

HAZARA YOUNG PEOPLE WITH REFUGEE BACKGROUNDS IN AUSTRALIA: PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS AND HELP-SEEKING

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INTRODUCTION

Many young people with refugee backgrounds continue to experience high levels of psychological distress in the settlement country, however it is not clear how they describe their own subjective health or the strategies they use to seek help. While there has been research on Explanatory Models (EMs) among refugees from other ethnic backgrounds, little research has investigated EMs for young Hazaras.

BACKGROUND

Clinician EMs of psychological distress may focus on aetiology, symptoms, course of illness and treatment options, whereas patient EMs of psychological distress may be less concrete, difficult to articulate, inconsistent and not justified by any medical evidence (Kleinman, 1978). Patient EMs of psychological distress need to be understood in relation to their EMs of help-seeking as analysing psychological distress in isolation limits our understanding of experiences of illness (Markova & Sandal, 2016).

METHODOLOGY

Semi-structured interviews were conducted via Skype or telephone with 18 Hazaras (9 males and 9 females) aged 18-30 years residing in Victoria, Sydney and Perth. Five men were unaccompanied and four were living with immediate family whereas all of the women were living with immediate family in Australia. Seven men and one woman had spent time in a refugee detention centre or camp.

RESULTS

The EM framework was used to describe psychological distress and help-seeking strategies. The young people explained psychological distress as “thinking about problems” and this distress was not recognised by the Afghan community (especially with elders). Both males and females described loss of control and stress and worry as causes of psychological distress. Help-seeking strategies were grouped into four categories: Coping strategies, barriers and access, patterns of use and satisfaction with services.

CONCLUSION

The current study offers insights into the subjective experiences of distress among this group and their experiences of seeking help including barriers and facilitators. This work will be helpful to service providers and others working with young Hazaras with refugee backgrounds.

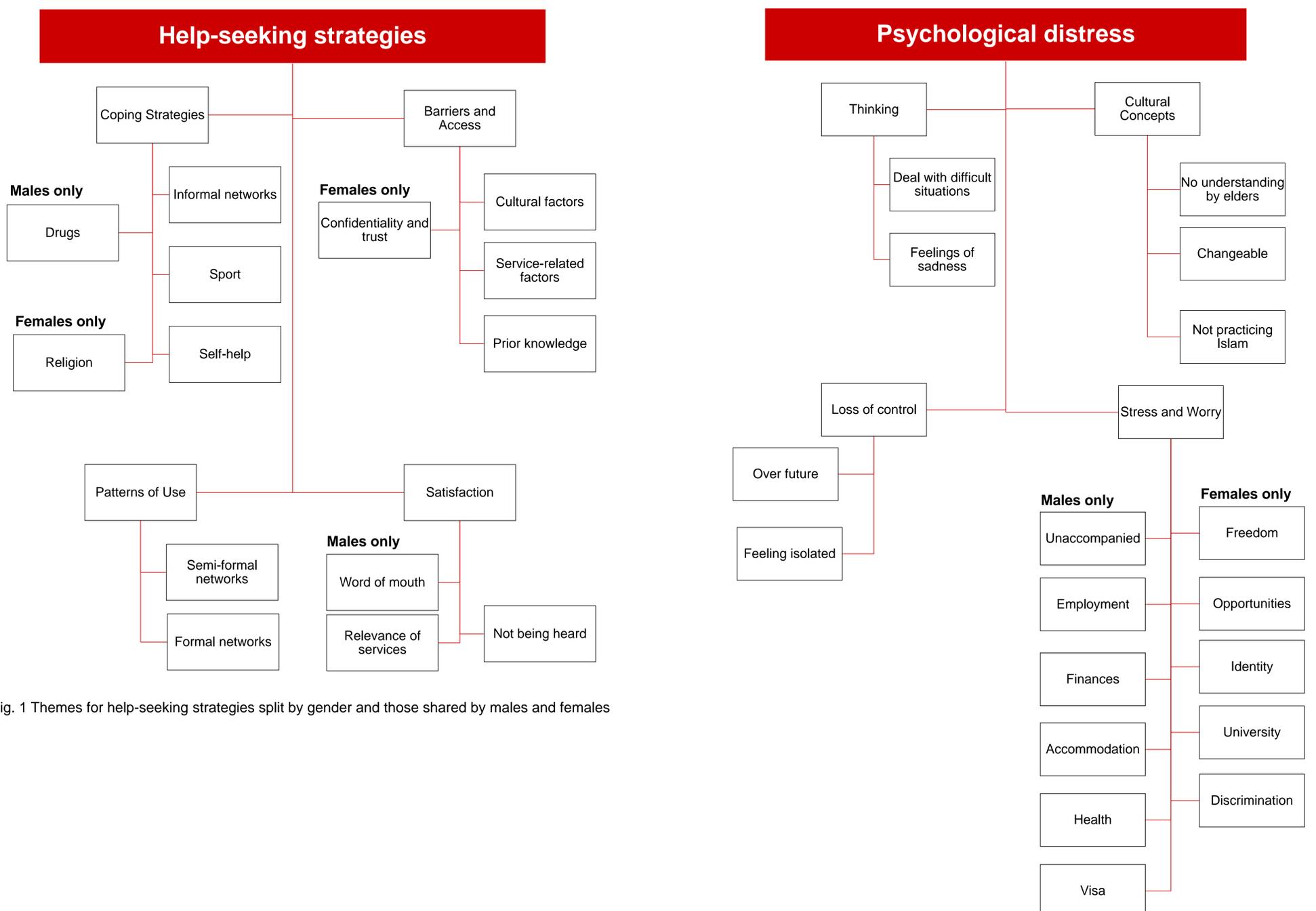


Fig. 1 Themes for help-seeking strategies split by gender and those shared by males and females

Fig. 2 Themes for psychological distress split by gender and those shared by males and females

References

Kleinman, A. (1978). Concepts and a model for the comparison of medical systems as cultural systems. *Social Science & Medicine*, 12, 85-93.
Markova, V. & Sandal, G.M. (2016). Lay Explanatory Models of Depression and preferred coping strategies among Somali Refugees in Norway. A Mixed-Method Study. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 7, 1-16.