

Factors Impacting the Mental-Health of Young African Refugees Transitioning from Higher Education to Employment in South Australia

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Abstract

The transition period from higher education to employment is a significant phase in the lives of young African refugees. This study adopts an intersectionality lens to understand the factors that impact the mental-health of African refugees transitioning from higher education to employment in South Australia. An intersectionality theoretical framework helps to identify and analyse how systems of inequity interconnect to produce compounded relationships of power and (dis) advantage (Crenshaw, 1989). Drawing from a qualitative study of 18 young African refugees in South Australia, the study explores the question, 'What are the factors impacting the mental-health of young African refugees transitioning from higher education to employment in South Australia?'. Through this question, the study indicates how various social locations (i.e., culture, race, gender, and immigration status) intersect to create unique experiences of oppression and privilege. The study argues that it is crucial to comprehend the obstacles that impede the labour-market integration of young African refugees because unemployment and financial difficulties can cause complicated mental-health implications, producing even more depression, anxiety, and uncertainty about the future. This perspective contributes significantly to policy and research regarding the higher education-to-work transitions of African refugees in Australia.

Keywords: *African refugees, Mental health, Intersectionality, Transition, Higher education, Employment*

1. Introduction

With the contemporary rise in the flow of humanitarian migrants and asylum-seekers in the world, mental-health specialists are

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increasingly conscious of the need to recognise the mental-health requirements of humanitarian migrants (Hynie, 2017). Young African refugees are part of the humanitarian migrant population facing mental-health issues linked to unemployment and underemployment in Australia. This population consists of refugees who endured trauma, stress, and torture during their migration and settlement experiences. (Chen et al., 2017). Many of these refugees have seen the horrific maiming, torture, and murder of their parents, guardians, and family members in their home nations and refugee camps. (Stevenson & Baker, 2018). The profound effects of young African refugees' lived experiences can severely damage their overall well-being and mental-health (Beiser & Hou, 2016). Young African refugees are ten times more at risk of having psychotic disorder challenges compared to the general population in Australia (O'Donoghue et al., 2021). The primary risk factors linked to mental-health issues among young African refugees include unemployment (Hugo et al., 2011; Torezani et al., 2008), underemployment (Tilbury & Colic-Peisker, 2006), financial difficulties (Molla, 2019), resettlement (Losoncz, 2017), cultural transition (Baker et al., 2021), separation from extended family (Stevenson & Baker, 2018), stigmatisation of mental-health issues (Hynie, 2017), and racial discrimination (Beadle, 2014). Among the various challenges confronting young African refugees, unemployment and underemployment can greatly impact mental well-being causing depression and stress. Recent studies have shown that social identity markers generate multiple employability disadvantages for refugee youth (Curry, Smedley & Lenette, 2018; Khawaja & Hebbani, 2018; Kuzhabekova & Nardon, 2021). However, not enough attention is given to the interplay of social locations in shaping the transition experiences of young African refugees, even though the interaction of these has a considerable effect on factors

transitioning from higher education to employment, as Curry, Smedley, and Lenette (2018) revealed in their qualitative study on successful resettlement with nine refugees in New South Wales in Australia. Newman et al. (2022) highlighted that not much is known about the transition of refugees and culturally and linguistically diverse migrants into employment, especially intersectional factors impacting employability. Young African refugees are not a homogeneous group; they experience transition in different ways according to their country of origin, gender, race, social class, and age (Baker, Due & Rose, 2021; Curry, Smedley & Lenette, 2018; Molla, 2019). Regardless of their heterogeneity and diversity, research on refugee youth is still limited and dispersed across various disciplines (Baker, Due & Rose, 2021; Kuzhabekova & Nardon, 2021). As a result, this study adopts an intersectionality lens to explore factors impacting the mental-health of young African refugees transitioning from tertiary institutions to the labour market in South Australia. Based on a qualitative study of 18 young African refugees in South Australia, the study specifically explores the question, ‘What are the factors impacting the mental-health of young African refugees transitioning from higher education to employment in South Australia?’. Through this question, the study seeks to understand how race, gender, culture, and age intersect to impact the mental-health of young African refugees transitioning from higher education to employment in South Australia. This piece is structured as follows: literature review, methodology, results, discussion, and conclusion.

2. Review of Literature

Previous research shows that young African refugees are at a higher risk of suffering from mental-health issues compared to other refugee groups (Abur & Mphande, 2020; Beiser & Hou, 2016; Mwanri & Mude, 2021). Young African refugees

encounter traumatic experiences in their home countries throughout their migration journeys, resettlement, and integration (Tomasí et al., 2022). Mental-health issues among young African refugees have been identified as stemming from various challenges impacting the welfare of people from humanitarian families (Ziersch et al., 2023). These factors include trauma (Baker et al., 2021), torture (Stevenson & Baker, 2018), destitution (Taylor, 2004), long periods in limbo or refugee camps (Amnesty International, 2019), social isolation (Mishra et al., 2023), English language barriers (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2007; Peisker & Tilbury, 2003), and the various challenges of settling in a new environment can contribute to everlasting health issues, hindering the ability of young African refugees to assimilate in the Australian economy and broader society (Refugee Council of Australia, 2010).

Research indicates that related health issues and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) significantly reduce the chances of employment and occupational standing for humanitarian migrants (de Vroome & van Tubergen, 2010). Reid (2012) contends that the underutilisation of the skills of migrants and refugees is connected to adverse mental-health outcomes, indicated by prolonged feelings of sadness and loneliness. Psychological and mental-health challenges vary amongst young African refugees, and research shows that Africans encounter most of these issues (Nelson et al., 2016; Ziersch et al., 2022a). Chang (2022) notes that while certain migrants successfully navigate the hurdles of migration and swiftly acclimate to new surroundings, this does not apply to all refugees.

Racial discrimination in Australia's labour market is a crucial factor affecting the mental-health of young African refugees (Baker et al., 2021). Racism in finding jobs manifests in many ways, including nepotism towards specific job seekers,

especially those from non-diverse ethnic backgrounds. Young African refugees face different forms of discrimination related to their English proficiency, accent, or ethnicity while searching for jobs, even post-hire (Booth et al., 2012; Riordan & Claudio, 2022). There is overwhelming evidence of racial discrimination in the modern Australian labour market. Booth et al. (2012) discovered that immigrants with distinctively different (African, Middle Eastern, Chinese, and Italian) names but similar resumes, that is, similar human capital among job applicants, showed substantial variances in call-back rates, indicating that ethnic minority candidates must apply for more jobs to secure the same number of interviews than those with 'Australian' names. Many young African refugees struggle to integrate into the Australian economy due to racial discrimination, often ending up in low-skilled employment (Reid et al., 2014).

Furthermore, research demonstrates that employers in Australia can show adverse stereotypes against African refugees, perceiving them as incompetent regardless of their academic qualifications and skills (Nunn et al., 2014). Tilbury and Colic-Peisker (2006) noted that many African refugees hesitate to report incidents of racial discrimination due to fears of losing their employment. There is a greater probability that young African refugees encounter discrimination and exclusion in the workplace and decide not to speak up because of fear and the lack of adequate support (Li et al., 2016; Stokes & Cuervo, 2008). Additionally, young African refugees, like most refugee groups, come from collectivistic and interdependent cultural backgrounds that value family, individual, and community within that setting (Bemak & Chung, 2017). Several refugees are resettled in industrialised nations, with a more individualistic emphasis on everyday interactions (Bemak & Chung, 2017).

For young African refugees, community and family are vital segments of their lives, and they jointly engage in their

upbringing, even in resettlement nations distant from home (Betancourt et al., 2015). Without direct and extended families, individuals in the community step up to take on various roles (e.g., uncle, auntie, sisters, and brothers) as required by younger people (Abur & Mphande, 2020). Therefore, the loss of family or family members, community support, and culture (both before and during migration) jeopardises the young African refugees' safety and security and may cause emotional distress, impacting their capability to concentrate on their education (Bemak & Chung, 2017). However, mental-health challenges continue to influence job opportunities in Australia and beyond (Fozdar & Hartley, 2013; Li et al., 2016; Ziersch et al., 2023).

3. Materials and Methods

Using a qualitative research methodology, this study was conducted with 18 young African refugees aged between 18 to 30 years old (see Table 1 below). Eight (8) participants were females, eight (8) were males, and one was bisexual. When the study was conducted, 16 participants were unmarried, one was married, and one was divorced. The study took place in South Australia, with participants identified through purposive and snowball sampling. All the respondents had either graduated or were still undertaking higher education in South Australia. Participants had an average residency of over 7 years in Australia, with their time here spanning from 7 to 22 years since their resettlement from their home countries.

The project obtained ethics approval from the University of South Australia's Human Research Ethics Committee before data collection commenced in January 2023. Semi-structured interviews were held for 12 months. Most participants in the study came from South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. All had diverse higher education qualifications, including social work, nursing, finance, psychology, law, medicine, business, and carpentry. Although all the semi-

structured interviews were in English, participants were bilingual or multilingual and spoke native languages, including Kibembe, Dinka, Kinyarwanda, Amharic, Lingala, and Swahili. The semi-structured interviews lasted approximately 35–60 minutes and explored how participant identity vectors (gender, race, culture, and age) intersected in affecting the mental-health of young African refugees moving from higher education to employment in South Australia.

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Qualifications	Country of Origin	Occupation	Year of Arrival in Australia
Aaron	Male	24	Bachelor of International Studies	Democratic Republic of Congo	Road Safety Officer	2011
Brian	Bisexual	21	Bachelor of Psychology	South Sudan	Retail Worker	2003
Clara	Female	27	Bachelor of Communication and Media	Democratic Republic of Congo	University Relations Officer	2005
Caroline	Female	23	Bachelor of Nursing	Tanzania	Registered Nurse	2007
Derek	Male	24	Master of Business Administration	South Sudan	Business Analyst Consultant	2002
Daniel	Male	26	Bachelor of Human Resource	Eritrea	Human Resources Administrator	2005
Eli	Male	26	Bachelor of Social Work	South Sudan	Support Worker	2011
Esther	Female	27	Master's in public health and international development	Republic of Congo	Community Development Officer	2009
Grace	Female	20	Bachelor's in health and medicine	South Sudan	Support Worker	2006
Helen	Female	21	Bachelor of Law and Corporate Finance	Democratic Republic of Congo	Law Clerk	2005
Innocent	Male	28	Master's in biotechnology	Democratic Republic of Congo	Logistics Officer	2005
James	Male	30	Bachelor of Social Work	Sudan	Support Worker	2001
Luke	Male	20	Certificate II in Carpentry	Republic of Congo	Carpenter	2016
Linnnet	Female	20	Bachelor of Social Work	Burundi	Insurance Underwriter	2007
Nancy	Female	27	Bachelor of Nursing	South Sudan	Registered Nurse	2002
Paul	Male	22	Bachelor of Finance	Sudan	Customer Advisor	2002
Stella	Female	23	Bachelor of Nursing	Democratic Republic of Congo	Registered Nurse	2011
Sasha	Female	30	Master of Counselling and Psychotherapy	Republic of Congo	Psychotherapist Counsellor	2005

4. Results

In line with Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis, the data has been analysed through these steps: becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, and writing (2006). The findings revealed four major themes:

- (a) African tradition places the burden of domestic duties on women-intersection of culture and gender
- (b) Linguistic discrimination- intersection of culture, race, and gender

- (c) Rising to supervisory and managerial positions-intersection of race, gender, and refugee status.
- (d) Lack of work experience- intersection of age, race, and gender

4.1 African Tradition Places the Burden of Domestic Duties on Women-Intersection of Culture and Gender

The African tradition places the burden of domestic duties on women. Cultural expectations and gender stereotypes in the African culture impose greater responsibility on women to prioritise domestic obligations over paid employment and personal ambitions. Gender significantly limits the freedom of young African women to pursue higher education studies and job prospects since they are expected to work predominately in the private sphere. Several young African refugees demonstrated how African cultural expectations and the distribution of domestic duties along gender lines impact opportunities outside the household, which subsequently impact their mental-health through anxiety. Clara (female) said:

“Women typically work in the house, cleaning the kitchen, making beds, and doing other things. Men tend to be outside the house, cutting hair or going to work.” (Clara, female)

Caroline’s experiences reveal how cultural expectations can burden women, making it more difficult for them to pursue higher education and employment opportunities:

“I feel like it is not fair because he is studying. He is working. I am also doing the same things, but I have an extra load, and I need to balance all that. It is like I had always had to do more than he had to do. So it just felt unfair, and it’s like I am always doing something, whereas he just had to do this, go to school, and that’s it.” (Caroline, female)

Women are often viewed as responsible for traditional household duties, whereas men are typically employed,

indicating their primary duty as providers and breadwinners in the household. This shows that the African tradition, which imposes the burden of doing domestic responsibilities on women, reduces their chances to engage in the workplace as they become more active in the house. In African households, young women and men experience varying degrees of independence and power. Men are able to make their own decisions with less parental oversight control. Simultaneously, young women, on the other hand, have less independence, impacting their freedom and ability to pursue desired career opportunities. African refugees' quotations reveal the interplay of several social identities in transitioning from tertiary institutions to employment. For example, age, culture, and gender influence young females' transition to employment in two ways: age limits their decision-making authority since their parents dictate their choices, and gender as they are anticipated to prioritise household duties over employment. The consequences of the lack of freedom to pursue employment opportunities subsequently impact the mental-health of young females who may not be financially independent in their lives.

4.2 Linguistic Discrimination - Intersection of Culture, Race, and Gender

Linguistic discrimination is a type of prejudice in which people create unconscious prejudices against others based on how they speak (Nguyen & Hajek, 2022). Young African refugees reported discrimination based on their language use, accent, and perceived speech characteristics and vocabulary. For example, Stella (female) experienced linguistic discrimination a lot in both the nursing industry and her business in the disability sector because of her strong [African] accent:

"You want to judge me because I have a strong accent, and I have experienced that a lot both in the nursing industry and in my business" [disability].

Likewise, Aaron experienced a similar discrimination incident when a consumer refused to take his orders and asked to speak with an Australian. This occurred when Aaron was working as a passenger service assistant for the Adelaide metro:

“You do not need 5 minutes of conversation with me to know that this guy does not speak English well or that English is not his first language. Even for 10 seconds, you will tell it is not his first language, which was enough for someone to say, ‘I do not want to take orders from him. I want to talk to an Australian.’”
(Aaron, male)

Young African refugees’ quotes show how linguistic discrimination negatively affects employment transitions, intersecting with culture and race. Stella claimed that she was judged because of her African accent, suggesting that she experienced discrimination in the disability and nursing field. Aaron experienced a similar situation where customers denied taking orders from him because they preferred to talk to an Australian. Racial discrimination affects the performance of young African refugees in the workplace and their chances of securing jobs that match their educational qualifications, which can lead to downward job mobility in some instances and underemployment in others. Job downward mobility and underemployment are outcomes that negatively impact the mental-health of young African refugees who attend higher education with the hope of finding employment after graduation.

4.3 Promotion and Management Positions-Intersection of Race, Gender, and Refugee Status.

Rising to supervisory and managerial positions is difficult for several young African refugees because some races are preferred over others, it's not about what you know, but about who you know are. Participants reported that racism plays a role in getting management positions or getting promoted to

leadership positions. For instance, three participants (Esther, Nancy, and Aaron) expressed their concerns about how race, gender, and refugee status intersected to limit their opportunities for accessing leadership positions in South Australia:

“...Even take jobs that work with refugees and migrants. You might come to an organisation, and you go to this organisation, which is very much cultural because the staff are very much cultural. It is not until you start looking at the organisation’s structure that workers might be cultural, though, but when you go to the board, you realise that most of them or everyone is white. There is no migrant person, and if they do, you might find maybe an Italian or South American, but you most likely will not find a black person. And when you look at the management, for example, you start seeing a difference, and I feel that’s how things are done. And even in things like aged care and disability, where the majority of workers are African people and migrant people. When you go to management, if you decide to go and visit the office, you won’t find any migrant person.” (Esther, female)

“Yes, it does [race]. It affects your chances of trying to get promotions.” (Nancy, female)

“The challenge is always that when I am moving up, there are always some preferences. It is not always about what you know, but it is about who you are.” (Aaron, male)

The experiences of the three participants (Esther, Nancy, and Aaron) highlight that race impacts the ability of young African refugees to secure management positions. Esther’s excerpt shows racial inequality in institutions. She also realised that regardless of whether most of the employees in sectors such as disability and aged care are migrants from African backgrounds, Australians dominate leadership positions. This suggests that individuals with African refugee backgrounds are confined to entry-level jobs due to their refugee status and race, even with

their academic qualifications. Nancy explicitly connected her race to promotion in the workplace. Nancy's story shows that her race and gender constrained her employment opportunities in a labour market that already favours individuals not from African humanitarian backgrounds. Aaron supported this by stating that advancing in a career is not solely about academic qualifications and knowledge; he clarified that racism significantly affects employment opportunities, often more than higher degrees do. These experiences indicate the prevalence of subtle racism in hindering young African refugees from rising to leadership and management positions despite their work experience and academic qualifications.

4.4 Lack of Work Experience - Intersection of Age, Race, and Gender

Young African refugees often lack the required work experience associated with being young. This section examines how age has affected the ability of several young African refugees to transition into employment after higher education, as well as how it has influenced their treatment in the workplace and their mental-health in South Australia. This theme highlights how age intersects with gender and race to affect employment opportunities for young African refugees. For instance, Stella (23 years female) emphasised how her young age prevented her from applying for senior and well-paying employment since she lacked the required work experience:

"As a young person, you are always discouraged from applying for bigger roles because they first say five years of experience and three years of experience. And you are like, I am 23. When was I supposed to get the experience? I was busy completing the degree. So yeah, they are very dramatic with experience. So a lot of us tend to apply for low, like a lot of jobs that pay like 50,000 to 60,000 or 65,000. Those are the only jobs we are stuck on because we do not have the experience. Why am I saying this

as a young person trying to save for a house and trying to cover the cost of living here in Australia? 55,000 to 60,000 is a lot, but it's also not a lot at the same time. It used to be a lot back in the day, but now, because of the cost of living, it is not a lot." (Stella, 23 years)

This quotation shows that Stella's transition to employment was not only shaped by her age but also by her gender and family responsibilities. Having recently graduated from university at the age of 23, Stella failed to meet the 'five years' experience' requirement for most senior and well-paying jobs, saying, *'When was I supposed to get the experience? I was busy completing the degree.'* This statement highlights that age prevented Stella from getting high-paying jobs. Besides age, Stella said that the jobs they are likely to get pay about '50,000 to 65,000' annually, which is no longer sufficient to save for a house and her personal and family daily expenses because of the high 'cost of living'. Her goal of saving trivial sums of money from her low-paying job was hindered by family responsibilities (young females also have a financial obligation to support their parents).

Helen (20 years female) claimed that age was a barrier to her process of looking for employment because she lacked the required work experience often associated with old age:

"I think that because I am 21, I would not have too much experience for any job I apply for. So, that might be a factor that affects my ability to find a job." (Helen, 21 years)

Nancy's statement further highlights how age, gender, and appearance interact in her nursing profession:

"Sometimes, I get treated differently because of my age or appearance; there are instances where I get people calling me. Oh hey, little girl. So I feel like age comes in a bit, and some people think I am not a registered nurse...so I feel like my age,

my appearance and gender because I get, oh, you look so young." (Nancy, 27 years)

Nancy's experiences demonstrate that she faced discrimination due to her physical appearance and age. Some people called her a 'little girl' and questioned her registration as a qualified nurse and work experience, stating, 'You look so young.' The remarks made by her co-workers imply that her gender and age influenced her transition and workplace experiences as a young African woman new to the profession. Nancy's lack of work experience also made some people doubt her academic qualifications. All these negative experiences in the transition trajectory from tertiary education impacted young African refugees' mental health. specialisation.

5. Discussion

This study discusses the factors affecting the mental-health of young African refugees moving from tertiary education to employment in South Australia. The findings (as presented above) show that the transition processes of young African refugees from school to employment in Australia are complicated because of the intersection of various social identities, which consequently influences the mental well-being of young individuals eager to secure employment in their newly resettled environment places. Hailu, Molla and Johnson (2022, p. 171) agree that young African refugees live at the intersection of multiple systems of oppression, including racism, discrimination, xenophobia, and religious intolerance. In spite of these obstacles, earlier studies showed that young African refugees possess strong educational and career ambitions (Hebbani & Khawaja, 2019; Molla, 2021; Naidoo, 2015). This study found that African culture and traditions intersect with gender, placing young African refugee women at a disadvantage when trying to participate equally in the Australian economy compared to their peers. According to Jenkinson et al. (2017),

women refugees face more significant employment barriers than any other migrant group in Australia. The African tradition and culture place more responsibilities on African refugee women to do most of the domestic and family duties. Turnbull et al. (2020) maintain that most African refugee households in Australia are patriarchal, and the concept of breadwinner creates a divide between parenting and productive work, resulting in women's subordination in the labour market. This implies that the intersection of African tradition, cultural beliefs, and gender usually constrain young African refugee women to be financially autonomous, diminishing their capability for independent living in Australia (Baker et al., 2019). Research indicates that financial dependency weakens the capacity of African refugee women to sustain social relationships and a sense of belonging community, resulting in social isolation, which affects mental-health and well-being (McMichael & Manderson, 2004; Ziersch et al., 2022b). Linguistic discrimination is another factor that impacts the mental-health of young African refugees looking for employment in South Australia. Young African refugees face discrimination in the job market, hindering their ability to utilise their skills. They are pressured to conform to the dominant culture to fit in workplace settings, which requires them to give up their actual selves to get a job or fit in. Cultural disparities between African refugee communities and those in the host country can complicate integration into employment. The disparities in cultural values between Australian and African societies have been a primary factor contributing to anxiety and mental-health issues among young people and their parents (Abur & Mphande, 2020). There is also an increased likelihood that young African refugees face discrimination and exclusion from the labour market and decide to be silent due to financial insecurity, which negatively affects mental-health (Fozdar & Torezani, 2008; Stokes & Cuervo,

2008). As a result of linguistic discrimination, young African refugees do not have an equal chance to land a job, which in most cases results in downward job mobility, underemployment, and unemployment (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2007). Unemployment has consistently demonstrated a strong correlation with elevated depression levels. According to two cross-sectional studies from South Korea and Australia, unemployed refugees reported depressive symptoms at roughly double the rate of those who were employed (Hocking et al., 2015). Furthermore, the intersection of race, gender, and age hinders young African refugees from advancing to supervisory and management roles in the Australian workforce. This produces stress, worry, and inferiority feelings for competent young African refugees. This aligns with previous research on refugee employment in Australia, showing that discrimination based on name, language, accent, appearance, and religion is a widespread issue in the labour market, significantly hindering satisfactory employment outcomes for refugees (Fozdar & Torezani, 2008; Onsando & Billett, 2017). This study revealed that young African refugees face challenges entering the Australian job market after completing higher education due to their limited job experience related to age. The lack of appropriate work experience is exacerbated by racial discrimination and gender imbalance in the labour market, reducing young African refugees' ability to participate in the Australian economy. According to Baker et al. (2021), finding a job in Australia has become increasingly challenging. The nation has experienced high unemployment rates over the last ten years, with these challenges affecting Africans more significantly, as they are often perceived as distant outsiders in the Australian workforce. Relocated refugees from Africa often struggle to comprehend Australian systems and workplace culture, delaying their hiring by employers (Losoncz 2017).

Curry et al. (2018) note that African refugees in remote regions of Australia are employed in tough jobs like building due to insufficient relevant local work experience and limited English skills for white-collar positions jobs. Young African refugees often face employment challenges, leading them to accept inequitable job contracts in sectors characterized by poor working conditions, which include extended hours and low pay (Ziersch et al., 2021), which impacts long-term mental and physical health. Ziersch et al. (2021) noted that women are overrepresented in low-paying sectors like cleaning, leading to greater suffering. The discussion of the findings shows that multiple intersecting factors related to race, gender, age, and culture impact the mental- health of young African refugees transitioning from tertiary education to the workforce in South Australia.

6. Conclusion

The intersectionality theoretical lens was employed in this study to understand how the social identities of race, gender, culture, and age intersect in impacting the mental-health of young African refugees transitioning from higher education to employment in South Australia. Through this lens, this study has shown that several intersectional factors play a significant role in impacting the mental-health of young African refugees transitioning from tertiary education to the South Australian labour market. For instance, the findings reveal that the intersection of African tradition and cultural beliefs, linguistic discrimination, lack of Australian work experience, and challenges in rising to supervisory and managerial positions, together with the division of family responsibilities engrained in African gender norms, significantly impact the employment opportunities and mental well-being of young African refugees. For example, African tradition and cultural expectations, particularly for women, exacerbate employment difficulties,

thereby constraining the participation of young African refugees in the Australian labour market, which leads to financial instability, social isolation, depression, and other mental-health problems. The lack of Australian job experience, along with age, racial, and gender bias, impacts young African refugees' ability to transition to meaningful employment in Australia, subsequently causing underemployment, poor working conditions, and long-term mental-health consequences. Employment is significant for newly relocated refugees because it fosters financial stability, social networks, and a sense of meaning, which is critical to successful integration into the new environment. Prolonged unemployment or underemployment has a significant mental-health impact on young African migrants who want to work to live independently and financially support their parents and extended families. Urgent and comprehensive policy measures are needed to tackle the intersectional and systemic barriers that young African refugees encounter when seeking employment in Australia. Young African refugees should have equal access to meaningful employment, as decent work promotes belonging, good mental health, and self-esteem. It is also imperative to build awareness within African refugee communities about various career pathways in Australia. Thus, addressing the intersection of race, gender, age, and culture in the workplace is critical to successfully integrating young African refugees into the Australian labour market. Enhancing mental-health, promoting labour market integration, and fostering a sense of belonging are essential for African refugee youth in Australia. Future studies should investigate the factors that help African refugee youth transition smoothly from tertiary education to the labour market in their host countries.

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