

Negotiating Educational, Language, Religious, Ethnic and Cultural Differences Encountered by Adolescent Refugees: A Case Study of Dadaab Refugee Camp in Kenya, Africa.

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ABSTRACT.

Due to political instability in the Horn of Africa and Great Lakes regions, Kenya has witnessed an influx of refugees from surrounding countries like Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Rwanda and Congo. Most of these immigrants are accommodated in Daadab refugee camp, the world's largest refugee camp. Though the immigrants are of different gender, religion, ethnicity, education level, culture and age, they are expected to fit into the laid down structures in the camps, their socio-cultural and religious differences notwithstanding. Focusing on 350 adolescent refugees in Dadaab Camp, the study traces the various ways in which refugees deal with the challenges they encounter in their receiving country: language barrier, a foreign education curriculum, ethnic stereotypes and attitudes, gender, religious and cultural conflicts. The study seeks to answer the following question: Do the religious institutions of the receiving country accommodate the adolescent immigrants? How does an adolescent immigrant negotiate around language bottlenecks? How does the adolescent negotiate around culture clash that is in every aspect of his or her life; may it be clothing, relationships with the opposite gender or even food and nutrition? What forms of discrimination does the adolescent immigrant face in the receiving country, especially from the peers? How does the immigrant counter ethnic stereotypes and attitudes? How does the immigrant cope with the different education system in the receiving country? What structures are put in place to facilitate the refugees' smooth transition into the culture, education and language of the receiving country? This study utilizes the Everett S. Lee (1966) **Theory of Migration** to evaluate the factors causing migration: push and pull factors. The study will also make use of Krashen's (1985) Acculturation theory to assess the process of adapting to the new cultures and to explain how the adolescent immigrants in Dadaab refugee camp deal with many conflicts that they encounter in the process. Stratified random sampling method will be used to select the 350 adolescents that will fit the sample frame: gender, ethnicity, education levels, religion and age. The study will adopt a descriptive research design and will use ethnographic qualitative techniques in data collection. The methods of data collection will be informal conversations, focus group discussions, in- depth interviews. The research instruments will be a tape recorder, an interview schedule, topics for discussion, and a questionnaire. The findings of this study are expected to highlight clearly to what extent the new environment accommodates or excludes an adolescent immigrant. It will also clearly show the existing avenues created in the receiving country to make the adolescent immigrant cope with physical, emotional, social, mental and psychological changes and growth taking place in him or her.

Key words: Immigrant, migration, cultural conflicts, acculturation, language barriers