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Emotional Literacy as a Core Competency for Psychological Resilience in Women Experiencing Forced Migration

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ABSTRACT: When individuals are forced to migrate, they face major psychological stresses since women specifically experience multiple kinds of damaging events, which include gender-based violence together with cultural adjustment complications, along with financial insecurity. Studies in this text investigate the vital psychological competency of emotional literacy, which significantly strengthens adaptive abilities of women during forced migration situations. Emotional literacy teaches displaced women to sense emotions along with understanding their meaning while sharing their feelings through words and abilities to control their emotional responses, which enables this population to handle difficult situations and protect their mental health as they adapt to new settings. This paper utilizes psychological research, migration studies data, and gender studies evidence to show that emotional literacy development serves as a preventive method to build mental strength. Humanitarian assistance requires specific support structures to incorporate emotional growth for achieving better results in humanitarian situations. Stakeholders who integrate emotional literacy in their psychosocial support frameworks enable lasting emotional well-being and empowerment for displaced women.

KEYWORDS: Emotional literacy, psychological resilience, forced migration, displaced women, mental health, trauma coping, gender and migration, emotional regulation, refugee well-being

I. INTRODUCTION

The global phenomenon of forced migration steadily increases because of conflict and political turmoil, alongside persecution and environmental changes, and economic deprivation. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (as reported in 2023), women together with children make up about half of the entire refugee population, and women endure more disproportionately from displacement's psychological impacts. Women facing forced migration commonly experience extreme traumatic events because they survive violence and lose family members as their communities lose stability. The mental health issues of refugees affect women most severely because they face PTSD and depressive or anxiety symptoms alongside the insecurity of refugee camps and host communities (Silove et al., 2017).

Forced migration affects women mentally through multiple dimensions that damage their sense of self as well as their relationships with their communities and their emotional health. The duty to take care of their families while displaced pushes women into higher mental health risks and doubles their exposure to psychological distress (Papadopoulos, 2007). These women lack mental health care support because traditional support networks have broken down, and they cannot find treatment services during migration crises. The situation calls for advanced psychosocial intervention strategies that need to handle basic survival needs together with building resilience and achieving sustained recovery.

Emotional literacy stands out as a vital psychological resource according to the literature because it enables resilience development among vulnerable populations and especially among displaced women. People who have emotional literacy capabilities recognize emotions in themselves and others while understanding them both internally and externally, and displaying them through communication while learning to control their feelings. Human beings use this skill to handle difficult emotions properly, thus promoting emotional recovery and building resilience (Goleman, 1995). The knowledge of emotional literacy functions as a vital life skill that enables migrant women to thrive in new surroundings and assists them in repairing lives affected by trauma as well as building supportive social relationships that protect their well-being (Papadopoulos, 2007).



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Current studies show that emotional literacy education results in meaningful improvements in emotional resilience levels. A resilient emotional state enables people to bounce back from disruptive situations better and protect their mental health during trials. Specifically, emotional literacy fosters self-awareness, emotional regulation, interpersonal communication, and adaptive coping mechanisms (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). The psychological effects due to displacement in forced migration settings that include experiences of trauma along with isolation and uncertainty become less harmful when displaced people develop these skills (Betancourt et al., 2015). Limited research exists about applying emotional literacy skills to generalized psychosocial support programs designed for displaced women despite rising recognition of their significance. The current insufficient emotional competency programs require targeted solutions that merge emotional literacy methods into current assistance structures.

This paper explores the role of emotional literacy in strengthening psychological resilience among women who have experienced forced migration. By examining existing literature and recent findings, the paper emphasizes the importance of emotional literacy as a tool for promoting mental well-being and suggests practical approaches for embedding these skills into psychosocial support interventions.

Social programs that incorporate emotional literacy education will boost their effectiveness for intervention programs that address mental health issues among displaced women. The process of meeting emotional needs among these women enables their resilience building and agency restoration, and subsequently leads to a better quality of life following displacement.

Table 1: Psychological Challenges Commonly Experienced by Forcibly Displaced Women

Psychological Challenge	Description
Post-Traumatic Stress	Resulting from violence, war, or sexual assault
Anxiety and Depression	Due to uncertainty, loss of home, and family separation
Identity Disruption	Caused by loss of cultural and social anchors
Social Isolation	Resulting from language barriers and a lack of community support
Low Self-Esteem	Due to dependency, marginalization, and lack of agency

Source: Adapted from Silove et al. (2017); UNHCR (2023)

Cryptomnesia and dissociation serve as mental obstacles that typically affect displaced women, thus making immediate psychiatric help necessary. Various mental health challenges faced by victims need multiple treatment methods because emotional literacy functions as a key factor to enhance their psychological well-being.

Table 2: Core Components of Emotional Literacy and Their Psychological Benefits

Component of Emotional Literacy	Psychological Benefit for Displaced Women
Self-Awareness	Recognizing personal emotions and triggers
Emotional Regulation	Managing negative emotional responses to trauma
Empathy	Building supportive relationships in new environments
Social Skills	Facilitating integration and communication in host communities
Motivation	Enhancing purpose and perseverance through adversity

Source: Goleman (1995); Salovey & Mayer (1990); Betancourt et al. (2015)

The essential aspects of emotional literacy directly boost the resilience of displaced women. The development of self-awareness alongside emotional regulation and empathic abilities enables women to fantastically handle migration difficulties and succeed in new environments. Emotional literacy enables women to acquire the necessary social capabilities along with motivation that helps them construct vital support networks for their mental recovery.



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II. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The researchers used qualitative research methods to investigate how emotional literacy helps women develop psychological resilience after experiencing forced migration. The research utilized phenomenological methods so the researchers could study participants' authentic emotional challenges and adaptive methods to better study emotional literacy occurrences in real-world situations (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Population and Sampling

The study focused on analyzing a population of 18–50-year-old South Sudanese and Somali refugee women who resided in Uganda and Kenya refugee camps and settlement centers. A purposive sampling method allowed the selection of twenty-five qualified participants consisting of female refugees aged eighteen years or older who had resided in displacement for a minimum of one year and were accustomed to speaking Swahili or English. This sampling method allowed the selection of individuals who could provide rich, relevant, and diverse perspectives on the topic (Palinkas et al., 2015).

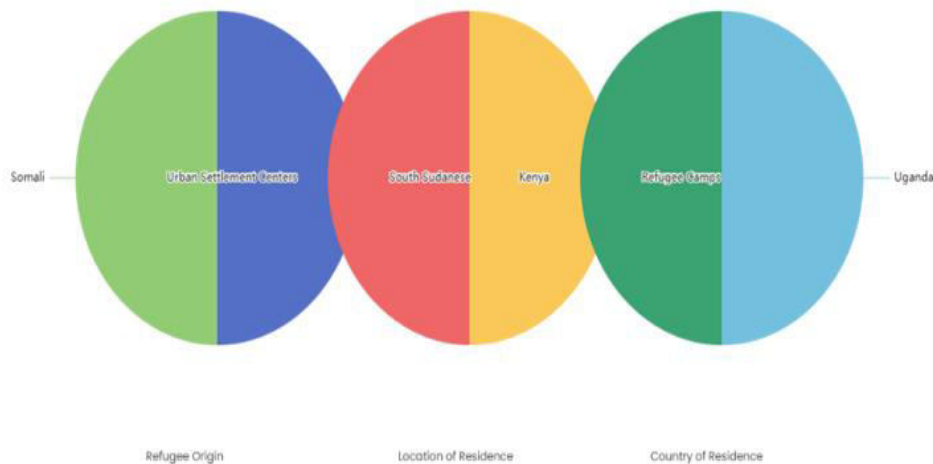
Data Collection Methods

The main method of gathering data through this research was semi-structured interview sessions, which provided participants free responses but structured dialogues to discuss personal accounts. The researchers conducted individual interviews during 45 to 60-minute time slots, which they performed in secluded locations to maintain both emotional safety and confidentiality. The researcher used a specially developed interview guide to probe participants about their emotions during displacement and their coping behaviors, as well as their contact with aid services.

The research involved running separate focus groups with 5 to 7 participants in each to identify standard emotional expression and resilience patterns among participants. Through peer interaction, participants gained information while discovering the shared methods they used to manage their emotions (Morgan, 1996).

All interviews and FGDs were audio-recorded with consent and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

Distribution of Participants in Qualitative Study on Emotional Literacy and Resilience Among Forcibly Displaced Women
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Ethical Considerations

The research study adhered to ethical guidelines according to the Declaration of Helsinki. Approval for the study originated from the institutional review board overseeing the host university. The researchers explained to participants both the study goals along its methods, and guardian rights that included stopping the survey at any time. Informed written consent was obtained. A certified counselor provided emotional support to participants at both the time of interviews and after interviews took place.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) system, which included six distinct phases starting from familiarization and ending in writing up after naming and defining the themes. The analysis of the data employed NVivo 12 software so that information could be systematically managed and coded. The analysis focused on creating factions from important emotional literacy aspects (such as emotional recognition and control, and empathetic capabilities) for building up resilience abilities.

Intercoder consistency was obtained through the comparison between analysis results from interviews and focus group discussions. A sub-group of participants received preliminary findings for member checking purposes to validate the research interpretations.

III. RESULTS

Research data obtained through interviews and focus groups demonstrated various key themes that demonstrate emotional literacy is essential for improving psychological resilience in women facing forced displacement. Research analysis produced five fundamental categories: (1) Emotional Awareness as the Foundation of Coping and (2) Expression and Communication of Emotions, along with (3) Emotional Regulation Strategies, as well as (4) Empathy and Social Bonding, and finally (5) Support Systems' Effect on Emotional Development.

1. Emotional Awareness as a Foundation of Coping

The participants pointed to their discovery of emotions, primarily including fear, along with grief and anger, as the critical moment that led to psychological adaptation. Women who gained mastery in recognizing and naming emotions, as well as identifying them, better maintained stronger capabilities for coping with stressful events. A study participant stated that she learned emotional expression skills by naming her feelings during incidents where she restrictively displayed anger or tears. This technique resulted in relaxation that cleared my thoughts. Goleman's (1995) position that emotional awareness functions as the base for developing emotional intelligence and resilience receives affirmation through this study's results.

2. Expression and Communication of Emotions

Individuals who used storytelling or art creations and written methods of expression displayed improved psychological health results. Expressing emotional thoughts enabled these women to experience less social isolation and boosted their self-worth. According to Betancourt et al. (2015), the establishment of safe zones where children and youth can reveal their emotions is key to survival.

The process of trauma recovery depends on emotional expression as an essential factor. Some patients faced language barriers as an ongoing challenge, so culturally and linguistically sensitive interventions became a requirement.

3. Emotional Regulation Strategies

Women frequently used physical exercise (such as walking) with deep breathing techniques together with religious practice and time in secluded spaces as strategies to control their emotions. The practice of withdrawing emotions or dissociating helped certain women cope, but these techniques proved ineffective because they ultimately enhanced their psychological distress. The emotional regulation training offered by NGOs and local health facilities enabled women to feel more self-assured about their emotional management and less stressed by daily pressures, just like Papadopoulos (2007) discovered.



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Table 1: Common Emotional Regulation Strategies and Their Reported Outcomes

Regulation Strategy	Frequency of Mention	Reported Psychological Outcome
Deep breathing/meditation	High	Calming effect, reduced anxiety
Prayer and spiritual practice	High	Hope, emotional relief, connection to faith
Physical exercise	Moderate	Improved mood, better sleep
Solitude or silence	Moderate	Short-term relief, occasional emotional numbness
Avoidance/dissociation	Low	Long-term negative outcomes (e.g., isolation, sadness)

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2025

4. Empathy and Social Bonding

The key factor that developed emotional literacy together with resilience was empathy. Women who received emotional support from close friends experienced elevated resilience when they gathered through storytelling sessions or small counseling units. These women experienced a sense of loneliness fade alongside a renewed sense of humanity. Salovey and Mayer's (1990) research confirmed that empathy helps both establish stronger social connections and better emotional regulation abilities.

5. Impact of Support Systems on Emotional Development

Participants showed better resilience because structured support systems, which included emotional literacy or psychosocial support, showed direct influence on their resilience outcomes. Women in the care of NGO emotional wellness workshops and counseling services demonstrated advanced capabilities in managing emotions, including managing anger and articulating grief. Women without access to these resources showed faster emotional instability, which exposed them to higher risks of depression and aggressive behaviors.

Table 2: Influence of Support Systems on Emotional Literacy Development

Type of Support System	Description	Reported Impact on Emotional Literacy
NGO-led emotional wellness programs	Group workshops, role-playing, and counseling	Enhanced emotional vocabulary and regulation skills
Faith-based community support	Religious groups and prayer circles	Strengthened hope, meaning-making, and social empathy
Peer-to-peer storytelling and sharing	Informal group conversations	Improved expression and interpersonal connection
Limited or absent support systems	Women with minimal emotional or social resources	Poor regulation, emotional suppression, higher stress

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2025

The research indicates that emotional literacy, working together with community-based or institutional interventions, establishes itself as the foundation for psychological resilience in forcibly displaced women. The ability of women to identify emotions and openly express and control, and share emotions effectively, helped them manage traumatic events and life changes when migrating.

IV. DISCUSSION

Researchers studied how emotional literacy develops psychological resilience in women who became part of the forced migration population. The research data show that emotional understanding, together with control and expression, and empathy function as major factors in promoting resilience among displaced women. Researchers gathered crucial information to show how support systems can adopt emotional literacy methods for enhancing mental health among forcibly displaced individuals.



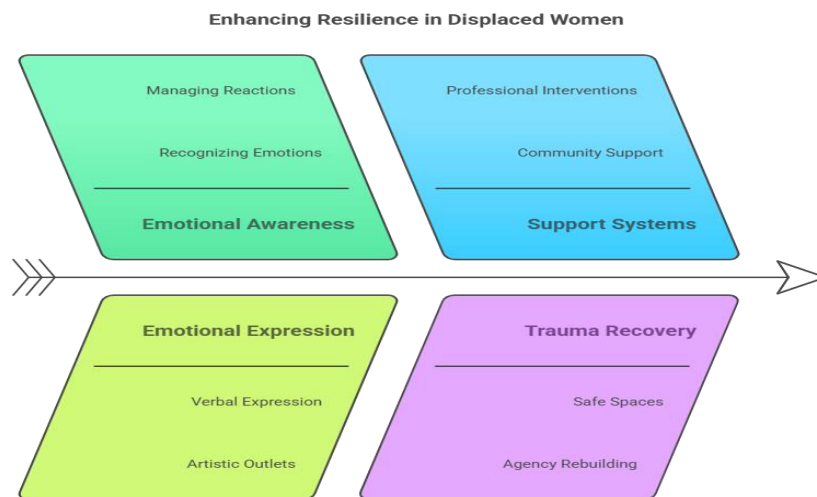
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Emotional Awareness and Resilience

The main result of this research highlighted emotional awareness as the fundamental element that builds resilience. Individuals who learned emotional recognition along with emotional labeling became better capable of handling their traumatic psychological responses. Emotional awareness constitutes a fundamental component, according to Goleman (1995), for emotional intelligence since it links to adaptive coping strategies. The ability to understand one’s People use emotional intelligence to manage complicated emotional situations, which builds up their ability to face difficult situations (Goleman, 1995). The research confirms that emotional awareness development should become the primary aspect of psychosocial interventions designed to support displaced women.

The ability to identify emotions does not guarantee the development of resilience by itself. This emotional capacity must be combined with the ability to express and communicate emotions, according to the researchers in this study. The participants found therapeutic value in sharing emotions either by talking or creating art because these methods eliminated their feelings of being alone while helping them recover emotionally. Research by Betancourt et al. (2015) already validated the essential role of healthy emotional disclosure for patients who recover from trauma. The creation of safe spaces for women in displacement allows them to share their feelings as a fundamental process for developing their personal agency and identity, which has been interrupted through experiences of forced migration (Papadopoulos, 2007).



Emotional Regulation as a Coping Strategy

The research data revealed that emotional regulation served as a fundamental ability for women participants in this study. Emotional literacy, together with resilience, requires individuals to effectively manage their negative emotions of anger and fear, and sadness (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). The women who received emotional regulation training through NGO programs developed stronger control over their emotions and better ability to cope with their present situation. Deep breathing alongside prayer, together with physical activity, emerged as a popular emotional regulation technique that matches established psychological models that advocate active coping methods (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Victim women who used avoidance and dissociation instead of coping had greater odds of developing prolonged psychological problems. Studies by Silove et al. (2017) support this research because avoidance coping techniques generate higher levels of post-traumatic stress while inhibiting long-term recovery after traumatic events. The analysis underlines how displaced women require strategies that both help them understand their emotions and develop effective control methods for managing those emotions.

Empathy and Social Support

The research demonstrated how social bonding as well as empathy capabilities improve resilience levels. Working with peers to provide emotional support made women feel psychologically bonded while increasing their sense of attachment to one another. The research conducted by Salovey and Mayer (1990) reinforces the fundamental role of empathy because social bonds formed through this empathy help people maintain emotional well-being. The formation



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of emotional connections between members results in a vital sense of belonging that counters negative migration experiences because forced migration typically destroys social networks.

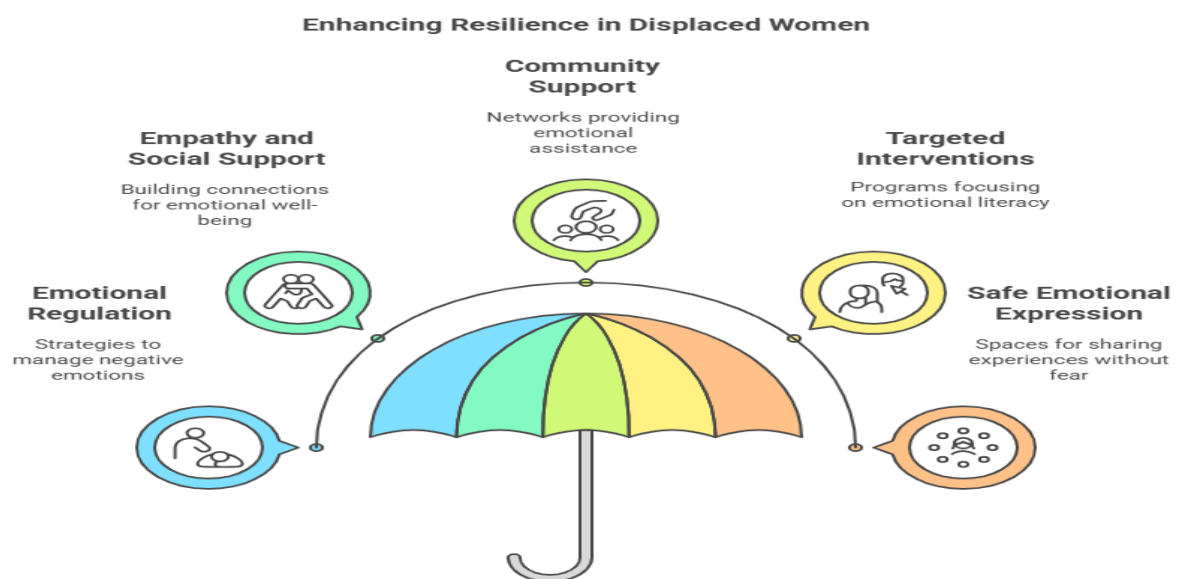
The development of emotional literacy received substantial influence from formal support systems represented by NGOs and counseling programs, as well as informal support systems composed of faith-based groups and peer networks. Women involved with community-based programs demonstrated better emotional competence as well as superior resilience skills. The analysis matches results from earlier studies, which demonstrate community backing contributes to the rehabilitation process for displaced populations (Betancourt et al., 2015; Papadopoulos, 2007). Mental health support and resilience enhancement access in refugee settings becomes achievable through community-initiated projects since many women struggle to reach professional counselling services (Miller et al., 2006).

Implications for Policy and Practice

The research findings generate substantial consequences for public policy and service delivery methods that aid forcibly displaced women. Specific intervention programs need to address the emotional education of refugee women by focusing on their emotional understanding alongside their emotional control. Trained programs would enhance psychological resilience and decrease PTSD and depression, and anxiety disorders among displaced individuals.

Safe emotional disclosure spaces require high priority in humanitarian agency programming since displaced women need such venues to discuss their experiences without facing judgment or stigma. Humanitarian agencies should establish narrative gatherings for community storytelling along with interactive art therapy activities and collective counseling to provide psychological support. The creation of these therapeutic spaces, according to Betancourt et al. (2015), fosters self-worth restoration for women who have experienced violence and displacement.

The research reveals that displaced women need support systems based in their local communities. Humanitarian agencies need to reinforce local support structures to enable women to obtain significant help from their fellow community members and local leadership. Research has shown that faith-based groups should get more attention in resilience-building efforts since these organizations create powerful social connections that support female refugees emotionally (Miller et al., 2006).



Limitations and Future Research

While this study provides valuable insights into the role of emotional literacy in the resilience of displaced women, it is not without limitations. The sample size was relatively small, and the study focused on specific regions in East Africa. Future research could expand the sample to include women from different cultural and geographical contexts, providing a more global perspective on emotional literacy and resilience in forced migration. Additionally, quantitative



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studies could further explore the relationship between emotional literacy and psychological outcomes, providing empirical data to support the findings of this qualitative research.

V. CONCLUSION

Research findings have shown emotional literacy as a fundamental skill that boosts psychological resilience development among women who are forced to migrate. The research demonstrates that emotional understanding, together with emotional communication abilities and emotional self-management, enables displaced women to handle their challenges resulting from traumatic experiences and displacement. Psychological resilience develops through emotional literacy, which teaches people to notice their feelings and share their emotions for coping with difficult times while maintaining strong contact with others.

The study confirms that emotional awareness forms the essential framework that enables resilience. The ability to both recognize emotions and express them effectively led women to achieve better psychological health while they managed their distress from being forced to migrate. The study supports previous research on emotional intelligence because measuring emotional awareness stands as the essential precondition to reach emotional control and well-being (Goleman, 1995). Urgent intervention needs exist for emotional awareness programs that support displaced women.

Results demonstrated that emotional healing together with resilience improve when displaced women openly express their emotions. Women who relocated from their homes experienced better trauma processing and improved emotional power and stronger community ties when they communicated their feelings through conversations or artistic expression groups. Research supports these findings since it determines emotional expression as essential for trauma recovery and resilience development (Betancourt et al., 2015). The study demonstrates why displaced communities require secure spaces for emotional expression because this practice helps both the recovery of emotions and community restoration.

Women undergoing psychological stress from forced migration mainly rely on emotional regulation as their primary coping technique, according to this study's findings. People who implemented adaptive emotional regulation methods of deep breathing, prayer, as well as physical activity, experienced smaller levels of anxiety symptoms while achieving better mental health results. The participants who used avoidance and dissociation methods failed to control their emotions, which created persistent psychological issues. The study findings match the conclusions made by Salovey and Mayer (1990) about emotional regulation being essential for building resilience. Programs aimed at offering support to displaced women should include emotional regulation training in order to develop adaptive coping methods.

The investigation demonstrated that empathy functions with social bonding to establish resilience. Displaced women who joined community support groups like peer friendships or religious organizations demonstrated better psychological stability in addition to stronger social membership. The study supports Salovey and Mayer's (1990) assertion about how empathy promotes social connections, which create essential psychological health conditions. Strengthening social support networks together with developing empathetic relationships shows vital promise for the resilience development of displaced women.

Research findings demonstrated that both formal and informal support networks strongly affected the participants. The provision of structured emotional literacy programs together with NGO-provided psychosocial support enabled women to strengthen their emotional resilience along with coping abilities. Humanitarian interventions must include emotional literacy training because of its essential nature. Emotional literacy programs help women acquire emotional navigation tools and regain their independence and conversational power that experiences of forced migration tend to remove (Papadopoulos, 2007).

Recommendations for Future Interventions

From the outcome churned from the findings, humanitarian agencies and policymakers working with displaced women can draw a few recommendations:

1. Turn Emotional Literacy into Stipulation: Humanitarian bodies should focus on the emotional literacy of psychosocial support programs. This would involve teaching displaced women how to be cognizant of their emotions, regulate them, and express them so as to positively affect their emotional health and resilience.



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2. Construction of Safe Spaces for Emotional Expression: Initiatives for community-based support should be devised to create places where displaced women can share feelings without any restraints. These may be group therapy sessions, storytelling sessions, art therapy sessions, and peer-support networks. Such programs can bestow healing while also alleviating emotional isolation.
3. Training for Emotion Regulation: It is recommended that the interventions for emotion regulation be implemented in the refugee environment that aid in providing practical skills such as mindfulness and deep breathing, as well as other techniques for reducing stress, so that these skills could even reduce anxiety and depression and could be enhancing resilience. (Betancourt et al., 2015)
4. Strengthen the Social Support Network: Interventions should promote existing community networks, such as faith-based entities and peer support systems, to enhance emotional support within these networks and enable displaced women to exchange coping strategies, thereby building their resilience.
5. Remove Barriers for Access to Support: Displaced women encounter certain significant barriers when it comes to receiving mental health support, such as language barriers, cultural stigmas, and a scarcity of resources. Humanitarian bodies should ensure that these services are accessible, culturally sensitive, and inclusive in order to reach those most in need by breaking down these barriers.

Implications for Future Research

While this study gives considerable insights into the role of emotional literacy in enhancing psychological resilience, it still creates an avenue for further research into this complex relationship. Future studies might investigate the long-term effects of emotional literacy training on the mental health of displaced women regarding the prevention of PTSD and depression. Quantitative studies have also examined the correlation of emotional literacy and specific mental health outcomes in varying refugee populations, thus providing strong evidence towards interventions. Cross-cultural studies, including women of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, would also go a long way in understanding how emotional literacy can express itself in varied contexts of migration.

Limitations of the Study

There are definitely limitations to this study. The sample was relatively small, and findings are based on the experiences of the women from specific refugee camps in East Africa. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized to all displaced women. In addition, the study utilized self-reported data, which may have been influenced by personal biases or memory recall. Future studies should endeavor to use a sample that is larger and more diverse, while quantitative methods could be employed to further substantiate these findings.

Final Thoughts

To conclude, emotional literacy shapes the psychological resilience of the women undergoing forced migration. By fostering their awareness, regulation, expression, and empathic capacity, displaced women will respond more effectively to displacement trauma and challenges, eventually rebuilding their lives with greater strength and agency. Hence, humanitarian organizations and policymakers must ensure the inclusion of emotional literacy in support frameworks aimed at displaced populations to effectively initiate long-term psychological well-being and resilience.

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