Food Insecurity Resilience of Refugee Families in the United States: A Qualitative Study

Maryam Suliman Alhabas

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FOOD INSECURITY RESILIENCE OF REFUGEE FAMILIES IN THE UNITED STATES: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

by

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation work to my family. I am particularly grateful to my mother, Nadiyah Aldahash who never left my side and travel long distances when I needed her to watch my children and help me during the most challenging times of graduate school and life. My father Suliman Alhabas taught me the value of life, nothing is worth giving up life, and maintain your health and happiness and those your loved ones precede almost any obstacle you are facing. My backbone is my husband Abdulrahman Alhadlaq, who empowered me to take the leap and travel alone with my children to the United States, a faraway country, to pursue my dream of completing my graduate studies and earning a doctoral degree in public health. He has been a constant source of support during this journey. My children, Basma, Ibrahim, and our soon-to-arrive baby boy, were my heroes and my cheerleaders. Basma, your resilience in coping with our living situation away from your father and family members encouraged me to keep working and not to worry about you. Ibrahim, you have been my work partner since your first breath, giving me a plenty of quiet time to work at the library and coffee shops and even attending my meetings with my professors. I appreciate all the weekends and holidays you two stayed home because mommy needed to work. Last but not least, I dedicate this work to my sisters and brothers, Sara, Mohammed, Abdullah, Fatimah, and Ahmed Alhabas. I have missed being with them and celebrating their special occasions. I love you all.
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“He who is not grateful to people, is not grateful to Allah” — Prophet Muhammed (PBUH).

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ABSTRACT

Refugee families living in the United States often encounter a number of challenges while trying to build a new home and maintain their household food security. Refugee families at high risk of experiencing food insecurity in the resettlement country. Food insecurity among US refugee families is a major public health concern as it adversely impacts their health and wellbeing, since it affects dietary intake and mental health and associated with illness, poor nutrition, and obesity. Little is known about what happens when refugee families face food insecurity experience, and the role of their social contexts in that experience. The objective of this study was to explore in-depth the refugee families’ challenges, their ability to respond to food shortage events, interpretations and characterizations of experiencing these events, and the social-ecological context that facilitate the maintenance and management of food security during these events. Two specific aims addressed the study objective. The first aim was understanding what household food insecurity means to refugee families in the US. The second aim was understanding how refugee families create resilience to food insecurity in the US and how resilience can be fostered.

In-depth Arabic interviews were conducted with 18 Syrian refugee families who lived in the Washington metropolitan area for 8 years or less. A maximum of three separate interviews were conducted in each family, one with each of two adults and one with the child. Demographics, and Arab Family Food Security Scale were collected. Two separate analysis processes were conducted to focus on each study aim (i.e., aim 1 and 2).
The results of the first aim showed that refugees experienced different periods of food security during various life events before and after resettlement, and the majority defined living in the host country (i.e., the country to which they fled before arriving in the resettlement country) as an extreme life event of hardship and food insecurity. This repeated exposure to food hardship events was connected to their judgment and interpretation of such events. In addition, refugees’ history with exposure to life hardship and food shortage led them to develop a habit of using positive self-description of adverse events. Positive self-description of negative events was obvious among refugee families who described their status in the home country as poor; they continually normalized the events and used their poor upbringing as justification for why they were used to these adverse events.

The results of the second aim showed that refugee families’ social and physical contexts played a role in their resilience to food insecurity, including sustaining their positive function and adjusting to any disruptive events. Refugee families’ social networks were one of the major resources that they relied on to prevent and mitigate any adverse events. The support received from their social networks was a significant aspect in helping refugee families develop new skills to prevent and/or deal with living hardships and food shortages. The lack of a supportive context that enabled the family to function and facilitate their resilience to food insecurity was a major aspect that contributed to the refugee family’s periodic food insecurity. Several recommendations to foster refugee families’ resilience to food insecurity participants offered to support them and other incoming refugee families.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

FAAR.................................................................Family Adjustment and Adaptation Response
FY .................................................................................. Fiscal year
ORR .............................................................................. The Office of Refugee Resettlement
PTSD ................................................................. Post-traumatic stress disorder
SNAP ............................................................... The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
SIV ................................................................. Special Immigrant Visa
WIC ...... The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children
WRAPS ...... The State Department’s Worldwide Refugee Admissions Processing System
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The number of forcibly displaced people has grown drastically, from 33.9 million in 1997 to 100 million in 2022, with 10.7 million newly displaced at the end of 2021, including 50 million displaced within their own countries, 4.4 million asylum-seekers, and 26.6 million new refugees (UNHCR, 2022). The majority of refugees have come from Syria (6.8 million), Afghanistan (5.7 million), South Sudan (2.1 million), and Myanmar (1.2 million) (UNHCR, 2022).

In the United States, the number of refugees during FY 2016 was the largest yearly amount since 1990 (84,994 individuals), representing a 22% increase over FY 2015 (69,933) (MPI, 2019). Almost 50% of the 84,994 refugees admitted in FY 2016 were nationals of Syria and Burma as the top origin groups, representing 14.8% (12,587 individuals) and 14.5% (12,347 individuals), respectively (MPI, 2019). US President Biden also proposed raising the target for refugee resettlement in the US to 125,000 people in FY 2022, compared to the previously highest number of 84,994 people in FY 2016 (MPI, 2022).

Refugees living in the United States with abundant food are still at high risk of food insecurity (Anderson, Hadzibegovic et al., 2014; Dharod et al., 2013; Gallegos et al., 2008; Hadley, Zodhiates et al., 2007; Hadley, Patil et al., 2010; Sellen et al., 2002). Food insecurity exists whenever the availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or the
ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways is limited or uncertain (Anderson, 1990). Food insecurity among US refugees is a major public health concern, as it adversely impacts their health and wellbeing, affecting their dietary intake and mental health, and is ultimately associated with illness, poor nutrition, overweight, obesity, and poor child development (Anderson et al., 2014; Dharod et al., 2013; Hadley et al., 2007; Patil et al., 2010; Sellen et al., 2002). The severity of the health outcomes of food insecurity may pose a barrier to successful integration in the resettlement country and lead to health inequalities.

Refugees’ vulnerability to food insecurity has persisted despite the duration of their residence in the resettlement country or level of acculturation or integration (Anderson et al., 2014). Unemployment and lack of income are common among refugees, particularly families with children, who are at high risk of food insecurity (Anderson et al., 2014; Hadley, Zodhiates et al., 2007). Although household income was found to be a strong determinant of food security status, refugees’ food insecurity has both economic and social determinants that place them at a higher risk of food insecurity than low-income citizens (Hadley & Sellen, 2006). For example, major shifts in food-related practices such as grocery shopping and food preparation might be one of the non-economic barriers that limit their ability to achieve or maintain household food security (Anderson et al., 2014; Hadley, Patil et al., 2010; Hadley, Zodhiates et al., 2007).

Limited attention has been paid to what happens when refugee families experience food insecurity in the US. Studies have focused mostly on the family’s dysfunctional characteristics and factors related to their food insecurity, while less emphasis has been placed on understanding how refugee families experience life
challenges, adjust to new life conditions, and try to improve their food status in the US (Hadley, Zodhiates et al., 2007; Patil et al., 2010; Peterman et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2016).

Therefore, this research used the family resilience perspective to provide a holistic view of the refugee family food insecurity problem by conceiving it as an interconnected set of problems rather than standing alone (Patterson, 2002). Resilience—or the capacity to function and rebound from life events and crises—shifts attention from a family’s dysfunction to broader thinking about how a family try to adjust to disruptions might feel overwhelmed by the imbalance of challenges and resources (Jones et al., 2018; Younginer et al., 2015). Thus, this perspective seeks ways for the families to rise to the food insecurity challenge and recognizes that resilience to food insecurity is not merely about a family’s ability to cope but includes challenges and resources in context (Jones et al., 2018; Patterson, 2002; Younginer et al., 2015).

The research conducted a qualitative study of food insecurity resilience of refugee families in the US from the Syrian refugee families’ perspective. The semi-structured interview guide was developed to conduct multiple interviews in each family. The qualitative method is well suited to study refugee family resilience to food insecurity; it provides a thick description of diverse family forms and experiences with food insecurity in very specific family meanings and contexts (Ungar, 2003). The method enabled the focus on the processes that family creates and maintains their own food status realities in the US, rather than focusing on identifying the family’s demographics or structural trends that related to their food insecurity (Ungar, 2003). In addition, understanding the process
of arriving at the situational meanings of their sources of stress as it one of the critical components in understanding the resilience process for food insecurity (Patterson, 2002).

1a. Research goals and specific aims

This research seeks to expand the limited knowledge of refugee families’ experience with food insecurity in the US. The research is innovative in studying refugee families’ resilience in the face of food insecurity, shifting attention away from families’ dysfunction in order to think more broadly about their challenges, their interpretations and characterizations of experiencing food insecurity, ability to respond to disruptive food shortages, and the social-ecological context that facilitate the maintenance and management of food security under stress.

The results of this study may expand our understanding of the complex and dynamic experience of refugee food insecurity and how to mitigate it by recognizing the contexts in which families experience food insecurity (Jones et al., 2018). The study aims will shed light on what happens when refugee families face food insecurity and to analyze the social contexts that determine the positive or negative impact of that experience. The study has two specific aims:

Specific Aim 1: To understand what household food insecurity means to refugee families in the United States.

Research Question 1: What life course events and transitions are related to refugees’ food insecurity? What past exposures and resources that carried across the life course do refugee families have that would be carried across time periods?
**Research Question 2:** How do these past exposures and resources result in refugee families’ adaptation from their interpretation of experiencing household food insecurity in the resettlement country?

**Specific Aim 2:** To understand how refugee families create resilience to food insecurity in the United State and how resilience can be fostered.

**Research Question 1:** What life challenges that make it hard for refugee families to secure their household food? And what refugee families’ capabilities that have played a role in their efforts to deal with these challenges?

**Research Question 2:** What is the role of social systems in refugee families’ context in shaping the challenges on and capabilities presents to the families?

**Research Question 3:** What are the recommendations from the refugee families’ perspective that would contribute to improve the refugees’ resettlement and foster their positive function to mitigate food insecurity?

1b. Overview

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the literature review. Chapter 3 provides a description of the research approach and methodology. Chapter 4 presents the research results, including 2 manuscripts. Chapter 5 provides a summary of major findings, recommendations, and study limitations and strengths.
CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

2a. Refugees

Throughout the Middle East and parts of Africa and Asia, the past eleven years have been a period of internal conflict and civil wars. Such conflicts have caused millions of people to be internally displaced or forced to leave their country to protect their lives and those of their loved ones (UNHCR, 2022). This forced displacement is known as “refugeeism.” The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) defines “refugees” as “people who are outside their country of nationality or usual country of residence and unable to return because of a fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, or membership in a particular social group or political opinion” (UNHCR, 2017). Many refugees have witnessed atrocities of war and lost their family and friends, homes, belongings, and dignity to the violence. Many have also suffered physical trauma and psychological problems such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, and insomnia (Jabbar & Zaza, 2014; Ostrand, 2015).

The number of forcibly displaced people drastically has grown from 33.9 million in 1997 to 100 million in 2022, with 10.7 million newly displaced at the end of 2021, including 50 million displaced within their own countries, 4.4 million asylum-seekers, and 26.6 million new refugees (UNHCR, 2022). The majority of refugees came from Syria (6.8 million), Afghanistan (5.7 million), South Sudan (2.1 million), and Myanmar (1.2 million) (UNHCR, 2022). During 2022, 1.4 million individual applications for
asylum were registered by UNHCR for resettlement in a third country, as the UNHCR helps with resettlement by transferring refugees from the country of asylum (i.e., host country) to one of the 35 countries that offer resettlement and permanent residency. In 2022, the number of asylum applications was 3% higher than in 2021 (UNHCR, 2022). In 2017, the United States was the largest recipient of new asylum applications (331,700), with an increase by 27% over the levels of 2016 (262,000) (UNHCR, 2017).

In the United States, the annual refugee admission ceiling, (i.e., the number of refugees who may be admitted each year), established by the President at the beginning of each fiscal year FY (i.e., October 1 through September 30), shifted from 76,000 in 2012, to 70,000 during the period from 2013 until 2016, and to 85,000 in FY 2016 (MPI, 2019). The admission ceiling dropped to 50,000 for FY 2017 (MPI, 2019). According to the State Department’s Worldwide Refugee Admissions Processing System (WRAPS), in FY 2016, 84,994 refugees arrived the United States, which represents a 22% increase over the amount that arrived in FY 2015 (69,933 refugees) (MPI, 2019). Almost 50% of the 84,994 refugees admitted in FY of 2016 were from Near East and South Asia, where nationals of Syria and Burma were the top origin groups, representing 14.8% (12,587 individuals) and 14.5% (12,347 individuals), respectively, followed by Iraq (9,880), Bhutan (5,817), Iran (3,750), Afghanistan (2,737), and Ukraine (2,543) (MPI, 2019).

2b. Life before resettlement in the third country

Refugees resettled in third countries have transferred from an asylum country (host country) to a resettlement country. During this migration process to their new home country, many refugee families experience war, loss of family members and friends, lack
of shelter and food, and exposure to violence (Jabbar & Zaza, 2014; Ostrand, 2015; Pejic et al., 2016). In the asylum (host) country refugee families were either living in urban slums or refugee camps, and refugees transferred from both settings were at high risk of micronutrient deficiencies as they face numerous challenges obtaining diverse, nutrient-rich foods (Fabio, 2014). In many countries where they refuge, they face restrictions on employment opportunities, freedom of movement, and residence, and become dependent on humanitarian assistance (Asylum Access, 2017; De Bruijn, 2009). In refugee camps the UNHCR recommends that each refugee receives more than 2100 kilocalories per day, but often refugee camps do not have a sufficient amount or variety of food (De Bruijn, 2009). In particular, there is a lack of vegetables and fruits (De Bruijn, 2009). For example, in Tanzania refugee camps, residents received around 1700 kcal per day in 2005 and 14600 kcal per day in 2006 (De Bruijn, 2009), while the daily food basket in Burmese refugee camps was restricted to rice, soy oil, mung beans, iodized salt, fermented fish, and dried chilies (Fabio, 2014; Ndemwa et al, 2011). This poor nutrition causes many refugees to suffer from malnutrition and related diseases (Fabio, 2014). For example, among refugees resettled in the US between 2010 and 2011, adolescents had a prevalence of iron deficiency anemia 2.5 times higher than US citizens, and children had a high prevalence of malnutrition, anemia, and dental caries compare to their US citizen counterparts (Fabio, 2014).

2c. Life after resettlement in the third country

Upon resettlement in the third country, refugees deal with an entirely new challenge while carrying the burden of their past experience. In their new home country,
refugees encounter many resettlement stressors such as poor housing and neighborhood, social isolation and exclusion, loss of identity, change in family role, language and culture barriers, and limited access to employment (Bernier, 1992; Betancourt et al., 2015; Hadley & Sellen, 2006; Pejic et al., 2016). Among Burmese and Bhutanese refugees resettled in the US, limited English-language proficiency was one of the greatest sources of their stress as well as a barrier to access to employment opportunities (Hauck et al., 2014).

2d. Syrian refugees

In the eleven years since the beginning of Syrian conflict in 2011, there has been massive Syrian displacement within the country and across the world (Ostrand, 2015; Jabbar & Zaza, 2014). The Syrian crisis is estimated by the UN as the worst in the 21st century, as it generated the largest number of refugees since the historic high number of refugees during the 1990s (Charles & Denman, 2013; UNHCR, 2017, 2019, 2022). Since 2011, the total number of Syrian refugees exceeded 6.8 million (UNHCR, 2021). Over 22,500 Syrian refugees were admitted into the US between 2011 and 2021 (RPC, 2019). Eight states received the majority of refugees (more than 1000 Syrian refugees), including California (2405 individuals), Michigan (2299 individuals), Texas (1614 individuals), Pennsylvania (1313 individuals), Arizona (1291 individuals), Illinois (1263 individuals), Florida (1154), and New York (1140 individuals) (RPC, 2019). During that time, nearly 968 Syrian refugees resettled in Virginia and Maryland (RPC, 2019).

Many Syrian refugees who resettled in the US have experienced violence compounded by loss of family members and friends, loss of their home and their
belongings, social isolation, discrimination, and uncertainty about the future during the bloody and ugly, 7-years-long Syrian civil war (Hassan et al., 2015; Pottie et al., 2016).

As refugees make lives in a new home country, they encounter new challenges. They struggle with becoming self-sufficient within a few months (i.e., within the first 120 to 180 days) of their arrival in the US while dealing with lack of income sources and employment opportunities, limited English proficiency, and navigating strange health and educational systems (Betancourt et al., 2015; Pejic et al., 2016; Pottie et al., 2016).

Syrian refugees face a number of challenges after resettlement in new countries that may worsen their distress (Hansen & Huston, 2016). According to the UNHCR, once their basic housing, food and security needs have been met, however, they demonstrate a remarkable resilience and recover quickly (Hansen, & Huston, 2016). Resettlement services in the US are divided between the Department of State’s Reception and Placement program and the Office of Refugee Resettlement: Matching Grant program. The Reception and Placement program provides the initial (i.e., first 30 days) reception and placement services for newly-arrived refugees, such as a one-time cash allowance (i.e., $975), and application for Medicaid and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), while the Matching Grant program provides services for 120 days after arrival (Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Arlington, B. Loppisso, personal communication, June 2019). The Matching Grant program package includes, extended case management, employment services (e.g., short term training: ESL, Behind the Wheel, Security training), three cash allowances (i.e., three payments of $200 per adult and $40 per child), and up to 3 months rental or utility assistance. After this initial period (i.e., 4 to 6 months) of resettlement support, refugees are then expected to be self-
sufficient (Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Arlington, B. Lopisso, personal communication, June 2019).

2e. Refugee’s food insecurity in developed countries and in the US

Refugees may live in developed countries with abundant food, yet their food security may become compromised (Anderson et al., 2014; Dharod et al., 2013; Gallegos et al., 2008; Hadle, Zodhiates et al., 2007; Hadley, Patil et al., 2010; Sellen et al., 2002). “Food insecurity exists whenever the availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or the ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways is limited or uncertain” (Anderson, 1990). A study of 30 refugee mothers with children under five who recently resettled in the United Kingdom found that they were all experiencing food insecurity (Sellen et al., 2002). In another sample of 195 Somali families who resettled in the US, 67% experienced food insecurity, more commonly among newly arrived refugees (Dharod et al., 2013). In a sample of 51 recently arrived refugees in Australia, more than half (71%) reported having run out of food at the end of the month (Gallegos et al., 2008). Unemployment and lack of income commonly place refugees, particularly newcomer refugee families with children, at higher risk of food insecurity (Anderson et al., 2014; Hadle, Zodhiates et al., 2007). A small number of qualitative studies have suggested that along with economic constraints, major shifts in food-related practices, such as grocery shopping and food preparation, to which refugee families must adapt, may limit their ability to achieve or maintain household food security (Anderson et al., 2014; Hadle, Zodhiates et al., 2007; Hadley, Patil et al., 2010).
Household food insecurity can be a major public health concern, since it affects dietary intake and, ultimately associated with illness, poor nutrition, and adverse child development (Alaimo, Olson, Frongillo, 2002; National Research Council, 2006; Wolfe & Frongillo, 2001). In studies of adults, food insecurity was positively associated with poor eating behavior, nutrient deficiencies, and being overweight and obesity (Utter et al., 2012). Self-reported food insecure adults have a lower intake of fruit, vegetables, and dairy products, higher intakes of fat and energy-dense food, and inadequate levels of vitamin A, folate, iron, and magnesium (Ghattas et al., 2013; Kirkpatrick & Tarasuk, 2007; Mello et al., 2010; Tarasuk & Beaton, 1999; Utter et al., 2012).

Among children, household food insecurity is associated with both nutrition and non-nutrition outcomes. Food insecurity is associated with a poor-quality diet and being overweight and obesity (Alaimo et al., 2002; Fram et al., 2015; Jyoti, Frongillo & Jones, 2005; Kaiser et al., 2002; Rosas et al., 2009; Slack & Yoo, 2005). Children experiencing food insecurity found to have a higher consumption of fat, sugar, and fried snacks, and lower consumption of vegetables than children not experiencing food insecurity (Fram et al., 2015; Rosas et al., 2009). Non-nutritional outcomes include diverse mental and physical consequences (Alaimo et al., 2001, 2002; Bernal, Frongillo, Herrera & Rivera, 2014; Casey et al., 2005; Cook et al., 2013; Fram et al., 2014; Hamelin et al., 2002; National Research Council, 2006; Saha et al., 2010; Jyoti et al., 2005). Food insecurity is linked to specific childhood developmental consequences, including delayed early childhood language development (Saha et al., 2010). Among school-aged children, food insecurity was positively associated with poor academic performance (Alaimo et al., 2001, 2002; Fram et al., 2014; Kleinman et al., 1998; Jyoti et al. 2005; Kleinman et al.,
2003; Murphy et al., 1998), reading and mathematics test performance (Alaimo et al., 2001; Kleinman et al., 1998; Murphy et al., 1998), physical activity, (Casey et al., 2005; Fram et al., 2014), and social skills (Alaimo et al., 2001; Kleinman et al., 1998; Murphy et al., 1998). For adolescents, 15 to 16 years old, food insecurity was associated with depression and suicide symptoms (Alaimo et al., 2002).

Among refugees, an increased severity of household food insecurity was associated with a decreased consumption of high-cost, nutrient-rich foods (e.g., fruit and vegetables) and increased consumption of low-cost, energy-dense and micronutrient-poor foods, particularly by caregivers of young children (Anderson et al., 2014; Dharod et al., 2013; Sellen et al., 2002). As a result, being overweight or obese was positively related to food insecurity, especially among refugee mothers (Dharod et al., 2013). Refugees’ household food insecurity can lead to health inequalities and pose barriers to successful integration in the resettlement country.

To refugees, food is one of the crucial components for creating a sense of home even in a hostile environment (Vandevoordt, 2017). To many of them, eating and drinking were more than a biological need; food plays a central role in the social and psychological meaning of life (Morse, 1994; Vandevoordt, 2017). In a qualitative study conducted among 39 Syrian refugees in Belgium that focused on their experiences in the new country (e.g., how they felt, what they expected), the topic of food repeatedly emerged during the first 13 interviews, so questions focused on food were systemically added to the subsequent interviews (Vandevoordt, 2017). Syrian refugees used food as an expression of their identity and distinctness from others (Lupton 1996; Vandevoordt, 2017). They were proud of their national culinary traditions, which they saw as
something valuable their society could offer to the world, and as a means of subverting negative stereotypes about the Syrian’s culture. In addition, their traditional foods’ unique tastes and aromas were related to their homeland, so losing the opportunity to consume these foods was a greater loss than a loss of social status (Vandevoordt, 2017).

Resettlement programs continue to be crucial in accelerating refugees’ integration and financial independence, which improve their overall wellbeing including their food security. In the US, volunteer agencies and the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) help refugees integrate by providing them a full range of resettlement services in the first four to six months of their arrival, including referrals for short-term cash, medical assistance, English as a foreign language classes, and job readiness and employment services, to help them become self-sufficient as quickly as possible. Despite these programs, however, refugee families’ still face high risk of food insecurity, and that risk does not diminish with the duration of residency in the resettled country (Anderson et al., 2014).

Limited attention has been paid to what happens when refugee families experience food insecurity. Studies have focused mostly on the family’s dysfunctional characteristics and factors related to their food insecurity; more emphasis should be placed on how refugee households try to rebound from life challenges, adapt to new life conditions, and improve their food security status in the resettlement country (Hadle, Zodhiates et al., 2007; Patil, et al., 2010; Peterman et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2016). Understanding how families try to respond to food insecurity challenges can help distinguish how families are sometimes overwhelmed by the adverse event when the challenge they face and the resources they have are imbalanced (Jones et al., 2018;
Patterson, 2002), as well as foster better understanding of how to enhance their resilience and reduce their vulnerability to food insecurity with the recognition of their social and physical context (Southwick et al., 2014). As resilience increases the individuals’ or groups’ capacity to cope with stress, it can be seen as an antonym of vulnerability (Adger, 2000; Bhana & Bachoo, 2011; Chambers, 1989; Watts & Bohle, 1993).

2f. Significance

Number of refugees resettled in the United States

The number of individuals arriving as refugees in the United States during FY 2016 was the largest yearly amount of refugees admissions since 1990 (84,994), according to WRAPS (IMP, 2019). This number represents a 22% increase over the amount in FY 2015 (69,933) (IMP, 2019). Almost 50% of the 84,994 refugees admitted in FY of 2016 were from the Near East and South Asia, where nationals of Syria and Burma were the top groups, representing 14.8% (12,587 individuals) and 14.5% (12,347 individuals), respectively, followed by Iraq (9,880), Bhutan (5,817), Iran (3,750), Afghanistan (2,737), and Ukraine (2,543) (MPI, 2019).

The refugee population in the US is diverse and rapidly growing, and face unique causes of food insecurity, both during and after resettlement, as compared to the general population and other immigrant groups. Food insecurity poses barriers to their successful integration in the resettlement country and leads to health inequalities. The health and wellbeing of this growing demographic group increasingly contributes to the health of American society at large and may strongly impact the future health care system and productivity of the US workforce as a whole.
Refugee families are at high risk of food insecurity and that risk does not diminish with the duration of their residency in the resettled country

Refugees living in the United States, where food is widely available, are still at high risk of food insecurity (Anderson et al., 2014; Dharod et al., 2013; Gallegos et al., 2008; Hadley, Patil et al., 2010; Hadle, Zodhiates et al., 2007; Sellen et al., 2002). Refugees’ vulnerability to food insecurity has persisted despite the duration of their residence in the resettlement country or level of acculturation or integration. Among a group of Sudanese refugees resettled in the US, there was no association between their household food insecurity and the length of the caregiver’s residence in the US (Anderson et al., 2014). Although household income was found to be a strong determinant of food security status, refugees’ food insecurity had both economic and social determinants that placed them at higher risk of food insecurity than low-income citizens of the US (Hadley & Sellen, 2006)

Adverse health and social outcomes related to food insecurity

Food insecurity among US refugees is a major public health concern as it inversely affects their health and wellbeing. Refugees’ food insecurity associated with poor dietary practices, adverse child development, depressive and behavioral disorders, and overweight among mothers (Anderson et al., 2014; Dharod et al., 2013; Hadle, Zodhiates et al., 2007; Patil et al., 2010; Sellen et al., 2002). Increased severity of household food insecurity among refugees is an indicator of decreased consumption of high-cost, nutrient-rich foods (e.g., fruit and vegetables) and increased consumption of low-cost, energy-dense and micronutrient-poor foods, particularly by caregivers of young children (Anderson et al., 2014; Dharod et al., 2013; Sellen et al., 2002). As a result,
being overweight or obese was positively related to food insecurity, especially among refugee mothers and adult caregivers of young children (Anderson et al., 2014; Dharod et al., 2013). Given the severity of the health outcomes of food insecurity, refugees’ food insecurity may pose a barrier to their successful integration in the resettlement country and lead to health inequalities.

Identifying the strategies applied by refugee families for food insecurity resilience

The research contributes to the literature on the health and food insecurity of refugees and migrants. The research outcomes help in identifying ways to foster refugees’ resilience to food insecurity. Findings will offer service and program providers as well as policymakers a deeper understanding of the context within which refugees reconstruct their lives and strive to maintain food security in the US. Additionally, by giving refugees the opportunity to tell their stories to the world and future generations, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of their experience with trying to rebound from life challenges and food insecurity in the resettlement.

2g. Conceptualizing refugee family’s food insecurity resilience

Concept of family’s resilience and refugee’s food insecurity

The concept of resilience is broad and has been developed and explored in numerous fields, such as ecology, socio-ecology, physics, economics, psychology, and sociology. The concept can be relevant for describing a refugee families’ experience to maintain adaptive functioning and overall well-being while facing adverse events and crises in the resettlement country.

Family resilience is the capacity of a family as an emergent system that is
potentially exposed to disturbances that threaten its viability, or function to navigate and use available internal and external resources that sustain their wellbeing, and a condition of the family community, and culture to provide these resources in way that are meaningful to them (Pooley & Cohen, 2010; Southwick et al., 2014; Ungar, 2019). It is a complex construct that may have different types (e.g., acute resilience, emergent resilience) and a specific meaning for a particular family, society, and culture depending on context (Southwick et al., 2014). For example, the resilience of Cambodian refugees who came to the US after being exposed to violence in their origin country may be different than resilience for some in the US after they experience a hurricane (Southwick et al., 2014).

Studies on family resilience provide a holistic view of family challenges by conceiving such challenges as an interconnected set of issues rather than a stand-alone problem. This view focuses on the ways in which challenged families avoid and/or address problems, rather than on the problem itself. This view provides a recognition of context, which goes beyond personal or group qualities and characteristics to include the context where the problem and stress took place (Black & Lobo, 2008; Pooley & Cohen, 2010; Rutter, 2007; Southwick et al., 2014).

In a food insecurity context, family resilience shifts attention from a particular family’s dysfunction toward thinking more broadly about the challenges that are being presented to families and the ability of families to respond to disruptive events creatively and constructively and the social-ecological factors that facilitate the maintenance and management of food security under stress (Jones et al., 2018; Pooley et al., 2010; Ungar, Ghazinour et al., 2013).
A family resilience perspective also encourages thinking about the context of the families experiencing or their adjustments to disruptive events or crises. A family might be overwhelmed by an imbalance between challenges and resources (Patterson, 2002; Jones et al., 2018; Younginer et al., 2015). Thus, the perspective thinks about the ways that the family responds to the food insecurity challenge and what they need to face this challenge by recognizing that family resilience to food insecurity is not only about an individual family’s ability to cope, but includes also various challenges and resources in their context (Jones et al., 2018; Younginer et al., 2015).

This broader perspective provides a helpful way to identify appropriate methods at different levels (e.g., individual, family, community, policy) that promote and protect a family’s ability to cope, and in particular address the family’s resilience to food insecurity (Southwick, et al., 2014).

Refugee’s Family

Elizabeth Bott (1957) was one of the first to consider each family as a social system (Wittner, 1994). A refugee family in the resettlement country can be considered as a social system comprised of interactive components that operate together for a common purpose, capable of reacting as a whole to external shock (Alinovi et al., 2010). Several independent components can be thought of as playing a role in shaping the refugee family system: individuals (e.g., the family members’ mental and physical health, the family head’s gender, worldview, education, and skills), community (e.g., ethnic and religious groups, neighborhood), organizations (e.g., resettlement organizations, local NGOs, religious organizations), and public policy (e.g., citizenship policy, welfare access policies).
2h. Conceptual framework

**Aim 1: To understand what household food insecurity means to refugee families in the United States.**

*Situational meanings (hedonic adaptation) and life course perspective*

The study sought to expand the limited knowledge of refugee families’ experience with food insecurity in the United States and their resilience in the face of food insecurity. One of the critical components for understanding the refugee resilience process for food insecurity is understanding the process of arriving at the situational meanings of their sources of stress (Patterson, 2002). Therefore, it is imperative to explore what household food insecurity means to Syrian refugee families from a life course perspective (Elder, 1994). The life course perspective focuses attention on the connection between the individual lives and their historical and socioeconomic context (Elder, 1994). The concept defined is as “a sequence of socially defined events and roles that the individual enacts over time” (Giele & Elder, 1998). The life course perspective provides two useful concepts: life events and life transitions. Both can be used to explore and understand the different experiences the refugee families endured during their life before and after the resettlement. A life event is a significant occurrence involving a relatively abrupt change that may produce serious and long-lasting effects (Settersten, 2003a). An application of life events could be useful for exploring past life events (e.g., war, food shortages, other hardships) the refugee families experienced. Meanwhile, life transitions (i.e., changes in status or identity, both personally and socially, that offer opportunities for behavioral change (Settersten, 2003a)) explore the refugee families’
different transitions in the resettlement country that had subsequent implications in building their resources and shaping their lives.

The idea of hedonic adaptation is that people may adapt, over time, to positive or negative events and return to a certain baseline state, which can influence the formation of refugees’ situational meaning of food insecurity (Graham & Oswald, 2010; Kahneman et al., 1999; Klausen et al., 2022). The framework was built upon the life course perspective and the idea of hedonic adaptation (Figure 2.1).

![Figure 2.1 Understanding the refugee families situational meaning of food insecurity using hedonic adaptation and life course perspective](image)

Both life events and life transitions can be used to understand the dynamics of refugee families’ responses to life events (i.e., hedonic adaptation) as well as their interpretation of experiencing food insecurity in the US. One means of hedonic adaptation is that people tend to change their judgement about the ideal state (i.e., satisfaction with and positive feelings about life) by adjusting the subjective reference level they use to compare their situation (Diener & Ryan, 2009; Frongillo et al., 2018;
Kahneman et al., 1999). An application of life events could be useful for exploring the role of repeated exposure to adverse events on refugees’ hedonic adaptation—namely, their judgment of current adverse events. In addition, being shielded from negative events by the social and physical environment, which is known as assisted adaptation, is an indirect form of adaptation that is not merely a cognitive response to a stimulus (negative or positive event), but also prevents an event from occurring (Klausen et al., 2022). This form of hedonic adaptation is related to individuals’ judgment and interpretation of adverse events, as it is conductive to individuals’ satisfaction about their state (Klausen et al., 2022; Putnam & Helliwell, 2004). The application of life transitions would be useful for navigating refugee families’ social and physical environments and the resources they build that relate to their hedonic adaptation—that is, their efforts to prevent adverse events that related to judgement and their interpretation of adverse events.

**Aim 2: To understand how refugee families create resilience to food insecurity in the United State and how resilience can be fostered.**

*Resilience as a Process*

This study resilience can be viewed as an emergent process in a challenging environment rather than an individual characteristic or trait (Jacelon, 1997; Patterson, 2002; Pooley et al., 2010; Southwick et al., 2014). In studies of children living in adversity, resilience is seen as a process of positive adaptation that involves a dynamic transaction between the child, family, community, and dominant culture to sustain wellbeing (Bhana & Bachoo, 2011). It is an ordinary phenomenon that results from the operation of a human adaptational system (Wright & Masten, 2005). The framework in
Figure 2.2 was built upon the Family Adjustment and Adaptation Response (FAAR) model and Bronfenbrenner’s ecological system theory to understand the refugee family’s resilience to food insecurity in the resettlement country (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Patterson, 2002).

The FAAR model emphasizes the process that the family engages to balance their demands and capabilities with an interaction of the meanings through which the family understands such demands and capabilities to reach a level of family adjustment or adaptation to crises (Patterson, 2002). Demands include normative and nonnormative stressors, ongoing strains, and daily living hassles (Patterson, 2002). Capabilities are comprised of tangible and psychosocial resources (what a family has) and coping behavior (what a family does) (Patterson, 2002). The FAAR model takes into consideration the importance of context, which influences how a family copes with crisis.
by identifying the demands on and capabilities present of the family. Therefore, it is also
important to understand and organize the sources of family demands and capabilities in
the resettlement country.

Bronfenbrenner’s theory incorporates recognition of the importance of looking at
the different layers in the environment within which a family functions (Bronfenbrenner,
1986). Integrating the FAAR model and Bronfenbrenner’s theory provides a useful
framework to understand a refugee family’s resilience to food insecurity through
encouragement, shaping, and activation by a host of family-context interactions. The
framework in Figure 2 is developed to focus on understanding how context shapes a
refugee family’s resilience to food insecurity. This framework serves to explore in depth
the refugee families’ food insecurity experience, and how their context shapes and fulfill
their functions to augment food security.

Demands and Capabilities within Context

From the perspective of research on refugee family resilience to food insecurity,
Bronfenbrenner’s (1986) ecological model helps explain the social and cultural context
where a refugee family try to creates and sustains resilience to food insecurity in the
resettlement country. Because family food insecurity stress takes place in the context of
interactions with other individuals, available resources and policies, specific cultures and
religions, communities, and organizations also shape the family’s experience of food
insecurity (Southwick et al., 2014; Sherrieb et al., 2010; Walsh, 2006; Younginer et al.,
2015). In the context of the multi-dimensionality of food security (i.e., food availability,
access, utilization and stability) Bronfenbrenner’s (1986) model organizes the resources
that foster household resilience and the sources of stress or demands, because each can be
placed on levels external to the family system (Aliaga & Chaves-Dos-Santos, 2014; Boon et al., 2012; FAO, 2006; Lawlis et al., 2018). This framework is useful for exploring the role of relevant capabilities and demands within a family system, as well as external resources such as assets (physical, human, and social capital), social support, public policies, access to food and income, which promote and protect family resilience to food insecurity. Collectively, capabilities and resources may shape the degree to which a family is able to fulfill their functions as well as the ability to acquire new capability to manage food insecurity events.

Bronfenbrenner’s model is based on the view that individuals’ well-being is influenced by the social context in which they are embedded and the quality and function of social networks such as family, community, and institutional systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). It emphasizes interrelationships between individuals and the contexts in which they live. Within the ecological framework, we can explore the available resources in the systems external to the family include the mesosystem (e.g., ethnic and religious groups, extended families), exosystem (e.g., resettlement agencies, church and mosque, non-profit organizations), and macrosystem (e.g., public policies, welfare access), which also play a role in determining family function as well as a family’s resilience to food insecurity.

21. Research goals and specific aims

This research seeks to expand the limited knowledge of refugee families’ experience with food insecurity in the US. The research is innovative in studying refugee families’ resilience in the face of food insecurity, shifting attention away from families’
dysfunction in order to think more broadly about their challenges, their ability to respond to disruptive food shortages, and the social-ecological context that facilitate the maintenance and management of food security under stress.

The results of this study may expand our understanding of the complex and dynamic experience of refugee food insecurity and how to mitigate it by recognizing the contexts in which families experience food insecurity (Jones et al., 2018). The study aims will shed light on what happens when refugee families face food insecurity and to analyze the social contexts that determine the positive or negative impact of that experience. The study has two specific aims:

**Specific Aim 1:** To understand what household food insecurity means to refugee families in the United States.

- **Research Question 1:** What life course events and transitions are related to refugees’ food insecurity? What past exposures and resources that carried across the life course do refugee families have that would be carried across time periods?

- **Research Question 2:** How do these past exposures and resources result in refugee families’ adaptation form their interpretation of experiencing household food insecurity in the resettlement country?

**Specific Aim 2:** To understand how refugee families create resilience to food insecurity in the United State and how resilience can be fostered.

- **Research Question 1:** What life challenges that make it hard for refugee families to secure their household food? And what refugee families’ capabilities that have played a role in their efforts to deal with these challenges?
**Research Question 2:** What is the role of social systems in refugee families’ context in shaping the challenges on and capabilities presents to the families?

**Research Question 3:** What are the recommendations from the refugee families’ perspective that would contribute to improve the refugees’ resettlement and foster their positive function to mitigate food insecurity?
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

The purpose of this grounded theory study is to develop a theory that explains how refugee families interpret the meaning of experiencing food insecurity, try to achieve resilience from food insecurity in their country of resettlement, and how such resilience can be fostered. A qualitative study was conducted to address the research aims. Based on a review of the literature and field observations, semi-structured interview guides (Appendix A and B) were developed. Refugee families who had lived in the Washington metropolitan area for eight years or less were interviewed in Arabic (i.e., participants’ native language) by the researcher in a face-to-face format. Short surveys on demographics and socioeconomics as well as food security status were conducted (Appendix C).

Study population and settings

Syrian refugee families served as this study’s population, specifically those that had been living in the United States for eight years or less and residing in the Washington metropolitan area (District of Columbia, Virginia, and Maryland). Syrian refugees admitted the US between 2011 and 2019 were 21,623 and distributed across the country (MPI, 2019). During that time a total of 625 Syrian refugees resettled in Maryland and 360 in Virginia (RPC, 2019). In Maryland refugee population
concentrated in three areas, including Prince George’s county, Baltimore city, and Montgomery county (DHS, 2019). In Virginia the majority of refugees lives in Northern Virginia (VDSS, 2019). Many Syrian refugee families went through secondary migration and moved from their resettlement state to another state seeking for better job opportunities; for example, many Syrian refugees in Maryland were originally resettled in Arizona and moved to Maryland after they lived there for two years.

**Sampling plan and recruitment strategies**

Most participants were recruited through purposive snowball sampling strategy. This strategy was appropriate because participants were difficult to locate; many had fallen out of contact with resettlement agencies in the years since their resettlement. The first author participated and volunteered in events focused on refugee populations in the DMV area, such as the Arab American Health Conference, cooking classes provided by refugee women, and house preparations for newly arrived refugee families, to learn about the distribution of the Syrian refugee population in the DMV area and identify a gatekeeper and potential families. Two families and a gatekeeper were identified. Rather than obtaining names and contact information from the first identified families for other families, each family was asked to forward an email invitation or text message (Appendix D) containing information on the research project with the researcher’s contact information to other refugee families. This method protected the identity of potential participants from being revealed to the researcher. Additional purposive sampling strategies were used, such as sharing a study flyer (Appendix E) with a gatekeeper, a non-
profit organization that works with the Syrian refugees and supports newly arrived refugees in the Washington metropolitan area.

The inclusion criteria were:

1. Syrian origin: this population has the highest rate of refugee claims in the US and worldwide. The number of Syrian refugees in the US since their civil war reached 21,623 individuals (2011-2019), and 985 refugees were originally resettled in Maryland and Virginia (RPC, 2019; MPI, 2019).

2. Entered the US as a refugee: A refugee is different than an immigrant who chooses to travel to a new country for better economic opportunities, ethnic and social network, etc. (DeLaet, 2000). In contrast, refugees are forced to leave their countries to escape civil war, and most have lived in temporary refugee camps with inadequate food, shelter, and medical care prior to resettling in a new country and commonly they arrive with multiple medical and psychological issues that limit them from acquiring new skills that are essential for employment and living (Skidmore, 2003). Accordingly, this research is focusing on this population because they are at higher risk of food insecurity because of their lack of savings or income source, poor English language-proficiency, and limited access and knowledge about a resettlement country’s living environment (Anderson & Sellen, 2013). Also, less is known about food insecurity among refugee’s living in the US (Hadley et al., 2010). Families who were immediate relatives of a US citizen, or who entered the US on a Special Immigrant Visa (SIV), were excluded.

3. Lived in the US for eight years or less: Syrian families that arrived in the US within the last eight years were recruited because the study interested in family that experienced the recent Syrian conflict.
Data collection procedure

In-depth Arabic interviews were conducted with each family in their home. The first author, who is fluent in Arabic and was experienced in using qualitative methods, conducted the interviews. Within each family, a maximum of three separate interviews were conducted: one with each of two adults (mostly parents) and one with a child (i.e., age 10 to 17 years). Conducting a separate interview with each family member maintained their privacy; in addition, the presence of any other family members during the interview could have restricted the conversation. The first author continued interviewing participants until reaching redundancy (saturation) at a total of 18 different families and 30 individuals (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1 Selected characteristics of the sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family (N=18)</th>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>n (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-1</td>
<td></td>
<td>3 (16.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3</td>
<td></td>
<td>11 (61)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-5</td>
<td></td>
<td>4 (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of time in the US</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Years</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (5.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Years</td>
<td></td>
<td>7 (38.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Years</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 (55.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food security status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food insecure</td>
<td></td>
<td>7 (38.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food secure</td>
<td></td>
<td>11 (61)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National nutrition program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WIK</td>
<td></td>
<td>5 (27.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNAP</td>
<td></td>
<td>16 (88.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School lunch</td>
<td></td>
<td>14 (77.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One family member</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 (55.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two family members</td>
<td></td>
<td>6 (33.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moved to better housing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 (55.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>8 (44.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family member</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both parents or mother and adult daughter</td>
<td>5 (27.7)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>5 (27.7)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult daughter</td>
<td>1 (5.5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both parents and child</td>
<td>1 (5.5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother and child</td>
<td>6 (33.3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the start of the interview, the study’s aims were described in detail along with the benefits of the study, both in general and for each participant. Participants were told the approximate length of the interview and informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any point. The permission of a parent or legal guardian was obtained for all participants under 18 years old, and all children aged between 13 to 17 years were asked to sign a consent form. While children between 11 and 12 years old their parent or legal guardian signed their consent (Appendix F), and the child was selected by the family to be interviewed.

In-depth Arabic interviews were conducted with a maximum of three participants in each family. A semi-structured interview guide was written in Arabic (i.e., participant’s native language) and translated into English for review by the research team. Each interview lasted for 50-75 minutes. The interview guide included open-ended questions started with an icebreaking question and followed with a question about memories they had of their family’s first years of living in the US and their experience with food in general. More food-related experience questions were asked, including food preparation and grocery shopping, and about any struggles with food shortage and use of low cost and quality food, and how they felt about their food status, and what they did to improve it and how available resources and networks in their context influenced their food situation.
Digital recorders and mobile phones were used to capture audio, and notes were written during each interview. For each family, summary sheets (memos) were created that describe living and family characteristics as well as key insights that may support emergent findings. Each family received an incentive (i.e., $60 gift card) as compensation for their time and participation in the study. All the de-identified interview audio files were transcribed verbatim in colloquial Arabic by a professional with native Arabic language capability. Only selected quotes were translated from Arabic into English. For readability, quotes were edited for grammatical irregularities and colloquial languages. Explanatory comments were inserted using brackets [...]..

Validity

The research had several potential validity threats to the conclusions of the qualitative data. The first threat was researcher bias; the research data analysis may be influenced by the subjectivity of the researcher, which impose possible biases on the research data selection and conclusion. The second threat was reactivity—the influence of the researcher on the individuals studied—the research data collection procedure counts on the participants’ interviews, which might be influenced by the interviewer (Maxwell, 2012).

To ensure the quality of data analysis and collection, the first author wrote a reflexivity memo to avoid any potential bias and reactivity that could influence the interview questions, interview process, or data interpretation and coding. This reflexivity memo explained how her preconceptions, beliefs, and knowledge might influence the research interview, analysis, and conclusion, and how she responded to any events or changes during the study, such as any modification to the questions guide or data coding.
The research also applied the Critical Appraisal Skills Program to ensure the quality of the study findings and conclusion (CASP, 2018) (Appendix G). During the analysis she held frequent meetings with the major professor to discuss the emergent themes and their codes, and select and refinement the codebook to address the study’s questions as well as specific aims.

Based on the demographics of the research sample (Syrian), the results would not be generalized to refugees of different race, ethnicity, religion, and resettled in other countries, although some themes might resonate refugees in similar contexts (Maxwell, 2012). The study intended to provide a rich description of Syrian refugees’ experience with maintaining food security while facing life challenges and adjusting to a new living condition in the US, as well as the meaning of food insecurity, therefore the study findings might not reflect the experience of non-Syrian refugees.

**Qualitative analytical strategies**

All Arabic transcripts from the in-depth interviews were entered into Dedoose for analysis. Individual classifications and attributes were created, including the following: family group code number (from 1 to 18), demographics (gender, family member, employment, and mother’s employment status), household food status, home country food status, and number of moves within the state. The analysis of the data was initiated immediately after finishing the first two interviews and continued while working on further data collection. This process created an opportunity to identify any limitations of the interview guide questions (Maxwell, 2012). The analysis started by reading the transcript and listening to the audio recording of the interview while noting observations.
of data and developing tentative ideas about categories and relationships. Next, coding was done, guided by grounded theory, starting with open coding (Creswell, 2007). The coding was conducted with 5 interview transcripts from 5 different families to develop a preliminary codebook. Substantive (emic; i.e., taken from participants’ own meaning and understanding) and theoretical (etic; i.e., representative of the researcher’s concepts) codes were assigned in each text segment, and coding decisions were recorded in memos (Creswell, 2007). Codes were related to the general lived experiences of the refugee families before and after the resettlement, including their food hardship experiences, interpretation of the feelings and characterization of these experiences, active efforts to improve their resettlement, and the type of resources within their context. Two separate coding processes were then conducted to focus on each study aim (i.e., aim 1 and 2).

Aim 1. Coding process:

Aim 1 coding process was resumed and conducted in two-steps process (Creswell, 2007). First, interviews of each family were treated as a case and, within each case, axial coding was conducted. Categories were developed and guided by life course perspective and hedonic adaptation, and they were linked back to the research questions and systemically linked to sub-categories (Creswell, 2007). Categories included periods of life: in the home country, host country, and resettlement country (divided into two periods: first days and current). Within each category (period of life), sub-categories were developed, including life events (i.e., significant change that produced serious and long-lasting effects on the family’s life) and instances of food insecurity in different periods of life, resettlement transitions (i.e., changes in the family’s social status that offer opportunities for life improvement in the resettlement country), and resources built
during transitions, premigration financial status, response and interpretation of new life events, and food status.

Second, selective coding was done to refine and integrate the categories by selecting analytic themes of interest, comparing them across interviews, and developing themes into general frameworks that explain associations between them. Refugee families’ characterization of new adverse events was one of the major analytic themes that linked to the research questions. Families experiencing new life events were categorized based on home country experience into two groups, poor and stable, and the interpretations of experiencing new events were compared between these two groups. In addition, the interpretation of experiencing new events was compared across all individuals and between families based on their host country experiences and resources built in the resettlement country.

**Aim 2. Coding process:**

Coding processes of aim 2 were more straightforward than aim 1 coding processes. First, within each case (i.e., each family), the axial coding focused only on the two periods of the refugee families’ resettlement life: first days (early life) and current days (later life). This coding process was conducted and guided by Patterson’s family adaptation and adjustment response (FAAR) model and Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model. Categories and sub-categories that linked back to the research questions were developed. Categories included time within the resettlement period (i.e., early life and later life during resettlement), system aspects within the refugee families’ context (i.e., negative, and positive aspects), and the target of the refugee families’ support recommendation (i.e., targeted public policies and programs and targeted refugee
families). Sub-categories were developed within each category. Within the time within in resettlement period categories (early and later life), sub-categories included life challenges (demands) and family capabilities in the resettlement country. Sub-categories developed within the negative and positive aspects of the systems within the refugee families’ context included the source of each aspect, such as the mesosystem (e.g., ethnic and religious groups, extended families), exosystem (e.g., resettlement agencies, church and mosque, non-profit organizations), and macrosystem (e.g., public policies, welfare access). Sub-categories developed within the refugee families’ support recommendations included recommendations to address early challenges and late challenges.

Second, selective coding was done to refine and integrate the categories by selecting analytic themes of interest and developing themes into a general framework that explains the associations among them. One major analytic theme was refugee families’ contexts that explained part of their resilience to food insecurity, which was linked to the second research question. Families exposed to a current crisis (e.g., COVID-19 pandemic), their actions to balance their challenges, and their capabilities to fulfill their functions and mitigate food insecurity were linked to the systems within their context and compared between different resource sources’ absence and availability in each system as well as their role in hindering or supporting the refugee families’ ability to overcome crisis effects on their food security.

**Quantitative data analysis**

The survey data was entered manually in the *Excel* software and. The data was cleaned and organized by checking for missing data and errors. Descriptive statistics
were conducted to examine demographic characteristics as well as the food security classification for each family.

**Data management and ethical approval**

To protect participants’ privacy, all identifying information was removed from the transcripts and pseudonyms were used. An identification number was assigned to each participant. All the data, including audio recordings, transcripts, and survey data were secured in an electronic server and only the PI could access it. All research hardcopy materials, including surveys, consents forms, and interview memos were locked away in a filing cabinet in a secure location. The study protocol was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board of the University of South Carolina (Appendix G).
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

4.1. Manuscript 1

The situational meaning of food insecurity among refugee families resettled in the United States

Introduction

Since the beginning of Syrian conflict in 2011, massive Syrian displacement has occurred within the country and across the world (Ostrand, 2015; Jabbar & Zaza, 2014). The Syrian crisis is estimated by the UN to have generated the largest number of refugees since the historic high number of refugees during the 1990s (Charles & Denman, 2013; UNHCR, 2017, 2019). Since 2011, the total number of Syrian refugees exceeded 6 million (UNHCR, 2022). Syrian refugees admitted to the US between 2011 and 2019 were 21,623 and distributed across the country (MPI, 2019). During that time a total of 625 Syrian refugees resettled in Maryland and 360 in Virginia (RPC, 2019).

Refugee families go through different periods of life before resettling in their new home country, starting from life in their home country and moving to the life in the host country (i.e., the country to which they fled before arriving in the resettlement country) (Jabbar & Zaza, 2014; Ostrand, 2015; Pejic, Hess, Miller, & Wille, 2016). Many Syrian refugees who resettled in the US have experienced violence compounded by loss of family members and friends, loss of their home and their belongings, social isolation, discrimination, and uncertainty about the future during the Syrian civil war and in the host country (Hassan et al., 2015; Pottie, Greenaway, Hassan, Hui, & Kirmayer, 2016). For many refugee families, these life periods are marked with multiple hardships, including food hardships (Asylum Access, 2017; De Bruijn, 2009; Fabio, 2014). Although refugees’ food status in resettlement have received much attention (Anderson, Hadzibegovic, Moseley, & Sellen, 2014; Dharod, Croom, & Sady, 2013; Hadley, Zodhiates, & Sellen, 2007; Patil, McGown, Nahayo, & Hadley, 2010; Sellen, Tedstone,
& Frize, 2002), limited studies have examined refugee families’ experiences with food insecurity by focusing on their situational meaning of food insecurity.

It is essential to understand how the repeated experience of hardships and food insecurity in different periods of life impacts a refugee family’s situational meaning of food insecurity as well as their interpretation of experiencing food insecurity in the resettlement country. Food insecurity has been shown to be associated with individuals’ hedonic adaptation as well as their judgment about their ideal state (Frongillo et al., 2018). Hedonic adaptation—that people may adapt with time to positive or negative events and return to a certain baseline state—may influence the formation of situational meaning (Graham & Oswald, 2010; Kahneman, Diener, & Schwarz, 1999; Klausen, Emiliussen, Christiansen, Hasandedic-Dapo, & Engelsen, 2022). As one means of hedonic adaptation, people tend to change their judgement about the ideal state (i.e., satisfaction with and positive feelings about life) by adjusting the subjective reference level they use to compare with their situation (Diener, Ryan, 2009; Frongillo et al., 2018; Kahneman, Diener, & Schwarz, 1999). Also, being shielded from negative events by the social and physical environment, which is known as assisted adaptation, is an indirect form of adaptation that is not merely a cognitive response to a stimulus (negative or positive event), but also prevents an event from occurring (Klausen et al., 2022). This form of hedonic adaptation is related to individuals’ judgement and interpretation of adverse events, as it is conductive to individuals’ satisfaction about their state (Klausen et al., 2022; Putnam & Helliwell, 2004).

The study sought to understand what household food insecurity means to Syrian refugee families in the US. Therefore, it is imperative to explore refugees’ food insecurity
experiences from a life course perspective (Elder, 1994). Both life events and life transitions can be used to understand the dynamics of refugee families’ response to life events (i.e., hedonic adaptation) as well as their interpretation of experiencing food insecurity in the US. An application of life events could be useful for exploring past life events (e.g., war, food shortages, or other hardships) the refugee families experienced, and the role of repeated exposure to adverse events on their hedonic adaptation— their judgment of current adverse events. Also, the application of life transitions would be useful for navigating refugee families’ social and physical environments and the resources they build that relate to their hedonic adaptation— their prevention of the occurrence of adverse events that related to judgement and interpretation of adverse events.

The study used a qualitative method to explore in-depth the refugees’ situational meaning of food insecurity in the US and how past events and the available resources carried across time periods shaped their meanings. Qualitative methods, particularly in-depth interviews, are well suited to study refugee family food insecurity; it provides a thick description of diverse family forms and experiences with food insecurity in very specific family meanings and contexts (Ungar, 2003). Two central questions guided the study:

Q1: What life course events and transitions were related to refugees’ food insecurity? What past exposures and resources that carried across the life course did refugee families have that would be carried across time periods?
Q2: How did these past exposures and resources result in refugee families’ adaptation and form their interpretation of experiencing household food insecurity in the resettlement country?

Methods

Sample

Syrian refugee families served as this study’s population, specifically, those who had been living in the United States for eight years or less (i.e., since no earlier than 2013) and were residing in the Washington metropolitan area (District of Columbia, Virginia, and Maryland). Most participants were recruited through purposive snowball sampling. This sampling was appropriate because participants were difficult to locate; many had fallen out of contact with resettlement agencies in the years since their resettlement. Rather than obtaining names and contact information from the first identified families for other families, two initial Syrian refugee families were identified; each family was asked to forward an email invitation or text message containing information on the research project with the researcher’s contact information to other refugee families. This method protected the identity of potential participants from being revealed to the researcher. Additional purposive sampling strategies were used, such as sharing a study flyer with a non-profit organization that works with the Syrian refugees and supports newly arrived refugees in the Washington metropolitan area.

The inclusion criteria were: a Syrian family who entered the US as refugees (i.e., had a refugee status) and had lived in the US for eight years or less. Families who were immediate relatives of a US citizen or who entered the US on a visit or Special Immigrant
visa were excluded. The first author continued interviewing participants until reaching redundancy (saturation) at a total of 18 different families (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1 Selected characteristics of the sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>n (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family</strong> (N=18)</td>
<td>Number of children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0-1</td>
<td>3 (16.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>11 (61)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4-5</td>
<td>4 (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Length of time in the US</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 Years</td>
<td>1 (5.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 Years</td>
<td>7 (38.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 Years</td>
<td>10 (55.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Food security status</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Food insecure</td>
<td>7 (38.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Food secure</td>
<td>11 (61)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National nutrition program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SNAP</td>
<td>16 (88.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Employment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>One family member</td>
<td>10 (55.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Two family members</td>
<td>6 (33.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>2 (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moved to better housing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>10 (55.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>8 (44.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family member</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Both parents or mother and adult daughter</td>
<td>5 (27.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>5 (27.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adult daughter</td>
<td>1 (5.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Both parents and child</td>
<td>1 (5.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mother and child</td>
<td>6 (33.3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Within each family, a maximum of 2 separate interviews were conducted, one with each of two adults (mostly parents) (N=24). The study protocol was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board of the University of South Carolina.
Data Collection

In-depth Arabic interviews were conducted with each family in their home. The first author, who is fluent in Arabic and was experienced in using qualitative methods, conducted the interviews. A semi-structured interview guide was written in Arabic (i.e., participant’s native language) and translated into English for review by the research team. Each interview lasted for 50-75 minutes. Conducting a separate interview with each family member maintained their privacy; in addition, the presence of any other family members during the interview could have restricted the conversation. At the end of the interview, participants were asked to complete surveys with short questions on demographics and socioeconomics (age, education, work and marital status, English language proficiency, family and friend network in the US, number of children, household size), and Arab Family Food Security Scale.

Data Analysis

All de-identified interview audio files were transcribed verbatim in colloquial Arabic by a professional with native Arabic language capability, and transcriptions were entered into Dedoose for analysis. Data analysis began immediately after finishing the first two interviews and continued while working on data collection. This created an opportunity to identify any limitations of the interview guide questions (Maxwell, 2012). The analysis started by reading the transcript and listening to the interview audio while noting observations of data and developing tentative ideas about categories and relationships. Next, coding was done, guided by grounded theory, which included a three-step process (Creswell, 2007).
First, open coding was conducted with 5 interview transcripts from 5 different families to develop a preliminary codebook. Substantive (emic) (i.e., taken from participants’ own meaning and understanding) and theoretical (etic) (i.e., representative of the researcher’s concepts) codes, which are words that related to the central research questions in each text segment were assigned, and coding decisions were recorded in memos.

Second, interviews of each family were treated as a case and, within each case, axial coding was conducted. Categories were developed and guided by life course perspective and hedonic adaptation, and they were linked back to the research questions and systemically linked to sub-categories (Creswell, 2007). Categories included periods of life: in the home country, host country, and resettlement country (divided into two periods: first days and current). Within each category (period of life), sub-categories were developed, including life events (i.e., significant change that produced serious and long-lasting effects on the family’s life) and instances of food insecurity in different periods of life, resettlement transitions (i.e., changes in the family’s social status that offer opportunities for life improvement in the resettlement country), and resources built during transitions, premigration financial status, response and interpretation of new life events, and food status.

Third, selective coding was done to refine and integrate the categories by selecting analytic themes of interest, comparing them across interviews, and developing themes into general frameworks that explain associations between them. Refugee families’ characterization of new adverse events was one of the major analytic themes that linked to the research questions. Families experiencing new life events were
categorized based on home country experience into two groups, poor and stable, and the interpretations of experiencing new events were compared between these two groups. In addition, the interpretation of experiencing new events was compared across all individuals and between families based on their host country experiences and resources built in the resettlement country.

To ensure the quality of data collection and analysis, the first author wrote a reflexivity memo to avoid any potential bias and reactivity that could influence the interview questions, interview process, or data interpretation and coding. This reflexivity memo explained how her preconceptions, beliefs, and knowledge might influence the research interview, analysis, and conclusion, and how she responded to any events or changes during the study, such as any modification to the questions guide or data coding. The research also applied the Critical Appraisal Skills Program to ensure the quality of the study findings and conclusion (CASP, 2018). Selected quotes were translated from Arabic into English. For readability, quotes were edited for grammatical irregularities and colloquial languages. Explanatory comments were inserted using brackets [. . .].

Results

Among the study participants, two groups of Syrian refugee families with two different pre-migration financial situations in their home country emerged. One group of 9 families described their financial status as stable (had a good income, a high level of education, employment, etc.); the other group of 4 families described their status as poor (i.e., poor or bad financial condition, etc.). As no question asked about their pre-migration financial situation in their home country and it emerged in some participants’
answers as a reference of comparison, the pre-migration financial status of 5 families was not known.

All refugee families shared one opinion about the food system in the US: You can find everything, but the quality (mainly the taste) is not like the food back home. They repeatedly described the smell and taste of the vegetables, fruits, and olive oil in their home country and how they missed it. “Before I die, I hope to return to Syria for one day to eat the Friday breakfast with my people there” (PN2 father). They also talked about how important it was to keep making and eating their traditional foods because they are part of their culture and heritage that they want to pass on to their children. Also, they find their traditional foods aromas and flavors are the only thing that linked them to their home country. All the families being forced to leave their home country to eventually end up in the resettlement country had one goal for moving from host to the resettlement country is to provide a better future for their children: They wanted their children get a good education. Families were not aware, however, that the higher education system in the US is not free to access, unlike in their home country, and students need to cover tuition and fees fully or partially. These costs prevented many families from being able to send their children to college.

Refugee families described multiple exposures to food hardships during different life events across their life course and the life transitions within the resettlement country. Both exposure to food insecurities and resettlement transitions led to build psychological and physical resources, which in turn would explain their interpretation of current food insecurity events in the US.
Life Events and Repeated Exposures

All the families went through different periods of food security during various life events. Most families experienced four different periods, starting with their original stable life in their home country (Syria before the war) and suddenly shifting to an unstable life in the host and resettlement country.

Refugees’ Home Country Food Experience (Pre-Migration)

The life condition in Syria emerged as a reference of comparison in most interviews. Almost all families pointed to their ideal life in Syria, which contrasted with their life in the host country (country to which they fled to before arriving in the US). Refugee families used their food situation in the home country to explain their situation in the host country: “In Syria, as I told you, our financial situation was very good. But we went to Egypt, there was no work for my husband, so sometimes I had to sleep hungry. I went through such circumstances.” (PN1-mother)

“Everything was little. Honestly! A big difference from Syria. We experienced, for example, days that we want to just live on that situation...Lentils...a meat dish once a week… Once a month because we don't have a job or income.” (PN11-mother)

“…the person cannot get what he is craving [in Jordan], he cannot get it, It's very difficult. I mean many days we had frying potatoes, from the existing food storage, or soup…Our food status was different than in Syria.” (PN5-father)

Some refugee families considered the adverse life events experienced in their home country better than those in the host country but worse than or like those in the resettlement country (the US). They considered their poor living condition in Syria better
than the host country when describing their adverse life events and food hardships in the host country: “Here [in the US] life is easy, I don’t know, may be because we were poor in Syria and things were difficult. But with rich people the system would be the same to them, but in my case, here is much easier.” And she continued: “No, no, thank God, not like Turkey [in the refugee camp]. Turkey is much more difficult. In Turkey, they gave us a food card. It was very little, barely covers the basics. The day they increased it, I bring fruits and vegetables and we will have a feast. We have a feast. And my husband was not allowed to go outside the camp and work but here [in the US] we can work” (PRI-mother)

One refugee adult daughter from a food insecure household described their food status during financially strained events in the US, and she used their pre-migration (in Syria) financial status as a reference for describing her family status in the US: “No, it is better here [food abundance and quantity in the US] …It is better because our financial condition in Syria was also not good, so now, thank God, it is better because our financial condition is better, and we have the basics and there are resources that we can benefit from.” (PN14-daughter)

Refugees’ Past Food Experiences (Post-Migration)

The most recurrent theme related to experiencing food hardship is past experiences, where participants admitted that they experienced food insecurity (food shortage, limited access to food, and/or acceptable food). This theme addresses the exposure to food insecurity during different past events.
Almost all refugees recalled their struggles to provide enough nutritious food to their family in the host country. They experienced a sequence of events, where earlier events conditioned later events, starting with poor living conditions in refugee camps or urban slums, unemployment, and limited food access and availability resulting in food hardship because they had no money, were not allowed to work, and lacked other resources for food. They had to reduce the quality and variety of their diets to cope with household budget stress and augment their food supply.

“In Egypt, yes, of course [difficult to get food], for example, there are things, for example, we get grilled chicken, let say every 15 days we can have it, once in the week if it is possible. For example, mangoes were expensive… so we don't buy it, I mean, even though it is a favorite food for us, but we get it when we are able to get it…meat, for example, meat, we do not depend on it much…We cook without meat…and there are dishes to which we usually cook them with meat. But we do not add meat.” (PN4-father)

“We ate chicken almost every 15 days once, which means we didn't have it all the time. At the time of receiving the food aid…The organization's [UN] food aid. We used it to buy the food we needed the most, for example rice, bulgur, vermicelli, tea, sugar, oil, ghee. These are what we needed more than, chicken and meat. We ate chicken about once every two weeks... It's expensive, we can't get it every week. Beef roughly once a month. Frozen beef is also expensive.” (PN12-mother)

Life Transitions and Built Resources

Participants went through different life transitions in the resettlement country (in the US) that subsequently had implications in shaping their family life later. Examples of
refugees’ family transitions include moving to the US, accessing nutrition assistance (e.g., SNAP), finding employment, owning a car, and learning English. Not all refugee families went through the same resettlement transitions; for example, some of them still struggle with unemployment or continue accessing SNAP benefits, which has in turn negatively affected their resettlement and made them more prone to face new adverse events.

Moving to the US

One main life transition that all refugee families endured was moving to the US, a far-off Western country (with a different language and culture) and building a new life in the resettlement country. Many participants expressed their goal in taking this step—other than fleeing the war and seeking a safe haven—was having a better life, including improving the household income, nutrition, and kids’ education opportunities. As one mother explained:

“There were several reasons to move to the US, before moving to here [the US], the reason of leaving Syria [moving to the host country] other than the war is my husband's job was not good, even though he was a pastry chef, it was the situation. I mean, people barely can find food for lunch and breakfast, sweets [pastries] become a luxury… Yes, luxury. And schools, also there was no schools. School stopped due to the bombing, destruction, and safety in Syria…So, we came here for these reasons, and Egypt [the host country] was the same thing. I mean, there are schools, but they were bad. You need to take private lessons. There is work, but the wage was very low.” (PN4-mother)
Accessing Nutrition Assistance

One of first resettlement transitions that gave the refugee a sense of insurance (safety) was accessing the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Many explained how accessing food was a concern before moving to the US, but once they arrived and got the food assistance (i.e., SNAP), it was less of a concern.

Refugees commented on their shift in fears regarding food accessibility before moving to the US and immediately after arriving in the US. Many refugees cited knowledge of SNAP accessibility or getting SNAP a few days after arriving in the US as a reason for changing their fears of not being able to have enough food to feed their family.

“First, when we arrived [the US], yes [Fears of not getting food]. But then, when they gave us [The resettlement agency] Food Stamp…And they told us this is every month [the SNAP]. I mean, you feel that this is it…We are okay, Alhamdulillah… They used to give us cash [The resettlement agency], but the cash stopped, but the Food Stamp continues because his [The father] income is little.” (PR2- mother)

Finding Employment

Almost all refugee families cited the father or another male member in the family (e.g., older son) finding a job as a main goal for providing a good life for their family as the resettlement policy in the US required becoming financially independent and starting to work within three months after resettlement. A male family member’s employment was a major life transition among almost all the families. Being able to financially support their family had a significant implication for the family’s situation in the US, as
the family would be able to address one of the major concerns, housing, by being able to pay the rent and bills.

“By the way, just the first [struggle with covering the household’s expenses]. Praise to Allah, Lord of the Worlds. Just the first period, because there is no fixed job…Once the work is stable, meaning you live on... the most important thing is the house rent. In my opinion, eating and drinking is something that one spends, but not the house rent.”

(PN11- mother)

As many Syrians explained, the US resettlement policy of providing limited financial coverage of the refugees during their first months in the US, pushed them to find a job and go through an important life transition in the resettlement country even if they accepted low-wage and difficult jobs: “The first time we came here [the US], my husband and I didn't have [money]. We did not know how to plan the budget, because this budget must cover the house [living expenses] and the rent of the house. For the first 3 months, the organization [the resettlement agency] paid the rent of the house to all the Syrian families, and then told us that you and your husband must work in order to cover the house rent and living. …. he started asking, there are Iraqi people who arrived before we came here [the US] ... "I want a job, if you know someone, they told him about a place here for sofas, do you want to work there? My husband said to them: “I work with anything; the important thing is that my wife does not work.” He worked for a good period of time, almost for 8 months and it was very hard.” (PN12-mother)

“The first thing before the help of the organization left us, Papa and my brothers had managed a job for them, and they had been working for a long time and we paid all the expenses.” (PN3-daughter)
Such a life transition contributed to further transition by considering increasing their household income and shifting women’s position in the family as they contributed to the household income, which could be a major contrast to their life in Syria, which was defined by culturally prescribed gender roles. As some female refugees described, female’ choice to work was a new role in a Syrian family, and not all Syrian families accepted it in the resettlement country: “… told us [the resettlement agency] that you [the mother] and your husband must work in order to cover the house rent and living. My husband found it very difficult, that I work and pay the rent. We don't have it [in Syrian culture]. Maybe there are people, maybe it's normal to them, but we are "Bedouins", the woman does not work, and the man does not stay home!!! …He told them [the resettlement agency] that "it is impossible that I let my wife work while I'm saying at home." (PN12-mother)

“There were days when I was cooking [home cooking business], and I was forced to do so. And my husband would say, “I don’t want you to cook,” but I tell him, “I do it to help you.” Oh, praise be to God, I mean, he is against that [women work] … the woman works only in her home. As long as her husband is working, she should not work. She cares about her family food and her children. There is no need [for women to work] ... He found it very difficult, my husband. But I guess that there is no difference between me and my husband, I am working to meet the needs of the house and the needs of my children. I used to work in the days of hardship.” (PN 13-mother)

Some families were against these cultural roles for women, and they expanded income resources when both parents worked outside the home. They went through a new life transition that positively impacted their family situation during resettlement. Families
acknowledged that they had been able to improve their income and meet all their living expenses when both parents worked: “I went to work, my husband and I…That helped me and my husband… the time when we were renting, it was his money for the car insurance and the house rent and electricity bill, and my money goes more for food, or the girls’ expenses, or my expenses. I mean, I try to cover my and the girls’ expenses and the food, and his money It is the rent of the house, car insurance and electricity.” (PR1-mother)

_Owning a Car_

Owning a car was a major change in their life in the resettlement country that opened up opportunities to improve their situations. In many families, both adult family members indicated that getting a driving license and having a car marked a focal life transition that significantly shaped their lives later. A refugee father stated the importance of this transition, owning a car: “One by one, I made a few friends, and I got a driving license. I bought a car and started driving. All our problems were solved when we had a car. I went out by my own. And I learned how to enter the address [in the GBS] and so on.” (PN2-father)

Similar themes emerged in the interviews of the mother and other adults in the sample:

“You know the most important thing in America, is the car, things are fine. Do you know why? Because in America, if you work, you will live, and if you do not work, you will not live. It was our most important problem the car. We do not know how to go or come, and then my husband, thank God, there were people that donate a car to us, and
our life are become easier, and he is now can go to buy household’s stuff.” (PN2-mother)

“After about 3 months and a half [resettling in the US], we had a car … Our lives have become easier, I mean, we have mental comfort. There is a car, mental comfort in terms of transportation.” (PN4-Father)

Learning English

Limited English proficiency was a difficulty in adjusting to and thriving in the resettlement country. Some stated that their poor English language skills were a key concern before moving to the US: “One of our concerns [before moving to the US] was the language. Are we going to be able to talk like them? As for me, I know some English, but I did not know the same as them [English native speakers], the accent [dialect] and so on.” (PN9-mother)

Poor English language skills created barriers in navigating the food system and perpetuated social isolation by limiting jobs options. Many families reported difficulties in accessing food and better jobs due to language challenges. Therefore, family members—mostly kids learning English—experienced a life transition. Some refugee parents stated that their kids learning English significantly influenced their life and made it easier, especially when discussing food access and navigation.

“Ah, really [Encountered difficulties in reaching supermarkets], the first four months!! Many times, I got out and got lost. We go by bus. I take a bus and it takes me to a place I don't know. I don't know how to speak English…. My wife was sick, and we went to many doctors’ appointments, I was very annoyed. Very, very, very. After that, my
children learned a little English. They made me a bit relief…Oh [life changed], it changed when my children learned the English language. They learned a lot of things and a lot of things changed.” **(PN2-father)**

“Ah, my daughters take their meal…Yes, free school meal…there are things that they eat, and there are things that they do not eat … they give us [The school] every month a menu of food, for example, today they will give them, for example, fish, vegetables, so I do not send food with them, but on other days the meal, for example, pizza with pork, or anything that is not halal, so I give them food, send food with them…they wrote, for example, it contains such and such in English, they give us a piece of paper, in English, and the back in Spanish. They use both languages. I translate it or my daughters, thank God, they know the language now and they translate it for me what is in it.” **(PN5-mother)**

Another mother described her relief and ability to navigate the food options once her children learned the English language: “It is definitely different [their life now]. You have become so reassured that you can get everything [food]. We know more. Your children are now familiar with the language. They help you with reading and translating [The food labels] sometimes. This thing helps.” **(PN1-mother)**

Learning English also played a role in the further transition of some refugee families. As adult family members learned English, they could improve the family income by accessing expanded job options and opportunities. One wife explained how their life in resettlement had improved, better income and food availability, compared to their first year in the US: “My husband's interest is the Body Shop [Car Plumbing] …I mean repairing cars…Alhamdulillah. Then he learned a little English, then he became…
he likes to depend on himself, he does not like to ask anyone for help…And then he worked for an American here in Maryland…Mechanics and so, and then he and the American. He learned from him that the language, and then his language got better, and he continued working with him in cars.” (PN10-mother)

Another mother explained how studying English was a goal to expand her job options and improve her family income: “The first thing I studied and then I worked…when I came to here, my English was, you want to say in the middle. And when I came, I said to myself that I would not keep my hand on my cheek and think about my family, exile, and Syria…So, I said I must do something for myself. I have to study anything suitable with my language. The first thing I studied language… They gave me a language and mathematics exam, and I started studying language and mathematics so that I could see what I wanted to study after … so I saw what I wanted to study, something that was at the level of my language… I started thinking about the idea of cosmetics. It is useful and a good business. It is possible that I work in this field, although I never thought of studying it in my life. And then finally, I focused and said I want to study cosmetology and take the license. I will then see a second job to study. I reached the school and took the license and I have a job now. I work in the [the salon name] and sometimes in my house.” (PN9-mother)

New Adverse Events

After refugee families resettled in their new home country and lived there for more than four years, they faced new sudden and periodic life events (e.g., COVID-related financial strains, periods between salaries and/or SNAP monthly credit, medical
bills), which affected their household income as well as food security. The majority, around seventy percent (thirteen out of eighteen), indicated that they are currently experiencing financial struggle to meet their needs and cover all their family expanses, and almost half of them were food insecure based on the scale.

In one food-insecure family, a mother and her adult daughter described their family’s periodic food shortages that occurred every month before the next SNAP payment cycle: “Yes, I swear to God, we experience these days [difficult to cover all the household expenses], because sometimes we wait for the Food Stamp (SNAP), and so…We [Experience these days] when the Food Stamp finish…they recharge it in the 18th of the month.” (PN14-mother)

“Yes, many times [difficult to cover all the household expenses], and I think we will continue to experience these times, …Sometimes, if we go through such periods of time, we eat only two breakfast and lunch, only…we spend our time with light dishes. It is normal, the dishes are acceptable, and once we saved, means we save some money, we go to mall [food store] immediately and get food items, so we get our own needs, but we save on important items only. For example, sugar, rice, bread, and other things, also, canned food, canned fava beans, tomatoes, vegetables, and food we can store, lentils, bulgur, and things like that…and I take only half of my monthly allowance from my family during these times to reduce the expenses.” (PN14-daughter)

In another food-insecure family, both the mother and father explained their struggles with periodic financial hardship: “Sometimes, yes [difficult to cover all the household expenses] …I mean during these periods, I try to cook dishes to eat them for
A mother described her family’s sudden financial hardship and her worries about her family’s food security when household income was threatened during financial constraints stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic: “When my husband had a job, I wasn't worried. My husband is working, we have a Food Stamp (SNAP) card, you don't worry that it's the end of the month, or the beginning of the month, it's normal. But when my husband stopped working and the Corona crisis started, and it was difficult to find a job. One is thinking that should pay attention…Especially that things have become very expensive. I mean, we felt that vegetables were not enough, food was not enough at the end of the month or until the last Friday…We ate the same, but I feel, ask the Syrians, they all will tell you that some vegetables have become expensive, I mean, you feel a little difference in prices.” (PN6-mother)

**Different Ways of Interpreting the New Adverse Events based on Different Past Experiences and Resources**

When it is come to describing the feelings and characterizations of how to face these new life events in the US, different interpretations emerged among families from different backgrounds (pre-migration status). Some referred back to unpleasant ones or
more experiences to contrast or compare them with the new experiences; others relied on their resources in the US and their expectations during hard times to interpret the significance of the new events they are facing, and some used both past experiences and resources.

**Repeated Exposure to Adverse Events and the Interpretation of New Events**

Some refugees remembered and recalled past adverse events to explain the significance of the new adverse events they are experiencing as well as food shortages in the US. Almost all the refugee families experienced multiple exposures to food hardships during different life events throughout their lives.

**Comparing the New Adverse Event to Experience in the Home Country**

Families that were currently struggling to cover their household financial expenses and experiencing periodic and sudden food shortages identified two major themes. These themes emerged from two different pre-migration (in Syria) financial status groups of refugee families (i.e., stable, and poor). The families normalized these adverse events or felt dissatisfied (compared it to their stable life in their home country).

The poor (in the home country) who experienced life hardships and food shortages (but were not food insecure on the scale) tended to normalize and use their history with hardship as justification and explanation for why they were used to these adverse events: “Here [in the US] life is easy, I don’t know, may be because we were poor in Syria and things were difficult. But with rich people the system would be the same to them, but in my case, here is much easier… [If family faced financial strains] I
would go back to “Mjaddara” [traditional dish known to be a low-income food that made of cheap ingredient lentils, burghul, and olive oil] like I used to do in Syria.” (PR1-mother)

A refugee mother was describing her family’s periodic food shortage events in the US and explained that she and her husband became used to living a simple life during their upbringing in Syria because they were not rich: “Honestly, we are not used to ask anyone for food. And, praise be to God, we are alive and satisfied…The first thing you need to know, we are used to live on the simplest things. The person gets used to the first thing that she raised with, the thing she is used to, and when she sees her family, for example, we are used to being very simple, and we are satisfied with anything. We were 10 kids, 6 girls and 4 boys lived in two rooms’ home. My mom and dad had a room, and we had a room… We used to sleep on the floor next to each other, we were young, and we used to stay together. My father built a second room for boys, when they grow up, yet we are used to this life. …Praise be to God. We weren't rich in Syria…Our life in Syria was much simpler [compared to current life].” (PN12-mother)

When it came to their children, mothers always shifted their interpretation (judgement) of the significance of experiencing financial hardship as well as food shortage events, saying that their children are not used to such adverse events. Therefore, they did not want their children to experience this adversity (e.g., the mother eats after her kids, buys everything they ask for it, tries to hide their struggles) because their children were too young to recognize their hard life in Syria and were not used to it.

One mother who normalized their adverse events added that her “children are not used to this life, and we will provide them with everything they ask for”: “…But now the
kids will have anything they ask for, we will bring it for them. Before, in our days, we don't have everything we ask for. I mean, here the toy costs twenty dollars, "Mama, I want it." I mean, imagine your son telling you, "Mama, I want this toy, do you buy the toy for him?" Surely, you would buy it. In Syria, when we ask our parents, “Mama, we want this toy” “we will buy it later” and we are done with this answer.”

This mother further added: “...I do not cut off on my children's food [during financial hardships]. I always tell the girls that if there is anything you want me to give you, any food you want, I am sure I will not prevent you, God willing. I mean, whatever you want, we can guarantee it to you, because we lived through many difficult times in Jordan and in Syria during the war. They suffered more with us than we suffered.”

(PN12-mother)

Another mother explained the same thing about poor life in Syria. She stated that they (the parents) were used to living through periodic food insecurity events, but their kids were too young to recognize that life and it would be difficult for them to adapt to it in the US: “Let us say this, from my part, [feelings during food shortage], thank God. But it is possible that sometimes my daughters, when we were in Syria, they were young, and we were one day up and one day down. Days, person has [money] and will bring [buy food] and days he doesn’t, he will not [buy food]. So now, here, it is necessary for one to be fine [covers food budget].” (PR3-mother)

In contrast, some refugees used their stable and good life in their home country (Syria) to interpret their lower living conditions and current adverse events in the US. They compared their life in the home country to their current life in the US and explained that their goal was to provide their family with the same life they were used to living in
their home country. A refugee father of a food-insecure family (i.e., food insecure on the scale) explained their struggles to meet their needs and cover all their family’s expenses during the COVID-19 pandemic:

“Yes, very very much, and a lot [facing difficulties with food budget] …These difficulties, honestly, I went through in different stages. The first stage was very difficult for me. When I was new (in the US). The second stage, our conditions were very good. Me and my children worked. All our conditions worsened, I mean, my wife got sick, and I had to quit my job and the Corona crisis started …I mean, I am now in the third stage, which is a little more difficult. I mean, the reverse stage. I cannot take it anymore! …If you make a displacement graph, I consider myself in the mourning point… My goal is to have a job that gives my children a good life. I want to give them a quarter of the life they used to live in Syria. I am in Syria; I was living very comfortable life. I was trying as much as possible to give them the same life that was in Syria”. He added that their family food changed with financial hardship: “…the day I have a thousand dollars, like when I have 100 dollars? The day I have $100, I will buy cheese and olives [A Syrian expression of poor food]. The day I have a thousand dollars, I want to bring for them the best food, I mean the day I have money. I go and get for them fruits and the best thing…the day I don't have money, I will have to get two apples, two pears, two bananas. The day I have my money, the food changes. completely changed.” (PN2-father)

Comparing the New Adverse Event to Experience in the Host Country

Adverse experiences with living hardship and food shortage in the host country emerged in all interviews as a part of the narrative for explaining families’ struggles with
food insecurity in the past and comparing it with the new events in the US. Some refugees were grateful for whatever food they had as it was better than their past experience with food in the host country. For example, when describing the struggles to cover their family’s expenses and meet their needs, including food in the US, parents frequently highlighted that their conditions were much better now than in the host country, even if not ideal: “Thanks God, not like Turkey [Family’s food situation]. Turkey [host country] was much more difficult… In Turkey, they gave us a food card, which was very little, barely, buy the essentials. The times when they gave me a little more in food card, I bring fruit and vegetables, it is like Eid [Muslim holiday]. We have a feast.” (PR1-motehr)

A father of one food insecure refugee family that recently arrived in the US (two years ago) explained that time in the US: “I mean, I want to tell you about some difficult days [in host country]. It means eating according to income. You always feel that you are lacking something. Here, praise be to God, is better than there. There is nothing like that, but here too, we always lack something, even in your meal.” (PN5-father). He added that even when material hardship is severe in the US, they feel that it will never be as bad as it was in the host country: “We always say, for example, a period of time and it will pass [living hardship in the US], for example, what we lived in Syria, the war. We do not feel that there is anything difficult for us here [in the US], because when you were living in a war and coming out of it. Alhamdulillah, nothing will happen to us more difficult than what we lived through in the war.” (PN5-father)

The food shortage experiences in the host country negatively marked the refugees’ memories. Therefore, experiencing food hardship in the first years was hard
emotionally hard for some of the refugees. The experience was scary because of their fear of living and continuing to live with food shortages as in the past (host country). These events brought back bad memories related to previous food hardships, which were one of the reasons that pushed them to move to the resettlement country (US)—namely, to have a better life as well as a better food status.

“Imagine that you are coming, and you were fasting [Ramadan], and there is no food in your house. I mean, our life was very difficult. I even hit myself. I see that my children did not eat anything but potatoes every day… I was afraid that I will live the same life as in Jordan. I was afraid that I will continue to be poor, and I will not find anything for my children…I was always, the first time when I came, I was always cry, just cry. I say oh God my children are without food. It is Ramadan, and we are fasting, and there is nothing. We do not have “Suhoor” [meal before starting the fast], we did not break our fast, and I say, Oh God, my children. I felt so oppressed. The first month was really bad.”

(PN2-mother)

*Built Resources and the Interpretation of New Events*

Many refugees talked about the times throughout the year when adverse events caused them to worry about where they would obtain sufficient food and their attempts to rely on their built resources to prevent and/or deal with food-insecurity events. Such attempts were part of their adaptation as well as the interpretation of the significancy of the new events they were facing. As refugee families moved from one positive transition to other in the US, they significantly improved their families’ resettlement in the US while opening more opportunities to greater accesses and resources. As previously
mentioned, not all families had the same resettlement transitions. Examples of resources and opportunities that families built included new social network supports and resources that enabled them to improve and develop new behaviors to prevent and/or deal with living hardship and food shortage.

Social Network Support

New social network support was one of the resources that refugee families built in their first days in the resettlement country (i.e., during families’ first life transition). After moving to the US, they expanded this support during their latter transition by learning English. Many stated that the social support and the strength of community networks were essential for helping them and other refugee families adapt and thrive in the resettlement country. Participants often viewed their social network as a resource they built and could now rely on to prevent and mitigate any adverse events:

“I will ask someone for help if I face any financial hardship if I have to. It is possible, to ask for the house rent, or a bill because they may cut off our phones or cut off electricity or water, but, other than that, No… Now, I am not the one who can do this [Ask for help] … My husband.” (PN4-mother)

One mother described how her family’s fears of not being able to have a good life or enough food in the resettlement country could now be resolved because they have a social network they could rely on:

“My fears have changed a lot now. I mean we got to know a lot of people, you can, for example, now ask people for help, for example, there are people who loves you…Sure, there are social connections. Language, for example, strengthen us. The children have
grown up a little, I mean, they are helping us with this [Translation], I mean.

Alhamdulillah all fears are gone” (PN6-mother)

Some mothers who were already experiencing struggles to meet their needs and cover their family’s expenses were using their available social support from their formed network in the US during hard times to interpret the significance of experiencing these new events:

“Certainly, the food abundance, praise be to God. Sure, is better now… I mean, thank God, we receive aids from the mosque in Ramadan month, they send rice and such, and canned food, in addition to food stamps [SNAP]… The Syrian community [Arab American] is also very good…. Turkish mosque is distributing [Food donations], so far, the Turkish mosque is distributing, and other mosque is also distributing… A lot of people, too, I mean, we also ask for advice from them about anything. We didn't have furniture and we asked them: could you bring us? This [point at the sofa], they brought it, we just had it. And this one old [point at the rug] is from the organization [Resettlement agency].” (PN14-mother)

“I turn to people for help. Sometimes, there will be a distribution in a mosque, I go… I mean, one must take a little from here and a little from there. It is necessary, especially if there are things that must be paid or something that will become abundant for the person and increase [Overdue bills]. Necessary… Also, I know someone, for example, every two months, she distributes home cleaning products. I just call her and tell her that I want cleaning products.” (PR3-mother)

“During the time when they cut off food stamps [SNAP], my neighbor told me to go to mosque to register. Every month they give you a box of rice, lentils, and oil. I went on
that day, to fill out the application and they told me that they will call me, if there is any help. In a week, the phone rang, and they told me, "Come, take the box" Oh my God! I was so happy…It was good. It contains rice, lentils, and oil. They saved me a lot. I would have to bought them if they did not give them to me…I had them for almost two years [Mosque monthly donations]” (PR1-mother)

Developing New Behaviors

Refugee families’ life transitions exposed them to more opportunities and resources to enable them to build their skills and confidence, which helped them better navigate the resettlement living systems, particularly the food system, and prevented and/or mitigated negative events from taking place that shaped their interpretation of the significance of these events. Refugees experiencing sudden financial hardship described living through adverse events now compared to the first years in the US. For example, they used “owning a car” as a significant resource that enabled them to improve their skills in navigating the food system as well as preventing household food shortages during this new event:

“Now, as purchases [Food], yes, they are definitely different now. In the first years [In the US], we didn't know the malls [Grocery store], we didn't know anyone, we didn't have a car that take us there [Grocery store]. And no one will direct you to the location. Yes, we struggled a lot from this matter… Yes, of course now is better, there is no need to ask. We write on GPS and go, even if we didn’t [Find the store]. I mean, just exploring... [Laugh].” (PN6-mother)
Having a stable income and SNAP enabled them to gain new skills (i.e., managing a household budget) to prevent and mitigate financial hardship and feel more confident which influence their judgement on facing these adverse events. Some refugees explained the role of developing a skill to manage their household income in the difference between their family’s food situation now while experiencing new adverse events and the time they were experiencing adverse events in the first months in the US.

A refugee mother of a family facing periodic financial hardship explained how two transitions—finding employment and accessing nutritional assistance—enabled them to learn how to manage their household budget, which helped them sustain their household food availability when financial strains happened compared to their first months in the US: “The first time we came here [the US], my husband and I didn't have [money]. We did not know how to plan the budget, because this budget must cover the house [living expenses] and the rent of the house... He worked for a good period of about 8 months, praise be to God, but when he started to have back pain, I became afraid, God forbid, because the disk is very difficult, then, praise be to God, we lived, praise be to God, Lord of the worlds, and I became aware [household budget] that the house renting is first, even in America, first and then, if I want to buy things for me and my daughters for the house, clothes for me and clothes for my daughters after the house rent... Much better much better [Family food situation]. The first thing, because we know how to plan the food budget.” (PN12-mother)

In addition, a father compared his feeling about his family’s food status now to their status during the first two years after moving to the US. He explained his satisfaction because of his family’s capability to manage their income and cover their
family needs without worrying about not have enough to pay for rent: “Nothing has
changed as a staple food… As a quantity, nothing differed, it means almost as the same
quantity. As a variety, yes, for example, we know more, more types, I mean we know
how to get the things. Before [In the first two years in US], I was afraid that, how would I
pay my rent, how would I pay my needs. There were some fears. Now, I don't have any
fear like this because I know better.” (PN4-Father)

Discussion

Being a refugee and experiencing different adverse events and resettlement in a
developed country while building a life in a new home country all played a role in
shaping their interpretations of their current experiences of food-insecurity events.
Examining their interpretations and characterizations of the meaning of food insecurity
from the perspective of hedonic adaptation gave us insights into the importance of
considering the role of repeated exposure to adverse events and resources refugees built
in the resettlement country in shaping their adaptation as well as their meaning of
experiencing food insecurity (Figure 4.1).
Ultimately, individuals’ judgment and characterization, as well as their coping strategies and features of their social and physical environments, all played a role in their adaptation to and interpretation of the events (Klausen, Emiliussen, Christiansen, Hasandedic-Dapo, & Engelsen, 2022).

Life in the host country was an extreme adverse event that emerged in almost every interview. Living through life hardships in the host country resonated with the results of similar studies of refugees resettled in the US and other developed countries (Anderson et al., 2014; Hauck, Lo, Maxwell, & Reynolds, 2014; Jabbar, & Zaza, 2014; Ostrand, 2015; Pejic, Hess, Miller, & Wille, 2016). Refugees from different countries of origin experienced different periods of food security during various life events, and the majority defined living in the host country as an extreme life event of hardship and food insecurity. A study focused on Syrian refugees’ experience showed similar life struggles.
in the host country as in our study, which was marked by poor living conditions in refugee camps or urban slums, restrictions on employment opportunities, freedom of movement resulting in food hardship; limited food access and availability (Ostrand, 2015).

Repeated exposure of individuals to events was connected to their judgment and interpretation of those events as a result of ideal calibration. Klausen et al. (2022) and Tiberius et al. (2010) have found that adults’ interpretation of the significance and attitude for approaching the adverse events are the product of adaptation to adverse events. Adaptation to adverse events is related to their exposure to one or more unpleasant experiences; individuals register and remember these experiences to compare and contrast their current experience and arrive at a calibrated judgment of their current experience (Klausen et al., 2022). This phenomenon was apparent among the participants in our study as they remembered and recalled past adverse events to explain the significance of the new adverse events they were experiencing as well as food shortages in the US. Adverse experiences with living hardships and food shortages in the host country emerged in interviews as a part of the narrative for explaining families’ struggles with food insecurity in the past as well as comparisons with the new adverse events in the US. Participants described their families’ struggles to cover their expenses and meet their needs, including food in the US, but parents frequently highlighted that their conditions were much better now than in the host country, even if not ideal.

Some refugees used a further coping strategy that related to ideal calibration by developing a habit of positive self-description of adverse events. Klausen et al. (2022) stated that frequently exposed to adverse events tend to develop a habit of positive self-
description of negative events, including living hardships and food shortages, to make them less affective as a part of individual’s adaptation process. In our study, this positive self-description of negative events was obvious among refugee families who described their status in the home country as poor; they continually normalized the events and used their poor upbringing as justification and explanation for why they were used to these adverse events. This description of negative events was in contrast to other refugee groups in the sample who described their financial status in the home country as stable; they showed dissatisfaction and used their stable and good life in their home country (Syria) to interpret their lower living conditions and current adverse events in the US. These findings were similar to those from a study of refugees from different countries who resettled in the US, which found that Burmese and Bhutanese refugees who lived in refugee camps prior to migration were accustomed to lower standards of living in the resettlement country. Meanwhile, refugees, including Iraqi refugees, who reported having a stable and comfortable life in their home country before the war and experiencing socioeconomic downturn in the resettlement country reported conflicting feelings about their situation in the US as they felt more safe than in their home country but were dissatisfied with their living situation in the US (Hauck et al., 2014). We should point out that this normalization quickly shifted, and the bar for judging the significance of experiencing financial hardship as well as food shortage events became higher when talking about their children and justifying their judgement—namely, these events led them to form a habit in their home country, but their children were too young to recognize their hard life in Syria and were not used to it.
Refugee families’ social and physical environments—mainly, the resources they built in the resettlement country—had a role in their assisted adaptation as well as the interpretation of the significance of the new adverse events they were facing. Refugee families went through different transitions during resettlement that led to increase their resources. For example, one of profound transition occurred after moving to the US (first transition), is learning English. This helped them build and expand their social network beyond the refugee community. The role of learning English in forming social networks resonated with the results of similar studies of refugees resettled in the US, where being fluent in English was a factor for having a numerous American friends (Hauck et al., 2014). This finding supports the view of refugee families that they built a resource that they could now rely on to prevent and mitigate any adverse events. Hauck et al. (2014) noted that refugees who resettled in the US who had greater social support from their family, community, and/or institutional programs were less stressed throughout their resettlement processes. Social support showed a protective effect on refugees from different cultures (e.g., Iraqi, Burmese, and Bhutanese), age groups, and host countries experiences (Hauck et al., 2014). Being shielded from negative events by others in one’s environment, which is known as assisted adaptation, is the most neglected form of hedonic adaptation related to individuals’ judgement and interpretation of adverse events as it is one of the factors conductive to individual’s’ wellbeing (Klausen et al., 2022; Putnam et al., 2004).

The refugee families’ acquisition and maintenance of different kinds of resources during their various resettlement transitions built up in a mutually reinforcing cycle such that, as refugee families moved from one positive transition to another in the US, they
significantly improved their families’ resettlement in the US while opening more opportunities to greater accesses and resources. These resources enabled them to improve and develop new behaviors to prevent and/or deal with living hardships and food shortages, which played a role in their adaptation as well as their interpretation of the adverse events. Preventing negative events from taking place by developing new behaviors is an indirect form of hedonic adaptation (Graham, Oswald, 2010; Klausen et al., 2022). One of the resources that they gained and that enabled them to change their behaviors or develop a new behavior was having a stable income and accessing nutrition assistance (e.g., SNAP), which helped them to gain new skills (e.g., managing a household budget) to prevent financial hardship. Studies have shown that budgeting is a critical factor linked to a household’s food insecurity as income is not the only determining factor; not all families who live above the poverty line are food secure while not all those who survive on a low income are food insecure (Hadley, Patil, & Nahayo, 2010; Nord, Andrews, & Carlson 2005). In addition, owning a car was an important resource that enabled refugee families to develop skills in navigating the food system, thereby preventing household food shortages during adverse events. Facing difficulties in the US shopping environment was one of the barriers that refugee families encountered that related to their food hardships during their first years in the US. This was also true of Liberian refugees who resettled in the US; the difficulties they encountered in the shopping environment and with the language were difficulty were associated with their food insecurity and food insecurity severity (Hadley et al., 2007). Refugee families used these new skills and behaviors to prevent an adverse event and to explain their adaptation processes as well as their judgment of the significance of potentially experiencing such
events. This an indirect form of assisted adaptation that is not merely a response to a stimulus (negative or positive event), but also an effort to prevent an event from occurring (Lyubomirsky, 2011).

Conclusions

Despite the many challenges that refugee families faced prior to and during their resettlement in the US, they used many ways to judge and interpret the meaning of experiencing food insecurity during their current life in the US. Refugees’ different forms of hedonic adaptation explained the different judgements of their ideal state as well as the meanings they associated with experiencing food insecurity. Acknowledging the many forms of hedonic adaptation and the role of one’s past experiences (history) as well as social and physical environment in their adaptation, in addition to their interpretation of such events, gives support for a more complex and dynamic view of individual’s interpretation of ideal state as well as the meaning food insecurity.

Our qualitative findings are useful for building a theory that can be tested in quantitative analysis. In-depth, qualitative interviews could be used to develop a direct measure of the meaning of experiencing food insecurity based on understanding the refugees’ history rather than just focusing on the current situation of refugee populations or other populations that have a history of living in different life circumstances, ranging from ideal circumstances to extreme hardship. The application of the life course and hedonic perspective broke down the food-insecurity experiences, and the meaning individuals associated with these experiences, into measurable components (constructs) that could be used to develop this measure. They illuminate that individuals’
interpretation of the current situation could be a result of an accumulation of multiple events that individuals recall and select to compare with current events, thereby arriving at a calibrated judgment as well as meaning of experiencing this event. Furthermore, their context, the resources that they access and accumulate during their resettlement life, and how they rely on these resources all contributes to their appraisal of the situation in certain times and places.

This study served as a first step in research that is aimed at expanding the limited knowledge of refugee families’ experience with food insecurity in the US and their resilience in the face of food insecurity. As one of the critical components in understanding the refugee resilience process for food insecurity is understanding the process of arriving at the situational meanings of their sources of stress (Patterson, 2002). Refugees’ consideration and judgment regarding food insecurity as well as their stress, and the context of their living environment can strongly influence their perception of the magnitude of food insecurity risk (Patterson, 2002). Thus, the appraisal of food insecurity as a risk can mean different things to different people as well as their resilience to food insecurity (Slovic, 1987).
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4.2. Manuscript 2

Understanding the refugee family resilience to food insecurity in the United States

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Introduction:

The refugee population in the United States is diverse and rapidly growing as the number of forcibly displaced people has grown globally. According to the UNHCR, refugees, are “people who are outside their country of nationality or usual country of residence and unable to return because of a fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, or membership in a particular social group or political opinion” (UNHCR, 2017). The number of refugees arriving in the US during FY 2016 was the largest yearly amount since 1990, 84,994 refugees, representing a 22% increase over FY 2015, 69,933 refugees (MPI, 2019). Almost 50% of refugees admitted in FY 2016 were from the Near East and South Asia, while Syrian nationals represented 14.8%, 12,587 refugees (MPI, 2019). Indeed, since the beginning of the Syrian conflict in 2011, there has been massive Syrian displacement, with more than 6 million Syrian refugees in the world and more than 22,500 in the US (2011-2021) (RPC, 2019; UNHCR, 2022). In their new home country, refugees encounter many resettlement stressors such as poor housing and neighborhood, social isolation and exclusion, loss of identity, change in family role, language and culture barriers, and limited access to employment (Bernier, 1992; Betancourt et al., 2015; Hadley & Sellen, 2006; Pejic et al., 2016).

Among US refugees, food insecurity is a major public health concern as it adversely impacts their health and wellbeing, since it affects dietary intake and mental health and is ultimately associated with illness, poor nutrition, obesity, and poor child development (Anderson & Sellen, 2013; Dharod et al., 2013; Hadle, Zodhiates et al., 2007; Sellen et al., 2002; Patil et al., 2010). Food insecurity exists whenever the availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or the ability to acquire acceptable
foods in socially acceptable ways is limited or uncertain (Anderson, 1990). The severity of the health outcomes of refugees’ food insecurity may hinder their successful integration into the resettlement country and lead to health inequalities. Refugees experience food insecurity, both during and after resettlement, with causes unlike those faced by the general population and other immigrant groups (Hadle, Zodhiates et al., 2007; Sellen et al., 2002; Patil et al., 2010). Refugees’ food insecurity has both economic and social determinants that place them at greater risk than low-income citizens (Hadley & Sellen, 2006). Unemployment and lack of income are common among refugees, particularly among refugee families with children, who are at high risk of food insecurity (Anderson et al., 2014; Hadley & Sellen, 2006). Along with economic constraints, a family’s ability to achieve or maintain household food security may be limited by major shifts in food-related practices, such as grocery shopping and food preparation, to which refugee families must adapt (Anderson et al., 2014; Hadley, Patil et al., 2010).

Resettlement programs continue to be crucial in accelerating refugees’ integration and financial independence, which improve their overall wellbeing, including their food security. In the US, volunteer agencies and the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) help refugees integrate by providing them a full range of resettlement services in the first four to six months of their arrival, including referrals for short-term cash, medical assistance, English as a foreign language classes, and job readiness and employment services, to help them become self-sufficient as quickly as possible (Anderson et al., 2014; Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Arlington, B. Loppisso, personal communication, June 2019). Yet despite these programs, refugee families’ still face a high risk of food
insecurity, and that risk does not diminish with the duration of residency in the resettled country (Anderson et al., 2014).

Limited attention has been paid to what happens when refugee families experience food insecurity. Studies have focused mostly on the family’s dysfunctional characteristics and factors related to their food insecurity; more emphasis should be placed on how refugee households try to rebound from life challenges, adapt to new life conditions, and improve their food security status in the resettlement country (Hadle, Zodhiates et al., 2007; Patil et al., 2010; Peterman et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2016). The current study used the lens of resilience to understand what happens when refugee families face food insecurity and analyze the social contexts that determine the positive or negative impact of that experience. The family resilience perspective provides a holistic view by conceiving the family’s problem as an interconnected set of issues rather than a standalone issue. Family resilience refers to the capacity of a family as an emergent system that is potentially exposed to disturbances threatening its viability to navigate and use available internal and external resources that sustain the family’s wellbeing; it is also a condition of the family’s community to provide these resources in meaningful ways (Pooley et al., 2010; Southwick et al., 2014; Ungar, 2019).

A family resilience perspective encourages us to consider how families adjusting to disruptions might feel overwhelmed by the imbalance of challenges and resources (Jones et al., 2018; Patterson, 2002; Southwick et al., 2014; Ungar, Ghazinour et al., 2013). Thus, it promotes efforts to consider how the family responds to the food insecurity challenges and what they need to face these challenges by recognizing that family resilience to food insecurity is not only about an individual family’s ability to
cope, but also includes various challenges and resources in their context (Patterson, 2002; Ungar, Ghazinour et al., 2013). The Family Adjustment and Adaptation Response (FAAR) model was used to explore how refugee families juggling to balance their life hassles and resources have to maintain their family functions as well as food security in the resettlement. The framework used in this study was built upon the FAAR model and Bronfenbrenner’s ecological system theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Patterson, 2002). The FAAR model emphasizes the process that the family employs to balance their demands and capabilities to reach a level of family adjustment or adaptation to crises (Patterson, 2002). Demands include normative and nonnormative stressors, ongoing strains, and daily living hassles (Patterson, 2002). Capabilities are comprised of tangible and psychosocial resources (what a family has) and coping behavior (what a family does) (Patterson, 2002). The FAAR model takes into consideration the importance of context, which influences how a family copes with crisis by identifying the demands on and existing capabilities of the family that are shaped by that context. Therefore, it is also important to understand and organize the sources of family demands and capabilities in the resettlement country. Meanwhile, Bronfenbrenner’s theory incorporates the recognition of the importance of looking at the different layers in the context within which a family functions (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). Integrating the FAAR model and Bronfenbrenner’s theory provides a useful framework for understanding a refugee family’s resilience to food insecurity through encouragement, shaping, and activation by a host of family-context interactions. The framework in Figure 4.2 is developed to explore in depth the refugee families’ food insecurity experience, and how their context shapes and fulfill their functions to mitigate food insecurity.
Three central questions guided the study:

Q1: What life challenges that make it hard for refugee families to secure their household food? And what refugee families’ capabilities that have played a role in their efforts to deal with these challenges?

Q2: What is the role of social systems in refugee families’ context in shaping the challenges on and capabilities presents to the families?

Q3: What are the recommendations from the refugee families’ perspective that would contribute to improve the refugees’ resettlement and foster their positive function to mitigate food insecurity?

Methods:
Sample

Syrian refugee families served as this study’s population, specifically, those who had been living in the United States for eight years or less (i.e., since no earlier than 2013) and were residing in the Washington metropolitan area (District of Columbia, Virginia, and Maryland). Most participants were recruited through purposive snowball sampling. This sampling was appropriate because participants were difficult to locate; many had fallen out of contact with resettlement agencies in the years since their resettlement. Rather than obtaining names and contact information from the first identified families for other families, two initial Syrian refugee families were identified; each family was asked to forward an email invitation or text message containing information on the research project with the researcher’s contact information to other refugee families. This method protected the identity of potential participants from being revealed to the researcher. Additional purposive sampling strategies were used, such as sharing a study flyer with a non-profit organization that works with the Syrian refugees and supports newly arrived refugees in the Washington metropolitan area.

The inclusion criteria were: a Syrian family who entered the US as refugees (i.e., had a refugee status) and had lived in the US for eight years or less. Families who were immediate relatives of a US citizen or who entered the US on a visit or Special Immigrant visa were excluded. The first author continued interviewing participants until reaching redundancy (saturation) at a total of 18 different families. Within each family, a maximum of 2 separate interviews were conducted, one with each of two adults (mostly parents) (N=24). The study protocol was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board of the University of South Carolina.
**Data Collection**

In-depth Arabic interviews were conducted with each family in their home. The first author, who is fluent in Arabic and was experienced in using qualitative methods, conducted the interviews. A semi-structured interview guide was written in Arabic (i.e., participant’s native language) and translated into English for review by the research team. Each interview lasted for 50-75 minutes. Conducting a separate interview with each family member maintained their privacy; in addition, the presence of any other family members during the interview could have restricted the conversation. At the end of the interview, participants were asked to complete surveys with short questions on demographics and socioeconomics (age, education, work and marital status, English language proficiency, family and friend network in the US, number of children, household size), and Arab Family Food Security Scale.

**Data Analysis**

All Arabic transcripts from the in-depth interviews were entered into Dedoose for analysis. The analysis of the data was initiated immediately after finishing the first two interviews and continued while working on further data collection. This process created an opportunity to identify any limitations of the interview guide questions (Maxwell, 2012). The analysis started by reading the transcript and listening to the interview audio while noting observations of data and developing tentative ideas about categories and relationships. First, coding was done, guided by grounded theory, starting with open coding (Creswell, 2007). The coding was conducted with 5 interview transcripts from 5 different families to develop a preliminary codebook. Substantive (emic; i.e., taken from
participants’ own meaning and understanding) and theoretical (etic; i.e., representative of the researcher’s concepts) codes were assigned in each text segment, and coding decisions were recorded in memos. Codes were related to the general lived experiences of the refugee families after the resettlement, including their food hardship experiences, active efforts to improve their resettlement, and the type of resources within their context.

Second, within each case (i.e., each family), the axial coding focused only on the two periods of the refugee families’ resettlement life: first days (early life) and current days (later life). This coding process was conducted and guided by Patterson’s family adaptation and adjustment response (FAAR) model and Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model. Categories and sub-categories that linked back to the research questions were developed. Categories included time within the resettlement period (i.e., early life and later life during resettlement), system aspects within the refugee families’ context (i.e., negative, and positive aspects), and the target of the refugee families’ support recommendation (i.e., targeted public policies and programs and targeted refugee families). Sub-categories were developed within each category. Within the time in resettlement period categories (early and later life), sub-categories included life challenges (demands) and family capabilities in the resettlement country. Sub-categories developed within the negative and positive aspects of the systems within the refugee families’ context included the source of each aspect, such as the mesosystem (e.g., ethnic and religious groups, extended families), exosystem (e.g., resettlement agencies, church and mosque, non-profit organizations), and macrosystem (e.g., public policies, welfare access). Sub-categories developed within the refugee families’ support recommendations included recommendations to address early challenges and late challenges.
Third, selective coding was done to refine and integrate the categories by selecting analytic themes of interest and developing themes into a general framework that explains the associations among them. One major analytic theme was refugee families’ contexts that explained part of their resilience to food insecurity, which was linked to the second research question. Families exposed to a current crisis (e.g., COVID-19 pandemic), their actions to balance their challenges, and their capabilities to fulfill their functions and mitigate food insecurity were linked to the systems within their context and compared between different resource sources’ absence and availability in each system as well as their role in hindering or supporting the refugee families’ ability to overcome crisis effects on their food security.

To ensure the quality of data collection and analysis, the first author wrote a reflexivity memo to avoid any potential bias and reactivity that could influence the interview questions, interview process, or data interpretation and coding. This reflexivity memo explained how her preconceptions, beliefs, and knowledge might influence the research interview, analysis, and conclusion, and how she responded to any events or changes during the study, such as any modification to the questions guide or data coding. The research also applied the Critical Appraisal Skills Program to ensure the quality of the study findings and conclusion (CASP, 2018). Selected quotes were translated from Arabic into English. For readability, quotes were edited for grammatical irregularities and colloquial languages. Explanatory comments were inserted using brackets [. . .].

Results:

The data indicate that refugee families were resettled in the United States for a maximum of five years, with the most resent family resettling three years ago. In the 18
participating refugee families, the majority (72%) of responses came from female members (mother: 94%; adult daughter: 11%); only (28%) of families included both parents as participants in the study. The Study composition is described in table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Selected characteristics of the sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>n (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family (N=18)</td>
<td>Number of children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0-1</td>
<td>3 (16.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>11 (61)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4-5</td>
<td>4 (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Length of time in the US</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 Years</td>
<td>1 (5.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 Years</td>
<td>7 (38.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 Years</td>
<td>10 (55.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Food security status</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Food insecure</td>
<td>7 (38.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Food secure</td>
<td>11 (61)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National nutrition program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SNAP</td>
<td>16 (88.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Employment</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>One family member</td>
<td>10 (55.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Two family members</td>
<td>6 (33.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>2 (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moved to better housing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>10 (55.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>8 (44.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family member</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Both parents or mother and adult daughter</td>
<td>5 (27.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>5 (27.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adult daughter</td>
<td>1 (5.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Both parents and child</td>
<td>1 (5.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mother and child</td>
<td>6 (33.3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During their resettlement life, refugee families experienced food insecurity at various times in the resettlement country. Almost all refugee families described early food
insecurity experiences during the first few weeks and months in the resettlement country, around 70% (thirteen out of eighteen), indicated that they are currently facing a crisis of sudden and periodic food shortage between salaries and/or SNAP monthly credit, and almost half of them are experiencing this life crisis as a result of COVID-related financial strains. In addition, refugee families described ways to help improve refugee families’ resettlement and foster their resilience to food insecurity.

Refugee families described three major themes related to the challenges (demands) they faced during their early days in the resettlement country, including food availability and preparation, food access, and employment. They also identified two themes related to later challenges, including new financial strains and employment. Their capabilities in managing and adjusting to these demands and mitigating food shortage included navigating an unfamiliar food system, using food-saving skills, and engaging in income-generating activates. The available resources within the families’ contexts, such as social networks and support, and public policies and programs.

**Challenges (Demands)**

Refugees’ challenges change over the time, with the challenges faced during the first few weeks and months in the resettlement countries differing from those later during their resettlement. They were unable to access acceptable food or worried about not having enough food for their families after their arrival in the US. Refugees said they first experienced a food insecurity event in their early days in the US, and this event was unforgettable. One theme of early challenges was the family’s experience with food availability and preparation in the US. As refugee families resettled and tried to build a
new home, they experienced food shortages and difficulties with food preparation in the resettlement houses where they stayed, which were a source of stress. These challenges were associated with poor resettlement services during their first days in the US. Participants also discussed their experiences with poor resettlement services related to their food hardship, including issues with a lack of food and insufficient kitchen tools and appliances in the resettlement housing; such issues affected the family’s ability to maintain their household’s food:

“We came here [the house] and we got the biggest shock, we entered an empty house that had nothing in it and no furniture, the fridge was empty, and we felt sad from this situation... This affected us a lot...And our financial situation was very bad, when we got out of Jordan [host country] ...I mean, we only have little money when we arrived in the US.” She added: “When we got into the house, the fridge had nothing in it. The agency [the resettlement agency] gave us a meal that was Pakistani-Afghani, it was very spicy...we couldn’t eat it” (PN6-mother)

“It was difficult [the first days in the US] ... How can I tell you! We spent two days at home. They [the resettlement agency] brought us a meal to eat in the first day. And we spent two days, we don't have anything in the fridge to eat. And I was embarrassed to tell my neighbors that I am hungry, and my neighbors also did not know that we came.” (PN10-mother)

Another common theme in early challenges that emerged in almost all interviews was accessing food. Several challenges were associated with this theme, including limited access to transportation, limited knowledge of the new food system, and difficulty locating traditional food stores, including those that serve halal food. Almost all families noted that
limited access to transportation was a significant challenge that made accessing food and maintaining their household food security difficult. Families explained the challenges of using public transportations, such as buses, to travel long distances to appropriate food sources. One refugee mother explained her family’s experience with limited food access due to difficulty locating food stores and access to transportation:

“After two days staying at home [in the first days in the US] I told my husband I want to eat …He got up and went out and stopped at the bus stop confused, where he wants to go get food, it is difficult …There were standing neighbors waiting for their children’s school bus. They saw my husband like that. They said, "Aren’t you the newcomer?" He told them yes, I want to eat, do you know from where? They showed him the location of the grocery store here.”. (PN10-mother)

Other mothers mentioned limited access to transportation as creating a difficult situation for their family during their first days in the US:

“Getting our traditional or halal food was not easy at first. It was hard. Transportation was difficult, meaning you take two buses to get to the store. You get tired and dizzy and then come back and have to cook for your family” (PR2-mother)

“When we first came, life was very, very harsh. I mean, we don't know how to get food, it was not easy to get the food because we don’t have the money, and there is no car to take us to the grocery store.” (PN2-mother)

Employment was one theme that the majority of families cited as a source of challenge in their early resettlement life. One significant challenge associated with employment was a lack of jobs within the first three months and before the refugee
resettlement financial support ended (i.e., 4 months financial support). For example, one refugee mother described how her family struggled to find a proper job that paid well and was located close to their house:

“The most difficult thing we faced when we moved to the US was finding a job. That's what we've struggled with the most. He [her husband] had to work in Virginia, he had to go by metro, he had to go long distances. We were in Maryland in Riverdale, so it was difficult to get to Virginia by metro. He had to take a metro, and take two metros to get there, which would take an hour or more on the road. And what did he take? only 7 dollars an hour, he used to spend a lot of it to pay the road fare, more than he earns. Then, he worked in a bakery in Maryland for a short time. The bakery burned down after a while, so he had to look for a job again.” (PN1-mother)

The employment theme continued to emerge as a source of challenge within some families even later in their life in the US. Some families cited employment issues, including a lack of jobs and adequate hours, as a significant challenge that increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. Mothers discussed the significant effect that unemployment and cuts in the work hours during the pandemic had on their families’ ability to cover their household financial expenses, such as house rent, monthly bills, and food purchases.

“At a time when my husband had a job, I have never been worried, I mean, my husband was working, and we had a Food Stamp card [SNAP]. I mean, I don't worry that it is the end or the beginning of the month. It's normal, it doesn't make any difference, but when they stopped my husband from work, and the crisis of
Corona became, and it became difficult for him to find a job, so I start to get worried and pay attention. Especially since things have become very expensive. We felt that vegetables, I mean Food Stamp, are no longer enough until the end of the month, meaning until the last Friday… some vegetables have become expensive, I mean, you feel a little difference in prices.” (PN6-mother)

“A lot of times my family cannot meet the house needs. I mean, like last month, and the one before that, I kept three electric bills, I couldn't pay them. I have to pay the car insurance, my husband's car, the rent of the house, and a lot of expenses. Our expenses are more than our income. Especially, with the current situation, with Corona. Before my husband was working with Uber, this job was fine, but now it is much less than before. I have had bills three months past due, I mean, even when I went to pay them the last time, I paid half of the payment, but I will come back again, God willing, I will complete the payment. I mean, sometimes days come, I mean, you can't cover all the expenses.” (PR3-mother)

Capabilities

Although refugee families experienced different challenges during their resettlement, they actively worked to achieve a level of family adjustment and mitigate food insecurity. As described in the FAAR model, family capabilities identified during the interviews consisted of either recognition of risks or opportunities in the ecological context. Four different capability themes paralleled or were a response to the previously discussed major challenges. The capabilities were navigating an unfamiliar food system, prioritizing their needs, using food-saving skills, and engaging in income-generating activities. Navigating the food system was associated with several capabilities, including
seeking information, discovering food and price options, and using technology to facilitate food searching. They functioned as some of the earliest capabilities that were important for facing the challenges families faced with regard to food availability and accessibility. Many considered their ability to frequently ask their refugee and Arab friends for information regarding food providers and locations to be an important aspect that significantly helped them improve their family’s food security. For example, one mother discussed the role of seeking information in improving her family ability to increase their food availability and accessibility:

“…the availability of food at home today is different than the first days. It's not difficult to find the food you want, but it's important to ask, to know. Who does not ask will know nothing. I mean, if you did not ask, you never know, I mean, they are here, they here before you, they will have more experience than you. Because we were new here, we had no experience, and they took us [to food stores]. The first thing they showed us was the halal shop. They told us the chicken is halal in this shop. The vegetables are cheap here, but not cheap there. This is how you learn from the people who came before you.” (PR2-mother)

In addition, discovering food and price options in the new food system was commonly cited as a capability that helped the families enhance their food security by decreasing food expenses and increasing food quality. This theme was linked with discussions of discovering their traditional food items in local stores with better prices and quality, rather than specialty or halal stores, and learning how to find better sales deals. For example, refugees explained their effort to improve their knowledge about the food system as well as their household food status:
“When I first came, I did not understand the prices. I was converting everything to Egyptian and Syrian currency and say oh!!! everything. And I say, Oh God, this is so. Just then, Glory be to God. One learns and we find Sam’s [wholesale store] is cheaper than Costco [wholesale store]. We are now finding something, for example, here is cheaper and there is more expensive, I mean, we count up to the cents. Frankly, America wants you to discover it. Because we were late in owing a car for a year and a half. I felt that I had not known America for a year and a half. Now, we go out and explore places. …We get the greens are from this place, for example canned food and goods from Costco, and olive oil must be from that place.” (PN11-mother)

Technology such as smartphone applications and websites played a significant role in facilitating efforts to navigate the food system. These technologies helped with translating the food labels and ingredients, locating certain food items provider, and getting direction. Refugees discussed the different ways they used technology to improve their families’ access to the food they want:

“Praise be to God, we found life easier, meaning it changed from zero to a hundred. By car, you can go to meet your needs. We started asking the Afghans, we point them like this, because they did not understand us, so we went to Google Photos and said, "Where can we find this from?" they would say: "I understand you” and they write the address to my husband. They write it on google address [Google Maps]. By the time, we know. We know the stores. The first time we go to the shop, we show the picture to the shop owner. We don't know how to talk; we just point to him. "Where can we find this?" He tells us: "Just come with me
and pay the money here”. Thank God by the time, we start knowing the nearby Arab shops.” (PN12-mother)

“You know we are Muslims. When we go to the supermarket, I have a translator application on the phone. Anything I take from the supermarket, if I am not sure that it is free of pork derivatives, or such, I would not take it until it is free of these things to buy it. When I buy biscuits for my children, I make sure that there is no gelatin [pig gelatin] in them. These things could have it in them.” (PN5-mother)

Although refugee families described their active engagement in trying to juggle their existing capabilities in order to deal with challenges they face while living in a new country and managing their families’ food availability and accessibility, certain challenges exceeded some families’ capabilities, resulting in an imbalance that makes meeting families’ basic needs a source of stress. Employment, especially during the pandemic, as previously cited, was a significant challenge for some families that led them to reapply for food assistances as they struggled to pay their bills, thereby creating a family imbalance. But families continued to function to reduce the effect of this challenge, and several families cited their capabilities as significant in mitigating life hardships as well as food insecurity. Such capabilities included their food-saving skills and budget management as well as income-generating activities. For example, some mothers used traditional recipes to create food produces from basic ingredients; other families managed their national assistance programs’ (e.g., SNAP) allotment budget to meet all their family needs, even saving part of the allotment for the next payment cycle. In some families, both parents worked or the fathers tried to work in two jobs. One
mother explained how her family tried to manage these days by relying on cooking low-cost, nutritious traditional dishes known in their culture and based on grains, legumes, and dried green leaves, such as chickpeas, burghul, lentils, and Jew’s mallow/moroheiya:

“I mean, it is possible on the last Friday [before SNAP next cycle], I try to make light meals, simple, meaning does not contain meat. Meat is not available, for example, “Mjaddara” [Lentils, burghul, and olive oil; traditional Syrian dish], almost these things. I try to pass these days, I say it will pass. The boys eat whatever it is.” (PN6-Mother)

Another refugee mother explained how she managed food availability when facing these challenges:

“Try to reduce the amount of food. For example, I avoid the foods they don't like [her family] because I don't have to do two dishes… sometimes I reduce the amount of food. Or sometimes I delay the lunch, so that they do not get hungry in the evening” (PR3-mother)

The Context Role in Shaping the Refugees’ Challenges and Capabilities

The social systems in refugee families’ contexts played a significant role in both challenges and capabilities. Context related themes can be characterized into two major categories: negative and positive aspects of the systems within their context. The negative aspects of the system related to the absence of needed resources to support the challenged family to fulfill their function in the resettlement country, including social institutions, national nutrition welfare, and neighborhoods. The negative aspects of social institutions included the absence of resettlement agency support. For some families, not having such
support that ensured access to what they needed hindered their ability to overcome challenges, especially in their first months living in the US. Many resources families needed to fulfill their function and mitigate their household food insecurity became available to them only during their early life in the US through resettlement agency support, such as informational (e.g., traditional food stores, translations and guides, job opportunities), tangible (e.g., proper food, kitchen appliance, and tools), and emotional support (e.g., attention and empathy). Refugee families described how the lack of resettlement support when experiencing early challenges in the resettlement country undermined their capability to function and secure the necessary food. For example, one mother described the resettlement agency’s lack of informational and emotional support during her family’s early days living in the US:

“… the only thing the organization told us is that there is a mall [food store] here, so you can go to it, but our neighbor showed us the Arabic shop, the organization [resettlement agency] almost only showed us this mall. The agency's treatments were a lot. How can I say it? It was not. I mean, we expected more. A strange country, a strange language, you don't know how to talk at all. I mean, they should be a little more, I mean, be kind to you. For example, take us to the store. We struggled a lot from this issue. Even when, for example, when we had the first appointment in the organization, they took us, but the second day they told us that you must come alone. The bus is an hour from the agency. It is difficult, and we have young children, and it is difficult to go out with them.” (PN6-mother)

Both parents described the resettlement agency’s lack of tangible support during these early days in the US:
“Life was so hard here. We have arrived in Ramadan. And my children were fasting, and my wife was fasting too, and I do not know what and where to eat. I had some milk, bread, and tomatoes in the fridge from the agency. The agency was very bad. They got us at home, and they don't know what Ramadan is. We kept eating milk and tomatoes, which means almost 4 days of fasting. My children were young. I got so upset. Then, I gradually got to know Syrian people, then Iraqi people and they helped me in getting food.” (PN2-father)

The mother described another similar experience:

“On the day we came, the agency did not give us food, but it gave us onions, it gave us milk, and of course, we had no cups or anything. The important thing is that there is nothing in the house. We arrived in Ramadan. Our lives were very difficult, there is nothing. And the agency that follow-up our case was not good with us.”

This lack of support led the family to not rely on resettlement support during their current financial challenges:

“No, by God, we did not ask the organization [resettlement agency] to help us now. The agency will not help us because it did not help us in the first place.”

(PN2-mother)

The support the refugee families received from community social systems was associated with the positive aspect of the system within their context, which related to the availability of resources supporting refugee families in fulfilling their function and developing new capabilities when they challenged. The majority of refugee families noted that the support received from the social community was a significant aspect in
helping them develop new skills to face life hassles in the resettlement country.

Community support primarily came from non-profit organizations, Arab American, old Syrian refugees (i.e., refugees who had arrived earlier), and religious communities (e.g., church and mosque communities). Refugee families recalled the impact of the tangible support they received from the Arab American community on improving their capability to discover the food system in the US to overcome their early challenges with food availability and accessibility:

“Someone that lives here [Arab American] helped my husband to find a car. Life has become easier. I mean, he gave him a car. Praise be to God. We found life easier, meaning it differed from zero to a hundred. By car, you will be able to meet your needs. We started asking and writing the address [using Google maps] to drive to stores.” (PN12-mother)

National nutrition welfare functioned as both positive and negative aspects of the refugee families’ surrounding system within their context. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) was one of the most positive aspect associated with the national nutrition welfare. Receiving the SNAP food support when the household income gets low or the family loses their income source helped refugee families develop the skills necessary to manage their SNAP allotment budget to cover all the food expenses as well as meet other family needs. One father explained how SNAP helped his family manage their food budget and save money for other essential household expenses during the pandemic, when his job hours were reduced and his wife lost her job, making it difficult to meet household expenses:
“I got a car, and I was depending on my job and my wife was not working, I mean I was confident that the bakery would cover my needs. The bakery reduced two, two hours, means I work 6 hours only. We tried to live on the same salary and food stamps, for example, the rent of the house, electric bill, car, mobile, internet. These are all must be covered. I mean, I tried as much as possible to live on this salary, if the food stamp is over, for example, this month, we need meat, we buy 2 pounds instead 4 pounds. For example, if the boys crave juice, we do not buy it. This is for 3 months. We tried a lot and were able to control until my wife found a job and we came back a little bit to normal.” (PN5-father)

Few saw the SNAP budget and regulation on the restriction to purchase only food as a negative aspect that restricted their allotment budget management. The majority perceived the negative aspect of the national nutrition welfare; free or reduced-price school meals as they were not applicable to their religious regulations. Almost all the refugee families explained that their kids did not eat the school lunches because they did not know whether the foods contained any pork products.

**Recommendations**

The refugee family members were asked about ways to support them, or other refugee families resettled in the US to alleviate food insecurity and prevent being food insecure during crisis. Their recommendations were targeted two: the family themselves, and their context (public policies and programs). The families also emphasized on the timing of the received support, they discussed the support ways changed by the time in the resettlement as their challenges changes by the time living in the resettlement. One
mother who been living in the US for five years, explained the types of support they needed during their life in the US depending on the time: “In the first few years mainly economic and instrumental support were required; later, mostly emotional and informational support (help with paperwork, translation, leisure time) were needed”

(PN1- mother)

Therefore, in table 4.3, the recommendations were organized according to the target group and the challenge time.

Table 4.3 Recommendations to improve refugee family’s resettlement and food status.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Early challenges</th>
<th>To public policies and programs</th>
<th>To refugee families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improve food access:</td>
<td>Older refugee support new refugees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provide reliable transportation to food stores and grocery shopping</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Quotes

“We were the first Syrian family. The organizations [resettlement agency] here take you for the first ride, but they don’t take you for the second one. The organizations should be a little more with the new family, they should care more. I mean, the person from the organization [resettlement’s case manager] should take care of the family, at least take the family two, three rides. They must ask about

Quotes

“I want families to do anything to raise awareness on social media. All people to put the information they know. Oh God, when I got on WhatsApp group and when they accepted me into Facebook group, I swear to God that my life changed 99%, my food and drink. Imagine after 3 and a half years in the US my food and drink have changed after I
them, not only take them to their residence and leave them, never contact them, or ask about them, I mean, that is still a strange country to them.” *(PN6-mother)*

joined the groups!!! Imagine that you have lived here for 10 years, the one who has been here for 10 years, and I have only here for 4 years, would be different than those who moved here new. People tell people, people teach people. Each one buys something, for example: I went to the store, I found this item, the price is such. “Hey guys, there is a sale on this”. Or someone asks: “I am trying to make buttermilk, does anyone have the recipe?” It is an open space. You put your idea down, and I put my idea down, and she puts her idea down. By God, the world will become easier.” *(PN11-mother)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Understand the culture and religious beliefs of the refugee population:</th>
<th>Manage food budget:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Better knowledge about the religious restrictions and cultural acceptability of food</td>
<td>- Avoid buying food from fast-food or regular restaurants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Prioritize food purchases, buy only essential food items.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Quotes*

“The thing we like the most that people get to know us, that we as a society are welcoming, we love to

*Quotes*

“The person must save as much as he can. There are people their food stamp remains until the
learn, live, and enjoy our life. The most important thing we also love that people know and respect more is that there are certain things in our religion that are forbidden or halal…These were the points that we most like people to know about us…In food, there are things that are halal and forbidden.” (PN3-daughter)

“It is important that they [resettlement agency] know, for example, this person from a particular country, so you know what their food is, other than their food, what he needs, what time of the year he's here [arrived the US]. For example, the most important thing about us was that we arrived at the time of Ramadan. It means fasting. Even if there was no food at home, we must fast. We want to fast. We cannot leave Ramadan fasting. They should pay attention to these things.” (PN4-mother)

End of the month, and there are people who do not. The reason is according to the family’s food waste. For example, there are people who buy ingredients that are not necessary, and leave them for three months, four months until they use them. One should get what to use at home, so that the food stamp will last until the end of the month, and if you do not want to spend out of your pocket. Also, how the person notices the price. If you know that in this store is cheaper, go to this store, buy cheaper, do not buy expensive. There are people who only buy expensive food with food stamps so their food stamp will not last until the end of the month.” (PN7-mother)

| Improve the resettlement agent services that provided to the refugees in the first 6 months in the resettlement | Life skills and knowledge |
Quotes
“…of course, it depends on the organization [resettlement agency]. The organization we are in was not very bad, as other organizations, they were not treating people good. I mean, I advise that they [resettlement agency] take into account the conditions of these people who are coming, who don’t know anything in this country [the US]. And it is important as much as they [resettlement agency] can address their needs. This is what they should be more concerned about…The organization must provide people with their needs so that they do not feel isolated. Seriously, when a person comes to a country that he doesn’t know, he suffers a lot.” (PN10-mother)

Quotes
"I advise people to not say I don't know, to learn. Don't say, for example, I don't want to do this thing, I'm afraid, try, just try. Experience is the biggest proof, adventure too. Learn, do not continue to depend on others. For example, you depend on aid and other than aids. You can work, why you wait for the help. If you leave your job and stay at home and wait for help, this also will affect your health, work will give you self-reliance.” (PN4-mother)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Later challenges</th>
<th>Increase SNAP allotment and expanding purchasing options to include home cleaning products</th>
<th>Having staple and/ or extra job</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Quotes
“I just imagine these days [at current time] that as long as there are food stamps [SNAP], I don't expect that there will be a shortage with any house. But not all families can cover all their needs with food

Quotes
“The most important thing is work. Whoever works, seriously, I mean seriously, does not think about food stamp or anything else. And I prefer this, I pray to God to grant us a
stamps, for example, according to families. But families can now, because with the situation with Corona, because they increased the food stamp, but before Corona, the family did couldn’t cover food with food stamp only. With the normal amount, it always means one has to pay about $200. It is possible to deliver $250 and $300 over the food stamp.” (PN14-daughter)

“The monthly [of the SNAP] allowance must be higher, and part of the food stamp [SNAP] must be for cleaning products. I mean, for example, three quarters can be for the food, and a quarter for detergents, so it will be excellent.” (PN2-father)

stable and good job because I don’t want food stamp, and I don’t want any subsidy” (PN11-mother)

Discussion:

Refugee families continue to face life hassles in the resettlement country. Examining their experiences as refugees in the US facing different life stressors while trying to build a new home and maintain their household food security from the perspective of family resilience gave us insights into the challenges presented to families and their efforts to respond to these challenges creatively and constructively. The findings also highlighted the social-ecological contexts that facilitate the maintenance and
management of family functioning and food security under stress (Figure 4.3) (Jones et al., 2018; Pooley et al., 2010; Ungar & Ghazinour et al., 2013). Ultimately, the life challenges refugee families experienced, the capabilities that helped them to adjust to their new life conditions and improve their food status, and the social contexts that determined the positive or negative impacts of such experiences all played a role in family food insecurity resilience in the US.

Figure 4.3 The process of refugee family resilience to food insecurity in the resettlement country

Household food insecurity was experienced by almost all participants as part of the refugee families process of adjusting to life early in the resettlement. Refugee families inadequate adjustment that resulted in household food insecurity in the early days goes beyond families’ ability to function to adapt to new life conditions during their resettlement. Refugee families identified the overwhelming demands (challenges) that exceeded their limited capabilities and the lack of supportive context to reach a level of family adjustment as an issue that significantly affected their household food availability
and access. Early challenges were not unique to the study participants. Findings from other studies have shown that refugees from different countries of origin who resettled in the US or other developed countries faced similar challenges (Anderson et al., 2014; Hadley, Patil et al., 2010; Hauck et al., 2014; Patil, et al., 2010; Sellen et al., 2002). Similar to our findings, a lack of income as a result of unemployment and insufficient hours are common challenges facing Iraqi and Brune refugees, particularly families with children, who are at high risk of food insecurity (Hauck et al., 2014). Among Burmese and Bhutanese refugees resettled in the US, limited English-language proficiency was one of the greatest sources of their limited employment opportunities (Hauck et al., 2014). Along with economic findings, other studies have pointed to findings similar to our findings related to refugees’ challenges in accessing food, including major shifts in food-related practices, such as grocery shopping and food preparation (Anderson et al., 2014; Hadley, Patil et al., 2010).

As refugee families resettled and built a home country in their new country, they actively engaged in a process of juggling to balance among ongoing life challenges and their capabilities to function and improve both their income and their food security status. Paterson (2002) suggests that family resilience is an active process by which families actively try to restore balance by reducing their challenges and increasing their capabilities, resulting in good outcomes. Families used different capabilities to address life challenges and mitigate household food insecurity, including navigating an unfamiliar food system, using food-saving skills, and engaging in income-generating activities. Refugee families used these capabilities to fulfill their function and adjust to any disruptive events, but they only become available in supportive contexts. Cash-
assistance programs available in the US through the national nutrition welfare for refugee families who qualify, specifically SNAP, enabled the refugee families to develop new capabilities, including food-saving skills and budget management when challenged. This positive aspect of the systems within the refugee context showed similar effects among Somali, Russian, and Liberian refugees, whose access to SNAP made them develop strategies that helped manage their food budget, such as sharing benefits with other refugees or prioritizing food purchases (e.g., not buying unessential food items, including cold beverages or preferred food types) (Patil et al., 2010).

However, when a family experiences a crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the challenges they face exceed their capabilities, making achieving a level of family balance difficult (Patterson, 2002). The function of this disbalanced family under crisis is a matter of their context. Studies have indicated that the ability to adapt to adversity requires having adequate supportive resources within the family context to meet new challenges (Heflin et al., 2011; Li, 1990; Jones et al., 2018). For example, economic resources were a major factor in protecting families under stress from experiencing child hunger (Jones et al., 2018). This phenomenon was apparent among participants in our study as well; the lack of a supportive context that enabled the family to function and facilitate their resilience to food insecurity was a major aspect that contributed to the refugee family’s periodic food insecurity during the pandemic. Therefore, considering the importance of the context in shaping the challenges and capabilities presented to a family, it is important to provide public programs and policies while other community institutions address potential areas that might enable Syrian refugees or other refugees in the US to sustain their positive function under crisis.
Finding ways to support refugee families from their early days after arriving in the resettlement country would be critical for those not yet well positioned to start building a new life during resettlement. Patterson (1988) demonstrated that a family in crisis is unstable and disorganized; therefore, interventions and programs that address their problems and return them to their balanced function show more potential. Research has also indicated that understanding refugee families’ perspective about ways to support them and other refugees (e.g., coming refugees) could foster their food insecurity resilience. Of many recommendations the refugee families discussed in the current study, one of the most dominant was improving SNAP budget and regulations, including increasing the SNAP allotment and expanding purchasing options to include home cleaning products. One study that focused on families’ resilience when dealing with negative life events and being vulnerable to child hunger showed that increasing the average monthly SNAP allotment decreased the odds of child hunger (Jones et al., 2018). Other studies supported such findings, concluding that insecure families too often must choose between purchasing food and other basic needs (Bhattacharya et al., 2003; Kushel et al., 2006).
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CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of major findings

This study sought to expand the limited knowledge of refugee families’
experience with food insecurity in the US, their resilience in the face of food insecurity,
and ways to foster their resilience. Findings from this study as well previous studies
showed that refugees from different countries of origin who resettled in developed
countries continue to experience food insecurity in their new home country (Anderson et
al., 2014; Hadley, Patil et al., 2010; Hauck et al., 2014; Patil et al., 2010; Sellen et al.,
2002). Using the lens of resilience expanded our study of refugee families’ experience
with food insecurity to not just focuses on families’ dysfunctional characteristics related
to their food insecurity, but also include families’ response to food insecurity, including
their navigations and uses of available resources in their context as well as the condition
of their context to support them and provide resources in meaningful ways (i.e., consider
their culture, religion).

Understanding how the refugees interpret the situational meaning of food
insecurity in the US was a critical component for understanding their resilience to food
insecurity (Patterson, 2002). Examining their interpretations and characterizations of the
meaning of food insecurity from the perspective of hedonic adaptation gave us insights
into the importance of considering the role of refugee families’ history, including
repeated exposure to adverse events in shaping their adaptation as well as their meaning
of experiencing food insecurity. Refugees experienced different periods of food security during various life events before and after resettlement, and the majority defined living in the host country as an extreme life event of hardship and food insecurity. A study focused on Syrian refugees’ experience showed similar life struggles in the host country as in our study, which was marked by poor living conditions in refugee camps or urban slums, restrictions on employment opportunities, freedom of movement resulting in food hardship; and limited food access and availability (Ostrand, 2015). This repeated exposure to food hardship events was connected to their judgment and interpretation of such events. Adverse experiences with living hardships and food shortages in the host country emerged in interviews as a part of the narrative for explaining families’ struggles with food insecurity in the past as well as comparisons with the new adverse events in the US. Participants described their families’ struggles to cover their expenses and meet their needs, including food in the US, but parents frequently highlighted that their conditions were much better now than in the host country, even if not ideal.

In addition, refugees’ history with exposure to life hardship and food shortage led them to develop a habit of using positive self-description of adverse events as a further coping strategy (Klausen et al., 2022). Positive self-description of negative events was obvious among refugee families who described their status in the home country as poor; they continually normalized the events and used their poor upbringing as justification and explanation for why they were used to these adverse events. This description of negative events was in contrast to other refugee groups in the sample who described their financial status in the home country as stable; they showed dissatisfaction and used their stable and good life in their home country (Syria) to interpret their lower living conditions and
current adverse events in the US. These findings were similar to those from a study of refugees from different countries who resettled in the US, which found that Burmese and Bhutanese refugees who lived in refugee camps prior to migration were accustomed to lower standards of living in the resettlement country. Meanwhile, refugees who reported having a stable and comfortable life in their home country before the war, including Iraqi refugees, and experiencing socioeconomic downturn in the resettlement country reported conflicting feelings about their situation in the US as they now felt safer than in their home country but were dissatisfied with their living situation in the US (Hauck et al., 2014).

Refugee families’ social and physical contexts—the resources in the resettlement country—played a role in sustaining their positive function and adjusting to any disruptive events. As refugee families resettled and built a home in their new country, they actively engaged in a process of juggling to balance the ongoing life challenges and their capabilities to function and improve both their income and their food security status. Therefore, accessing resources enabled them to improve and develop new skills to prevent and/or deal with living hardships and food shortages. One resource that enabled them to develop a new skill (capability) was having a stable income and accessing nutrition assistance (e.g., SNAP), which helped them develop a new skill that related to managing a household budget to prevent financial hardship. Studies have shown that budgeting is a critical factor linked to a household’s food insecurity. Income is not the only determining factor of food insecurity; not all families who live above the poverty line are food secure while not all those who survive on a low income are food insecure (Hadley, Patil, & Nahayo, 2010; Nord, Andrews, & Carlson 2005). Refugee families’
usage of these new skills and capabilities to mitigate and prevent an adverse event also played a role in their adaptation as well as their interpretation of the adverse events. Collectively, capabilities and resources shaped the degree to which a family is able to fulfill their functions and their ability to acquire a new capability to manage food insecurity as well as the family’s formation of meaning regarding the significance of food insecurity in the resettlement country.

In addition, refugee families’ social networks were one of the major resources that they relied on to prevent and mitigate any adverse events. The support received from their social networks, including non-profit organizations, the Arab American community, old Syrian refugees (i.e., refugees who had arrived earlier), and religious communities (e.g., church and mosque communities), was a significant aspect in helping refugee families develop new capabilities to face life hassles in the resettlement country. For example, the tangible support such as a car donation from the Arab American community improved the refugee families’ capability to discover the food system in the US to overcome their challenges with food availability and accessibility. Being shielded from negative events by others in one’s context, which is known as assisted adaptation, is the most neglected form of hedonic adaptation related to individuals’ judgement and interpretation of adverse events as it is one of the factors conductive to individual’s’ wellbeing (Klausen et al., 2022; Putnam et al., 2004). Social support showed a protective effect on refugees from different cultures (e.g., Iraqi, Burmese, and Bhutanese), age groups, and host country experiences (Hauck et al., 2014). Refugees who resettled in the US who had greater social support from their family, community, and/or institutional programs were less stressed throughout their resettlement processes (Hauck et al., 2014).
However, the lack of a supportive context that enabled the family to function and facilitate their resilience to food insecurity was a major aspect that contributed to the refugee family’s periodic food insecurity. Refugee families described their active engagement in trying to juggle their existing capabilities in order to deal with challenges they face living in the resettlement country and managing their families’ food availability and accessibility; experiencing certain crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, caused the challenges they were facing (e.g., unemployment, cuts in the work hours) to exceed their capabilities, resulting in an imbalance that made meeting families’ basic needs a source of stress. Not having a supportive context that ensured access to what families needed during crises hindered their capabilities to overcome challenges they face. Many resources families needed to fulfill their function and mitigate their household food insecurity become available to them only through their context. For example, economic resources were a major factor in protecting families under stress from experiencing child hunger (Jones et al., 2018). Therefore, considering the importance of the context in shaping the challenges and capabilities presented to a family as well as their resilience to food insecurity, it is important to provide public programs and policies while other community institutions address potential areas that might enable Syrian refugees or other refugees in the US to sustain their positive function during crises.

Finally, to foster refugee families’ resilience to food insecurity, the current study discussed several recommendations that refugees themselves offered to support them and other incoming refugee families. Their recommendations focused on two areas: the families themselves and their context (public policies and programs). The families also emphasized on the timing of the received support; they discussed how support changed
over time during resettlement as their challenges change throughout the resettlement process. Research has indicated that understanding families’ perspectives about ways to support them could foster their resilience (Patterson, 1988, 1989). Of the many recommendations that refugee families discussed in the current study, one of the most prominent was improving the SNAP budget and regulations, including increasing the SNAP allotment and expanding purchasing options to include home cleaning products. One study that focused on families’ resilience when dealing with negative life events and being vulnerable to child hunger showed that increasing the average monthly SNAP allotment decreased the odds of child hunger (Jones et al., 2018). Other studies supported such findings, concluding that insecure families too often must choose between purchasing food and other basic needs (Bhattacharya et al., 2003; Kushel et al., 2006).

Implications and recommendations

In today’s global situation, the refugee population is increasing, with the Syrian displaced population still among the highest resettlement need. The internal human rights abuses and economic issues within El Salvador as well as internal conflicts in Afghanistan, South Sudan, and Myanmar have all contributed to two thirds of the total number of displaced people worldwide (100 million) and increased the refugee population to the highest number ever, at more than 26 million (UNHCR, 2022). US President Biden also proposed raising the target for refugee resettlement in the US to 125,000 people in fiscal year 2022, compared to the previously highest number of 84,994 people in fiscal year 2016 (MPI, 2022).
Despite efforts to accelerate refugees’ integration and financial independence in the US, more can be done to better resettlement and strengthen the autonomy and self-reliance of refugees. Refugee populations are still facing difficulties and at high risk of experiencing food insecurity. The recent COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the refugee situation, adding to their resettlement challenges; the findings from our study and other studies indicate that social and economic issues have threatened refugees’ living situation, including losing their jobs or being evicted from their homes (UNHCR, 2022).

Several studies have addressed the challenges refugee families face during the resettlement and later in their new home country that are related to their living hardship and food insecurity (Anderson et al., 2014; Dharod et al., 2013; Gallegos et al., 2008; Hadley, Patil et al., 2010; Hadle, Zodhiates et al., 2007; Sellen et al., 2002), which increase the need to move on and think about a solution to address these challenges to improve refugee families’ resettlement. The findings illuminate the need for comprehensive approaches that take into account all different layers in the context within which refugee families function and components that form these families (i.e., history, culture, religion). This population cannot work and flourish in a vacuum; collective actions are needed. To address their challenges and foster their resilience, studies and programs must consider the whole picture, including refugee families’ history, the meaning they associated with food insecurity experiences, their capabilities, and the role of their context in shaping these capabilities and developing new ones, especially when overwhelmed with different challenges. Such efforts should be in addition to the meaningful inclusion of the refugee population in consulting on and co-designing
strategies that seeks to empower them, address barriers, and find appropriate solutions to their challenges.

**Strength and limitations**

The strength of this study is its use of a qualitative method to explore in-depth the refugees’ experiences with food insecurity, the situational meaning of food insecurity in the US, and how past events and the available resources carried across time periods shaped their meanings as well as their resilience to food insecurity. Qualitative methods, particularly in-depth interviews, are well suited to study refugee family food insecurity; they provide a thick description of diverse family forms and experiences with food insecurity in very specific family meanings and contexts (Ungar, 2003). In addition, the in-depth interview was conducted by the first author, who is fluent in the participants’ language and (accent), and the data analysis was done in the original language; quoted text was only translated for the publication and communication purposes. The first author is well educated in the participants’ culture and cuisine, which helped understand the indirect ways they explained their situation as food hardship is a sensitive topic for them and was not easy for some of them to talk about. An example is the consumption of dishes that, in their culture, are well-known as a poor people’s food, such as “Mujadraa” (a meatless dish that made of staple foods in their country: lentils, burghul and, and olive oil). Another example is how they described their typical meal or their satisfaction during food shortages, such as “we are okay eating cheese and olives.” The first author’s knowledge of participants’ religious beliefs made her aware how they explain or describe the adverse events by not showing their dissatisfaction, as a part of Muslim’s beliefs that
individuals show acceptance of and patience with any adverse event, trying to see the meaning of this event and compared to people who suffer more and thanking God.

In addition, hiring a transcriptionist from Lebanon, which shares a border, accent and culture, especially food culture and cuisine, with the refugees’ original country, and a registered dietitian with a master’s degree in nutrition allowed for the frequent review of the interview data to provide feedback on improving the interview flow by, for example, minimizing the interruptions and clarifying some words. Finally, the study focused on understanding the meaning of the adverse events experienced, particularly food insecurity, in the resettlement country and took into account the role of history and hedonic adaptation in shaping this meaning. This a novel approach helped explain individuals’ different judgements of the individuals ideal state as well as the meanings they associated with experiencing food insecurity. Acknowledging the many forms of hedonic adaptation and the role of one’s past experiences (history) as well as social and physical context in their adaptation, in addition to their interpretation of such events, supports a more complex and dynamic view of individuals’ interpretation of the ideal state as well as the meaning of food insecurity.

Several study limitations must be noted. Data were collected during the COVID-19 pandemic, a major crisis affecting everyone that was new to the whole world, not just to the US; this situation caused the weaknesses and the lack of a supportive context, including programs and public policy to address the challenges related to this crisis facing both refugees and on the whole population. The pandemic also increased the difficulty of reaching out and recruiting refugee families to participate in the study. The inability to meet with three different family members, including both parents and an older
child, resulting in a limited number of interviews being conducted with both parents and almost entirely with the mother. Conducting interviews with the male member (father) would have given us deeper insights into the family income and economic management as the male in most households is the family breadwinner. In addition, as noticed among the few family interviews that included both adult members (mother and father), the female member (mother) usually tried to make the family seem more polished and more conservative when talking about their food situation.
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Hello,
My name is Maryam. What is your name?

[Name] This interview should take around one hour to complete. Please know that you have the right to withdraw from this study or stop the interview at any time, for any reason. All of the information you have shared with me already, in addition to the information from this interview, will be kept completely confidential. For this interview, I want to know about your family’s first years of living in the United States and their experience with food in the US. Please let me know if you have any questions about this, and I will be happy to answer them.

I am at least 18 years old, a member of refugee family, and agree to participate in this study.

Signature: ......................... Date:.........................
Before we start, I just want you to know that I appreciate your willingness to share your story. Every story is unique, and I heard all kinds of things and there’s no right or wrong answer to any of the questions; what matters is that it’s your story.

A. **Icebreaker question:**

1. (Interviewee Name) Can you tell me, what is your favorite Syrian dish?  
   (PROBE: Do your kids like it? When is the last time you ate it?)

2. Can you choose one meal and describe your family food rituals?

   Thinking about this meal,

   a. Which meal do you choose? And why?

   b. Does your family eat together? If not, Why? (PROBE: who is there, where do people eat, etc.)

   c. What else goes on while people are eating? (PROBE: TV, talking, phone)

   d. Who decides what foods are eaten? And are there any special dishes in certain day/s in the week or occasions? When and what?

   e. What, if any, rules about what your family can or cannot eat in this meal? Or when they can eat?

   f. Who prepares food?

   g. Who cleans up after a meal?

B. **Transition question (Life before resettlement):** I want you to think back about your life before moving to the US, tell me about your life in the country you fled and requested refuge paperwork.

   1. Where did you used to live? And for how long?

   2. Were all your close family members with you?

      If No, who was/were not?

      If Yes, who was/were with you?

   3. How was the food there?

      (PROBE: How do you describe the food back then? Do you like it? Were you able to get the food you want, and your family wants? Explain.)
C. Transition question (Life after resettlement): Now, let’s think back about your family’s life during first few years in the US.

1. Can you describe for me the first years living in the US?
   (PROBE: How about other important events in your life that we haven’t talked about?)

2. How do you describe your first experience with food in the US? What about your family’s first experience with food in the US?

You have been describing what your family experienced during first few years in the US and it would be helpful to hear more about their experience with food. Therefore, the next set of questions is about your family’s first experience with obtaining food in the US.

During the interview I will keep paying close attention to the participant’s words to discover the meaning from their experiences. I need to discover the resources (religious and cultural believes) that they have within themselves which used to overcome their problems (or adjust their attitude toward the experience), and what they value most about food (their food culture and rituals) and how they feel about not be able to had them (Identity).

D. Food environment and preferences: Now, let me ask you to think about your family experience with food preparation and grocery shopping during first few years in the US. How do you describe it?

a. Who was usually shopping for the groceries? Does this change now? [If Yes] Why?

b. What were your thoughts about the grocery shopping? What about your family, what were their thoughts?
   (PROBE: What did you think about the food prices? Options?)

c. How you buy or get the food that you like such as traditional food or Halal food?
   (PROBE: Was it easy to find the food you like? How do you get to the market? Did you face any difficulties with transportations? Why?)

d. Were you trying to buy your traditional food or American food or a combination of both? Explain why?

e. Did you face any difficulties in preparing the food?
   (PROBE: Why did it happen?)
E. **Budget management and food priorities**: In the United States many families struggle at times to meet their needs. Since you and your family have moved to the US, have you ever found it hard to cover all your expenses?

1. **If YES**

   1. Can you tell me about that time? 
      
      *(PROBE: How did you manage that? What compromises did you have to make?)*

   2. How is your family food during that time? Were you able to keep eating the way you’d like? 
      
      *(PROBE: Did you change the kinds of food you ate during those times? Did the amount of food your family ate change? How did it change? Did you or any member in your family skip meals or go without food for a whole day?)*

2. **If NO**

   1. How has your family been able to manage cover all expenses?

   2. Can you imagine that something comes up – someone loses a job, or someone gets sick – and money gets tight. What do you think you might do to get by? 
      
      *(PROBE: How do you think you would manage that? What compromises do you think you might have to make?)*

   3. Would you ask anyone for help? 
      
      **If YES:**
      
      To whom you will recourse (or turn) for help or food?

      **If NO:**
      
      Why you will not?

3. How often did this happen?

4. What did you do during this time? 
   
   a. In addition to [STRATEGY] what else could you do? *[keep going until no more ideas]*

   b. How do you think, if anything, that other resources within yourself helped you and your family during this time? *(PROBE: How your religious or cultural believes adjust your attitude towards this experience?)*
5. How did you feel during this time?

6. You told me you did that … (Recall his/her answer), did you ask anyone for help?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If YES</th>
<th>If NO</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To whom did you have recourse (or turn) for help or food?</td>
<td>Why you did not?</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**F. Resilience question (Capabilities: resources):**

1. Can you tell me about something you’ve done to try to help your family have enough food? Why (what made you do that?)?

2. Can you tell me about something you’ve done to try to make food at home last longer?

3. Now, can you think about the area where you and your family were living and the people in your network during the first year of your resettlement, what were the ways that your family got food?  
   **[PROBE into roles the person plays in each situation]**
   - Did anyone in your family eat at a restaurant?  
     **[IF “YES”]** What restaurants did you usually go to?  
     About how often did you eat out? Does this change now?
   - Did anyone in your family borrow food from friends or neighbors?  
     **[IF “YES”]** Can you please tell me more about that?

4. Sometimes families have to do things they don’t like to get food. Was there a time when you, or someone you know, had to do something that they didn’t like to get food? Can you tell me about that?

5. Many families use some sources of food assistance (e.g., SNAP, WIC, or food pantry). Have you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If YES</th>
<th>If NO</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Did anyone in your family use SNAP to help buy groceries at the store? How did you learn about it?</td>
<td>a. Explain why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Did anyone in your family use WIC, to help buy child groceries at the store? How did you learn about it?</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
c. Did anyone in your family go to a food pantry – like at a Church/Mosque or Harvest Hope?

   [IF “YES”] About how often?
   Who usually goes to the food pantry?
   How did he/she learn about it?

d. if at all, did (program/s name) help?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are there ways that it was not helpful or create any problems to you or to your family members?</td>
<td>Why?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Did anyone in your family get free or reduced lunch at school?

   [IF “YES”] Who were usually get free or reduced lunch at school?
   Does he/she get it now?
   [IF “NO”] Why not?

7. Did anyone in your family get free breakfast at school?

   [IF “YES”] Who were usually get free or reduced lunch at school?
   Does he/she get it now?
   [IF “NO”] Why not?

G. Resilience question (Situational meanings “Hedonic Adaptation”):

1. What were your main concerns and your family in living in the US when you first came here?

   If “Food WAS” one of them: If “Food WASN’T” one of them:
   How did food concerns compare to these other concerns? Was it more or less important to you?
   What about food access?

   How, if at all, have your concern and your family changed by living in the US?

2. What were your family main goals for living well in their new country when they first came? Do their goals still the same now? How?
3. You described your family food rituals… [recall rituals in part A], Are there any other rituals? What was retained from life before moving to the US and what has changed? How does it change? How do you feel about this/these change/s?

4. How do you think your family food situation today and in the first few years in the US compare?

5. How your thoughts about food have changed since you have been living in the US?  
   **(PROBE:** Your thoughts about what it means to have enough food? Your thoughts about what foods are good for your family to eat and not to eat?)

**H. Closing Question:**
Based on your experience, what would ensure that your family or new refugee families never go without food or experience food shortage?

What else do you think I should know about to understand your food situation that I did not ask about?
مرحبًا، مرحباً,

انا اسمي مريم، الاسم الكريم؟

المقابلة مدتها ساعة تقريبا، لك الحق بالانسحاب من المقابلة أو ايقافها في أي وقت لأي سبب.

كل المعلومات التي شاركتها معي قبل المقابلة والتي سوف تشاركها خلال المقابلة ستبقى محفوظة وسرية.

في هذه المقابلة، أريد أن أعرف عن السنوات الأولى التي عاشتها عائلتك في الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية وتجربيتها مع الطعام هنا. إذا كان لديك أي أسئلة حول هذا الموضوع يسعدني الإجابة عليها.

الرجاء إخباري إذا كانت لديك أي أسئلة حول هذا الأمر، وسيسعدني مساعدتك.

أنا فرد من عائلة لاجئة لا يقل عمره عن 18 عاما وأوافق على المشاركة في هذه الدراسة.

التاريخ: ........................................

التوقيع: .................................
قبل أن نبدأ، أريد أن تعرف أنني أقدر استعدادك لمشاركة قصتك. كل قصة فريدة ولا توجد إجابة صحيحة أو خاطئة على أي من الأسئلة، ما يهم هو أنها قصتك.

1. **أسئلة تمهيدية:**

1. (اسم الشخص الذي تجري معه المقابلة) ما هو الطبق السورى المفضل لديك؟
   (تحفز: هل يحبها أطفالك؟ متي كانت آخر مرة أكلت؟)

2. هل يمكنك اختيار وجبة معينة وصف طقوس الطعام في عائلتك؟
   - خلال هذا الوجبة:
     
     أ. ما هو الوجبة التي اخترت؟ وماذا?
     ب. هل تتناول جميع أفراد العائلة الطعام معًا؟ إذا اردت لا: لماذا?
   (تحفز: من هم أفراد العائلة؟ أين تتناولون الطعام؟)

  ج. ماذا تفضلون أثناء تناول الطعام؟ (تحفز: تلفزيون، حديث، تلفون)
  د. من الذي يقرر ماهي الأطباق التي يتم تناولها؟ وهل هناك أطباق خاصة في أيام معينة في الأسبوع أو المناسبات؟ متي؟ وما هي هذه الأطباق؟
  ه. ما هي، إذا وجد القواعد الأكل السوسي أو غير مسموح أكلة في هذا الوجبة؟ أو التي تخص متي؟ (مثال: وقت الوجبة، الأكل من خارج المنزل)
  م. من يقوم بإعداد طبخ الطعام؟
  ن. من ينتقد بعد الانتهاء من الطعام؟

2. **أ. أسلحة النهاية (الحياة قبل إعادة التوطين):** أريد أن أعيد التفكير في حياتك قبل الانتقال إلى الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية، أخبرني عن حياتك في بلدك الذي سكنت فيه وطلبت منه اللجوء لأمريكا.

   أ. أين كنت تعش؟ وكم كانت المدة؟
   ب. هل جميع أفراد عائلتك المقرية معك؟
   - إذا كانت الإجابة لا، فمن كان/لم يكن معك؟
   - إذا كانت الإجابة نعم، من كان معك؟

   ج. كيف كان الأكل هناك؟
   (تحفز: كيف تصف الطعام في ذلك الوقت؟ هل يعجبك؟ هل كنت قادر على الحصول على الطعام الذي تريده)
   وعائلتك؟ اشرح)

3. **أ. أسلحة النهاية (الحياة بعد إعادة التوطين):** الآن دعنا نفكر في حياة عائلتك خلال السنوات الأولى في أمريكا.

   أ. هل يمكنك أن تصف لي السنوات الأولى التي عشت فيها في أمريكا؟
   (تحفز: هل هناك أحداث مهمة أخرى في حياتك لم تخاطب عنها؟)
   ب. كيف تصف تجربتك الأولى مع الطعام في أمريكا؟

لفقد وصفت ما مرت به عائلتك خلال السنوات الأولى في أمريكا، وسأستخدم أكثر من سماع المزيد عن تجربتهم مع الطعام. لذلك، فإن المجموعة التالية من الأسئلة تدور حول التجربة الأولى لعائلتك في الحصول على الطعام في أمريكا.
١. هل يمكن أن تخبرني عن ذلك الوقت؟

٢. هل يمكن أن تخبرني عن بعض الأحيان لتلبية احتياجاتي في أمريكا. منذ أن انتقلت

٣. هل استطلا المساعدة من أي أحد؟

٤. ماذا فعلت خلال هذا الوقت?

٥. كيف كان شعورك خلال هذا الوقت؟

(التحفيز: كم مرة حدث هذا؟)

(التحفيز: هل تشعر أن هذا يتطلب مساعدة؟)

(التحفيز: هل تشعر أن هذا يتطلب مساعدة؟)

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(التحفيز: هل تشعر أن هذا يتطلب مساعدة؟)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>المساعدة من أحد؟</th>
<th>نعم</th>
<th>لا</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ما سبب رفض طلب المساعدة؟</td>
<td>المساعدة أو الطعام؟</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. أسئلة المرونة/المعاوية (الموارد):

1. هل يمكن أن تخبرني عن شيء فعلاً متعلق بمحاولة مساعدتك في الحصول على طعام كافٍ؟ لماذا (ما الذي جعلك يفعل ذلك؟؟)

2. هل يمكن أن تخبرني عن شيء فعلته للمحاولة جعل الطعام في البيت يدوم مدة أطول؟

3. الآن، هل يمكنك التفكير في المنطقة التي كنت تعيش فيها أنت وعائلتك، والأشخاص المقربين لتك خلال السنوات الأولي في أمريكا، ما هي طرق حصول عائلتك على الطعام؟ (ما هي الأدوار التي يلعبها الشخص في كل موقع؟)

أ. هل أكل أي فرد من عائلتك في مطعم (جاهز)؟

إذا كانت الإجابة "نعم":
- ما المطاعم التي كنت تذهب إليها عادة؟
- كم مرة أكلت خارج البيت تقريباً؟
- هل تغير هذا الآن؟

ب. هل استعار أي فرد من أفراد عائلتك طعامًا من الأصدقاء أو الجيران؟

إذا كانت الإجابة "نعم":
- هل يمكنك إخباري بالمزيد عن ذلك؟

4. في بعض الأحيان يتعين على العائلات أن تفعل أشياء لا تحبها (لا تفضلها) للحصول على الطعام. هل مر وقت اضطررت فيه أنت أو أي شخص تعرفه إلى القيام بشيء لا يحبه للحصول على الطعام؟ هل يمكن أن تخبرني عن ذلك؟
5. تستخدم العديد من العائلات بعض مصادر المساعدة الغذائية، على سبيل المثال: طعام (Food Stamps، EBT، WIC). هل سبق واستخدمت أي من هذه المصادر؟

نعم
أ. هل استخدم أي فرد في عائلتك فود ستاميس ، أو أي بي تي، للمساعدة في شراء المواد الغذائية؟ كيف عرفت هذه البرامج؟
ب. هل استخدم أي فرد في عائلتك برنامج (دبليو أي سي) للمساعدة في شراء المواد الغذائية للأطفال؟ كيف عرفت عن هذا البرنامج؟

لا
إذا كنت البرنامج "نعم":
- كم مرة؟
- من عادة يذهب إلى مخزن الطعام؟
- كيف عرفت عن هذه المصادر؟

ج. هل ذهب أي فرد من أفراد عائلتك إلى مخزن الطعام - مثل الكنيسة / المسجد؟

د. هل (اسم البرنامج) ساعد؟

لا
لماذا؟ هل هناك أي شيء غير مفيد في البرنامج أو سبب أي مشاكل لك أو لأفراد عائلتك؟

6. هل حصل أي فرد في عائلتك على وجبة غذاء مجانية أو مخفضة في المدرسة؟

إذا كانت الإجابة "نعم": من الذي يحصل عادة على وجبة غذاء مجانية أو مخفضة في المدرسة؟ هل يحصل عليها الآن؟
- إذا كانت الإجابة "لا": لماذا؟

7. هل حصل أي فرد من أفراد عائلتك على وجبة فطور مجانية في المدرسة؟

إذا كانت الإجابة "نعم": من الذي يحصل عادة على وجبة فطور مجانية أو مخفضة في المدرسة؟ هل يحصل عليها الآن؟
- إذا كانت الإجابة "لا": لماذا لا؟

8. أسئلة المرونة/المعاوية (التكيف):

1. ما هي مخاوفك الرئيسية وعائلتك في العيش في أمريكا عندما وصلت هنا لأول مرة؟

الطعام ليس ضمن المخاوف
كيف تقارن مخاوف الطعام بهذه المخاوف الأخرى؟ هل كانت أكثر أو أقل أهمية بالنسبة لك؟

ماذا عن الحصول على الطعام؟
كيف اختلفت مخاوفك وعائلتك مع المعيشة في أمريكا؟

1. ما هي الأهداف الرئيسية لعائلتك للعيش بشكل جيد في بلدهم الجديد عندما وصلوا لأول مرة؟ هل أهدافهم لا تزال هي نفسها الآن؟ كيف؟

2. وصفت طفلك طعام عائلتك (تذكر الطفلك في الجزء السابق)، هل هناك أي طفلك آخر (في مناسبات معينة)؟ ما الطبقات أو العادات التي استمرت من الحياة قبل الانتقال إلى أمريكا وما الذي تغير؟ كيف تغيرت؟ ما هو شعورك اتجاها هذه التغييرات؟

3. هل يمكن أن تقارن كيف وضع طعام عائلتك اليوم وفي السنوات القليلة الأولى في الولايات المتحدة؟

4. كيف تغيرت نظرتك لطعامك (وجودة، كمية، نوعية، وفرة) منذ قدومك للولايات المتحدة؟

5. تحفيز: أفكارك حول ما يعنيه الحصول على طعام كافٍ؟ أفكارك حول ما هي الأطعمة الجديدة لعائلتك لتناولها (وعدم تناولها)؟

6. أسئلة ختامية:

1. بناءً على تجربتك، ما الذي يضمن عدم بقاء عائلتك أو العوائل الاجتياح الجديدة بدون طعام أو المعاناة من نقص الطعام؟

2. هل هناك شيء لم أسأل عنه وبإمكانه مساعدتي لفهم وضعك الغذائي أكثر؟
APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS GUIDE IN ENGLISH AND ARABIC
(CHILDREN)

Hello,
My name is Maryam. What is your name?

A. Icebreaker Questions:

1. Can you tell me, what is your favorite food? When do you eat it?!

2. What did you eat yesterday? Did you enjoy your food?!

B. Transition Questions:

1. Okay, I would like you to describe your family’s way of eating a meal together (e.g., lunch or dinner)?
   Think about one meal,
   a. Which meal you are thinking about? Why?
   b. Does your family eat together? (PROBE: who is there, where do people eat, etc.)
   c. What else goes on while people are eating? (PROBE: TV, talking, phone)
d. Who decides what foods are eaten? And are there any special dishes in certain day/s in the week or occasions? When? What is the dish called?

e. Are there any rules about what people can eat? Or when they can eat?

f. Who prepares food?

g. Who cleans up after a meal?

C. Household food priorities and shopping:

1. At home, does everyone like the food that your family buys? Why?

2. Who is usually shopping for the grocery? Do you go with him/her?
   a. If YES: What do you like or not like in shopping for the grocery? Do you get to buy the food you like? Why?
   b. If NO: Why?

3. Does your family try to buy traditional food or American food or a combination of both? And which one you like most?
D. Food Insecurity Questions: In America many families sometimes struggle to get their needs met. Have you ever known kids from a family that are having a hard time to have enough money to get food?  

**If YES**

1. What do you think made that happen?
2. What did the grown-ups say that let the kids know there wasn’t enough money to get more food?
3. What did the grown-ups do that let the kids know there wasn’t enough money to get more food?)
   **(PROBE:** Did they change the type of food they ate? Did the meals size change? Or the number of meals changed?)
4. Have you ever known kids from a family that worried that their food would run out and they wouldn’t have enough money to get more?
   **If Yes**
   a. How did the kids in the family know they were worried?
   b. What did grown-ups say that let the kids know they were worried?
   c. What did the grown-ups do that let the kids know they were worried?)
   **(PROBE:** Did the kind of meals the family ate change when they were worried? How did they change? Did the amount of food the family ate change when they were worried about having enough? How did it change?)
   **If No**
   **Go to part E**

**If NO**

1. Have you ever known kids from a family that worried that their food would run out and they wouldn’t have enough money to get more?
   **If Yes**
   a. How did the kids in the family know they were worried?
   b. What did grown-ups say that let the kids know they were worried?
   c. What did the grown-ups do that let the kids know they were worried?)
   **(PROBE:** Did the kind of meals the family ate change when they were worried? How did they change? Did the amount of food the family ate change when they were worried about having enough? How did it change?)
   **If No**
   **Go to part E**
Do you think this kid’s family asked anyone for help?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
<th>If YES</th>
<th>If NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To whom did they have turn for help or food?</td>
<td>Why do you think they did not ask for help?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

E. Food Insecurity Questions:

1. What sorts of things do you worry about?
   *(PROBE: What is happening that you know you need to worry?)*

2. Have you ever *worried* about not having enough food in the house?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If YES</th>
<th>If NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. When there is worry about not having enough food, what do your parents do? What does your mom do? What does your father do? What do your siblings do? What do you do?</td>
<td>Go to Q2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Do meals vary? How do meals vary?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

   *(May PROBE: Did you change the kinds of food you ate? Did the amount of food your family ate change? How did it change?)*

   c. Can you tell me about something you’ve done to try to help your family have enough food?

   d. Can you tell me about something you’ve done to try to make food last?

2. Tell me, if a family was going through a hard time, and couldn’t afford enough food, what could they do?

   o In addition to *[STRATEGY]* what else could they do? *[keep going until no more ideas]*
   o With all these things they could do, what do you think they should try first? Why?

F. Diffusion Question:

Do you know how to cook? What do you cook?


مرحباً،

انا اسمي مريم، الاسم الكرم؟

1. أسئلة تمهيدية:

اسم الشخص الذي تجري معه المقابلة ما هي أكلتك المفضلة؟ ومتى تأكل؟
a. ماذا أكلت، هل أعجبت الأكلة؟
b. هل أعجبت أكلتك؟ ومتى تأكل؟

2. أسئلة انتقالية:

أ. أريدك توصيف كيف عائلتك تأكل أي وجبة مع بعض (مثل وجبة الغداء أو العشاء)؟

فكر بوجبة واحدة:

أ ما هي الوجبة التي اخترتها ولماذا؟
ب هل عائلتك تأكل مع بعض؟ (من هم أفراد العائلة؟ أين تأكلون الطعام؟)
ت إذا تمكن اثناء تناول الطعام (قفر، حديث، تلفون)
ث من الذي يقرر ما هي الأطباق التي يتم تناولها؟ وهل هناك أطباق خاصة في أيام معينة في الأسبوع أو المناسبات؟
ج هل هناك قواعد معينة تخص ما يمكن أكله أو متى يمكن أن يأكلوا؟ (مثال: وقت الوجبة، الأكل من خارج المنزل)
ح من يقوم بإعداد وطهي الطعام؟
خ من ينظف بعد الانتهاء من الطعام؟

3. أولويات الغذاء والتسوق:

أ في المنزل، هل كلكم تحبون الطعام الذي تحتري عائلتك ولماذا؟
ب من هم من يذهبون للتسوق؟ (هل تذهب من دون بعض أو معهم؟)

إذا كنت إذا ماذا يعجبك أو لا يعجبك في التسوق للطعام؟ هل تشتري الطعام الذي تحبه؟ ولماذا؟
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ﻲﺋاذﻐﻟا نﺎﻣﻷا .

ﺔﺑوﻌﺻ ﮫﺟاوﺗ ﺔﻠﺋﺎﻋ نﻣ لﻔط تﻓرﻋ نأ قﺑﺳ لھ .مﮭﺗﻠﺋﺎﻋ تﺎﺟﺎﺣ رﯾﻓوﺗﻟ ﺢﻓﺎﻛﺗ نﺎﯾﺣﻷا ضﻌﺑ تﻼﺋﺎﻌﻟا نﻣ رﯾﺛﻛﻟا ﺎﻛﯾرﻣأ 

؟مﺎﻌطﻟا ﻰﻠﻋ لوﺻﺣﻠﻟ ﻲﻓﺎﻛﻟا لﺎﻣﻟا ﻰﻠﻋ لوﺻﺣﻟا ﻲﻓ

١

؟ثﺪﺤﯾ اﺬھ يﺬﻟا ﺎﻣ ﻚﯾأﺮﺑ .

٢

اذﺎﻣ .

لﺎﻗ

رﺎﻐﺼﻟا ﻞﻌﺟو رﺎﺑﻜﻟا

ءاﺮﺸﻟ ﻲﻓﺎﻛﻟا لﺎﻤﻟا ﺪﺟﻮﯾ ﻻ ﮫﻧأ نﻮﻤﻠﻌﯾ

؟مﺎﻌﻄﻟا

٣

اذﺎﻣ .

ﻞﻌﻓ

ﻻ ﮫﻧأ نﻮﻤﻠﻌﯾ رﺎﻐﺼﻟا ﻞﻌﺟو رﺎﺑﻜﻟا

اوﺮﯿﻏ ﻞھ) ؟مﺎﻌﻄﻟا ءاﺮﺸﻟ ﻲﻓﺎﻛﻟا لﺎﻤﻟا ﺪﺟﻮﯾ

ﻢﺠﺣ اوﺮﯿﻏ ﻞھ ؟ﮫﻧﻮﻠﻛﺄﯾ يﺬﻟا مﺎﻌﻄﻟا عﻮﻧ

(؟مﻮﯿﻟا ﻲﻓ تﺎﺒﺟﻮﻟا دﺪﻋ وأ ؟ﺔﺒﺟﻮﻟا

٤

ﺔﻠﺋﺎﻋ ﻦﻣ ﻞﻔط ﺖﻓﺮﻋ نأ ﻖﺒﺳ ﻞھ .

ﻖﻠﻘﺗ ﻦﻣ

لﺎﻤﻟا ﻢﮭﯾﺪﻟ ﺪﺟﻮﯾ ﻻو ﻲﮭﺘﻨﯾ فﻮﺳ مﺎﻌﻄﻟا نأ

؟مﺎﻌﻄﻟا ءاﺮﺸﻟ ﻲﻓﺎﻛﻟا

مﻌﻧ اذإ

ﻻ اذإ

مﺎﻌطﻟا ﻰﻠﻋ لوﺻﺣﻠﻟ ﻲﻓﺎﻛﻟا لﺎﻣﻟا ﻰﻠﻋ لوﺻﺣﻟا ﻲﻓ

٥

مﺎﻌطﻟا

مﻌﻧ اذإ

ﻻ اذإ

مﺎﻌطﻟا ﻰﻠﻋ لوﺻﺣﻠﻟ ﻲﻓﺎﻛﻟا لﺎﻣﻟا ﻰﻠﻋ لوﺻﺣﻟا ﻲﻓ

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؟ﺚدﺣ اذھ يذﻟا ﺎﻣ ﻚﯾأﺮﺑ .

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اذﺎﻣ .

لﺎﻗ

رﺎﻐﺼﻟا ﻞﻌﺟو رﺎﺑﻜﻟا

ءاﺮﺸﻟ ﻲﻓﺎﻛﻟا لﺎﻤﻟا ﺪﺟﻮﯾ ﻻ ﮫﻧأ نﻮﻤﻠﻌﯾ

؟مﺎﻌﻄﻟا

٢

اذﺎﻣ .

ﻞﻌﻓ

ﻻ ﮫﻧأ نﻮﻤﻠﻌﯾ رﺎﻐﺼﻟا ﻞﻌﺟو رﺎﺑﻜﻟا

اوﺮﯿﻏ ﻞھ ؟مﺎﻌﻄﻟا ءاﺮﺸﻟ ﻲﻓﺎﻛﻟا لﺎﻤﻟا ﺪﺟﻮﯾ

ﻢﺠﺣ اوﺮﯿﻏ ﻞھ ؟ﮫﻧﻮﻠﻛﺄﯾ يﺬﻟا مﺎﻌﻄﻟا عﻮﻧ

(؟مﻮﯿﻟا ﻲﻓ تﺎﺒﺟﻮﻟا دﺪﻋ وأ ؟ﺔﺒﺟﻮﻟا

٤

ﺔﻠﺋﺎﻋ ﻦﻣ ﻞﻔط ﺖﻓﺮﻋ نأ ﻖﺒﺳ ﻞھ .

ﻖﻠﻘﺗ 

نﻣ

لﺎﻤﻟا ﻢﮭﯾﺪﻟ ﺪﺟﻮﯾ ﻻو ﻲﮭﺘﻨﯾ فﻮﺳ مﺎﻌﻄﻟا نأ

؟مﺎﻌﻄﻟا ءاﺮﺸﻟ ﻲﻓﺎﻛﻟا
هل تعتقد أن عائلة هذا الطفل طلبت المساعدة من أي أحد؟
إذا لا
لماذا تعتقد لم يطلبوا المساعدة؟ أو الطعام من؟
لا أعلم

.5 الأمان الغذائي:
.1 ما هي الأشياء التي يمكن أن تقلق بشأنها؟
(ما الذي يحدث ليجعلك تعلم أنه تحتاج أن تقلق؟)
.2 هل سبق أن قلقت بشأن عدم الحصول على طعام كافي في البيت؟
إذا لا
.3 أذهب إلى صفحة 3
اأ. إذا كان هناك قلق بشأن عدم وجود الطعام الكافي، ماذا فعل أبويك؟ ماذا تفعل امك؟ ماذا فعل أبوك؟ ماذا فعل اختوتك؟ وماذا تفعل انت؟
ب. هل تتغير الوجبات؟ كيف تتغير؟
(هل تغير نوع الطعام الذي تأكله؟ هل كمية الطعام الذي تأكله عائلتك يتغير؟)
ت. هل يمكن أن تخبرني عن شيء فعلته لمحاولة أن تساعد به عائلتك للحصول على طعام كافي؟
ج. هل يمكن أن تخبرني عن شيء فعلته لمحاولة جعل الطعام يدوء؟
.4 أخيرني، إذا كانت الأسرة تمر بوتقة عصيب، ولا تستطيع تحمل تكاليف شراء ما يكفي من الطعام، فماذا يمكنها أن تفعل؟
.5 بالإضافة إلى [الاستراتيجية] ماذا يمكنهم أن يفعلوا أيضًا؟ [استمر حتى لا توجد أفكار أخرى]
ب. مع كل هذه الأمور التي يمكنهم القيام بها، ما الذي تعتقد انهم يجب أن يجريوه أولًا؟ و لماذا؟
.6 سؤال الختام:
هل تعرف كيف تطبيق؟ ماذا تطبق؟
You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a member of refugee family that lives in the United States and are over the age of 18. I am a graduate student at the University of South Carolina, and I am conducting a study of refugee families and food in the US. This study will help inform researchers about the experience of refugee families with food here in the US, and the effect of their living conditions on their family food status. This survey is part of the study data collection and it has 20 questions and should take about 10 minutes to complete.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Thank you!
Maryam S. Alhabas,
MSPH, PhD Candidate
Department of Health Promotion, Education, and Behavior
Arnold School of Public Health
University of South Carolina

E-mail:

I am at least 18 years old, a member of refugee family, and agree to participate in this study.

*Please choose only one of the following:*

- Yes
- No
1. What is the highest level of education you have completed? Please choose only one of the following:
   a. Some primary
   b. Primary
   c. Secondary
   d. High School
   e. University or higher
   f. Other

2. What is your gender?
   a. Male
   b. Female

3. How old are you?
   a. 18-19 years
   b. 20-29 years
   c. 30-39 years
   d. 40 years or above

4. What is your current marital status?
   a. Single
   b. Married
   c. Divorced
   d. Widow

5. How do you describe your English language proficiency?
   a. Excellent
   b. Very good
   c. Good
   d. Poor

6. Do you have children?
   a. Yes
   b. No
7. In the family I am the…
   a. Wife
   b. Husband
   c. Son
   d. Daughter

8. How long you been living with your family in the US? Please provide the number:

                           

9. From the day you arrived in the United States, how many times have you moved? Where?

                           times

Cities (states) and areas:………………

10. Who all lives with you in your home?
    a. How many children? Please provide the number:

                           

What are their ages? 1\textsuperscript{st} child age _____ 2\textsuperscript{nd} child age _____
3\textsuperscript{rd} child age _____ 4\textsuperscript{th} child age _____

    b. How many other adults?
    What are their relationships to you? interviewer writes list:

                           

11. Are you working? Please choose only one of the following:

    a. Yes, full-time employed
    b. Yes, part-time employed
    c. No
    d. No, I study

12. In which working sector do you work?

                           

168
13. Your work hours per day on average are… *Please choose only one of the following:*
   
a. 7 hours/day  
b. 8 hours/day  
c. 9 hours/day  
d. More than 10 hours/day  

14. How many members in the family is working?

   a. Me only  
b. Me and my husband/wife  
c. My husband/wife only  
d. Me, my son, and my husband/wife  
e. Me and my son  
f. My son only  
g. No one work.  

15. Are you or your family using any food assistance program?  

   a. Yes  
      ▪ Which program? *(Please write the name of all the programs)*  
         ……………………………  
   
b. No  

16. Do your kids use the reduced-price school lunch program?  

   a. Yes  
b. No, the school provides it, but they don’t use it  
c. No, they are not qualified to use it  
d. No, the school does not provide it.  

17. Do you have family and/or friends here?  

   a. Yes  
b. No  

18. Do you ask their help if you or your family could not have food?  

   a. Yes  
b. No
19. Are your friends from the same: Please choose all

☐ Country of origin
☐ Religion
☐ Race/ethnicity
☐ Neighborhood

20. Do you have friends here?

c. Yes
d. No

21. Do you ask their help if you or your family could not have food?

c. Yes
d. No

22. Are your friends from the same: Please choose all

☐ Country of origin
☐ Religion
☐ Race/ethnicity
☐ Neighborhood

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION
University of South Carolina
Arnold School of Public Health
Department of Health Promotion, Education, and Behavior

لقد طالب طالب المشاركة في هذه الدراسة لأنك فرد من عائلة لاجئة في الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية، ولأنك فوق سن الـ18. أنت طالب دراسات عليا في جامعة ساوث كارولينا وأردت إجراء دراسة عن تجربة العوائل اللاجئ بتجربة العوائل اللاجئ مع الطعام في الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية. هذه الدراسة سوف تساعد الباحثين على الاطلاع على وضع الغذاء عند اللاجئين وتأثير بنية الحياة في الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية على مقدمة العائلة اللاجئ على تأمين غذاء العائلة. يحتوي هذا الاستبيان على 19 سؤال وينبغي أن تأخذ حوالي 10 دقائق لإكماله.

الرجاء الاتصال بي إذا كان لديك أي أسئلة.

شكرًا
مرحباً،
ماجستير العلوم في الصحة العامة
مرشح للحصول على درجة الدكتوراه في الصحة العامة
قسم تعزيز الصحة والتعليم والسلوك
كلية أرنولد للصحة العامة
جامعة جنوب كارولينا
تلقيون:
البريد الإلكتروني:

أنا فرد من عائلة لاجئة لا يقل عمري عن 18 عامًا وأوافق على المشاركة في هذه الدراسة.

الرجاء اختيار واحد مما يلي:

نعم
لا
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>السمات السكانية والوظيفية</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. ما أعلى مقدار تعليم حصلت/ حصلتني عليه؟</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>أ. قبل الإبتدائية</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ب. الإبتدائية</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ت. الإعدادية</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ث. الثانوية العامة</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ج. الجامعة أو أعلى</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ح. أخرى</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. الجنس:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>أ. ذكر</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ب. أنثى</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. كم عمرك؟</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>أ. 18-19 عاما</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ب. 20-29 عاما</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ت. 30-39 عاما</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ث. 40 عاما وما فوق</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. ماهي حالتك الاجتماعية؟</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>أ. أعزب/عازب</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ب. متزوج/متزوجة</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ت. مطلقة/مطلق</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ث. أرمل/أرملة</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. كيف تصف إتقانك للغة الإنجليزية؟</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>أ. ممتازة</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ب. جيدة جدا</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ت. جيدة</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ث. أبدا لا أجيدها</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. أنا في هذه العائلة:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>أ. الزوجة</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ب. الزوج</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ت. الأبناء</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ث. الإبنة</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. هل لديك أطفال؟</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>نعم (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>لا (2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. كم سنه تعيش/تعيشين مع عائلتك في الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية؟

9. من يوم وصولك للولايات المتحدة الأمريكية كم مرة تتنقلت؟ وآن؟

المدن (الولايات)/مناطق السكن:

10. من يعيش معك في البيت؟

أ. كم عدد الأطفال؟
ب. ما هي أعمارهم؟ عمر الطفل الأول ....

الثاني ....

الثالث ....

الخامس ....

كم عدد الأشخاص الآخرين الكبير في بيتك؟

ما هي علاقتهم بك؟

11. هل تعمل/تعلمين؟

أ. نعم، بدوام كامل
ب. نعم، بدوام جزئي
ت. لا

12. في أي قطاع تعمل/تعلم؟

13. عدد ساعات العمل تقريبا في اليوم

أ. 7 ساعات
ب. 8 ساعات
ت. 9 ساعات
ث. أكثر من 10 ساعات/اليوم

14. كم شخص يعمل في العائلة؟

أ. أنا فقط
ب. أنا وزوجي/زوجتي
ت. أنا وزوجي/زوجتي فقط
ث. أنا والأبناء (الابناء) وزوجي/زوجتي
ج. أنا والأبناء (الابناء) فقط
ح. لا أحد يعمل

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15. هل تستخدم أو عائلتك أي إعانة غذائية؟

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>نعم</th>
<th>لا</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>ما هي؟</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>لا</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16. هل الأطفال الذين يدرسون في المدارس العامة يستخدمون الغذاء المدرسي المخفض؟

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>نعم</th>
<th>لا</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>لا يوجد في مدرستهم ولكن لا يستخدمونه</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>غير مؤهلين لإستخدامه.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>لا يوجد في مدرستهم.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

17. هل لديك أقارب هنا؟

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>نعم</th>
<th>لا</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>لا</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

18. هل تطلب منهم المساعدة في حالة عدم تمكن عائلتك على الحصول على طعام؟

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>نعم</th>
<th>لا</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>لا</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

19. هم من نفس: (اختار كل الإجابات التي تصفهم)

- جنسيتك
- دينتك
- عرقك
- الحي الذي تعيش فيه

20. هل لديك أصدقاء هنا؟

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>نعم</th>
<th>لا</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>لا</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

21. هل تطلب منهم المساعدة في حالة عدم تمكن عائلتك على الحصول على طعام؟

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>نعم</th>
<th>لا</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>لا</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

22. هم من نفس: (اختار كل الإجابات التي تصفهم)

- جنسيتك
- دينتك
- عرقك
- الحي الذي تعيش فيه

شكرا جزيلًا لكن على المشاركة
Arab Family Food Security Scale (AFFSS)

Hala Ghattas, Associate Research Professor, American University of Beirut, Beirut, Lebanon

Nadine Sahyoun, Professor, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland, USA

Notes

- In order to construct the Arab Family Food Security Scale (AFFSS), use AFFSS 1,2,3,4,5,6,7 to derive the 7-item scale.
- AFFSS1 is coded as affirmative for all responses expect the first. All other items are coded as yes=1, no=0.
- We suggest adding the option of “don’t know/refused” to answer which is coded as missing, and not deriving the scale for that individual respondent.
- Scores can be categorized into three groups (Food secure, Food insecure, Severely food insecure)
- Validated reference periods include 6 months, and 1 year

AFFSS English Questionnaire:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AFFSS 1</th>
<th>Which of these sentences applies the most to the food eaten by your household during the past 6 months?</th>
<th>We had enough to eat of the kinds of food we wanted (quantity &amp; quality)</th>
<th>We had enough to eat but not always the kinds of food we wanted (only quantity)</th>
<th>Sometimes we did not have enough to eat (quantity)</th>
<th>Often we did not have enough to eat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| AFFSS 2 | In the last 6 months, was there a time when you were concerned that you would run out of food for your household for the next month? | 1                                                                   | 0                                                                     |

| AFFSS 3 | Did the following statement apply to your household in the last 6 months? "The food that we bought was not enough and we didn't have money to get more." | 1                                                                   | 0                                                                     |

| AFFSS 4 | Are there any foods you feel your family does not eat enough of? | 1                                                                   | 0                                                                     |

| AFFSS 5 | In the past 6 months, did you or any other adult in your household ever cut the size of | 1                                                                   | 0                                                                     |
your meal because there was not enough food?

**AFFSS 6**

In the past 6 months, did you or any other adult ever skip a meal because there was not enough food?

1

**AFFSS 7**

In the past 6 months did you or any adult in your household not eat for a whole day or go to bed hungry because there was not enough food?

1

*Additional questions that can be added to derive the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FAO FIES):*

**Notes:**

In order to construct the FAO FIES in addition to the AFFSS, use AFFSS, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and FIES 2, 7, 8 to derive the 8-item scale. All items are coded as yes=1, no=0.

**FIES2**

During the last 6 months, was there a time when you or any adult in your household were unable to eat healthy and nutritious food because of a lack of money or other resources?

1

**FIES7**

During the last 6 months, was there a time when you or any adult in your household were hungry but did not eat because there was not enough money or other resources for food?

1

**FIES8**

During the last 6 months, was there a time when you or any adult in your household went without eating for a whole day because of a lack of money or other resources?

1
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>لا أعلم</th>
<th>لا</th>
<th>نعم</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>في كثير من الأحيان لم يكن لدينا ما يكفي من الطعام</td>
<td>كان لدينا ما يكفي من الطعام، ولكن ليس دائما لدينا ما يكفي من الطعام (الكمية قليلة)</td>
<td>أي من هذه الجمل تنطبق أكثر على معظم الأعظام التي تتناولها أسرتك خلال 6 أشهر الماضية؟</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>في بعض الأحيان لم يكن لدينا ما يكفي من الطعام</td>
<td>كان لدينا ما يكفي من أنواع الطعام التي نريدها (النوعية والكمية)</td>
<td>AFFSS 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**AFFSS Arabic Questionnaire**

- **AFFSS 2**: خلال 6 أشهر الماضية هل شعرت في بعض الأحيان أن غداء أسرتك قد ينفد في الشهير المقبل؟

- **AFFSS 3**: خلال 6 أشهر الماضية، هل يمكن تطبيق العبارة التالية على أسرتك؟ "إن المواد الغذائية التي اشترتها لم تكن كافية ولم يكن لدينا المال للحصول على المزيد"؟

- **AFFSS 4**: هل هناك أي أطعمة تشعر أن عائلتك لا تأكل ما يكفي منها؟

- **AFFSS 5**: خلال 6 أشهر الماضية هل خففت أنتم أو أحد من أفراد أسرةكم من كمية الطعام لأنه لم يكون هناك ما يكفي من الطعام؟

- **AFFSS 6**: خلال 6 أشهر الماضية هل تخليت، أو أي فرد آخر في أسرتك، عن وجبة لأنه لم يكن هناك ما يكفي من الطعام؟

- **AFFSS 7**: خلال 6 أشهر الماضية، هل أكلت أو أكل أحد أفراد أسرتك كمامل من دون تناول الطعام، أو خبرت إلى السرير جاعا لأنه لم يكن هناك ما يكفي من الغذاء؟

- **FIES2**: خلال 6 أشهر الماضية، هل حدد وأن لم يكن بإستطاعتك، أو باستطاعتك أن تفرغ آخر في أسرتك، كمامل من دون تناول الطعام، أو خبرت إلى السرير جاعا لأنه لم يكن هناك ما يكفي من الغذاء؟

- **FIES7**: خلال 6 أشهر الماضية، هل حدد وأن كنت أو أي فرد آخر في أسرتك، جاءا لكما لتتناول من التفوق أو المصارح الأخرى للطعام؟

- **FIES8**: خلال 6 أشهر الماضية، هل حدد وأن بقيت أنت أو أحد من أفراد أسرتك دون تناول الطعام يوم كامل بسبب نقص التفوق أو المصارح الأخرى؟
Hello,

I am conducting a study about refugee families and food experience in the US. This study will help inform researchers about refugee’s family food experience and access in their first years living in the US. In order to successfully conduct this study, I need your participation in the study interview.

If you are interest in participation, please contact me.

Thanks,

Maryam

Phone:
E-mail:
APPENDIX E

STUDY FLYER IN ARABIC AND ENGLISH

ARE YOU FROM SYRIA?
we are seeking Syrian refugee families to participate in interview.

We want to learn more about:
• Your family’s first experience with food in the United States in general.
• Food-related experience, including food preparation and grocery shopping, and any struggles they face to obtain food.
• How living environment and country’s policies impacted your family’s food status?

Your family will receive a gift card for their participation.

Study Details
Three separate interviews will be conducted in each family:
  One with each of two adults (usually parents)
  One with the child (age between 10 to 17 years)

When can I interview?
Select a day that works best for your family, and pick a time from 10 am to 9 pm.

Who is a candidate?
• Syrian refugee family with children (age between 10 to 17 years)
• Living in the US for 7 years or less.

If we decide to do the interview, can we change our mind?
You may change your mind any time and discontinue your participation in this study.

How to get more information:
Please call or email Maryam at [email protected] or mali.sc.edu

Figure E.1 Study flyer in English
نحتاج لمشاركتكم

هل أنت من سوريا؟
نحن نبحث عن عوائل لاجئة من سوريا للحديث معها.

نريد أن نعرف أكثر عن:
• تجربة عائلتك الأولى مع الطعام في الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية.
• تجربتهم مع أمور عدة تختص بالطعام مثل: إيجاد الأطعمة المناسبة، و الحصول على طعام، و طرق تحضيرها و أي معاناة رافضت هذه الأمور.
• كيف طبيعة الحياة وقوانين البلد أثرت على الوضع الغذائي لعائلتك؟

عائلتك سوف تحصل على مكافأة مادية تعويضا لمشاركتها و لوقتها.

تفاصيل الدراسة:
مع كل عائلة ثلاث مقابلات سوف تقام:
مع شخصين بالغين مقابلة واحدة لكل منهم (غالبا الأبوين)
مع طفل واحد (بعمر بين 10 - 17 سنة)

متى تكون المقابلة؟
حدد/حدد اليوم المناسب لعائلتك و أخبر أي وقت بين 10 صباحا إلى 9 مساء.
من هم المناسبين للمشاركة؟
• أن تكون عائلة من سوريا لديها أطفال (بعمر بين 10 و 17 سنة).
• عاشت في الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية لمدة 7 سنوات أو أكثر.
• إذا قررت المشاركة في المقابلة هل تستطيع الانسحاب؟

لللحصول على معلومات أكثر، الرجاء التواصل معنا على:
Tel: 
email: 

Figure E.2 Study flyer in Arabic
APPENDIX F

CHILDREN CONSENT

(Aged between 10 to 12 years)

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

ASSENT TO BE A RESEARCH SUBJECT

Understanding Food Insecurity Resilience of Refugee Families in the United States

If participants include those under 18 years of age: 1) The subject's parent or legal guardian will be present when the informed consent form is provided. 2) The subject will be able to participate only if the parent or legal guardian provides permission and the adolescent (age 13-17) provides his/her assent. 3) In statements below, the word "you" refers to your child or adolescent who is being asked to participate in the study.

I am a researcher from the University of South Carolina. I am working on a study about refugee families and food in the US and I would like your help. I am interested in learning more about the experience of refugee families with food in the US, and the effect of their living conditions on their family food status. Your parent/guardian has already said it is okay for you to be in the study, but it is up to you if you want to be in the study.

If you want to be in the study, you will be asked to do the following:

- Meet with me individually and talk about your experience with food in the US. The talk will take about 60 minutes and will take place at in your home.

Any information you share with me will be private. No one except me will know what your answers to the questions. Audio will be heard by professional to transform it to a written transcript.

You do not have to help with this study. You can also drop out of the study at any time, for any reason, and you will not be in any trouble and no one will be mad at you.

Please ask any questions you would like to about the study.
My child participation has been explained to me and to him/her, and all my and his/her questions have been answered. My child is willing to participate.

___________________________________________________________________  ____________
Print Name of Parent or Legal Guardian                      Age of Minor

___________________________________________________________________  ____________
Signature of Parent or Legal Guardian                      Date
الموافقة على المشاركة في البحث

فهم انعدام الأمن الغذائي لدى أسر اللاجئين في الولايات المتحدة

إذا كان المشاركون يشملون الأشخاص الذين تتراوح أعمارهم بين 18 عاماً وكلمة "أدا" أو الوصي القانوني للموضوع حاضراً عند تقديم نموذج الموافقة. 2) لن يكون الطفل قادراً على المشاركة إلا إذا قدم الوالد أو الوصي القانوني إذا وكان المراهق (من 13-17) يقدم موافقة. 3) في الجداول أدناه، تشير كلمة "آنت" إلى طفلك أو المراهق الذي يطلب منه المشاركة في الدراسة.

أنا باحثة من جامعة ساوث كارولينا. أنا أعمل على دراسة حول أسر اللاجئين والغذاء في الولايات المتحدة، وأود الحصول على مساعدتك. أنا مهتم ب يحتاج المزيد عن تجربة أسر اللاجئين التي لديها طعام في الولايات المتحدة، وتتأثر ظروفهم المعيشية على وضعهم الغذائي الأسري. قال والدك / الوصي إنه يقبل أن تكون في الدراسة، ولكن الأمر متزاحم لك إذا كنت ترغب في الدراسة.

إذا كنت ترغب أن تكون في الدراسة، فسيطلب منك القيام بما يلي:

• أقتبسك بمفردك للتحدث عن تجربتك مع طعام في الولايات المتحدة. يستغرق الحديث حوالي 60 دقيقة وستحدث في منزلك.
• أي معلومات تشاركها مع سكسون خاصة. لن يعرف أحد سواي إجاباتك على الأسئلة، سيتم سماع الصوت بواسطة المحترفين لتحويله إلى نص مكتوب.
• ليس عليك المشاركة في هذه الدراسة. يمكنك أيضًا ترك الدراسة في أي وقت ولأي سبب، ولن تكون في مأزق ولن يغضب منك.

أعد
يرجى طرح أي أسئلة ترغب معرفتها.

تم شرح مشاركة طفلي لي ولها، وتمت الإجابة على جميع أسئلتي. طلقي مستعد للمشاركة.

اسم الوالد أو الوصي القانوني

عمر القاصر

توقيع الوالد أو الوصي القانوني

التاريخ

183
CHILDREN CONSENT

(Aged between 13 to 17 years)

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA
ASSENT TO BE A RESEARCH SUBJECT

Understanding Food Insecurity Resilience of Refugee Families in the United States

If participants include those under 18 years of age: 1) The subject's parent or legal guardian will be present when the informed consent form is provided. 2) The subject will be able to participate only if the parent or legal guardian provides permission and the adolescent (age 13-17) provides his/her assent. 3) In statements below, the word "you" refers to your child or adolescent who is being asked to participate in the study.

I am a researcher from the University of South Carolina. I am working on a study about refugee families and food in the US and I would like your help. I am interested in learning more about the experience of refugee families with food in the US, and the effect of their living conditions on their family food status. Your parent/guardian has already said it is okay for you to be in the study, but it is up to you if you want to be in the study.

If you want to be in the study, you will be asked to do the following:

• Meet with me individually and talk about your experience with food in the US. The talk will take about 60 minutes and will take place at in your home.

Any information you share with me will be private. No one except me will know what your answers to the questions. Audio will be heard by professional to transform it to a written transcript.

You do not have to help with this study. You can also drop out of the study at any time, for any reason, and you will not be in any trouble and no one will be mad at you.

Please ask any questions you would like to about the study.

*For Minors 13-17 years of age:

My participation has been explained to me, and all my questions have been answered. I am willing to participate.

_________________________________________  ______________________
Print Name of Minor                              Age of Minor

_________________________________________  ______________________
Signature of Minor                               Date
الموافقة على المشاركة في البحث

فهم اندماج الأمان الغذائي لدى أسر اللاجئين في الولايات المتحدة

إذا كان المشاركون يشملون الأشخاص الذين تقل أعمارهم عن 18 عاماً: 1) سيكون الد. أو الوصي القانوني للموضوع حاضراً عند تقديم نموذج الموافقة. 2) لن يكون الطفل قادراً على المشاركة إلا إذا قدم الوالد أو الوصي القانوني إذا وكان المراهق (من 13-17) يقدم موافقته. 3) في العبارات أدناه، تشير كلمة "أنت" إلى طفلك أو المراهق الذي يُطلب منه المشاركة في الدراسة.

أنا بحثة من جامعة ساوث كارولينا. أنا أعمل على دراسة حول أسر اللاجئين والغذاء في الولايات المتحدة، وأود الحصول على مساعدتي. أنا مهتم بمعرفة المزيد عن تجربة أسر اللاجئين التي لديها طعام في الولايات المتحدة، وتأثير ظروفهم المعيشية على وضعهم الغذائي الأسري. قال والدي/و الوصي إنه يقبل أن تكون في الدراسة، ولكن الأمر متروك لك إذا كنت ترغب في الدراسة.

إذا كنت تريد أن تكون في الدراسة، فسيطلب منك القيام بما يلي:
• أقابل بك بمفردك لتحدث عن تجربتك مع طعام في الولايات المتحدة. يستغرق الحديث حوالي 60 دقيقة وسيحدث في منزلك.
• أي معلومات تشاركها معي ستكون خاصة. لن يعرف أحد سواي إجاباتك على الأسئلة. سيتم سماع الصوت بواسطة المحترفين لتحويله إلى نص مكتوب.

ليس عليك المشاركة في هذه الدراسة. يمكنك أيضًا ترك الدراسة في أي وقت ولأي سبب، ولن تكون في مأزق ولن يغضب منك أحد.

يرجى طرح أي أسئلة ترغب معرفتها.

تم شرح مisbury، وتمت الإجابة على جميع أسئلتي. وأنا مستعد للمشاركة.

________________________________________________________________________

اسم القاصر

عمر القاصر

توقيع القاصر

التاريخ
APPENDIX G

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR HUMAN RESEARCH
APPROVAL LETTER

Maryam Alhabas
Arnold School of Public Health
Health Promotion, Education, and Behavior
Columbia, SC 29208 USA

Re: Pro00095367

Dear Mrs. Maryam Alhabas:

This is to certify that the following proposal entitled, Understanding Food Insecurity Resilience of Refugee Families in the United States, was reviewed and approved by the University of South Carolina Institutional Review Board (USC IRB) on 2/4/2020 by Expedited review (category 7).

When applicable, approved consent /assent documents are located under the “Stamped ICF” tab on the Study Workspace in eIRB.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS ARE TO ADHERE TO THE FOLLOWING APPROVAL CONDITIONS

• The research must be conducted according to the proposal/protocol that was approved by the USC IRB
• Changes to the procedures, recruitment materials, or consent documents, must be approved by the USC IRB prior to implementation
• If applicable, each subject should receive a copy of the approved date stamped consent document
• It is the responsibility of the principal investigator to report promptly to the USC IRB the following:
  o Unanticipated problems and/or unexpected risks to subjects
  o Adverse events effecting the rights or welfare of any human subject participating in the research study
• Research records, including signed consent documents, must be retained for at least (3) three years after the termination of the last IRB approval
• No subjects may be involved in any research study procedure prior to the IRB approval date
• Continuing review is not required; however, at the time of study closure, a Continuing Review form is used for the final report to the USC IRB

The Office of Research Compliance is an administrative office that supports the University of South Carolina Institutional Review Board. If you have questions, contact Lisa M. Johnson at lisaj@mailbox.sc.edu or (803) 777-6670.

Sincerely,

Lisa M. Johnson
ORC Assistant Director and IRB Manager