 10 sub-Saharan African countries.

Data Collection

Data collection is a process of collecting information from all relevant sources in an established systematic fashion that enabled me to answer stated research questions (Barrett & Twycross, 2018; Paradis et al., 2016). The most critical objective of data collection is ensuring that rich and reliable information is produced to help answer the study's research questions and capture the phenomenon of interest (Paradis et al., 2016). In this section, I describe the study's recruitment process and data collection exercise.

Participant Recruitment

As detailed in the Setting Section of this chapter, I recruited the study's participants by posting flyers on several sub-Saharan Africa Facebook group pages that operate in the Los Angeles, California, area. Participants who met the study's inclusion criteria were asked to show their interest by responding to the flyer via a phone number or to the email address provided. Twelve individuals responded and indicated their interest in participating. A brief preliminary conversation via telephone followed to review and discuss the study in greater detail, as well as for the participants to sign and return the consent form.

I used purposeful sampling to recruit and invite potential participants for the study. By using purposeful sampling, I was able to recruit participants who met the study's inclusion criterion, which increased the likelihood of choosing participants who possess valuable information relevant to this study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Patton, 2015). Following Institutional Review Board approval (no.10-15-21-1007538), participants were recruited, contacted, and invited to participate in the study. Prior to

participating in the interview, all participants were required to provide informed consent via email after reviewing the study's documentation.

During this pre-interview correspondence, I discussed the study in greater detail to ensure that each participant understood what it would entail before signing the consent form. Participants who did not wish to participate or did not sign the consent form were thanked for their consideration, and the correspondence with the potential participant was terminated. Participants who did not sign the consent form were also excluded from the study, while those who signed and returned the consent form were included in the study and received a copy of the signed consent form for their records. All 12 participants who were recruited agreed to participate; hence, there was no need for additional recruitment to reach the target sample size.

Semi-structured Interviews

Data collection included 12 virtual interviews of 12 participants. I conducted the virtual interviews via Zoom to examine how the participants perceived the impact of detention on their resettlement. The interviews were recorded using an audio recording device. I also used a journal to take hand-written notes during the interviews. The audio recordings were uploaded to a private password-protected folder on my personal computer, allowing me to easily access the recordings for transcription.

The duration of the interviews ranged from 25 to 45 minutes, depending on how each participant responded to individual interview questions. Upon the completion of each transcript, I underwent a member checking process where I asked each participant via email to review their responses for accuracy. I did not receive a reply from any of the

participants. I listened to the audio recordings of the interviews multiple times as I recorded data in the coding and analysis instrument. This helped to ensure accuracy of participant responses despite not receiving any replies from member checking.

I securely stored all data in a password-protected folder in my personal computer at my home office. All field notes including my reflexive journal used during interviews were stored in a folder in a locked filing cabinet that is only accessible to me. All data collected for this study will be securely stored for a period of at least 5 years, as required by Walden University. Thereafter, the raw data will be destroyed and disposed of in a manner consistent with the qualitative research discipline (Van den Eynden et al., 2011). There were no unusual circumstances or adverse events encountered during the data collection process.

Data Analysis

To analyze data for this study, I used the Braun and Clarke (2006) reflexive thematic analysis approach. Data analysis occurred simultaneously with the process of data collection for each participant. Data were collected virtually from the participants through semi-structured interviews. The interviews were audio-recorded to ensure the accuracy of responses and transcription (Aziza, 2018; Keselman et al., 2010; Wellard & McKenna, 2001). I used NVivo to manage, organize, and analyze the data. The preliminary coding categories were asylum; detention; pain; family; bond; struggling; and hope. Once all the data were transcribed, and member checking was conducted for accuracy, I read the raw data in its entirety multiple times to gain a holistic understanding

of each participant's lived experiences (Alase, 2017) as formerly detained asylum seekers from sub-Saharan African countries living in the United States.

During the initial analysis, the data were organized into several tables including Participant Demographics, Female Participant Experiences, and Male Participant Experiences, allowing me to synthesize direct quotes from the interviews (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2012). Next, significant participant descriptions and meanings were identified, highlighted, and categorized into meaningful units. The meaningful units were analyzed further to identify and merge relevant similarities, where thematic categories began to emerge (Beail & Williams, 2014; Smith et al., 1999). Further analysis of the thematic categories identified the final significant meanings and themes relevant to the study (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). During the final analysis of the data, four themes emphasized by the participants emerged including: (a) generalization about immigration detention, (b) challenges from detention experience during resettlement; (c) support relied on during resettlement, and (d) meaning of resettlement. Subthemes also emerged from analysis of the four themes emphasized by participants.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is the degree of a research study's rigor which is demonstrated through a consistent, precise, and exhaustive analysis of the data collected (Amankwaa, 2016; Tracy, 2010; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I used these strategies during data collection and analysis to establish the study's credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. For example, the use of audio recordings helped me obtain a stronger authenticity or reflection of participants' perspectives. As Markle et al. (2011) argued,

working with data in its original audio or video format allows for thicker descriptions and more informative reporting of data collected. My use of the complete interview protocol found in Appendix A also helped to ensure the issues of trustworthiness.

Credibility

Credibility of a research study is established when readers have confidence in the truthfulness of the study's findings (Nowell et al., 2017; Amankwaa, 2016). To establish the credibility of this study, I ensured that the study's findings emerged from the data and not from my own predispositions. As Klein et al. (2018) opined, the credibility of a study depends upon the transparency of the research products. Against this backdrop, I was transparent in my recruitment and data collection processes as evidenced in my recruitment flyer, consent form, and complete interview protocol. This transparency allows other researchers and research consumers to verify the steps to reach a conclusion by themselves and decide whether their standards for accepting a finding as evidence are met in this study.

Transferability

Establishing transferability involves demonstrating the findings of a study are applicable in other contexts (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Tobin & Bagley, 2004). During the interviews, each participant was encouraged to provide in-depth and detailed accounts of his or her experiences. I also incorporated thick descriptive details into my interpretation of findings to show that the study's results can be transferred to other studies. This effort also included adopting research methods that are well established, which helped provide sufficient detail of the context of the fieldwork.

Dependability

Dependability establishes that the study's findings are consistent and can be repeated by other studies (Fritz & Vandermause, 2018). To establish the dependability of this study, I ensured that the whole research process was logical, traceable, and clearly documented. The process of data collection and analysis as well as the process of securing data were also documented to establish the dependability of this study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Finally, the chair and committee members helped with establishing dependability through external audits by providing feedback and guidance on developing stronger and better findings (Fusch et al., 2017).

Confirmability

Confirmability is the degree of the researcher's neutrality to the findings of the study (Tobin & Begley, 2004). Thus, the resulting data are richly descriptive and faithful to the participants' views (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018; Koch, 1994). To establish confirmability in this study, I maintained reflexive notes that detailed the study's instrumentation. The reflexive notes included the rationale for the research method, researcher's positionality, and the operational measures of the fieldwork. The reflexive notes helped me to examine and become aware of my own personal experiences and biases. The use of audio recordings that I listened to multiple times also augmented the study's confirmability.

Results

The research question for this study was, How do formerly detained asylum seekers from sub-Saharan African countries living in Los Angeles, California, perceive the impact of detention on their resettlement experience? The data presented in this section describe the four themes as well as subthemes that emerged from the 12 semi-structured interviews. The interview questions were developed to address the research question as well as to obtain full, rich, and thick descriptions of the participants' lived experiences and their conceptualization of the impact of detention during resettlement. After data collection, I organized the data into the four themes based on the Braun and Clarke (2006) reflexive thematic analysis approach. This approach facilitated thick and rich descriptions of the lived experiences furnished by the participants. Table 1 shows the four themes and corresponding subthemes that emerged from analysis of the interview data and that address the study's research question.

Table 1

Themes and Subthemes in Interview Data

Theme	Subtheme
Generalizations about immigration detention	Treated like convicted criminals Physical and psychological trauma
Challenges from the detention experience during resettlement	Delayed process of obtaining permanent residence Fear, shame, and discrimination
Support relied on in resettlement	Family and friends Religious organizations and faith Vocational training
Meaning of resettlement	The ability to earn equal membership in a host country

Theme 1: Generalizations About Immigration Detention

The first two interview questions were asked to obtain participants' understanding of the meaning of immigration detention. The participants' response to the two questions provided a perspective of immigration detention as a hindrance to asylum seekers' resettlement. When answering the first question, all participants provided a standard definition describing immigration detention as a form of deterrence to individuals who are trying to seek asylum in the United States. For example, Participant 8 stated "[Immigration detention] is a way to deter people from coming into the country illegally." Participant 1 narrated a similar view, stating "[being in detention] makes me understand the sovereignty of the United States ... that, you must qualify through the nation's law or qualify through some form of international law before you are welcome into the host country." Participant 1 and Participant 8's description of detention as a deterrence to people coming into the country illegally reflects the generalizations other participants shared about detention.

When I next asked the participants to define what their immigration detention experience meant to them, three of the participants personalized the meaning of detention to their own experiences, while the others provided a standard definition. The three participants that personalized their definition described it as an experience that hindered their resettlement process. For example, Participant 9 said, "... immigration detention is the unfair and cruel practice of incarcerating me, while I was waiting for a determination of my asylum claim."

I now discuss subtheme (a) which is, “Treated like convicted criminals”. I asked the participants a question about what they find most difficult about detention. All 12 participants mentioned that they experienced or observed some form of being treated like convicted criminals. Participant 8 stating “... you are treated like a criminal. All your basic human right rights are taken away. It was hard to understand why I was treated like a convicted criminal when you are running away from persecution, however you want to define persecution.” Participant 6 stated “I was able to contact my family just once a month. My eleven months detention was a nightmare. You must wake up at 4:00am in order to attend breakfast at 4:30am, if you are late or miss your breakfast, you stay hungry till lunch.”

I then asked the participants to describe the most difficult thing about being in detention? All participants stated prison-like conditions as the most difficult thing to deal with. Participant 1 saying “They take all your rights away including access to legal representation if you cannot afford one for yourself.” Participant 4 described more dehumanizing experience in detention, “I was forced to strip naked in front of guards as part of searches in the facility ... I have never been treated like this ever in my life.” Participant 7 also detailed the prison-like conditions, stating “You are treated worse than a convicted criminal. You have no rights to legal representations. You face all sorts of discriminations you have no one to complain to about it. Even if you do, nobody takes your grievance seriously.”

I next discuss subtheme (b) which was “Physical and Psychological trauma.” I asked the participants to describe how the detention experience affected their resettlement

process. Of all the participants, participant 9 provided details of various human rights violations during and after their detention which caused them physical and psychological trauma. I then asked the participants to describe how the trauma impacts their resettlement. Majority of the participants' description of their psychological trauma varies in different levels and different degrees. For example, the female participants expressed less traumatic experience especially during resettlement compared to their male participants. This disparity could be due to close-family support which was more favorable to the female participants compared to the male participants who had mostly distant and extended family ties during resettlement.

Describing how the psychological trauma of detention affects participants' resettlement, Participant 3 stated, "I still carry the scars and trauma of those humiliations, punishments, handcuffs and leg-chains, every day...." Participant 8 also stated "The psychological pain and treatment I experienced in detention really affect my resettlement. For example, the embarrassment, the shame, the stigma of detention, they all come back to haunt you. All these painful experiences coupled with the restrictive conditions of release make my resettlement process more difficult." Participant 10 described how the inability to access legal representation during detention did not help in the process of obtaining permanent residence, stating "No lawyer could take my case because during the initial hearings, I could not present my case properly to the immigration judge. Because of those initial errors, my case was in a mess for years."

When I asked the participants about the process they took to get out of detention, 10 of the 12 participants said they paid a bond through bond companies before release.

Participant 1 stated they paid a bond of \$15,000.00 and wore an electronic monitor and signed up for the ATD program as a condition for release. Participant 2 also recounted a bond payment of \$20,000.00, and Participant 7 narrated the story of how the immigration judge granted a \$5,000.00 bond. Participant 3's description of the process to get out of detention also emphasized the use of a monetary bond, stating "I was lucky the judge gave [me] \$10,000.00 bond. I was very happy. There were these three ladies who were in court the same day with me, the judge gave \$35,000.00 each to two of them and gave the third one \$25,000.00. Just like that". Participant 11 did not pay a bond but was released from detention on own recognizance due to strong family ties in the United States "I was fortunate to have a strong family tie here in the United States. This was easily verified by the authority, and I was granted release after about a month of detention with bond."

Despite variation in the bond amounts received, most participants expressed the psychological trauma they experienced days, weeks, and even months after their bond hearing. Some of the participants were worried due to not knowing when or if their family would be able to pay the bond amount. For example, Participant 3 stated "It was so traumatic. When I received my bond after 7 months in detention, I waited another month. I didn't know if my family would be able to put together \$10,000.00 to pay my bond. As days passed, I became restless and sleepless. I stopped eating and started staying to myself". As a follow up question, I asked the participant to speak more about the reason for staying alone. The participant responded "I was staying to myself because of what I was seeing around me. I have cellmates and dormmates that had bonds but were

not able to pay. They stayed months before they signed for deportation. So, I was thinking, could this be my faith?”

Theme 2: Challenges from the Detention Experience During Resettlement

The “Challenges from the Detention Experience during Resettlement” theme mainly focused on participants’ response to the interview questions about how their detention experience impacted their resettlement. The participants provided significant connections between detention and resettlement including two subthemes: (a) delayed process of obtaining permanent residence, and (b) fear, shame, and discrimination.

In terms of the first subtheme, when asked to describe how their detention experience impacted their resettlement process, 9 of 12 participants attributed the delay of their permanent residence status to their detention experience. For example, Participant 4 said, “... my detention affected the process of getting my permanent residence. I was supposed to get my green card within a year, but it took me eight years to obtain it”. Participant 6 also described a similar experience, stating, “The detention experience had delayed my resettlement process. I was trying to get my citizenship document on time but the challenges that resulted from being detained made me wait for years to obtain my citizenship.” Participant 8 gave a more detailed description of detention impacts on their residence status, stating “... the most challenging aspect in the resettlement process was the delay in permanent residence. You have one appointment, and you will spend another year or years before you have another one. Even when the immigration officers finished the interview process, it would take another lengthy period to notify [you] of the decision. The waiting period is the worst, because you don’t know what is going to happen.”

In terms of the second subtheme, all participants indicated that the ADT program was the most challenging part of their resettlement process. Most participants stated that participating in the ADT program, especially wearing electronic monitors, was the most challenging aspect in their resettlement. Participant 2 described participating in the ADT program this way, “My daily life was built around the Alternative to Detention Program and not the other way around. The challenges [resulting] from the program dictated my daily life ... it was frightful and was very disorienting.” Participant 1 described a similar experience, stating “...the ankle bracelet was a constant humiliation and embarrassment among my friends and community members.”

Participants also described the fear and shame they felt as a result of other resettlement challenges stemming from their detention experience. Participant 3 stated that attending ICE appointments as part of the ADT program was the most challenging and fear inducing. “Going to my ICE appointments was always a fear. You never know what is going to happen. My ICE officer told me in one of my early appointments that one day I might be detained when I come to the appointment and be deported. So, any time I went to appointments, I was panicking, shaking and praying till the appointment was over. Sometimes I will be so scared to go to my ICE appointment.” Participant 4 described the monthly bond payment as the most difficult challenge during resettlement, stating “The bond condition was the most difficult for me. I was paying about \$400 a month for the bond company. I had no job, no source of income and paying \$400.00 a month was a nightmare. Defaulting was shameful and traumatic. I can’t even describe the situation. The bond company was coming after me every month on the money I cannot

afford to pay.” Participant 6 said renewing a work permit was most challenging, stating “The process of getting back your working permit sometimes takes many months. You must pay over \$400 fees for renewal. If you delay paying the fees, then your work permit will also be delayed and that means you will have no job at the time of waiting.”

When I then asked the participants how these challenges affect their daily lives, a majority stated that the challenges made them feel ashamed of themselves, humiliated, and discriminated against. For example, Participant 1 stated, “...the ankle bracelet was a constant humiliation and embarrassment among my friends and community members.” Participant 10 described discrimination felt due to the electronic monitoring devices that was visible to the public, “I always feel some people don’t want to interact with me because I was wearing an ankle bracelet ... even after I got work authorization, it was still difficult to find employment with an ankle monitor.” Participant 7 narrating the most difficult aspect in resettlement, stated “The pain from detention ... the chains, I mean the handcuffs and shackles. They stripped you naked before the prison guards ... all these memories follow you around ... [they] become a constant reminder of what you have gone through.”

Theme 3: Support Relied on in Resettlement

To obtain participants’ perspectives of support that asylum seekers use during resettlement, they were asked to describe the types of support they relied on during and after detention. As a result, all participants expressed deep connections with: (a) family and friends, (b) religious organizations and faith, and (c) vocational training, which

emerged as subthemes (See Table 1). I now discuss the three subthemes, starting with subtheme (a) “Family and Friends.”

When the participants were asked to describe the kind of support they relied on during and after detention, all participants stated that the highest support they received came from family and friends. I then asked the participants to describe the role family and friends played in their getting out of detention. All participants described various ways family and friends helped them in getting out of detention. For example, Participant 5 said “My family and friends supported me 100%. When I was in detention, I always make collect calls, and talked with my family several times a day. They will tell me what they were doing to secure my release, talking to my lawyer and getting together paperwork my ICE officer required. They will encourage me and prayed with me on the phone, giving me hope that everything will be alright.” Participant 11 also stated “... my uncle sent photocopies of his passport, mortgage papers, and his tax records. Everything the ICE officers asked for to show my family ties in the U.S.” Participant 7 also narrated a similar experience, stating “There were really no resources or support I could find outside my family members and some few friends. They put together the 20% down payment the bond company required before my bond was granted.”

Participants also described the role family and friends played in their resettlement process. For example, Participant 4 said, “My family was there all the time. The attorney fees, my bond monthly repayment. They were responsible for all of that. Culturally, they had to help me. They didn’t have any choice than to help. That’s how we were brought up.” Participant 11 also acknowledged family support during resettlement, stating

“Family was all for me. They supported me in hiring lawyers in different stages to help with my case.” Participant 9 also described family support during resettlement, stating “... their financial support, their love and prayers sustained me throughout the resettling process.”

I now discuss subtheme (b) which is “Religious Organizations and Faith.”

Describing the support relied on during resettlement, six participants mentioned religious organizations as the strongest support behind family and friends. Participant 8 said “... religious organizations including my community church were a great support to me. I always go to them, and they were always willing to help wherever and whenever they can.” Participant 12 also stated “Support was coming from my church and church members. The church had all sorts of resources to help me connect to the community.” Participant 8 and Participants 12 also said that their churches at different stages organized fundraising for them to help support their bills. Participant 2 said something along the same lines, “My church members and the church leaders were praying for me. They donated stuffs and wrote references for me when I was looking for housing, work and other things that helped me resettled.”

Three participants included their faith when describing the kinds of support they relied on during resettlement. For example, Participant 7 said “I prayed every time. I had faith in my Lord, knowing that He brought me here, so He would finish what He started. The whole situation made me closer to God and I grew more in my faith.” Participant 5 also stated “I was praying and fasting. I believed God was going to get me through the resettling process.” Participant 10 also mentioned their faith as a source of support in

resettlement, stating “I was always praying. I believed God’s purpose in my life was going to be fulfilled, no matter what.”

Now, I discuss subtheme (c) which is “Vocational Training”. Continuing the conversation on the support relied on during resettlement, three participants mentioned government support in the form of vocational training that focused on auto repair and plumbing skills. Describing the vocational training they underwent, Participant 9 said they learned about car repairs and plumbing which “helped me gain employment”. Participant 5 and Participant 3 expressed less positive views about the training programs. For example, Participant 5 said, “I remember attending some free training programs where you learn about the job market. I am not sure if those programs were helpful though, since I did not use any of the information I got from those sessions till today.” Participant 3 described the vocational training experience as information overload, stating, “... there was just too much information for such a short time I attended the training that I forgot all about it even before I got home. I stopped going to the training class after the second time.” One participant mentioned public resources including daily visits to public libraries offering basic computer courses, “They [taught] the skills of how to use the computer, like how to use the Microsoft Office, or how to search and browse the Internet.”

I next asked participants about additional support and resources they think would have helped resettling asylum seekers after detention. Ten participants mentioned community civic engagement as a form of support that could promote interaction between resettling asylum seekers and the members of the host community. Participant 8

also stated the need for “government resources especially in educational and vocational areas where you learn more about American culture and way of life.” Participant 4 suggested a similar ingroup and outgroup interaction as additional support that would help asylum seekers in resettlement, stating “...access to information and resources to help guide asylum seekers interact with members of the host community, especially in the first period of getting out of detention.” Participant 12 also mentioned something along the same line of ingroup-outgroup interaction. Participant 6 suggested financial assistance from the government as additional support that could ease the financial burden during resettlement, stating “Cash assistance and food stamps to help with the fair living [during resettlement process] will be a game changer.”

Theme 4: The Meaning of Resettlement

As in the theme of “Generalizations about Immigration Detention” which focused on the meaning of detention, the theme of “Meaning of Resettlement” explored how the study’s participants perceive the meaning of resettlement. Participants’ responses to a single interview question about the meaning of resettlement produced one overarching subtheme, which is “The ability to earn equal membership in a host country.” All participants described resettlement as a dynamic process that allows new immigrants to participate in the economic, political, social, and cultural life of the host country. Some participants described resettlement in a more generic way. For example, Participant 7 defined resettlement as “The ability to live legally in a host country.” Also from a general standpoint, Participant 6 stated “Resettlement is the ability to take part in the socio-economic and other liberties America Constitution guarantees.” Participant 10 and

Participant 11 also defined resettlement from a general viewpoint as "... to be able to stay in the country legally" and to "... participate in every legal activity like any other member of the society," respectively.

Three of the participants defined resettlement from a narrower and more personalized perspective. For example, Participant 4 defined resettlement as "... being able to carry on with your life in the new home and pursue your dreams." Participant 1 said "Resettlement for me is the ability to work to take care of my family, travel in and out of the country, and do things to improve my life". Participant 8 also expressed a personal definition, stating "Resettlement means I now have my green card and I am now one of the America people."

Summary

The research study was conducted to explore the lived experience of formerly detained asylum seekers from sub-Saharan African countries living in Los Angeles, California. The aim was to understand how this population perceived the impacts of detention in their resettlement. This chapter furnished a comprehensive account of the results of this study which comprised the main themes and subthemes that emerged from the data analysis. The study's participants described detailed human rights violations and dehumanizing experiences in detention including being treated like criminals which caused them physical or psychological trauma.

The trauma experienced in detention and the resulting stigma made participants fearful, ashamed, and discriminated against in resettlement. Participants' perception of being treated like criminals in detention also extended into resettlement. Examples

include their mandatory participation in the ATD program including having been subjected to electronic monitoring devices and unscheduled and unannounced ICE visits which led to delays in obtaining permanent residence, discrimination in employment, and financial hardship due to mandatory monthly bond payments. All participants in this study were candid and open in sharing their lived experiences as formerly detained asylum seekers from sub-Saharan African countries living in the United States. Chapter 5 next discusses the limitations of the study and presents recommendations for future research. The chapter also discusses the study's implications for positive social change and ends with a conclusion of the study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine how formerly detained asylum seekers from sub-Saharan African countries living in the United States perceive and conceptualize the impact of detention on their resettlement experience. Because formerly detained asylum seekers' resettlement experience has not been subjected to detailed examination in existing studies (Filges et al., 2018), little is known about the population's perception of the role detention plays in their resettlement. The research gap addressed in this study was how the nature of the detention experience relates to asylum seekers' future psychological well-being, relations with others, and quality of life in resettlement.

I used phenomenological methodology in this study. Because the central phenomenon of this study was the way asylum seekers experience, perceive, and give meaning to immigration detention and its impact on their resettlement, a phenomenological approach presented the best tools to answer this study's research question. Applying a phenomenological approach to this study allowed me to explore issues related to individuals who have firsthand knowledge of the study phenomenon. The importance of using a phenomenological approach lies in its ability to increase insight about the phenomenon examined (Cope, 2011; Frechette, 2020; Lester, 1999).

The key findings in this study were that participants experienced human rights violations and dehumanizing activities in detention including being treated like criminals resulting in physical or psychological trauma. The trauma experienced in detention and

the resulting stigma of detention extended into resettlement and made participants fearful and ashamed. They also reported feeling discriminated against in resettlement. In addition, the following sections of this chapter contain the interpretation of the study's findings, limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, the study's implications for positive social change, and concluding remarks.

Interpretation of the Findings

As stated in the introduction of this chapter, the key findings in this study were that participants experienced human rights violations and dehumanizing activities in detention which may have extended into resettlement. There is a relation between this study's findings and existing literature which shows that detention experiences affect resettling asylum seekers psychologically and socially in resettlement. Next, I explain the four themes associated with the findings of this study.

Theme 1: Generalizations About Immigration Detention

Participants stated that they felt treated as convicted criminals in detention. Most participants also expressed that they experienced physical and/or psychological trauma in detention that extended into resettlement and made them fearful and ashamed; they also reported feeling discriminated against. This study's findings corroborate the findings in the reviewed literature, which shows that immigration detention produces both short-term and long-term psychological harm to asylum seekers in resettlement (Posselt et al., 2020; Kang et al., 2019; Von Werthern, et al., 2018; Popescu, 2016).

The findings of this study suggest that immigration detention is seen as a form of deterrence to individuals who are trying to seek asylum in the United States. This finding

supports existing literature which shows that the prevailing legal, political, and public discourse treats the issue of detaining asylum seekers as the appropriate and expected response of a sovereign state to those who have breached its national and territorial sovereignty (Peutz & De Genova, 2010; Bloch & Schuster, 2005; Walters, 2002).

Although tentative, it is possible, therefore, to suggest that there exists a belief among the public that the benefits in detaining asylum seekers as a deterrence to protect national and territorial sovereignty outweigh the foreseeable harm detention causes to this uninvited migrant population.

Theme 2: Challenges from the Detention Experience During Resettlement

Most of this study's participants provided details of various human rights violations during and after their detention, which caused them physical and psychological trauma. For example, a participant described a dehumanizing experience in detention where they were forced to strip naked in front of guards as part of searches in the facility. A majority of this study's participants also described the fear, humiliation, and discrimination experienced in the ADT program, especially wearing electronic monitors. One participant described this experience as "frightful and disorienting."

The experience of the participants in this study suggests that the trauma experienced in detention and the resulting stigma that extended into resettlement negatively impacted their resettlement process. As discussed in Chapter 2, recent researchers have found that after release from detention, asylum seekers may experience significant difficulty adjusting to a host culture, and this difficulty may persist even after many years following resettlement (Nosè et al., 2020; Oppedal & Stabin, 2020; Bentley

et al., 2019; Idsoe, 2015; Beiser & Wickrama, 2004). A systematic review by Lofaso et al. (2021) confirmed that there is a relationship between detention and interpersonal difficulties during resettlement. Across the reviewed studies, there is consistent evidence that supports the findings of this study that the experience of detention and the nature of that experience influence formerly detained asylum seekers' future well-being, relations with others, and quality of life in resettlement.

Despite the high rate of exposure to traumatic events, many of the participants did not express chronic psychological trauma. For example, all female participants expressed rapid reduction of psychological trauma after release from detention. All female participants and half of the male participants indicated that they adjusted well and rapidly to the post detention process. This result confirmed previous studies that suggest that most asylum seekers with PTSD and depression show a rapid reduction over time (Silove et al., 2014; Steel et al., 2002), particularly if there are low resettlement stressors (Oppedal & Idsoe, 2015; Betancourt et al., 2013; Beiser & Wickrama, 2004).

Theme 3: Support Relied on in Resettlement

Current resettlement policy debates in the United States revolve around a push to assist resettling asylum seekers to gain a sense of belonging in their host communities. According to the U.N. Refugee Agency -UNHCR (2021), there is a need to focus on ways in which resettlement countries can aid asylum seekers to enhance their social connections in the receiving community. When I asked participants in the interviews to tell me about the types of support they relied on in detention and in resettlement, 10 out of 12 participants emphasized family and religious supports as a protective factor.

Numerous researchers have examined the context specific nature of asylum resettlement policy and practice and underline the importance of support provided by family as a vital resource in asylum seekers' resettlement (Phillimore et al., 2021; du Plooy et al., 2019; Carswell et al., 2011; Simich et al., 2005). As evidenced in this study's results, supportive relationships can help resettling asylum seekers build their connections with the host communities. Through these connections, formerly detained asylum seekers can access other important integration resources such as employment, volunteer opportunities, and a wider socioeconomic network (Phillimore et al., 2021; du Plooy et al., 2019). As the findings of this study show, social connection with resettled asylum seekers and family was particularly important in maintaining participants' cultural integrity while building a new identity in the receiving community. However, some studies, including UNHCR (2021), suggest that resettling asylum seekers might not seek contact with the community of the same origin due to personal circumstances or reasons for fleeing their country of origin.

The centrality of social connection in understanding refugee integration is well established in both policy and academic literature (de Wal Pastoor, 2017; Ager & Strang 2004a; Putnam 2000). As this study's results show, establishing 'bonding' relationships was a critical priority for the participants. This study's results clearly show that being a part of a bonded group has unique saliency in human relationships and thus in asylum seekers' resettlement process (Ager & Strang, 2010).

Theme 4: The Meaning of Resettlement

The 'Meaning of Resettlement' theme focused on how this study's participants defined resettlement. All participants' definition or perception of resettlement related to the attainment of rights equal or like those enjoyed by the citizens of the host country. For example, all participants described resettlement as a dynamic process that allows new immigrants to participate in the economic, political, social, and cultural life of the host country. As this finding shows, the more resettling asylum seekers acquire equal rights with members of the host community, the more their perception of belonging in the community increases. The empowerment or sense of belonging that comes from the attainment of rights equal or similar to those enjoyed by the citizens of the host community, as shown in this study's finding, is suggestive of Ager and Strang's (2010) conceptual framework of Refugee Integration which will be discussed in the next subsection as it relates to this study. This study's findings including the empowerment that arises from the attainment of citizens' rights support previous findings which highlight the importance of inclusive policy that could reduce or eliminate the tensions between resettling asylum seekers and the members of the host community who are often competing for scarce resources (Baugh, 2020; Kang, 2019; Filges et al., 2018; McDowell-Smith, 2013).

Appropriateness of Ager and Strang's Conceptual Framework of Refugee**Integration for This Study**

Ager and Strang's (2010) conceptual framework of Refugee Integration presents integration in a contextual reflection of what successful integration really means. The

framework encompasses central spheres and associated themes for examining and measuring access and achievement of resettling immigrants within education, employment, health and housing, and social connections. This study used Ager and Strang's refugee integration model as the conceptual framework because it defines the issues highlighted in this study's research problem regarding challenges formerly detained asylum seekers face in resettlement. In addition, the meaning of resettlement found in this study relates to Ager's model which opines that an individual or a group is integrated within a society when they achieve legal rights and socio-economic outcomes equivalent to other wider members of the host communities in a manner consistent with shared notions of nationhood and citizenship (Ager & Strang, 2004, 2010). As the findings of this study also show, the concept of nationhood and citizenship shape the policy and socio-economic space available to resettling asylum seekers.

While policy reflects some shared understandings of integration, Ager and Strang (2010) argued that policy is also used instrumentally to influence such understanding. The findings of this study draw attention to Ager's notion of resettlement from the perspective of rights and citizenship. For example, the participants of this study provided significant connections between detention policy and the challenges they face in resettlement which made it difficult for them to participate in the economic, political, social, and cultural life of their host community.

Ager sees integration as a two-way process, where demands are placed on both the newcomers and the receiving communities. Duke et al. (1999) have previously defined Ager's bi-directional process as the conditions to participate and the perception

of acceptance by the newcomers, on the one hand, and a willingness of the host community to adapt to the change, on the other hand. This principle has subsequently become well established in the literature.

Although Ager and Strang (2010) acknowledge the foundational role played by the state about the legal framework of rights and access to citizenship, the authors clearly argued that legal rights alone are not sufficient for successful integration. The authors stressed that further support is needed to enable resettling immigrants to access those rights. This study's participants mentioned cultural knowledge awareness programs, skills (re)training, and making social connections as additional support that could help formerly detained asylum seekers in resettlement. The participants' idea of needed support reflects and reiterates Ager's argument of additional support beyond legal rights. The findings of this study support previous findings including that of Edge et al. (2014), McKeary and Newbold (2010), and Valenta and Bunar (2010) which show that cultural and social support are likely to enhance the human capital of asylum seekers, especially during their resettlement process.

Limitations of the Study

Ross and Zaidi (2019) argued that being honest and detailing the limitations of a study qualifies the study's findings and helps readers understand how the study's results can be applied to future research. One limitation of this study is the restricted boundaries or lack of external validity. A lack of external validity is the inability to generalize the findings of a study to other groups, populations, or individuals because the results represent only the words and experiences of the study's participants (Theofanidis &

Fountouki, 2018, Morse et al., 2002; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This study was intended to capture how the experiences of formerly detained asylum seekers from sub-Saharan African countries living in the United States perceive the impact of detention in resettlement. Given this intention, the findings of this study are limited in application to the population of the study's participants.

A second limitation of this study is the inclusion criteria for the participants which includes individuals residing in the Los Angeles, California, aged 18 or older. The geographical constraint of this study posed a limitation as a relatively small sample of participants drawn from a common geographic location does not present a nationwide perspective of the interested population. Also, the exclusion of the lived experiences of formerly detained asylum seekers from sub-Saharan African countries who are under the age of 18 may further limit the transferability of the study's results.

A third limitation may be the potential bias that exists in this study. At the beginning of this study, I anticipated the potential for personal bias that might be a limitation of this study. For example, I expected that my role as an insider to this study's population including having common characteristics and shared experience with the participants may lead to bias due to my preconceived views and beliefs about the phenomenon under study (Mampane & Omidire, 2018; Bourke, 2014). I effectively managed any of the potential bias by taking steps to help ensure that the study's findings are the result of the experiences and ideas of the participants and not my preference. For example, during the interviews, I found that I was opened and curious to make meanings to the data collected based solely on the participants' shared opinions for the study.

Further, I bracketed my biases and used a reflective journal to prevent interfering with participants' narration of their lived experiences (Vicary et al., 2017; Thorpe, 2004).

Recommendations

One recommendation about further research could be to explore the value of creating mental health services for the formerly detained asylum seekers. Another salient recommendation could be to give attention to understanding gender disparity in trauma resilience among formerly detained asylum seekers in resettlement. These two recommendations will now be discussed in detail.

Recommendation 1: Provision of Mental Health Services for Formerly Detained Asylum Seekers

This study's results show that formerly detained asylum seekers experienced prejudice and maltreatment during and after detention, which caused physical and/or psychological trauma for most of them. Informed by this data, policy makers and public administrators could develop culturally sensitive mental health interventions. This policy should create and manage access to services that could help the traumatized population heal and thrive in resettlement.

Recommendation 2: Research on Gender Disparities in Trauma Resilience Among Formerly Detained Asylum Seekers

One of the interesting things about the results of this study is that all female participants expressed rapid reduction of psychological trauma after release from detention, compared to only 3 out of 8 male participants who expressed the same. Recent studies including that of Taha and Sijbrandij (2021) and Pooley et al. (2018) suggest that

males and females show fundamentally different responses to trauma, and perhaps females are more resilient to the effects of traumatic stress. In contrast, Wolfe and Ray (2015), Morano (2010), and Solomon et al. (2005) show that individual differences such as gender had limited influence on resilience. Because of the ambiguity in the available studies on the role gender plays in trauma resilience, additional research exploring underlying mechanisms of gender differences in asylum seekers' response to detention trauma is recommended.

Implications

From a public policy perspective, this study has the potential to contribute to positive social change as it provides rich, in-depth, and context-specific information on the impacts of detention on asylum seekers. This section discusses two implications for positive social change if policy makers and administrators used the two recommendations provided in this chapter.

Recommendation 1 discussed developing culturally sensitive mental health interventions that could help the traumatized population heal and thrive in resettlement. Recent studies have provided a rationale for developing culturally sensitive interventions for post-migration detention stressors (Turrini, 2021; Knefel, 2020; Slobodin et al., 2018). If policy makers and administrators used this evidence-based recommendation, it may strengthen the capacity of individuals and communities that are currently limited in their ability to provide support for those suffering from psychosocial distress due to the burden of multiple post-detention stressors. This approach could increase access to

specialized care, including increased competence in the culturally informed delivery of post-detention mental health interventions.

Recommendation 2 opined for additional research exploring underlying mechanisms of gender differences in asylum seekers' response to detention trauma. There is ambiguity in the available studies on the role gender plays in trauma resilience. Hence, in-depth studies that explore the underlying mechanisms of gender differences in trauma resilience could provide insight to policy makers and administrators developing specific mental health interventions for formerly detained asylum seekers.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine how formerly detained asylum seekers from sub-Saharan African countries living in the United States perceive and conceptualize the impact of detention on their resettlement experience. Data collection included 12 virtual interviews of 12 participants living in the Los Angeles, California, area to examine how the participants perceive the impact of detention on their resettlement. The key findings in this study were that participants experienced human rights violations and dehumanizing experiences in detention and in post-detention, including being treated like criminals which caused them physical or psychological trauma. The study made salient recommendations including further research to explore the value of creating mental health services for the formerly detained asylum seekers and to give attention to understanding gender disparity in trauma resilience among formerly detained asylum seekers in resettlement. This study overall adds to the growing body of academic evidence that immigration detention produces both short-term and long-term

socio-economic and psychological harm to asylum seekers in resettlement. The overarching take-home message from this study is that current immigration detention policies cause physical and/or psychological trauma for formerly detained asylum seekers, and psychological trauma may also be experienced in resettlement. Hence, there is a need for mental health policies to address this phenomenon.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Opening Statement

Hello, my name is Felix Vescovi. As you already know, I am in the Walden PhD program. I would like to start by saying welcome and thank you for agreeing to take part in this research interview. Our main focus for this interview today will be for you to share your experience on immigration detention, and how the experience impacts your resettlement process. Before this meeting, you received the Walden University consent to take part in this research interview, and you have agreed to do so. You also received the interview questions before this meeting. As you are already aware, this conversation is going to be audio recorded.

Talking about how the information gathered from this research interview will be used, first of all, I would like to repeat that your responses to the interview questions will be anonymous in order to protect your privacy and security. Once I finish all the interviews, I will be writing a report including a summary of your responses which I will also share with you on your request. So that you will have the opportunity to review the transcript to make sure I captured everything that was said.

Once again, the interview questions will be asking about your immigration detention experience, and to share your view on how the detention experience affects your resettlement process. Our objective today is to work through these questions in order to understand the two topics we will be discussing. As you engage to answer these questions, I may ask some follow-up questions to hear more about other issues that may come up. The interview will likely take about 45 minutes. Before we begin, I would like

to make sure that this place is conducive enough that you will be able to have a free and confidential conversation. I also want to assure you that during the conversation, you are free to stop the interview at any time to either take a break or attend to other urgent matters that might come up during the interview. Is there anything you would like me to go through again or any questions about anything I have said so far? Thank you. So, let begin with anything you would like to tell me about yourself. Thank you very much for that information. Now we can move to the first topic.

Body of the Interview

Topic 1: Immigration Detention Experience

To open up the conversation to this topic, I want to ask about how you view immigration detention. I will be listening as you talk, but I may ask further questions to hear more about what you are saying.

1. “What does immigration detention mean to you?”
2. “What did your immigration detention experience mean to you?”
 - a. Possible prompt: “Can you give a specific example?”
3. “What did you find most difficult about immigration detention?”
 - a. Possible prompt: “Can you give a specific example?”
 - b. Possible prompt: “Can you describe how you worked through this situation?”
4. “What was the process you took to get out of detention?”
5. “What role did your family and friends play during you getting out of detention?”

6. Now, we will be moving to the next section, but before we do that, is there anything else that you would like to share about this topic?"

Topic 2: The Resettlement Process

Moving to the next topic, I am going to ask you about your resettlement process after release from detention. I want to start this conversation by letting you describe how you understand resettlement.

1. "What does resettlement mean to you?"
2. "How does the detention experience affect your resettlement process?"
3. "What were the most challenging aspects of your resettlement process?"
4. "How do these challenges affect your daily life?"
 - a. Possible prompt: "What do you mean when you say [xxx]?"
 - b. Possible prompt: "How did you feel about that?"
5. "What types of support did (do) you rely on during the resettlement process?"
6. "What types of support worked best for you during the resettlement process?"
 - a. Possible prompt: "Can you tell me more?" or "Can you explain why?"
7. "What additional types of support and resources do you think would help in the resettlement process?"
8. Thank you so much. Before we end this interview, is there anything else that you would like to share regarding the two topics we touched on today?"

Closing Statement

We have discussed the two center topics of the interview, and I believe we covered everything I need. I really want to thank you for participating in this interview

today. I want to thank you also for all the valuable information you provided. I will use the information to the best of my ability. Would it be okay to contact you if there is a need to clarify anything from your responses to the interview? I will be happy to send you a copy of the abstract as a summary when the study is published, in case you would like to review any part of the full study. Again, thank you so much.

Appendix B: Recruitment Flyer

An interview study seeks formerly detained asylum-seekers from sub-Saharan African countries.

There is a new study called “Asylum-seekers from sub-Saharan African countries’ Perception of the Impacts of Immigration Detention” that could help policy makers better understand and assist asylum-seekers during their resettlement process. For this study, you are invited to describe your experiences with immigration detention and how the experience impacts your day-to-day living after release into the US community.

This research is part of the doctoral study for Felix Ogunsuyi Vescovi, a Ph.D. student at Walden University.

About the study:

- One 30-45-minute virtual interview (audio recorded)
- To protect your privacy, no names will be collected, and all information will be kept confidential.

Volunteers must meet these requirements:

- 18 years old and older
- Formerly detained sub-Saharan Africa asylum-seeker living in the Los Angeles, California area.

To confidentially volunteer, email or Text

“I am interested in your study” to Felix Vescovi at:

[email address redacted]; Cell Phone: [redacted]