

**Post-Migration Living Difficulties as a Significant Risk Factor of Psychological Distress
in Burmese Refugees in the U.S.**

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Abstract:

Background: Post-migration living difficulties (PMLD) have been shown to have negative impact on the mental health and integration of refugees and immigrants. This study investigated the role of PMLD and psychological distress among 205 resettled Burmese refugees in the United States.

Methods: The self-administered questionnaire measured the frequency and severity of PMLD and psychological distress. Demographic information such as age, gender, relationship status, residency status, employment status, and length of residence were also collected. Logistic regression analysis was conducted to assess the effect of the number of PMLD on psychological distress. All respondents provided written consent.

Results: Respondents ranged in age from 18 to 73 years, with a mean age of 35.29 (SD=11.31). A little more than half (53.2%) of the respondents were female, 71.7% were married, and 64.9% had one or more children. About 16% had bachelor's degree or above, 50.7% had completed high school, 14.6% had primary level education, and 18.5% reported no formal education. About two-thirds (67.2%) were currently employed, reporting a median monthly household income of \$2,000. Length of living in the U.S. ranged from one to 24 years (Mean years = 5.84), and all but six respondents have permanent residence or American citizen status. The findings showed that 35.1% were at risk of high psychological distress. In the total sample, the most frequently reported PMLD were language/communication difficulties (33.6%) and poor access to emergency medical care (30.4%). The frequency of reporting at least one serious/very serious PMLD was also higher in participants with high psychological distress. Logistic regression analysis revealed that the number of PMLD ($B = .09$, $p < .01$), and having at least one serious/very serious PMLD ($B = -.26$, $p < .01$) significantly increased one's likelihood of reporting high psychological distress, controlling for age, gender, marital, educational and employment status and length of residence. The log of the odds of high psychological distress is related to the number of PMLD reported, recording an odds ratio of 10.10.

Conclusions: Experiencing serious/very serious post-migration living difficulties significantly increase the risk of psychological distress in Burmese refugees. Findings have implications for service provision in terms of implementing appropriate interventions to effectively meet the needs of refugees in the US.