



DIRECT SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE WITH REFUGEE CHILDREN FROM THE MIDDLE EAST: AN ACADEMIC PERSPECTIVE

Yaser SNOUBAR*

Magdy Atef Mahfouz ABITA**

Abstract

The continued wars and conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa forced millions of people to migrate both inside and outside the region. Children constitute nearly half of the refugees and this is one of the most serious challenges facing childhood in the Middle East. These events have greatly affected the healthy development of children, made them vulnerable to various risks and caused serious violations of their rights. The traumatic experiences faced by children during this period of living in the environment of war and conflict from witnessing the violent events, threats and difficult conditions during the resort to the problems expected in the host countries affects children psychologically, healthy, social and behavioral. Therefore, in order to preserve their rights and promote their integration into the new environment, the effective intervention of social work is necessary. This article discusses how to work directly with refugee children from the Middle East and propose effective mechanisms to promote the direct practice of social workers with refugee children.

Keywords: social protection, refugee children, child rights, social work, integration.

1. Introduction

The problem of asylum is one of the most serious problems facing children in the Middle East and North Africa, which is the result of wars and conflicts. This situation has been the focus attention of scientific researches, especially social sciences because displacement has a great impact on the individual, family and society. Children are one of the most affected groups from these events and experiences traumatic which require many interventions both individually, within group and or at the level of social policies to ensure the protection of the refugee child and his well-being.

The persistence of wars, conflicts, and instability has led to a steady increase in the number of refugee children, making it difficult for host countries to assume full responsibility and protect refugee children alone without the contribution of the international community. There is no doubt that the sharing of the responsibility of refugee children and the provision of a responsible international protection system is inevitable and extremely important. Children at this stage face many risks that require many radical solutions and the development of laws, policies, and programs to promote and protect their rights. Where forced migration has deprived millions of children of many rights, most notably security, health, and education.

The problem of denial of education is one of the most important problems faced by refugee children, especially children living outside refugee camps. Here, the role of governmental and non-governmental institutions in protecting the right to education for refugee children appears (Hos, 2016). Here lies the importance of cooperation between many governmental and non-governmental internal and external actors in the provision of this fundamental right of refugee children. Although host countries provide many health and education services to refugees, the real benefits and well-being of refugee children are worthy of research and study. The exposure to many problems, neglect and exploitation of children before, during or after the period of asylum in addition to poverty and family problems is one of the most important challenges that can face the refugee children in the new society and in the educational system.

Therefore, the integration of refugee children into the educational system requires many steps and strategies applied by social workers. Where professional intervention is an extremely important part of the

* Asst. Prof. Dr., Social Sciences Department (Social Work Program) College of Arts and Sciences Qatar University.

** Prof. Dr., Coordinator of the Social Work Program, Social Sciences Department, College of Arts and Sciences, Qatar University.



process of integrating and providing protection for refugee children. Social worker is the main driver of the integration process by focusing on building a positive school community that welcomes and respects diversity. As well as working with teachers and parents of students and organizing programs and activities that help to create a cultural environment that promotes diversity and respect for others and their rights. It is also important to plan psychosocial support programs that are central to the integration process. Here it is important to take into account the cultural and social environment of refugee children, especially those coming from the Middle East. The direct social work practice with this vulnerable group requires the social worker to fully understand the cultural environment in which these children lived.

2. Middle Easterners children between the wars, conflicts and asylum

Middle Eastern children are the major victims of wars and conflicts in the region. In such conditions, children are exposed to many negative consequences such as injuries, disability, murder, torture and ill-treatment, and their use as soldiers or a tool for perpetuation of conflict by the conflicting parties, as well as their families being killed, detained and displaced, and subjected to violence (physical, psychological and sexual) (Snoubar, 2010). In addition, wars and conflicts have destroyed the infrastructure of society, such as health, education and other social services sectors. Right now, ongoing conflicts in the region have had a major impact on the family and the individual, such as family disintegration, changing roles, forced migration and resort to neighboring and distant states. The problems faced by children and women in areas of war and conflict in the Middle East and North Africa can be described as a multi-dimensional crisis physically, healthily, psychologically, socially and educationally (Snoubar & Duman, 2016).

Wars and conflicts have plagued many countries in the Middle East and have made deprivation of primary education one of the main problems facing children, in addition to low quality education and inequality between girls and boys (Nelson et al, 2015). Given the problems faced by children in the Middle East before wars and conflicts, the most prominent are child labor, early marriage, high child mortality, gender segregation and low enrollment rates in many countries such as Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Libya, Morocco, Syria and Yemen. As well as the impact of spatial, social and economic disparities in access to education (Marcus et al, 2011). The wars and conflicts in the Middle East has led to increasing problems faced by childhood before the war. Perhaps the most striking evidence of this is the destruction of many educational institutions, which has exacerbated the drop in rates to go to school (Snoubar & Hawal, 2015).

Working with refugee children from the Middle East requires knowledge of the stages and violations experienced by these children. There are problems and traumatic experiences in the environment of war and conflict and there is also what the child is exposed during and after the asylum and displacement to safe areas. Perhaps many of the refugee children lived these three experiences before, during and after the displacement with all its problems and traumatic experiences (Snoubar, 2016). Which requires effective intervention that is aware of all the problems a child can experience in these traumatic environments.

Many international organizations have monitored the problems of childhood in the Middle East and North Africa due to wars and conflicts through numerous studies and reports. In a report entitled "Seven Years of War on Childhood", Save the Children pointed to children being at risk of death, illness, abuse and exploitation on a daily basis. During displacement to neighboring countries, found that most children living buildings, open spaces and temporary camps lacking basic necessities. As a result of the targeting and closure of schools by the parties to the conflict and forced migration, a large number of children have been deprived of their right to quality basic education. The harsh winter conditions pose serious additional risks to children living without shelter, as well as the displacement of most children in the areas affected by the fighting more than once, thus increasing their vulnerability (Save The Children, 2018).

In general, wars and conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa have doubled the number of refugees, where more than half of them are children. Refugee children in the region face many problems associated with conflict and displacement. They are often injured, killed, exploited, neglected and subjected to violence. When displaced to neighboring countries, refugee children may find safety but also lack of clarity in many aspects of their lives as well as daily conflicts that disturb children and their families (UNHCR, 2014). Refugee child labor is a serious problem for children in host countries, as indicated by the ILO study (2019), where children are increasingly drawn into the worst forms of employment as well as the risks they contain, rights violations, abuse and abuse. "Refugee and displaced children work in different sectors of activity, with a notable rise in street work, bonded labour, early marriages, and commercial sexual exploitation. Child labour among refugee and displaced children is mainly a coping mechanism for their families who face extreme poverty or where adults are unemployed" (ILO, 2019).



Given the problems faced by refugee children before, during and after the asylum in the Middle East and North Africa, they range from the daily problems that children may face such as murder, imprisonment, torture, exploitation in all its forms and serious injuries. As well as problems related to violations of rights such as the right to education and the right to live in a safe environment, health and access to basic services.

3. Responding to the refugee children crisis and protecting them

The growing numbers of refugees in the region and beyond have put pressure on the resources of their host countries. The massive influx and large numbers of refugee families forced host countries to increase the number of refugee camps. But this increase requires an increase in health and education services, basic needs and psychosocial support (Save The Children, 2018).

Given the economic profile of countries hosting refugees in the Middle East, they often fail to provide appropriate support and provide an integrated protection system without international cooperation on this issue. These countries lack refugee protection policies and asylum laws. Despite international contributions to share responsibility, the response to the refugee crisis, particularly vulnerable groups such as children, is still limited and needs to be re-examined. This can be inferred from the international reports issued by many organizations on the childhood crisis and the problems they face in the Middle East and North Africa. See the following reports as an example: "ILO (2019) Child Labour in the Arab Region: A Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis"; "Stop The War On Children - A Report From Save The Children 2019"; "UNICEF Syria Crisis Situation Report - December 2018 Humanitarian Results".

Although many countries in the region lack policies that protect refugee children and do not ratify international conventions such as the 1951 Geneva Convention, some countries have developed some protection policies that guarantee refugee children their rights to education, health services and access to various services. There is no doubt that the development of these policies and initiatives aimed at protecting the rights of refugee children were born of urgent necessity and in regional and international cooperation.

Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan are among the most countries in the world hosting refugees and displaced persons from conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa, specifically refugees from Syria (UNHCR, 2017). In view regarding a large number of Syrian refugees in Turkish territory, Turkey has developed several projects aimed at protecting the rights of the child in many areas, especially education. Where is carried out many measures aimed at integrating refugee children into the Turkish educational system (Karaca, 2017).

One of the most important measures that can be taken to respond to the problems of refugees and their integration into the educational system is the structure of the existing system, including students, teachers and the language of teaching, as well as the establishment of educational centers for refugee children with international cooperation in this field.

Thus, the increase in flows of refugee children requires host countries to undertake structural responses that are not short-term, for example (Rubin, 2016):

"1. Integrating stronger training modules on teaching in multicultural classes in pre-service training, and providing teachers life-long opportunities for learning how to best address diversity in the classroom.

2. Increasing access to pre-primary education of children in families of refugees.

3. Increasing availability of accelerated education programs for children who get a refugee status after having lost several years of schooling."

In addition to these structural measures in the education system, an effective professional intervention aimed at refugee children from the Middle East must be developed as a result of many considerations. Professional intervention is very important in the process of integrating these children into the schools of the host countries. Social work intervention is one of the most important interventions in working directly with refugee children and dealing with their problems.

4. Direct social work practice with refugee children

Despite the long experience of some countries in the Middle East with refugees, but there is an urgent need for psychosocial support programs for refugee children in particular. Direct intervention with refugee children coming from a war and conflict environment in the Middle East requires from social workers to be able to use a range of strategies, including: psychological or mental health strategies, emotion control strategies, behavioral change strategies, multi-group interaction strategies, social networking development strategies that children deal with it, recreational activity strategies, strategies to develop and increase the effectiveness of performance within the school, the strategy of cultural diversity. We can explain these strategies as follows:



1. Psychological or mental health strategies: Here, social workers remove the psychological and social trauma effects through emotional ventilation, acceptance and good professional relations, inventory of children required to help them and provide alternative schools to educate them and rehabilitate them psychologically and socially through cooperating and communicating with international institutions such as the United Nations, UNICEF and others, as well as coordinating with relevant local institutions. Taking into account the fact that social workers use narrative therapy based on the application of techniques such as (Combs, & Freedman, 2012):

The externalization technique.

Deconstruction Technique.

Unique Outcomes Technique.

Existentialism Technique.

Expressive Arts

Meditate .

Journal.

Draw.

Movement.

Visualization.

2. Emotion control strategies: Perhaps the acceleration of professional work with children psychosocial rehabilitation should be prioritized to alleviate the trauma of war as well as to deal with the psychological crises experienced by these children.

The strategy includes helping children to vent the energy generated by emotions. This energy enables an individual to perform violent and unwanted acts and behaviors. The best way to get rid of this energy, by employing and engaging in any useful and self-indulgent work, such as reading the Koran, exercise, arranging the surrounding place, or through forgiveness and refuge to god from the satanic. The best way to get rid of this energy, by employing and engaging in any useful and self-indulgent work, such as reading the Koran, or exercise, or arranging the surrounding place, or through forgiveness and seeking refuge with Allah from the devil. This method helps the individual to return to normal, calms himself and relaxes his heart. It is worth mentioning that this method also helps the individual to turn his attention from the exciting things of his emotions to other things that cause self-tranquility. As well as provoking psychological responses opposite to emotion such as singing, these acts of self-satisfaction and dispense with emotion. Refugee children may need emotional guidance through targeted play, recreational recreation, and leisure education, taking into account that the environment in which refugees live is safe and conducive to creating an atmosphere of adjust the emotions

3. Behavioral change strategies: The techniques of behavioral modification are necessary for mentors, social workers, psychologists and educators to use with the refugee child and enable them to modify the wrong behaviors by scientific methods. Perhaps the most prominent of these methods (Mahfouz, 2013):

Modeling

Prompting

Shaping

Behavioral Chaining

Reinforcement

Role Play

4. Multi-group interaction strategies: The writings of the early scientists (James Baldwin and John Dewey and John Dewey Charles Colly Charles coolly) on the psychosocial vision of the individual contributed to the formation of the interactive perspective. In light of this diverse intellectual reality, symbolic interaction concepts have been formulated to include a philosophical, psychological, social and educational vision for the individual and society. These concepts can be defined as follows (Robbins et al, 2006):

Refugee children are seen as social beings interacting with each other through common symbols and meanings, so human interaction is symbolic interaction.

Refugee children respond to symbols only through their translation through the reality of human life, which is described as dynamic and creative. This emphasizes the need to create an interactive



environment that allows these children the freedom to express opinions and meaningful discussion that leads to sound psychological and social development.

Interactive symbolism considers the process of thinking as an impossible process without language, so George Meed thinks that thinking is a process of speaking to oneself and others. Therefore, social workers must help refugee children learn the language of the host country of asylum to develop collective interaction through realistic thinking related to their living and social reality. The process of collective interaction must include three processes:

Reflection.

Discrimination.

Analysis.

Meed believes that human behavior is seen as a social function rather than as a result of the psychological process. Common themes, symbols, and traditions arise from the social experiences gained from the lives of refugee children and are the main driver of their behavior and actions.

The human personality is rooted in the social structure and the social processes and through it, the self-concept of the refugee child develop. The reflection of children's experiences on their actions makes them able to constantly assess their actions and feelings to achieve the desired change.

Reflection and evaluation are the basis for the development of self-concept among refugee children, the acquisition of experience and the reciprocity of the act, as well as the responsibility of the child for his ideas within the framework of the interaction process.

The symbolic interaction perspective views the process of socialization of children as responsible for individuals' learning of norms, values, skills, community expectations. Formation as a focal concept in this theory can be said that a dynamic process that allows individuals to increase their ability to think.

Perhaps the above principals emphasize the importance of thinking about the interaction that occurs between refugee children and their peers. Not only that but also the process of dynamic change that can occur during the interaction, which leads to education and experience, which appear through the actions of individuals in the various groups which they belong and are an integral part of society.

Perhaps multi-group interaction is one of the important strategies that can be used with refugee children in institutions of care and human services: These are the institutions that offer their services to children, such as child abuse, marital abuse, and elder abuse. These institutions try to use direct and supportive services for these groups by working with individuals, groups, and families.

The social worker here can determine the position of assistance to the refugee child through three aspects:

A- the deviation resulting from the abused person

B - The problem, which is the person who is the abuser

C - The growth of both together as each needs to develop in the personality or in living conditions.

These attitudes require the use of interaction as a means of re-upbringing of the deviant and raising the victim to deal with neglect and abuse and prevent recurrence in the future.

Here the social worker must develop basic assumptions for the symbolic interaction perspective in working with groups (Mahfouz, 2010):

Whenever the size of a small group whenever the interaction was effective

Biological, psychological and social characteristics influence collective interaction

Whenever the interaction is strong and directed during socialization whenever the individual learns the roles, rules and positive standards

Oriented collective interaction a way to treat and modify behavior

Oriented collective interaction is a means of forming positive attitudes in the members.

Oriented collective interaction is a way to understand and practice social roles.

The interaction of the individual with the primary and secondary group is a means of integrating his personality.

Creating a material and moral climate is a necessity for positive and effective collective interaction.

Intellectual activation is a means to develop the skills of interacting with the group and motivating creativity.



The agrees of the individual with himself that there is a need for positive interaction with the members of the group.

The deviant person needs to be re-upbringing again by changing his interaction with the reference groups.

5. Social Networking Development Strategies: UNICEF has developed communication strategies for development by applying a wide range of communication theories, concepts, and approaches that are gathered through ideas on the ground through ongoing research during the communication analysis phase. UNICEF's communication strategy for development usually includes the following (UNICEF, 2008):

"Setting social and behavioural outcomes, as well as communication objectives that identify key desired behaviours or social practices among children and their communities – these need to be maintained, changed or developed and are clearly linked to the achievement of larger programme and advocacy goals.

Audience analysis that identifies key participant groups in the communication process as well as the networks of influencers and community mobilizers who can be called upon during an initiative to influence or support behaviour and social change among the key participant groups.

Designing *creative approaches* that consist of plans for the development of content, materials and channels of communication. *Delivery of accurate, sensitive and culturally appropriate* messages is strategically spread across multiple channels of communication. These channels include print media, websites, radio and television as well as more traditional forms including puppet shows, street theatre and traditional ballads. Community-based workers, local leaders and service providers often become channels of communication to consult and dialogue with communities and households.

Developing an implementation plan *that includes the schedule and resource implications of events and actions for activating the development, dissemination and utilization of C4D* messages and materials. An implementation plan also contains plans for training of community mobilizers and service providers.

Developing monitoring and evaluation plans that clearly lay out the indicators and research methods for measuring performance and impact of C4D initiatives. Monitoring and evaluation data provide the basis for course correction and revision of plans to ensure that C4D strategies are evidence-based, focused and strategic."

It is clear from the above that refugee children can interact and connect to the network of peers, a network of colleagues and friends, and the network of education, health, and livelihood services of their own. These contacts may need the following:

Refugee children should have adequate information on available social networks.

Training children in different social skills that ensure proper social growth.

Remove obstacles which impede the ability of these children to make successful contacts with the social networks available in the asylum community.

6. Recreational Activity Strategies: Recreation is a deliberate activity of the individual to spend leisure time and a sense of happiness and psychological comfort, which reflects the impact on the personality of the child and contribute to the development of social and physical skills different. Therefore, attention is paid to recreational activities as one of the basic tools by which children can be helped to interact positively with others as well as expressing an opinion as well as gaining experience, learning skills and developing positive behaviors.

One study pointed out the importance of these activities in identifying the ways in which the personality can be formed and the knowledge of the rights, duties, and responsibilities associated with them. It also emphasizes the need to use recreational activities to contribute to the formation of a positive personality. The study recommended the importance of integration in student activities in the light of the interests and needs of children (Benge, 2006). The practice, expansion, and development of activities has become a necessary and imperative requirement for the comprehensive development of children and adolescents as well as for the protecting them against the dangers that beset them in all aspects. Because it is a stimulant factor for the child and helps in the refinement of instincts and Highness them and then it is a protective fence youth from deviation.

In light of the above, efforts should be made to develop activities for refugee children to include activities of excellence and creativity in light of the era of globalization, knowledge activities linked to civil society institutions and voluntary civil action for the development of civil society culture, activities for the development of entrepreneurship and small productive enterprises under privatization and computer



activities. In addition, the Internet and public information, and educational activities commensurate with the revolution of communication and information, and the exercise of these activities contribute to the preparation of a generation capable of carrying individual, collective and community responsibilities and lead the community towards progress (Mahfouz and Khalifa, 2013).

7. Cultural diversity strategies: Cultural diversity is the key driver of sustainable development for individuals, communities, and countries. The development of an effective global approach to sustainable development and education for sustainable development. Therefore, requires addressing the aspects of respect, and sustainability of cultural diversity in the world now and in the future.

Cultural diversity has a strong impact on education for sustainable development because (Farah, 2016):

Education for sustainable development as a whole must be relevant at the local level and culturally appropriate;

Culture influences what the current generation chooses for next-generation education, including knowledge that is valued, skills, ethics, languages, and global perspectives;

Education for sustainable development requires intercultural understanding, where people can live together in peace and allow for differences among cultural groups.

The profession of social work is the first line of defense to reduce the misbehavior against women, children, people with special needs and uneducated people, due to the lack of acceptance of cultural diversity. The social worker in this context can do the following (Mahfouz, 2017):

Empower vulnerable, marginalized, oppressed and oppressed groups to obtain their rights, especially refugee children, in accordance with international and domestic legislation.

Educating children in the right way to deal with others of different nationalities through education, rehabilitation, development and dealing with them from the perspective that all people are equal.

Contribute to the development of policies and plans to provide all services to those at risk in society, especially children, to strengthen them and to establish social justice in dealing with them.

Activating the role of existing institutions in the society to contribute to the provision of services to ensure the welfare of socially vulnerable groups, including institutions for the protection of women and children, anti-human trafficking institutions, human rights institutions, adult education institutions, special needs institutions, productive families and others.

5. Conclusion

This article reviews the most important problems faced by refugee children in the context of war and conflict, during and after asylum. The focus of this study was on refugee children from the Middle East and how to intervene and direct social work practice with them in order to empower them within communities and host countries. As the problems faced by children during asylum have a significant impact on their integration into host communities. Therefore, during the direct practice of the social worker with these children, these problems must be recognized in addition to the awareness of cultural sensitivity and its importance in working to solve the problems of children and integrate them into society and the educational system of host countries.

There are many strategies that are of great importance in working directly with refugee children, which the social worker must understand. As protectionist strategies direct effective professional practices with refugee children and enable social workers and all other specializations working in the field of refugee relief and protection to work professionally to achieve the therapeutic, rehabilitation and development goals of that group. Thus, ensuring that they are adaptable and healthy, who can socialize, live a decent life and be able to achieve their future goals in the societies in which they live.

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