

Migrants' Lived Experiences and Post-Traumatic Growth Among Urban Refugees in Nairobi County, Kenya

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Abstract

Human migration, especially forced displacement, is an increasingly prominent global phenomenon. Amidst the turmoil of war, persecution, and socio-economic upheaval, urban refugees face unique challenges and opportunities for recovery. This study investigates the lived experiences and post-traumatic growth (PTG) of urban refugees in Nairobi County, Kenya, employing a robust mixed method, an embedded research design. This article synthesizes theoretical perspectives, Reasoned Action Theory, Resilience Theory, and PTG Theory, with empirical evidence, offering a multidimensional approach to understanding refugee experiences in the global south. Drawing on a sample of 398 respondents from diverse nationalities, data analysis provided nuanced insights into the psychological, social, and spiritual trajectories that characterized adaptation and resilience within Nairobi's cosmopolitan environment. Using quantitative instruments such as the Post-Traumatic Growth Inventory (PTGI) and qualitative interview guide. The findings revealed significant facts regarding stigmatization, compassion, spiritual transformation, and the nuanced influence of variables such as gender and education. The results from post-traumatic growth inventory showed that respondents had higher levels of spiritual change (Mean =2.65), indicating a more profound transformation in their spiritual outlook post-crisis, exhibited greater personal strength (Mean=2.47), and an overall higher sense of posttraumatic growth (Mean=2.36), suggesting a stronger capacity to adapt and grow after the crisis. Results indicated a difference in post-traumatic growth between males and females (0.000). There is a need for the Government to consider matter related to the education of refugees, improving their integration in the community.

KEYWORDS: Urban refugees, post-traumatic growth (PTG), Migrants, Forced displacement

INTRODUCTION

Migration, both voluntary and involuntary, has shaped the trajectory of human societies for centuries. In recent decades, the number of forcibly displaced people has surged, driven by armed conflict, persecution, climate change, and economic instability. Refugees are individuals forced to flee their country of origin due to a well-founded fear of persecution. While much attention has been paid to the plight of refugees in camp settings or during transit, the experiences of urban refugees, those living outside formal camps in metropolitan environments, remain understudied, particularly in the global south.

Nairobi County, Kenya, stands as a vital urban hub in East Africa, hosting a significant population of refugees from countries such as Somalia, South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, and Burundi. These urban refugees negotiate a spectrum of social, economic, and psychological challenges as they seek to rebuild their lives. Of particular interest is the

phenomenon of post-traumatic growth, wherein individuals develop new strengths, perspectives, and appreciation for life in the aftermath of trauma.

Lived Experiences among Urban Refugees

In an era marked by unprecedented global migration, the personal narratives of urban refugees offer profound insight into resilience, adaptation, and the human spirit's capacity for growth after trauma. Across the globe, thousands of refugees navigate the daily realities of displacement, forging new lives amid complex social, economic, and psychological challenges.

In the US, McCarthy et al. (2020) carried out a study on transition in occupations of refugees during resettlement. They stated that those refugees experienced a major adjustment upon migrating to a new country. It was hard in the beginning when I came here. The transport was different, so I used to lose my way a lot. I didn't know how to use the bus, and then after some time, I learned how to use the BART [Bay Area Rapid Transit] and bus but still, I have some degree of difficulty going to the doctor and taking appointments and stuff (Jawid). Akef, Poyrazli, and Quintero (2024) conducted an exploration of the lived experiences and psychological states of Migrants and Refugees in the United States of America. They noticed that in addition to traumatic experiences, refugees encountered stressors such as low income, reduced social support, as reported by some refugees. They did not want to do any sponsorship, and even when you try to explain that you are not that person (meaning that you already have work authorization) they are not going to listen to you.

In Australia, Shaw et al. (2019) explained that forced migrant persons encountered challenges due to religious denomination. One participant shared her experience that when the driver asked us, we said we are from [native country]. Then he said, 'are you Shia?' It was the first time that someone asked that question. We came here [recently]. I didn't know that they have [a] problem with our religion. We said 'yes, we are Shia.' Suddenly he stopped the car. And told us to get off from his car, because you are Shia. I don't want to see you again.' We were shaking and afraid. We didn't know what we should do. In Australia, Kaphle et al. (2024) conducted a study on the lived experiences of the resettled South Sudanese refugees. This was a report from a participant that she could say life in Australia is better because of the freedom and opportunities available to them compared to Sudan, where she came from. In South Korea, Park (2023) conducted a study on the topic of suffering the insufferable. Participants in the study reported that while it was good to arrive in RoK, a safe country, adjusting to the new society and environments was tough due to embodied memories, perceptions, and trauma. One participant stated that there were many black cars here [in the RoK]?! In China, only executives ride in those. But those black cars were all around us. I came to the South and developed heart disease, so I took medicine for it. I couldn't sleep properly, and I saw them coming to catch me in my dreams. It was the same here as in China (Ms. Kim, M. O.). Wyrzten (2020) detailed the plight of refugees in Morocco, with a focus on people fleeing sub-Saharan Africa. Urban areas impose less visible restrictions on migrants' mobility. Migrants navigate the city as circumscribed subjects, left to their own devices and stigmatized as racially excluded outsiders, even yet they inhabit areas right in the middle of it all.

Research on the dynamics of African migration, centered on expectations and lived experiences, was conducted in South Africa by Kanayo and Anjofui (2020). South African immigrants from Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of the Congo living in Cape Town were the subjects of this research, which compared their expectations with their actual experiences. Upon I came home, my landlady threw away all my possessions. For four years, I was a responsible renter who always paid my rent in advance. I was given short notice by the landlady to vacate the premises. However, this transpired prior to the due date, which was not even the appropriate length as per the legislation. I discovered that I could go to the police, who I thought would make fair judgments, since I was weak and didn't know who to fight for me. I was shocked to hear that they are unable to assist me due to my foreign status (Cameroonian, Interview, March 2017).

Researchers Gudeta and Seyeneh (2025) set out to learn more about the psychological and social assistance that displaced people in Ethiopia's Sebeta temporary shelter had. We have been completely reliant on the generosity of the community, the government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), religious groups, and individuals who have offered us food, clothing, and shelter since we have taken up residence in this shelter. According to the study conducted by Reddick and Dryden-Peterson (2018), language was identified as a barrier as well as an opportunity. After becoming a leader among the refugee population, Jean Claude was able to complete his schooling in Uganda thanks to his command of the English language. He addressed the issue of student attrition. Many students stopped attending classes because of the medium of teaching. While residing in Kenya, refugee children actively seek out language learning opportunities so that they may fully engage in their new school environment (Bellino & Dryden-Peterson, 2019). Despite challenges in predicting suitable linguistic choices for current or possible future languages, refugee life is impacted by language choosing in unpredictable future situations, both during and after education. Refugees learned Kiswahili which is widely used in Kenya and helped them avoid prejudice. They avoided using their own language, which would have identified them as refugees, in favor of Kiswahili.

The literature review about migrants' experiences revealed not only the hardships of forced migration but also the remarkable journeys of transformation that can emerge in the heart of a bustling metropolis.

Level of Post-Traumatic Growth among Urban Refugees

Post-traumatic growth referred to the positive psychological change experienced because of the struggle with highly challenging life circumstances. Among refugees, who often endure profound adversity, the concept has become an important area of study. Many refugees have fled violence, persecution, or disaster, facing both acute trauma and ongoing stressors in the process of displacement. Despite these hardships, some individuals demonstrate resilience and emerge from their experiences with a renewed sense of purpose. Research indicates that post-traumatic growth can manifest in various forms, such as enhanced personal strength, improved relationships, and a deeper appreciation for life.

According to Maitlis (2020), the phenomenon of posttraumatic growth, the transformative positive change that could occur because of a struggle with great adversity, has been a focus of

interest for psychologists for more than two decades. Research on work-related posttraumatic growth has concentrated primarily on contexts that were inherently traumatic, either through direct exposure to trauma, such as in the military, or through secondary trauma, such as in professions that provided care for traumatized people. There is an attempt to look at PTG in refugees' situation. In the United States of America, Hirad et al. (2022) noticed that less attention has been directed toward understanding resilience, adaptation, and growth among this population. The research identified post-traumatic growth experiences among Middle Eastern and Afghanistan refugees. Findings shed light on the complex process of growth and adaptation in the aftermath of war and forced migration.

Umer and Elliot (2019) established through their research in Scotland that Post-Traumatic Growth equates with hope development that promotes personal growth outcomes among refugees. The extended hope framework serves as an integrated approach to analyzing hope for refugees in addition to showing how refugees experience recovery through understanding theoretical components and consequences affecting their new life in a different country. Lee et al. (2022) carried a study on the factors associated with posttraumatic growth among North Korean defectors in South Korea. Findings of the study indicated that PTG scores did not differ significantly between men and women ($p=0.110$) measured against the educational level in North Korea ($p=0.075$), years spent in South Korea ($p=0.336$), and living with family ($p=0.244$). However, PTG scores were significantly higher in those who were religious ($p<0.001$) or were employed ($p=0.004$). In Indonesia, Prasetya et al. (2020) conducted a study on the relationship between previous traumatic experience, post-traumatic growth, coping strategy to mental health state on refugees in Sidoarjo Camp. Some 58.8% of refugees had high post-traumatic growth (PTG) scores with the highest dimension was spiritual change (83.5%), while dimension openness to new opportunities (45.4%) was the lowest score. PTG growth features economic factors and employment as main influences while high income shows the strongest link to growth enhancement.

In South Africa, Tesfai et al. (2024) conducted a study on the coping resources among forced migrants in South Africa. Their results indicated that within this sample of African refugees in South Africa, spirituality and religiosity emerged as the most frequently referenced capacity. Theodicies of suffering and belief in 'God's will' as a greater force to explain what is beyond human control helped participants construct a sense of coherence out of tragedy and begin to metabolize the psychological impacts of trauma. Spiritual explanations for survival provided many participants with the strength to face past and current difficulties. In Ethiopia, Amare (2024) conducted a study social support, resilience and psychological distress, among refugees. It was a case study of Alemwach refugee camp in north Gonder. The correlation analysis revealed a Pearson correlation coefficient of ($p=0.105^{**}$), indicating a statistically significant positive and strong relationship between social support, psychological distress and resilience. It suggested that higher levels of social support were associated with increased levels of psychological resilience among the refugees in the Alemwach Refugee Camp. Usunobun, Asatsa and Macharia (2021) performed research to determine if PTG has any connection with PTSD among Kenyan refugees. All participants showing post-traumatic growth regardless of their religion were observed during data analysis according to the findings. Posttraumatic

growth develops because of belief-based psychosocial support as well as teaching that connects individuals to their traumatic experiences.

Cultural background, social support, and access to mental health services all play significant roles in shaping these outcomes. It is important to recognize that not all refugees experience post-traumatic growth, as the path from trauma to growth is highly individual. Understanding the processes that contribute to growth can inform more effective support programs and interventions. By exploring this subject, we gain insight into the capacity for human flourishing even in the aftermath of immense suffering. Ultimately, studying post-traumatic growth among refugees highlights both the challenges they face and the remarkable potential for healing and transformation.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A mixed method embedded research design was employed in this study. An embedded method allows the researcher to capture both quantitative and qualitative dimensions of refugee life in Nairobi.

Sample size

The study used a sample size of 398 respondents. The study employed the Taro Yamane formula (1967), with a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5%. This is the formula which was: $n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$. In this formula, n represents the sample size. N represents the population.

The e into bracket (e) represents the margin of error. In the sample, there 45,18 % of male respondents and 54.82% of female respondents.

Demographic Characteristics

Gender: 54.8% female, 45.18% male. Concerning the level of education of the participants: Education: 58.13% had no formal education; 2.71% held university degrees. Most of the respondents were predominantly between 20–30 years, with representation across adult age groups.

Sampling method

The study used a stratified sampling which is among the probability sampling methods. As the population was coming from different strata, a stratified sampling method enabled the researcher to distribute participants based on the dimensions of their stratum groups. Each stratum was represented proportionately. For the qualitative approach, the researcher used a convenient sampling method.

Research instruments

The researcher used self-constructed and standardized instruments for this study. These instruments were pilot tested before their use in this research. The PTGI scale reliability needed its overall reliability for all 21 items to be determined as an initial step. Internal consistency measured by $\alpha = 0.87$ shows a high degree of reliability in the assessment results (Suarez &

Hemsworth, 2015). In their research, Silva et al. (2021) found that the overall scale and its subscales demonstrated strong internal consistency, with $\alpha = 0.91$ and $\alpha = 0.85$ to 0.70 , respectively, in the findings. Dubuy et al. (2022) examined the Posttraumatic Growth Inventory (PTGI) and found Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.75 to 0.88 , all domains demonstrated strong internal consistency, according to their results. The researcher collected quantitative data by administrating a questionnaire and the qualitative data by using an interview guide.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS 26 for producing descriptive and inferential statistics. For qualitative data analysis, there underwent thematic content analysis via NVIVO 11.

Ethical issues

This study followed the academic guidelines in terms of ethical considerations. The permission from the university was obtained before conducting the study. Participants consented freely to participate in the study. Confidentiality as well as anonymity were observed during all process.

Ethical clearance (quote numbers)

The researcher obtained a research permit from NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION (NACOSTI, Ref No: 771599) before conducting this research.

RESULTS

Lived Experiences of Urban Refugees in Nairobi County, Kenya

Table 1:

Lived Experiences

		I was welcome in my church by my fellow members	I received spiritual support from my church leader	I experienced compassion from the people who live with me in the compound	I was bullied because I am a refugee	I was harassed because I was a refugee	I was treated dignity because I was a refugee
N	Valid	332	332	332	332	332	332
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		2.64	2.71	2.69	2.98	3.16	3.44

Std. Deviation	1.057	1.016	1.036	1.019	1.095	1.057
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The results from the quantitative data (Table 1) were compared with those from qualitative data. Some respondents indicated facing humiliation, exploitation, stigmatization because of their refugee status. Financial exploitation could take the form of overcharging or underpayment, due to their vulnerability. This is how some of the respondents stated.

"I like going to buy small stuff such as salt and milk among others in the supermarket. When entering the supermarket, I felt unwelcomed. I was checked twice at a supermarket because I might belong to a bad group" (Respondent 7, 24).

Another respondent stated the following:

"I have a limited budget for shopping. This is the reason for visiting the market for purchasing goods. I realized that most of the time the price was a bit higher. Prices were doubled because I spoke my home language" (Respondent 8, 29).

Another participant reported in this way:

"I stay in a compound with many other families. When something goes missing, it is common that they suspect us. When they talk, they mention that they were safe before. Refugees are blamed for everything bad happening in the neighborhood" (Respondent 9, 36).

Some respondents reported some positive experiences of compassion, support, and opportunities, especially in scholarship for education. This is how some respondents experienced it.

"This happened when I was just arriving in the city. I was trying to go to the offices to acquire some documents. I was on a bus. A gentleman noticed that I was a foreigner because I was struggling to ask for the price. He paid my fare and acknowledged that we have suffered a lot. " (Respondent 10, 35).

Another respondent reported as follows:

"I do congregate in a local Christian church. At the end of the Sunday service, they do ask for new visitors to stand, introduce themselves and greet the community. I was invited to share a meal. I felt valued when people at church shared their meals and listened to my story" (Respondent 11, 45).

This is another testimony concerning good experiences.

"I have four kids. My situation is not allowing me to send all of them to school, especially grown-ups who must attend university. Lucky enough, I submitted a request to a non-government organization for education assistance. They responded positively. My son received a scholarship and is now in a good university" (Respondent 12, 56).

Mean of Post-Traumatic Growth among Urban Refugees

Table 2:

<i>Mean of Post Traumatic Growth</i>		
Posttraumatic growth	1.68	2.36
Relating to Others	1.92	2.62
New possibilities	1.62	2.30
Personal strength	1.67	2.47
Spiritual change	1.36	2.65
Appreciation of life	1.45	1.88

Gender and Post Traumatic Growth among Urban Refugees in Nairobi, Kenya

Table 3

Gender and Post Traumatic Growth

One-Sample Test						
	Test Value = 0					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Gender	56.597	331	.000	1.548	1.49	1.60

Level of Education and Post-Traumatic Growth among Urban Refugees in Nairobi, Kenya

Table 4

Education and Post Traumatic Growth

Gender	Level of Education	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Male	None	2.0597	.45332	75
	Primary	1.9826	.54089	52
	High School	2.0644	.50786	17
	University	2.1905	.59323	6
	Total	2.0387	.49399	150
Female	None	2.1340	.40497	118
	Primary	2.0362	.46788	46
	High School	1.9841	.49279	15
	University	2.3968	.32414	3
	Total	2.1013	.42981	182
Total	None	2.1051	.42480	193
	Primary	2.0078	.50607	98
	High School	2.0268	.49442	32

	University	2.2593	.50682	9
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DISCUSSION

This section delves into the complexities faced by urban refugees, focusing on their everyday encounters with migration, stigma, and the process of social adaptation. Drawing on both quantitative and qualitative findings, the following discussion illuminates the diverse challenges and positive nuanced experiences of refugees as they navigate new environments, social expectations, and cultural landscapes.

Both quantitative and qualitative analyses of the data demonstrate that, with a few exceptions, refugees had a hard time navigating their day-to-day interactions with others. The findings highlight the post traumatic growth experienced by urban refugees with a higher level in spiritual growth, followed by relation to others, and personal strength. There was equally significant difference in post-traumatic growth across gender, nationalities, and level of education. In relation to the lived challenges, the findings are consistent with those of Akef et al. (2024). They showed that almost everyone who took part in their studies emphasized how challenging immigration was. Some participants, for instance, griped about the "incompetence" of the case workers, the "terrible conditions" they were thrust into upon arrival, and the government's little assistance. There were several reports of individuals experiencing racist and sexist attitudes and behaviors. This included prejudice stemming from their presumed religious beliefs, their looks, or their refugee status. Regarding the significance of religion among refugees, the findings from the research conducted by Shaw et al. (2019) reached similar conclusions. In other cases, refugees may find community and support among members of their own faith via religious organizations. Similarly, Rousou et al. (2025) found comparable results in their investigation. Their research showed that many refugees are really let down by their host nations once they finally settled down. Overcrowding and poor living circumstances are recurring themes among participants, making it difficult for them to start anew. It is familiar to come across situation like this; We are now staying in a tent outside of a refugee camp after being forcibly removed from our previous location. A renal ailment affects one of my kids, and I worry about her and my other children's health. Also, I'm worried about getting frostbite from being in a tent all day in this chilly weather.

However, in contrast to previous research on lived experiences, this study found quite different outcomes. The results of this research somewhat contradict those of Kiteki (2021). The findings illustrate how religious beliefs may either fuel prejudice or serve as a shield against it. According to the author, many migrants endure prejudice due to preconceived notions about their faith, anti-Black racism, and anti-Arab sentiment, in addition to religious persecution.

Refugees reported a spectrum of experiences, from compassion and support to stigmatization, bullying, and exploitation. Notable narratives included financial discrimination, social suspicion, and experiences of dignity and scholarship opportunities.

Post Traumatic Growth

The findings are supported by the results of a study conducted by Kheirallah et al. (2022). They discovered that the areas of personal strength (84.2%) and spiritual transformation (97.9%) had the highest sub-scores, with both areas seeing moderate-to-high increase. Consistent with previous work by McCormack and Strezoy (2021), which indicated that most participants claimed a stronger connection to their faith after experiencing refugee trauma. According to Acar et al. (2021), the PTG domains of "personal strength" and "spiritual change" were shown to be strongly connected with exposure to war and life-threatening situations ($r = 0.13$, $p < .001$ and $r = 0.19$, $p < .001$, respectively). Zacchaeus (2020) also found the same thing in his study conducted in Nigeria. Survivors showed signs of progress after enduring trauma. As they learned to cope with the trauma, they formed strong bonds with others, which deepened over time and led to increased physical and emotional intimacy. Refugees with high PTG scores planned, concentrating on things like employment, education, and family, according to research by Umer and Elliot (2021). Individuals' experiences with post-traumatic development varied, according to research by Holthe and Söderström (2024). Studies consistently found that participants' feelings of personal and societal responsibility, as well as their knowledge of their own power and wisdom, were the most significant development results. They didn't want to be identified as victims; instead, they saw themselves as survivors who had overcome adversity.

In the face of adversity, I became wiser, more resilient, more self-reliant, and more equipped to face and conquer future difficulties. The course helped its participants become more adaptable and patient as they learnt to deal with the inevitable difficulties and unknowns of life. Prasetya et al. (2020) stated that there was no statistically significant correlation between coping mechanisms and mental health issues ($p > 0.05$). Compared to refugees who use problem-focused coping (PTG), those who rely on emotionally focused coping (EFC) techniques are more prone to suffer from poor PTG. Even though most of the refugees who participated in this survey had suffered some kind of psychological stress, only 39% claimed to be suffering from a mental ailment now. Despite a high post-trauma growth rate in 58.5% of the research participants, the other patients had a poor rate of post-trauma growth. Most of the subjects had undergone psychological trauma. Neither psychological trauma nor post-traumatic development were significantly related in the bivariate analysis ($p > 0.05$). Four studies found that women had slightly higher PTG than men. Most researchers agree that post-traumatic growth does not require all five domains of positive change to establish its occurrence. For example, research findings suggest that the occurrence of positive change in at least one or two out of the five domains may suffice to confirm the presence of growth (Zaccheaus, 2020). While research in this group has shown a moderate to high level of PTG, Pop et al. (2025), it was noted that there was a lot of variation in PTG. Some of the factors that were studied in relation to PTG include demographics such as age, gender, education, and type of displacement.

Gender and Post traumatic Growth among Urban Refugees in Nairobi, Kenya.

The findings in this study reported a significant difference in post-traumatic growth among male and female respondents. Female respondents showed a higher post-traumatic growth than male respondents. The results from the study carried out by Kheirallah et al. (2022). They discovered that women generally exhibited greater optimism and religiosity, a stronger sense of self-reliance, and less difficulty adjusting than first anticipated. Umer and Elliot (2019)

stated that an individual's ability to handle problems grows increasingly complex in relation to the number of obstacles they face. It would indicate that women face additional difficulties while migrating or seeking asylum. Hope theory, which stresses people's capacity to anticipate difficulties and come up with other ways to achieve their objectives, relies heavily on the capacity to identify and overcome such hurdles, according to the authors. When comparing male and female post-traumatic development, the findings of the Nairobi research did not line up with those of the South Korean study by Lee et al. (2022). The results showed a statistically significant difference in the levels of post-traumatic development between the sexes. Their research found no significant difference in PTG scores between men and women ($p=0.110$) when compared to North Korean educational level ($p=0.075$), South Korean years spent ($p=0.336$), and family living status ($p=0.244$). Spiritual change emerged as the most pronounced domain, echoing findings from other African contexts (Tesfai et al., 2024; Kheirallah et al., 2022). Religion and spirituality provide a vital framework for meaning-making, coherence, and resilience. Personal strength and relational growth were also prominent, indicating the importance of community ties and self-efficacy.

Level of Education and Post-traumatic Growth among Urban Refugees in Nairobi, Kenya.

Results from Table 4 showed that both tests show a p-value of 0.000, which is less than the typical significance level of 0.05. Education Level: Participants with University education report the highest mean scores for posttraumatic growth across both genders (Males = 2.1905, Females = 2.3968). Participants with no education show relatively higher mean scores (Males = 2.0597, Females = 2.1340), compared to those with Primary or High School education. The Primary education group (Males = 1.9826, Females = 2.0362) has lower mean scores for post-traumatic growth than the educated or University groups. This suggests that there is a statistically significant relationship between Education and PTG. The Level of Education significantly impacts how individuals relate to others after experiencing a crisis. People with different education levels may have distinct ways of interacting or coping in social contexts after a crisis. The large Chi-Square values (237.639 and 245.807) and significant p-values further emphasize the importance of education level as a factor influencing how individuals relate to others in post-crisis.

Post-traumatic growth tends to be higher among females and those with higher education. Participants with University education report the highest levels of post-traumatic growth, while those with Primary education report lower growth. There is some variability in responses, particularly in the Primary education group, but overall, individuals tend to experience a moderate degree of post-traumatic growth. This finding is supported by another group of researchers. Sultani et al. (2024) in their research found that PTGI mean scores across the studies ranged from 28.86 to 89. Asgari and Naghavi (2020) conducted a study on lived experience of academic factors affecting their post-traumatic growth, Methods. The results indicated that post-traumatic growth among young people was affected by several academic factors such as the school support network, teacher's role, school attachment, and academic well-being.

Gender differences in PTG, with females reporting slightly higher scores, align with global research while also revealing context-specific nuances. Nationality and education exerted significant influence, suggesting that cultural and cognitive resources mediate adaptation and growth.

Theoretical Integration

In this study, both Resilience Theory and Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG) Theory served as key conceptual frameworks, guiding the analysis of urban refugees' experiences and outcomes in Nairobi. Resilience Theory was woven throughout the research design and interpretation, focusing on the refugees' ability to adapt to adversity, recover from setbacks, and maintain psychological well-being amid social exclusion, discrimination, and crisis. Through this lens, the study explored adaptive strategies, agency, and the choices refugees made to navigate a challenging urban environment, highlighting their capacity to endure and thrive.

PTG Theory was similarly central, providing a structure for examining how individuals can experience positive psychological change following trauma. By employing established PTG instruments and drawing on previous research, the investigation mapped the ways in which refugees not only overcame adversity but also discovered new meaning, coherence, and personal development. By combining these two theories, the study took a multidimensional approach, assessing both the ability to withstand difficulty (resilience) and the potential for profound positive change (PTG).

CONCLUSION

Urban refugees in Nairobi embody resilience, adaptation, and the capacity for post-traumatic growth. Their experiences are characterized by both adversity and transformation, shaped by individual, social, and institutional factors. Understanding these trajectories is essential for effective policy, support, and integration efforts.

The findings underscore the complexity of urban refugee experiences. Social exclusion and discrimination were pervasive, yet respondents also identified moments of compassion and institutional support. These dynamics reflect both the challenges and the adaptive capacities of urban refugees in Nairobi.

This research contributes a comprehensive empirical and theoretical foundation for future studies on refugee experiences in Africa and beyond. By illuminating the lived realities and psychological outcomes of urban refugees, it underscores the importance of viewing migration through a lens of hope, agency, and multidimensional growth.

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