

Supporting Resilience of Refugee Youth and Families

TITLE OF RESEARCH: **Safe Spaces: Youth with Refugee Experience and Their Parents Harnessing Resilience**

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SUMMARY: In this study, ten workshops were organized for Arabic-speaking refugee youth and their parents. Facilitated by the Syrian Canadian Foundation and psychiatrist Dr. Omar Reda, the workshops aimed to provide a safe space for refugee families to build better inter-family understanding and integrate trauma stories to build resilience. The workshops were open to both parents; however only mothers chose to attend. The workshops were preceded and followed by focus groups with the participants.

LINK: Click [here](#) to read the executive summary and [here](#) to learn more about the project

Youth voices

Youth felt a strong bond with their mothers and sought comfort and advice from them; however, they also desired better communication and trust.

Youth sought more parental support for physical activities - girls especially felt restricted by parentally-enforced gender norms.

Youth identified challenges at school including: 1) bullying, which they were uncomfortable sharing with parents; 2) lack of support for post-secondary education from educators; and 3) parents were unable to help with homework.



Mothers' voices

Mothers described many challenges in raising their children, including cultural differences between how they raised children in their home country and in Canada, as well as concerns over their children's use of technology.

Mothers often took on burdens silently – particularly regarding their marital difficulties which they did not feel they could share with their children.

Mothers often felt a sense of isolation and loneliness and described not knowing how to adapt to their new country. Through the workshops, participants were able to learn coping strategies to help their emotional and mental wellbeing.



Recommendations:

- Engaging fathers in programs, services, and supports is important for a whole-family approach.
- More meaningful youth-centered activities are needed; in particular, more physical activity programs are needed, especially for girls.
- Mothers need access to flexible and accessible English as an Additional Language classes.
- Supports for youth are needed in multiple sites, including the family, school, and the broader community.

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Child and Youth Refugee Research Coalition.

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