Exploring Cognitive Dissonance among Muslim Refugees

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Abstract: This literature review provides an examination of the cognitive dissonance among Muslim refugees. It aims to improve the understanding of psychological challenges faced by them. The results of this study may contribute to the development of relevant interventions and policies. Based on a systematic review of relevant literature, it identifies the key factors which influence this phenomenon. The findings suggest that cognitive dissonance may occur as a result of differences in cultural values, religious beliefs, and social norms between the host country and the refugee's home country. Furthermore, the study identifies the various coping strategies used by individuals who experience cognitive dissonance. The limitations of the study are also mentioned.

Keywords: cognitive dissonance, Muslim refugees, literature review, cultural transition, mental health

1. Introduction

Over the past decade, the number of global refugees has increased significantly [1]. Millions of people have been exiled from their home countries for safety [2]. Different groups of refugees will face different challenges. Among these, Muslim refugees face unique challenges because of their cultural and religious identity. Cognitive dissonance might be one of the results. Using cognitive dissonance theory, this literature review discusses the psychological problems of them. It also examines the factors contributing to this theory and analyses its impact on Muslim refugees.

This research is based on the understanding of cognitive dissonance. Cognitive dissonance is a state of psychological discomfort that appears when individuals hold conflicting beliefs, attitudes, or behaviours [3]. Festinger developed this theory to explain the difficulties when people maintain consistency in their thoughts and actions [4]. In this theory, individuals who experience cognitive dissonance are likely trying to reduce discomfort. That could be achieved through a change in their beliefs or behaviours. In addition, this psychological discomfort can also be resolved by acquiring new information or reducing conflicting factors [5]. In this study, the cognitive dissonance theory is reflected in situations where an individual's cultural identity differs from the expectations of the host country's society.

The group of Muslim refugees is diverse. This concept represents a range of ethnic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds. Refugees who have migrated to Europe, North America, or other Middle Eastern countries from Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq are most of the subjects analysed in this research. According to Hein, the term 'refugee' refers to individuals who have been forced to leave their home

countries due to war, violence, or persecution [6]. Exile disrupts their lives by removing them from their familiar environments. This experience can lead to psychological and emotional challenges [7]. To a great extent, Muslim refugees' experiences are influenced by Islam, which is an important part of their identity. Their faith provides a sense of belonging to a cultural group [8]. However, there might be challenges to practicing religious beliefs in another country.

Cognitive dissonance theory can be applied to this research when discussing the experiences of Muslim refugees. In many cases, immigrants and refugees may find themselves caught between their original cultural identity and the cultural norms of the host country [6]. The conflicts of identity can result in cognitive dissonance because they have to cope with the tension between preserving their cultural traditions and joining a new society [7].

The structure of this research is as follows. Firstly, it will define cognitive dissonance. Its relevance to the Muslim refugee context will be highlighted as well. Then, there will be a review of the existing research. The cognitive dissonance theory is used to understand the factors which influence this phenomenon. In addition, it will discuss the impact of this theory on Muslim refugees. Finally, this review will examine the limitations of the current studies and provide suggestions for future research.

2. Cognitive Dissonance among Muslim Refugees: Literature Review

2.1. Method

An analysis of the relevant literature was used in this study to examine the cognitive dissonance experiences of Muslim refugees. This study uses the Systematic Review approach, which is often used to summarise and analyse the existing literature on one research topic. It aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the available evidence [9].

Google Scholar is the mainly used tool to search. In the literature searching of this study, the keywords included 'Muslim refugees', 'Muslim immigrants', and 'cognitive dissonance'. The articles or books published within ten years were mainly chosen.

2.2. Manifestations

Muslim refugees can experience cognitive dissonance in a variety of ways. Cognitive dissonance theory explains these manifestations. As a result of conflicts between their cultural values and traditions and those of the host country, they may face cognitive dissonance [10]. When they attempt to reconcile their own culture with those of the host society, the inconsistency between the two values creates psychological discomfort. This is also the case when they wish to maintain their religious beliefs within an environment that does not fully accommodate or understand their belief system [8]. In addition, the struggle to balance their roles within their community, the host society, and their expectations also result in cognitive dissonance [11,12]. As a result of the pressure to conform to the norms of the host country while retaining one's cultural and religious identity, a psychological conflict can develop.

2.3. Factors

Cognitive dissonance among Muslim refugees is a multifaceted phenomenon influenced by a variety of factors. Language barriers [8,10,13], discrimination and prejudice [10,14,15,16], as well as the loss of social support networks [13,17] are all significant factors contributing to their cognitive dissonance.

All these factors are connected and interact with one another. Language barriers contribute significantly to the inability to express thoughts and feelings [8]. In the absence of adequate language skills, Muslim refugees are unable to express their experiences, needs, and concerns [8,10]. This limitation hinders the ability to seek understanding and support from others, further exacerbating their

cognitive dissonance [13]. In addition, prejudice and discrimination increase the feeling of otherness and internal conflict [10,14]. Hostile attitudes, prejudices, and discriminatory practices in the host society can undermine their sense of belonging [16]. These negative experiences may reinforce conflicting values. Furthermore, the loss of social support networks can also exacerbate the cognitive dissonance faced by Muslim refugees [13,17]. Displacement disrupts their social relationships and cuts them off from family, friends, and community members. Lacking a familiar support system, they may lose the emotional support to cope with the new environment [17]. That might exacerbate their cognitive dissonance and increases feelings of isolation [13].

In summary, language barriers, prejudice, and the loss of social support networks influence the cognitive dissonance experienced by Muslim refugees. At the same time, these factors are interrelated, which increases their psychological problems.

2.4. Coping Strategies

Furthermore, there has been considerable discussion in many literature regarding the coping strategies adopted by Muslim refugees to reconcile cultural differences. Cognitive dissonance theory is also reflected in these behaviours.

It is possible that they may be inclined to make changes to justify stressful behaviour [5]. To reduce the inconsistency between internal beliefs and the external environment, refugees may change their behaviour or attitudes. They may try to conform to their personal values and host country norms, by finding a balance between different cultures [7,17]. This adaptation process allows them to reduce the cognitive dissonance between their cultural background and the expectations of their new environment [8].

Another strategy used by Muslim refugees is to adapt to specific aspects of the host culture [10] [11,13]. Rather than completely assimilating or rejecting the host culture, people may choose to selectively adapt to certain aspects of the new culture that correspond to their values and beliefs [10]. As a result of selective acculturation, they can maintain their cultural continuity while integrating into the host society. The program assists Muslim refugees in managing cognitive dissonance through the integration of aspects of their host culture that they find acceptable and beneficial [13]. This is done while retaining their cultural values. By taking this approach, it can maintain a balance between the original culture and the changing cultural context in which people have found themselves [10,11].

Furthermore, they may seek assistance from other refugees or community organizations to cope with conflicting cultural beliefs and share similar experiences with others [8,10,12]. Muslim refugees could seek help from other refugees, community organisations, or support groups to cope with cognitive dissonance. Their support can alleviate the isolation caused by the loss of social support networks [8]. Community organisations can often provide information on services, educational opportunities, employment prospects, language courses, and legal support [18]. As a result, individuals have access to resources and guidance that will assist them in adjusting to and integrating into their new environment. The practical assistance provided by this may alleviate the challenges associated with cognitive dissonance.

3. Conclusion

This study discusses the phenomenon of cognitive dissonance among Muslim refugees and the challenges they face. The findings suggest that the experiences vary from person to person, influenced by a lot of factors. Including cultural and religious background, social expectations, and so on. Through the analysis of the literature, the limitations and challenges of the study are also mentioned.

As the literature search used existing research and publications, the primary data from Muslim refugees was not collected directly. The insights might be limited by the lack of first-hand experience

[9]. In addition, the level of cognitive dissonance felt by Muslim refugees can vary from individual to individual. Other factors may be involved that have not been discussed in the literature. This may limit the generalisability of the findings [19]. Meanwhile, it is necessary to recognise that not all Muslim refugees experience this. A lot of them can successfully cope with the cultural challenges they meet [10].

Furthermore, the literature selected may have biases. It may be influenced by specific research preferences, publication bias, or languages [9]. The extent to which the research is comprehensive may be affected by this.

To deepen the understanding of cognitive dissonance among Muslim refugees, future research could also focus on the following points. For instance, examining the intersectionality of cognitive dissonance among them with other identities and experiences, such as gender, age, or economic status. This approach would better examine how multiple dimensions of identity influence it and its impact [20]. Besides, interventions and support services aimed at addressing cognitive dissonance among Muslim refugees could be explored. This may include psychological interventions or community-based policies that help reduce cognitive dissonance. These points can all help to make this study more comprehensive.

There is a need for continued research in this area to deepen the understanding of this phenomenon. There will be a better understanding of cognitive dissonance by including more perspectives as well. By understanding the cognitive dissonance among Muslim refugees, there will be a more inclusive and supportive environment for them.

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