



SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND TECHNOLOGY

INVESTIGATING THE EFFECTS OF REFUGEE RIGHTS ON THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF RWANDANESE YOUTHS: A CASE STUDY OF MAKENI TRANSIT CENTER, LUSAKA.

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to The School of Technology and Social Sciences in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the award of a Bachelor of Science Degree in Politics and International Relations.

BY

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Author's Declaration

I, **Faith Zulu**, hereby declare that this dissertation entitled "*Investigating the Effects of Refugee Rights on the Socio-Economic Status of Rwandanese Youths: A Case Study of Makeni Transit Center, Lusaka*" is my original work. It has not been submitted, in whole or in part, for the award of a degree or any other academic qualification at this or any other institution of higher learning. All sources of information used in this work have been duly acknowledged in accordance with academic conventions.

I further affirm that this dissertation has been carried out under the guidance and supervision of **Miss Lizzy Banda**.

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Abstract

This study examined the impact of refugee rights on the socio-economic status and livelihood prospects of Rwandan youths at Makeni Transit Center in Lusaka, Zambia. Although Zambia is a signatory to key international legal instruments and enacted the Refugee Act No. 1 of 2017, the implementation of refugee rights remains inconsistent. As a result, refugee youths continue to experience poverty, unemployment, social marginalization, and limited access to education and formal livelihoods. The study sought to: (1) assess the extent to which refugee rights are upheld among Rwandan youths at Makeni Transit Center; (2) examine the socio-economic challenges affecting their livelihood opportunities; and (3) propose strategies to enhance their socio-economic well-being through improved rights implementation.

Guided by Human Capital Theory and Social Capital Theory, the study employed a qualitative descriptive research design focusing on Rwandan youths aged 18–35. A purposive sample of 100 participants was selected. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions and analysed thematically to capture participants' lived experiences. The findings revealed that the legal recognition of refugee rights does not consistently translate into effective practice. Only a small proportion of youths reported regular access to education, employment, legal documentation, and freedom of movement. High unemployment (46%), financial insecurity, limited access to affordable education, documentation challenges, and social exclusion were identified as major socio-economic barriers.

Despite these constraints, participants demonstrated resilience and proposed practical solutions, including expanded formal employment opportunities, microfinance support, improved access to education, streamlined documentation processes, and strengthened community integration initiatives. The study concludes that when effectively implemented, refugee rights function as critical enablers of socio-economic empowerment rather than mere legal entitlements.

Keywords: Refugee rights, socio-economic status, livelihood opportunities, Rwandan youths, Makeni Transit Center, Zambia, social capital, human capital.

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Dedication

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

The displacement of refugees is a big humanitarian concern in the world. Most displaced individuals seek protection and possibilities in cities instead of the traditional camps. Zambia is a party to important international and regional documents on refugee protection and passed the Refugee Act No. 1 of 2017. Refugees of various countries, such as Rwanda, are found in the country. Despite this legal framework, there is inconsistency in the application of the rights of refugees, mostly among the youths who reside in urban areas like the Makeni Transit Center in Lusaka. These Rwandan youths are subjected to major socio-economic issues, which include unemployment, poverty, educational opportunities, poor legislation, and social exclusion. In this research, the researcher explores the impact of refugee rights on the socio-economic conditions and livelihood of young Rwandan people at Makeni Transit Center. It looks at the way in which the legal rights can be converted into practical outcomes and discusses how they can be strengthened and ingrained into the Zambian society.

1.1 Background of the Study

The global refugee crisis has been one of the most complicated humanitarian problems of the twenty-first century. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2023) indicates that conflict, persecution, and natural calamities have displaced over 110 000,000 individuals and refugee populations across the world. Refugee youths are one of the most vulnerable groups. They experience unpredictability, broken education, and poor sources of livelihood. International laws, including the 1951 Refugee Convention, the 1967 Protocol, and the 1969 Organization of African Unity (OAU) Convention, are the foundation of refugee protection. They are ensuring a right to safety, education, health, and work (Rutinwa, 1999; UNHCR, 2022). Despite this, the practical implementation of the rights of refugees is variegated in most countries that are the hosts. Poor access to services and sustainable livelihoods are constrained by economic and infrastructure limitations and poor enforcement mechanisms (Betts and Collier, 2017; Dryden-Peterson, 2016).

Zambia has been receiving refugees since the past, who originate in different African countries: Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, and Rwanda (Muleya, 2018). Humanitarian protection has been taken seriously by the government where international laws have been adopted with the climax being Refugee Act No. 1 of 2017. The Act confirms the rights of refugees to an education, employment and non-discrimination (Chanda, 2020). Nonetheless, implementation is patchy particularly when it comes to refugees in towns. The management of refugees in Zambia was traditionally of the camps and the large settlements of Meheba and Mayukwayukwa which became the designated assistance areas (Musonda, 2021). Though these camps ensure the basic protection and services, they limit the freedom of movement of refugees and access to greater socio-economic opportunities. This limitation compels a lot of people, particularly the youths, to move to the cities in pursuit of livelihoods (Zetter and Ruaudel, 2016).

The Rwandese refugees in Zambia can be traced back to the time of the Rwandan genocide of 1994, when thousands of people were forced to leave the country (Muleya, 2018). To start with, the majority of Rwandese refugees used to live in camps. With this form of displacement becoming long-term, most people moved to urban centers like the Makeni Transit Centre in Lusaka. This was an exodus of seeking improved access to education, work, and their freedom. Regrettably, urban refugee youths tend to suffer various problems, including unemployment, poverty, social marginalization, and insufficient educational access and documents (Musonda, 2021). These predicaments point to a major policy mismatch between the legalization of rights of refugees and their implementation in the urban setting. Refugees in such environments are often left alone to take care of themselves with little institutional protection.

In the case of refugee youths, the fulfillment of rights is what directly defines the chances of developing socio-economic empowerment. Human capital is created by access to education. The integration and self-reliance are enhanced by employment and social incorporation (Becker, 1964; Putnam, 2000). However, in Zambia, the majority of urban refugee young people encounter ongoing challenges in the form of discrimination, strains of bureaucratic limitations on work permit, and insufficient access to affordable education (Chanda, 2020). These institutional constraints make them incapable of escaping poverty and dependency cycles. This policy-

practice imbalance compromises the fundamental humanitarian goal of protecting refugees, which is to restore dignity and offer means of sustainable livelihoods (Betts and Collier, 2017).

Lack of balance between the government agencies, humanitarian organizations and localities also limits the successful implementation of the refugee rights. Despite the initiatives taken by the agencies like UNHCR and other NGOs, focused on livelihood and education, they tend to be random, temporary, and under-funded (Zambia Red Cross Society, 2018; Refugee Empowerment Council, 2019). The absence of policies of refugee programs in national development plans leads to the increased socio-economic marginalization especially of the youths in the Makeni Transit Center. The young people are challenged by unemployment and marginalization in the mainstream. Most of them have to enter into informal, low-income work lacking any systemic aid; thus, they have little to offer in terms of stability or improvement.

Thus, it is critical to comprehend the impacts of the concept of refugee rights on the socio-economic standing of the Rwandese youths to close the gap between the law and reality. This paper also examines the effects of observing and enforcing the rights of refugees on the socio-economic status of Rwandan youths in the Makeni Transit Center in Lusaka. It determines their access to education, work, and legal documentation besides isolating obstacles that make full inclusion in the Zambian society difficult. It is hoped that the findings will be utilized by government policy, humanitarian programming, and advocacy to show how effective the implementation of refugee rights can turn legal protections into pragmatic tools of empowerment and sustainable development (UNHCR, 2023; Betts, 2021; Chanda, 2020).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite Zambia's progressive refugee framework under the Refugee Act No. 1 of 2017, the practical implementation of refugee rights remains inconsistent, particularly for Rwandan youths residing at Makeni Transit Centre in Lusaka. According to the Ministry of Home Affairs and Internal Security (2024), Zambia hosts over 110,000 refugees and asylum seekers, with approximately 23% living in urban centres such as Lusaka. An estimated 1,000 Rwandan youths reside at Makeni Transit Centre, where socio-economic deprivation is widespread (UNHCR, 2023). Although the law guarantees the right to work, education, healthcare, and freedom of

movement, many refugee youths face unemployment, limited access to secondary and tertiary education, documentation barriers, and social stigma. Studies indicate that over 60% of urban refugees in Lusaka depend on informal trading or casual labour due to restricted access to formal employment (Musonda, 2021; Muleya, 2018).

The scale of deprivation is further reflected in limited access to social services. Reports show that less than 25% of refugee youths in Lusaka access affordable education, while over 70% lack valid immigration or work documentation, effectively excluding them from formal labour markets and government youth programmes (UNHCR, 2023; ZIPAR, 2022). At Makeni Transit Centre, overcrowded and economically insecure living conditions persist, with most households surviving on less than ZMW 1,000 per month (Zambia Statistics Agency, 2023). These challenges point to structural gaps in institutional coordination, monitoring, and resource allocation, rather than merely legislative shortcomings.

Furthermore, a significant knowledge gap exists. While existing literature acknowledges Zambia's humanitarian commitment, limited empirical research focuses specifically on urban-based Rwandan refugee youths and the extent to which refugee rights influence their socio-economic outcomes. Much of the scholarship centres on camp-based refugees in Meheba and Mayukwayukwa, overlooking the unique documentation, education, and employment challenges faced by urban refugees. This gap constrains evidence-based policymaking. Therefore, there is a critical need for focused research examining how the implementation of refugee rights affects the socio-economic status and livelihood prospects of Rwandan youths at Makeni Transit Centre, in order to inform targeted policy and sustainable integration strategies.

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1.3.1 General Objective

To investigate the effects of refugee rights on the socio-economic status and livelihood opportunities of Rwandan youths at Makeni Transit Center, Lusaka.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

- I. To assess the extent to which refugee rights are being upheld for Rwandan youths at Makeni Transit Center.
- II. To examine the socio-economic challenges affecting the livelihood opportunities of Rwandan youths at Makeni Transit Center.
- III. To propose practical strategies for improving the implementation of refugee rights among Rwandan youths at Makeni Transit Center.

1.3.3 Research Questions

- I. To what extent are refugee rights being upheld for Rwandan youths at Makeni Transit Center?
- II. What socio-economic challenges affect the livelihood opportunities of Rwandan youths at Makeni Transit Center?
- III. What practical strategies can enhance the implementation of refugee rights among Rwandan youths at Makeni Transit Center?

1.4 Significance of the Study

The research is important in its ability to provide definite information on how the rights of refugees influence the socio-economic position and livelihood choices of the Rwandan youths residing at Makeni Transit Center in Lusaka. The research addresses a gap in the literature, where past studies have paid attention to policy, but had neglected the actual experiences of urban refugee youths because of legal right. These results can be taken by policy makers, humanitarian organizations, and civil society stakeholders to enhance the application of refugee rights and create livelihood interventions to enhance self-reliance. To local and international stakeholders, it provides a platform upon which documentation procedures can be reformed, access to education increased, and employment opportunities provided to the youths in refugee

settlements. Finally, the study gives voice to youths at Makeni but it is clear that there is a dire need to translate legalized protections into practical everyday changes.

1.5 Delimitations of the Study

The research will deal with the Rwandan refugee youths at the Makeni Transit Center in Lusaka, Zambia. It specifically looks into the impacts of refugee rights on their socio-economic status and livelihood opportunities in a displacement scenario in urban areas. The sample will consist of youths between the ages of 18 and 35 since they are the most affected in areas concerning education, employment and integration. The paper will not include the refugees of other nationalities or refugees who reside in rural camps like Meheba and Mayukwayukwa since they do not experience what the urban dwellers get to experience. It is focused on actual implementation of rights, which are access to education, employment, and legal paperwork, as opposed to the general problem of refugees' legislation and diplomacy. The research becomes focused and, therefore, contextually rooted, which brings it an in-depth analysis, making it easier to manage and more aligned with the realities of the lives of the Makeni youths.

1.6 Limitations of the Study

Similar to most qualitative studies, the present research is characterized by a number of limitations that can influence the scope and external validity. The research sample is confined to a single group of Rwandan youths at Makeni thus they cannot be generalized to refugee populations in other places in Zambia or even rural settlements. Although qualitative research is suitable in terms of investigating lived experiences, it restricts the possibility to measure larger socio-economic conditions. The sample was limited to one hundred participants by time and resource constraints, and this might have missed out on a variety of experiences. There was also the issue of language barriers since certain participants spoke Kinyarwanda or French only, and thus translations had to be done which may make some of the nuances a bit less significant. As well, the sensitivity of the participants around the subjects such as the employment issues and the premises of their legal status occasionally caused shyness in providing a detailed information, though the confidentiality and trust were also provided. Although such limitations exist, the study can be viewed as credible and useful, due to a range of strategies that enhance reliability

and validity: semi-structured interviews and focus groups. The insights provide a contextual insight on how refugee rights affect the socio-economic wellbeing of Rwandan youths in an urban environment. Such constraints do not reduce the importance of the study; they just mark the direction of future research which can be expanded and incorporate the mixed methods which can be used to supplement the qualitative depth with the quantitative breadth.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

Livelihood Opportunities: are those resources and skills people access to make a living, i.e. employment, education, and income generating activities.

Refugee Rights: The legal rights and privileges provided to refugees under International law such as a safe haven, employment, education, and healthcare.

Socio Economic status: The social and economic status of an individual or a group of people commonly quantified as a representation of income, education and their occupation.

Urban Refugees: Migrants residing in urban settings instead of in camps and those who encounter their own unique issues when seeking services and legal status.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.

2.0 Introduction

This chapter is a survey of scholarly and policy literature regarding the subject of refugee rights and their relation to the socio-economic status of the Rwandan youths at Makeni Transit Center in Lusaka. It situates the study in the contemporary academic and policy discussions and determines the knowledge gaps that justify this study. The discussion is organized thematically; the world views on rights of refugees and youth livelihoods, the African regional experience and the local situation in Zambia. The review takes the step towards the particular and makes the international trends visible in the context of Zambian legal and socio-political reality.

The chapter also interacts with the theories explaining the way rights get transferred, or not to better outcomes of displaced peoples. The Social Capital Theory and the Human Capital Theory are discussed as the means of explaining the livelihoods of refugee youths. The interplay between socio-economic outcomes and rights of refugees is subsequently described in the form of a conceptual framework, which will be followed by subsequent data analysis. This chapter is not merely a summary but a critical discourse of what is known and what is disputed as well as a major gap particularly relating to the lived experiences of urban refugee youths in Zambia. This strategy explains why a specialized research on the Rwandan youths at Makeni is not only urgent, but it is also timely.

The present study aimed to examine the social-economic status and refugee rights in relation to the Rwandan youths. 2.1 Overview of Refugee Rights and SES of Rwandan Youths The given study tried to consider the social-economic status and the rights of refugees in reference to the Rwandan youths.

The rights of refugees are a major factor in determining the socio-economic integration, particularly among the vulnerable youths. Access to education, health, work and avoidance of discrimination are guaranteed by the international instruments like the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1969 OAU Convention, which form the legal basis. Nonetheless, there is disparity in the application of these rights in the host countries resulting in disparate consequences.

To young refugees, socio-economic opportunities collide with rights in very important ways. Juveniles are in transitional stages where they need education, skills as well as employment to secure their future. When young refugees are respected, they are able to attend schools, undergo vocational training and get employed which creates human capital and helps them to contribute to their communities and host societies. The rights are precariously enforced, which makes them vulnerable to precarious livelihoods, exclusion, and long-term poverty.

These challenges affect the world and the entire region, as seen in Makeni Transit Center by Rwandan youths in Zambia. In spite of legal framework provided in the Refugee Act of 2017, there has been little transformation of the rights into daily opportunities. An interposition like unemployment, lack of access to secondary and higher education as also a lack of access to national development programs creates a disconnect between policy written on paper and reality being practiced.

This paper thus sees the rights of refugees' not as abstract rights but as practical facilitators of livelihood and well-being. Through the study of how the Rwandan youths enjoy these rights in Makeni, the study does not merely test the application of laws, but also the practical effects on the socio-economic front. This point of view helps to emphasize the relevance of the study and the necessity to situate refugee youth in the context of the further debate on rights, integration, and sustainable development.

2 Interim Literature or Empirical Review.

The reviewed empirical literature provides information about the impact of refugee rights on socio-economic outcomes in different contexts. The section is divided into three parts: a global view that emphasizes the global trends and discussions; a regional view that is based on the African countries that host them and a local view that dwells on the situation in Zambia and the realities the youths of Makeni are facing. The review provides the context of the dissertation through moving to a global level, then regional, and, finally, local level, identifying the knowledge gaps that the study will fill.

2.2.1 Global Perspective

International debates on the rights of refugees have developed under models such as the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol which provide basic protection. Instruments like the Global Compact on Refugees of recent times reinforce these commitments with the aim of fostering burden-sharing and social-economic inclusion. However, the practice is still uneven, particularly in the states where the political, economic, or security interests prevail over the humanitarian responsibilities (Betts and Collier, 2017; UNHCR, 2022). The existence of this gap demonstrates the conflict between the universal principles of protection and state sovereignty, restricting the implementation.

One of the major concerns in the global scholarship is economic integration of refugees. Researchers, such as Jacobsen (2005) and Zetter and Ruaudel (2016), hold that access to legal work contributes to self-reliance, aid dependency, and economic development in locations by fostering entrepreneurship. The opponents, however, indicate that the mass of refugees can cause tension in labor markets and in the provision of public resources, especially in developing economies (Krause and Schmidt, 2020). The discussion indicates the divergence in national contexts: on the one hand, there is a provision of organizational employment opportunities, and on the other hand, there are restrictive labor policies that drive refugees to the informal sectors. The middle way is needed, where both the contribution of the refugees and the economic interests of host societies are taken into consideration.

Another dimension that is of vital importance is access to education. According to UNHCR (2023), refugees in the form of children and youths continue to be significantly underrepresented in secondary and tertiary education in contrast to the host populations, which affects their mobility and mobility in the long term. Dryden-Peterson (2016) explains this by disrupted schooling in the process of displacement and insufficient capacity of host countries. Nevertheless, this description carries too little weight to systemic discrimination and policy oversight that further increase marginalization in urban locations. In well-endowed states, specific assistance such as language training, financial aid is a major boost to the educational achievements. These variations demonstrate that though the resource limitation is a critical

factor, political will and inclusive policies are also determinants on the accessibility of refugees to education.

In addition to institutional challenges, the literature on the world has identified the social factors, which have a significant influence on the fulfillment of refugee rights. As Maughan -Brown and Van Wyk (2018) demonstrate, refugees are likely to experience xenophobia, social exclusion, and discrimination that undermine their access to vital services. However, a social aspect tends to be disregarded in legal and policy discourses, which put formal rights and title before actual experiences. However, a similar study conducted in Germany and Canada demonstrates that in those cases, where the host communities actively foster integration and social cohesion, refugees report improved economic and psychosocial results (Wyk, 2018). This analogy shows that it is not sufficient to have legal rights in the absence of social incorporation mechanisms. Thus, the process of refugee protection should be regarded as a legal and social process that is defined by the perceptions of the host community and the behavior of the institutions.

The international bodies have been at the center of ensuring the protection of refugees but they have a limit. UNHCR has broadened its role as an emergency relief organization to a program that focuses on livelihood and self-sufficiency among the refugees. However, researchers like Betts (2021) or the Refugee Council (2019) observe that chronic under-investment, donor burnout, and other crises across the world still persist in the inefficiency of programs. Although these agencies are making efforts to introduce innovative solutions, the absence of long term funding and the reliance on short term humanitarian funding limits any reasonable socio economic change. Conversely, those countries that have been able to collaborate with international agencies in their endeavor to incorporate refugees into the national development strategies record more promising results. This difference indicates that the international frameworks are not enough, host-state ownership, and accountability are also instrumental in the successful implementation of the rights of refugees.

Gendered aspects of refugee protection are also dominant in the global discourse. As Freedman (2019) notes, males and females alike are vulnerable to systemic issues as refugees, yet, young women are particularly disadvantaged by the social construct of gender and the responsibility to care and increased vulnerability to exploitation. Other scholars argue that the current global

policy frameworks are increasingly undertaking to deal with such inequalities with gender sensitive programming and livelihood targeting initiatives. Still, the dissonance between policy and practice are still very pronounced: in many cases where gender inclusivity is legally acknowledged, it is merely cosmetic or arbitrary in practice. This puts against a backdrop the discrepancy that has always existed between rhetorical promises of gender equality and the real empowerment of young refugee women in education and employment.

Scholars are moving towards the discovery of developmental implications of refugee inclusion. According to the World Bank and UNHCR (2017), once refugees are absorbed into the local economies, they transform into beneficiaries of aid to become people who contribute to development. This unifying story, however, is disputed by those policymakers who are concerned that the move towards giving refugees socio-economic rights will overstretch the local resources. Although the mutual benefits of inclusive models have been experienced in some countries, including greater productivity and resilience of the community, most countries that are hosts are not ready to embrace such models. The fact that restrictive policies are here to stay is not just a show of economic restraint, but also a sign of a more fundamental political opposition to re-branding refugees as development, rather than humanitarian, dependents.

Another facet that has influenced the world of refugees is increased urbanization of displacement. As opposed to the old fashioned camp-based system of refugee management, a good number of refugees are engaged in urban set ups alongside the host populations. According to UNHCR (2022), over fifty percent of all refugees on the planet are now residing in cities, and they experience complicated protection issues. Cities provide increased chances of job and education but also place the refugees at increased risks of informal housing, security and legalization. According to Betts (2021), the humanitarian agencies are slow to evolve since they focus on camp-based support despite the displacement becoming more urban. Other researchers, in turn, emphasize the resilience and entrepreneurial solutions urban refugees find in the situations when formal help is scarce and demonstrate that self-organization can partially offset the ineffective institutional reactions. The urbanizing trend of the world hence necessitates more flexible policies that do not ignore refugee agency, yet providing sufficient protection and inclusion.

The social and psychological well-being of the refugees have taken center stage in the current research. Miller and Rasmussen (2017) claim that a long period of displacement, restricted rights, and socio-economic marginalization are the factors that precondition the high rates of trauma and mental distress among refugees. Nevertheless, the mental health is less researched than material needs like food, shelter, and documentation. New research in Europe and North America has shown that psychosocial support interventions enhance mental health as well as educational success and employability among youthful refugees. This fact indicates that socio-economic empowerment could be seen as a holistic concept, where mental health interventions should be included in the right-based approaches. In the case of the lack of psychological well-being, the refugee youth experience compounded vulnerabilities preventing them to gain the potential of education and livelihood opportunities.

Attitudes of the host-community also influence the way the rights of refugees are fulfilled. According to Wyk (2018), resentment and discrimination towards refugees are likely to happen because of negative attitudes created by competition over jobs, housing, and public services. However, experience of inclusive community participation and intercultural dialogue in societies has proven better results of integration. The distinction is that there are no or very few concerted government and civil-society measures to enhance social integration. Legal protection structures are necessary but their effectiveness is also determined by the development of positive host-refugee relations. The literature emphasizes that protection of refugees is a social project rather than a legal or political one that will have to invest long-term in mutual understanding and community trust-building.

The renewed definition of the global refugee story is also being redefined by climate change and environmental displacement. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2021), extreme weather events, desertification, and lack of resources introduce new groups of displacement that do not fit into a definition of a refugee as enacted in the existing legal frameworks. The existing global systems have left a vast number of people with no formal protection since they have been displaced due to climate causes. Progressive scholars on the other hand, propose the extension of the refugee law to cover environmental migrants based on the belief that climate vulnerability is gradually becoming integrated with socio-economic insecurity. The junction of climate change and outplacement creates a two-fold problem to the

refugee youngsters, as they are exposed both to immediate environmental consequences and systemic hindrance to assimilation. This changing reality demands more accommodative and proactive policymaking that acknowledges the issue of climate-induced displacement as a form of humanitarian concern.

2.2.2 Regional Perspective

Africa has a complicated combination of conflict history, colonial boundaries, and different post-independent governance trajectories that determine the policies towards refugees. Continental protection was further enhanced in the 1969 OAU Convention that officially gave recognition to those who were fleeing rampant violence. But it has not been implemented equally (Rutinwa, 1999). OAU principles have been translated into progressive domestic legislation in some states, and are regarded as aspirational in other states. This loophole indicates that legal instruments are not sufficient but that paper rights become actual protections through political will, administrative competence, and financial means (Musoni, 2019). Concisely, regional frameworks are characterized by idealistic setting, yet issues of national security and the budget tend to restrain their implementation.

Uganda is brought up as a local example of inclusive refugee policy due to its practice of permitting refugees to own land, free movement, and legally employ them (Dryden-, 2016; UNHCR, 2018). According to proponents, self-reliance practice in Uganda is advantageous to refugees and the host communities, in terms of agriculture and the small business. This is not the opinion of critics. They note that legal rights are not supported by sufficient investment in professional training, good education, or market networks, which restrict further opportunities of young refugees in the long-term (Ahimbisibwe, 2021). Uganda thus is a typical regional struggle: progressive legislation that is wanting in resources and application. It cautions that changes in policies will not be the answer.

Another example in the region is that in Kenya, camps are still the primary method. Refugees receive minimal services in camps such as Dadaab and Kakuma but with tight restrictions including the movement and even official employment (Refugee Consortium of Kenya, 2017). Betts et al. (2017) claim that this segregation brings addiction and interrupts the young people in

their educational and professional opportunities. Nevertheless, as recent projects to establish camp-based economies demonstrate, camps can also be used to achieve productive livelihoods with the right support. The point is that policy formulation is donor priority-local labor market driven. Limiting frameworks can be alleviated through intensive economic initiatives, a level of inclusion remains wanting, as long as the refugees are free to move around and contribute to work.

The other complex case is South Africa. Its open laws provide refugees with the right to work and study, but the practical barriers to these rights are bureaucratic delays, xenophobic violence, and social exclusion (Mungazi, 2016; Landau, 2018). Wyk (2018) demonstrates that such structural and social obstacles place refugee youths in low-wage positions and limit their access to higher education. The law-reality gap underscores the fact that non-financial elements of administrative inefficiency and social hostility are very powerful in the impediment of the rights realization. The combination of inclusionary legislation and exclusionary results so far complicates North-South or rich-poor analysis in South Africa.

The 2019 Refugee Proclamation in Ethiopia was hailed as an ambitious change that increased the rights of refugees to work, study, and freely move around, which was assisted by partners such as the World Bank (World Bank, 2017). This change is indicative of a shift in the region towards how refugees can be a means of economic contribution instead of just humanitarian consumers. However, Samuel (2020) and others observe that the legislation has yet to positively influence young people working or attending universities on a consistent basis. Prospects of young refugees are curtailed by overcrowded camps and markets in the local countries. Ethiopia demonstrates that legal change is not sufficient and does not guarantee socioeconomic inclusion, and it should be accompanied by the investments in skills training, infrastructure of higher learning, and involvement of the private sector.

The experience of West Africa in Ghana and Liberia demonstrates that national capacity and post-conflict recovery have an impact on the outcomes of refugees. In Ghana, the open policy enables the refugees to work and receive social services, but researchers have found that a significant number of refugee youths experience underemployment and lack access to job skills (Refugee Empowerment Council, 2019). Still plagued by internal conflict, Liberia can offer

simple protection, but has no money and institutions to scale up integration programs (UNHCR, 2016). Collectively, the above-mentioned cases indicate that even good legislative frameworks can be undermined by structural deficiencies, namely; skill discrepancies, limited budgets, etc that define the way youths live their lives and further divide countries.

In all parts of Africa, refugee youths are confronted with similar barriers, which include lack of access to quality education past primary levels, bad vocational education, poor access to formal labor markets, and social marginalization. The small institutions and even scattered donor assistance increase these challenges (Musoni, 2019; Ahimbisibwe, 2021). Integration policies evidenced to be successful in few countries when supported by consistent investment and political dedication, however in the majority of the cases the gap between the legal and the actual opportunity is obvious. This tendency is important to our research as it highlights the administrative, financial, and social dynamics eroding the effect of refugee rights on the socio-economic performance of youths, in particular, in cities like Makeni.

One consistent trend in the governance of refugees in Africa is the disparity between policy commitments and actuality due to poor institutions and politics. Most of the states have signed the 1951 Convention and 1969 OAU Convention but its implementation depends on national security and domestic politics. According to Musoni (2019), inconsistencies in the application of rights are observed daily even in the countries that have strong laws. Ahimbisibwe (2021) further suggests that the control of protection by governments is also influenced by the influence of donors and geopolitical alliances, in particular, when external funding is associated with migration control.

Education is not only a legal right, but also the crucial path to socio-economic mobility among refugees, and much of the African host states continue to deny refugees access to good education. Schools for refugees are overcrowded and under-funded, and the opportunities to study in a university are limited (Dryden-, 2016). In other nations, such as Uganda and Kenya, the situation has been getting better as those nations collaborated with international donors to provide refugee students with scholarships and vocational training (UNHCR, 2018). These ambivalent results demonstrate that educational inclusion is effective only when the policies were harmonized by the host governments, development agencies and local communities. In the

absence of such coherence, a good number of the refugee youths are left with low-skill employment or in informal work which retains them in poverty despite their rights being recognized.

One major critique of regional research is that it over depends on humanitarian aid as an alternative to sustainable development. Although aid provides short-term relief, very few live livelihoods are created among refugee youths. Betts et al. (2017) caution that aid-dominant programs might lead to dependency, and will disenfranchise refugees to the growth of the nation. Conversely, combined models, such as the Jobs Compact in Ethiopia, which links refugee work with local development, demonstrate how humanitarian and development objectives can be combined. This analogy highlights how long-term refugee rights in Africa will be achieved by leaving the charity paradigm and entrenching refugees within national economic strategies.

2.2.3 Local Perspective

Zambian refugee policy does not only have a humanitarian approach, but it is also pragmatic. It remains open-door since the Southern African liberation movements and the Rwandan genocide of 1994, although it continues to regulate the movement of the refugees and the service provision. The Zambian legal framework is established on the basis of the 1951 Convention on refugees, the 1967 Protocol, and the 1969 OAU Convention which are written in the Refugee Act No. 1 of 2017. The Act ensures the right of refugees to education, employment, medical care, and anti-discrimination (Chanda, 2020).

According to Muleya (2018) and Musonda (2021), even with these guarantees, implementation is not evenly spread due to the lack of resources, administrative bottlenecks, and political considerations. The discrepancy between the inclusive provisions of the Act and the real-life reality demonstrates that legal rights cannot create any socio-economic opportunity without proper funding and proper administration.

The established policy of encampment in Zambia also makes it difficult to protect and integrate. Refugees have been confined in such settlements such as Meheba and Mayukwayukwa where

humanitarian agencies supply them with housing, food, and primary schooling. Although it is the most basic form of safety, it also leads to dependency and denies refugees chances of accessing employment, higher education, and entrepreneurship (Zetter and Ruaudel, 2016). Since the displacement has been prolonged most of the refugees have gone to the cities like Lusaka in pursuit of more independence.

Muleya observes that when people migrated to cities, the traditional humanitarianism model was broken, and now migrants cannot obtain organized assistance. Nonetheless, this migration is also an indication of agency-refugees are not forced to depend on anyone but on their own. The policy crisis has been the problem of balancing between the state control and the realities of urban displacement in which new populations such as those at Makeni Transit Center fall between institutional gaps.

The emergence of transit hubs and urban centers including Makeni brings out systemical flaws in the way Zambia manages refugees. As Musonda (2021) notes, even though a part of the urban refugees receive the assistance of UNHCR and governmental agencies, the majority are not involved in the national development programs and formal employment. The Rwandan youths in Makeni make ends meet by relying on informal trading, piecework and domestic labor, which are low paying and exploitative jobs. This contradiction demonstrates that the legal system in Zambia that promulgates inclusiveness does not translate into economic inclusion. In contrast with the more integrated policies of the countries such as Uganda, the experience of Zambia shows that progressive laws need to be accompanied with the investments in institutions and economics in order to produce real outcomes.

The right to education is a priority area that has not been fulfilled by the Zambia refugees' youths. Although there has been an increase in primary enrollment through government and UNHCR interventions, the secondary and tertiary education barriers still exist. According to UNHCR (2017), high school charges, bureaucracy, and scarcity of scholarships prevent many urban refugee youths to continue their studies. Despite certain potential of small scale donor funded scholarships, inconsistency proves a structural disconnect: integration between refugee education and national strategy is missing. Since this paper is about rights and socio-economic

performance, education is a policy success during the elementary school level but failure at the high-school level.

Another big challenge is employment and economic participation. Despite the fact that work is authorized under the Refugee Act, bureaucracy and discrimination hit a major blow over a formal employment. According to Chanda (2020), separate work permits introduce delays, which put off employers, and research conducted by the Zambia Institute for Policy Analysis and Research (2018) demonstrates that negative stereotypes and lack of recognition of foreign qualifications add to the marginalization of refugees in the labor market. The informal self-employment prevails, but has little finance, markets, and training. This trend highlights another structural problem: legal rights are in existence, but the facilitating facilities, credit, and business services, are poor, or absent. The example of Zambia shows that legal permission is not the same as being empowered, it needs institutional and social acceptance.

It is also important to socialize. According to the Zambia Red Cross Society (2018), exclusion is fueled by xenophobia, cultural prejudice, and competition over resources, particularly in urban areas. These are social obstacles that restrict access of the refugees to services and employment, which support marginalization.

2.3 Research Gap

Numerous analyzers who look at the protection of refugees through legal, humanitarian and economic perspectives; however, tend to ignore the fact that the enforcement of rights and the socio-economic empowerment are intertwined. The normative frameworks of the 1951 Refugee Convention and other related instruments have been explained but little has been said about how these rights are realized in particular local settings.

Recent studies by Krause and Schmidt (2020) and Freedman (2019) report on implementation issues in Europe and North America. Very few of these works expand their analyses into African or Zambian contexts that have different kinds of institutions and politics. The world literature also does not pay much attention to the experience of refugee youth whose access to adult life is based on a little access to education, employment, and legalization.

On the regional level, African-based scholarship indicates that the lack of resources, weak governance, and national politics prevents the implementation of refugee rights in practice (Musoni, 2019; Ahimbisibwe, 2021). Nonetheless, to a large extent, that is all descriptive work, catalogue of policy provisions without questioning their actual impact on specific population groups. As much as Uganda and Ethiopia have been noted to have achieved success in terms of integration, there are limited studies that get into the real world experiences of the refugee young people, or how the inclusive policies impact on their livelihoods.

Although the concept of refugee self-reliance is touched upon, research tends to generalize the populations together, not dividing them by age, gender, or displacement location. Thus, urban youth who are not residing in formal camps are still underrepresented in regional studies. This analytic oversimplification of youth based inquiry forms an analytical contradiction that restricts our knowledge of how legal structures are implemented into socio-economic empowerment in the lives of young African refugees.

information about the urban refugee population. The Refugee Act No. 1 of 2017 has been applauded to widen the right to work, education and health care (Chanda, 2020), but not many empirical studies confirm the actual materialization of the rights among the urban youth in Lusaka. Even those who do mention urban refugees usually consider them as a homogenous group without regard to national differences, community relations, and generational distinctions. Consequently, the problems, which Rwandan youth experience, including the lack of formal jobs, the inability to access tertiary education, and stigma, have not been sufficiently investigated. The policy-practice gap is caused by the fact that recent developments that incorporated refugee management into the national development agenda of Zambia have never been critically evaluated (ZamStats, 2023; UNHCR, 2023).

The proposed study aims at providing these identified gaps by presenting an empirically based and youth centered investigation into the effects of refugee rights on the socio-economic position of the Rwandese youth within the Makeni Transit Centre in Lusaka. It is the first theory to incorporate both Social Capital Theory and Human Capital Theory to understand how appropriately enforced rights can create empowerment by means of education, employment as well as community inclusion.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

The paper is grounded on the Human Capital Theory and Social Capital Theory which when combined elucidate that the realization of refugee rights influences the socio economic empowerment of Rwandan youth in Makeni Transit Center. These theories can be specifically used since they associate juridical rights with practical social and economic consequences. The Human Capital Theory focuses on how education, training, and skills development can be used to enhance productivity (Becker, 1964; Psacharopoulos and Patrinos, 2018). The Social Capital Theory emphasizes the impact of networks, trust, and social relationships as accessing opportunities and resilience (Bourdieu, 1986; Putnam, 2000). This combination of the two views ensures the study captures the individual level of capacity building and the group aspects of empowerment that reflect the multifaceted realities of the life of refugees where rights are ensured yet not consistently implemented (Betts, 2021; UNHCR, 2023).

2.4.1 Human Capital Theory

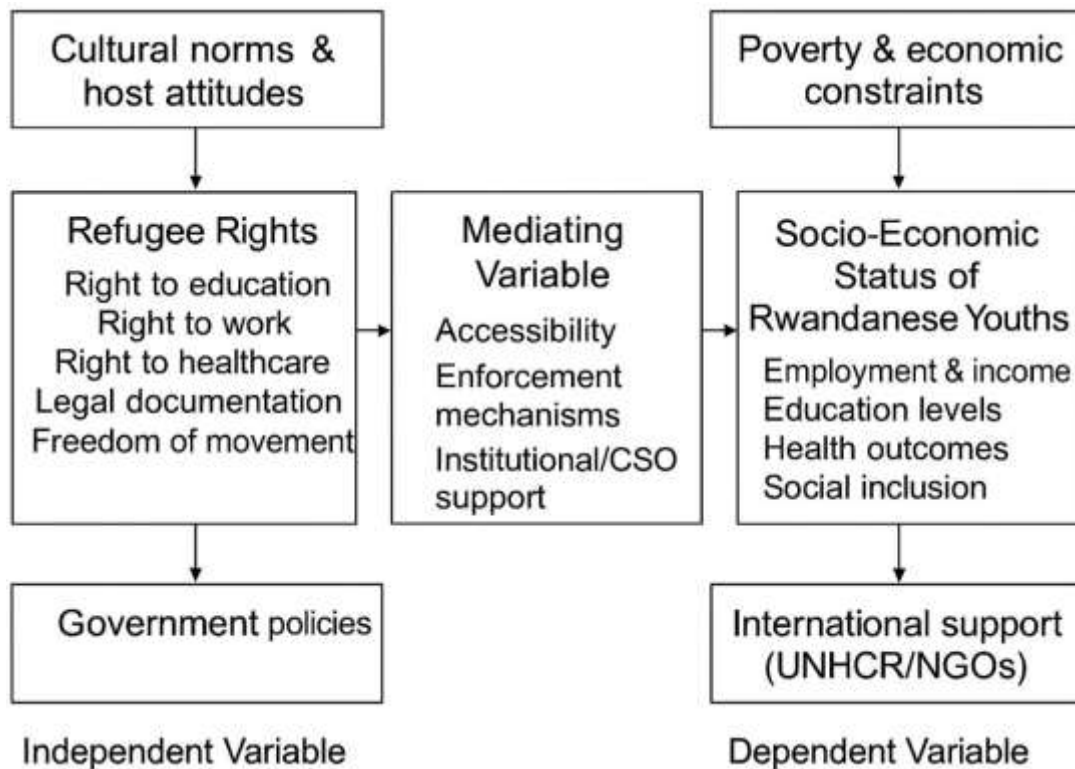
Human Capital Theory which was originally expressed by Becker (1964) is an idea that is based on the premise that education, training and experience are a type of capital that enhances productivity as well as overall earnings of the lifetime of a person. Learning and work is a survival and long-term socio-economic mobility necessity in refugee circumstances. Studies by Dryden-Peterson (2016) and UNHCR (2017) indicate that refugees with a higher level of education have higher chances of securing employment and stand a better chance of becoming self-reliant. Recent statistics support this argument and show that the skill building and qualification recognition enable the economic integration of refugees significantly (OECD, 2021; World Bank, 2022).

2.4.2 Social Capital Theory

The Human Capital Theory emphasizes on skills whereas the Social Capital Theory emphasizes on the relevance of social networks, relationships, and trust in bringing about socio-economic results. It is the theory of Bourdieu (1986) (enhanced by Putnam, 2000) that contends that individuals that are placed in favorable communities will access resources and opportunities that are not accessible to individuals that are isolated. Social capital in the case of refugees is in the form of links to local communities, NGOs, and institutions that offer employment, training, or

protection (Portes, 1998; Woolcock and Narayan, 2000). Empirical research proves that refugees having powerful networks have easier integration and greater access to livelihoods (Maughan-Brown and Van Wyk, 2018; Ager and Strang, 2020). Nevertheless, these networks can be destroyed by negative attitudes of the host, xenophobia, and the struggle to access scarce resources in order to be excluded and feel insecure (Zambia Red Cross Society, 2018; Landau, 2018). Makeni is the urban Rwandan youth who do not have bridging capital with host populations in Zambia and therefore inaccessible to employment and formal education (Muleya, 2018; Musoni, 2019). Thus, the Social Capital Theory provides an opportunity to examine the role of inclusion in the mediation between formal rights and empowerment or the lack thereof. This is part of the second objective of the study that explores the way in which community relations and social integration influence the lived experiences of the refugee youth

2.4 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

The chapter outlines the approaches employed in the study of the impact of refugee rights on the socioeconomic status of young people in Rwanda at Makeni Transit Center in Lusaka. It specifies research design, population of study, sampling, data gathering, reliability and validity, data analysis, and ethical concerns. It was decided to use a qualitative method in order to understand more about what the participants experience in terms of refugee rights and empowerment.

3.1 Research Design

The qualitative descriptive design was used in the study to understand the experiences and perceptions of Rwandan youth in the refugee program. The design was appropriate since it reflected real-life situations of the participants with regard to education, employment, and livelihood opportunities. It also assisted in establishing the role of the enforcement or absence of the rights of refugees on their socio-economic empowerment. Qualitative research is suitable in this study as it enables one to get a detailed knowledge of the human experience and it cannot be quantified, just as Creswell and Poth (2018) note.

3.2 Study Population

The study sample included approximately 1,000 Rwandan refugee youth aged 18-35 years in Makeni Transit Center in Lusaka. They were chosen as this group is the most economically active and socially vulnerable group of refugees. The participants were of different sex, education and occupation, which gave various viewpoints. Inclusion criteria were nationality Rwandan, age between 18 and 35 years, and a six-month stay at the center, otherwise the individuals were eliminated.

3.3 Sampling Procedure

The target population was used to come up with a purposive sample of 100 participants. This sampling method was non-probability in nature and used those respondents who had enough knowledge and experience on the research topic. Diversity in terms of gender and livelihood status was guaranteed by the help of community leaders. This sample size was large enough to obtain data saturation whereby no new information was obtained in the process of the interviews (Guest, Namey & Chen, 2020). As such, the purposive sampling was the right choice to get the in-depth information on the lived lives of the refugee youth.

3.4 Data Collection Instruments.

The data was gathered using semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs). These approaches enabled the respondents to share their experiences and perceptions freely. Individual understanding of education, employment and rights implementation was obtained through interviews, and shared experiences through FGDs. The two approaches were complementary and increased the reliability of the data. The tools were refined and clarifying questions were explained with a pilot test with five participants. The confidentiality and comfort were ensured throughout to ensure that honest responses are gotten

3.5 Reliability and Validity

To obtain credibility trustworthiness, the research followed the principle of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The credibility was reached through pilot testing, longer interaction and member checking. Constant procedures were used to ensure dependability. The documented audit trail was used to record the research process to increase the degree of confirmability, whereas rich contextual descriptions of Makeni Transit Center augmented transferability. Such actions enhanced validity and genuineness of the results.

3.6 Data Analysis

The data were interpreted using thematic analysis, which is an approach that has six steps as developed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The transcripts were read several times, coded and sorted into themes that included the rights enforcement, socio Economic challenges and the empowerment strategies. Inductive and deductive methodologies were utilized to document the experiences of the participants and to fit in the theoretical framework of the study. Interviews and FGDs triangulation were used to increase validity and consistency.

3.7.1 Weaknesses of the Methodology.

The research was limited by time, resources and language. The 100 sample size might not be entirely representative of the entire youth in the center of Rwanda. Certain participants had to be translated and possibly some forms of interpretation were lost. Others were afraid to talk about delicate issues. These difficulties were alleviated through trust-building and confidentiality. The study has rich information about the urban refugee experience in Zambia although it is restricted to a single location.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

The research committee of the university approved the study ethically and the management of Makeni Transit Center authorized the study. An informed consent was obtained and confidentiality and voluntary participation guaranteed. Pseudonyms ensured identity safety, and the interviews were also held in secure places. Cultural norms have been observed and those participants who required emotional support have been referred accordingly. These were to provide respect, integrity and ethical research standards.

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

The findings of the study are presented and discussed in this chapter. The research was on the impact of refugee rights to the socio economic status and livelihood prospects of the Rwandan youths in the Makeni Transit Center in Lusaka. Three goals of the discussion are:

1. Measuring the respect of the rights of refugees.
2. Research into the socio-economic factors that enslave the livelihood choices of Rwandan youths.
3. Find ways to enhance their welfare by enhancing the rights.

4.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Results are framed based on these objectives. Both of the themes address the voices and lived experience of the participants. The primary source of data is the semi-structured interviews and focus groups. A thematic analysis was used to find patterns and new discoveries. The text and direct quotes of participants are provided to make the discussion genuine and contextual. This is more than a descriptive report but provides a more insight into the issues and the possibilities of Rwandan refugee youths within an urban settlement.

The respondent profile will be provided by the demographic data of the respondents.

The knowledge of the demographics of respondents gives a background and helps to understand their views. In the study 99 participants were used and their ages, gender, level of education, and occupation were gathered. These facts contribute to the understanding of how demographics are influencing the experiences of refugee rights and socio-economic opportunities..

4.1.1 Age of Respondents

The respondents were categorized into four ages. The distribution is indicated in table 4.1.1..

Age category(Years)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18-20	20	20%
21-25	35	35%
26-30	28	28%
31-35	17	17%
Total(n=100)	100	100

Source: Field Data (2025)

The table indicates that 35% of them were between 21–25 years, and 28% were 26-30 years. The majority of the respondents are between the ages of early and late twenties, which is a time when young people are concerned with finishing a school, joining the labor force or seeking means of sustaining themselves. Their responses are hence particularly useful.

One out of every five was 18-20 years, still in school or considering employment. Their inclusion makes them reflect on the hopes and struggles of young adults as they move into adulthood in displacement.

The least percentage 17% was 31-35 years. Their numbers are smaller, but they provide the viewpoint of more years living in the center and lifelong experience of suffering. The age distribution has a wide range of youthful voices, those at the border of adulthood to those at the verge of maturity, hence informing us more about the impact of refugee rights across age groups..

4.1.2 Gender of Respondents

The gender balance will make sure that the male and female views are represented. Gender determines access to opportunities, displacement, and the way the youths of the refugees interact with their rights. The distribution is presented in table 4.1.2.

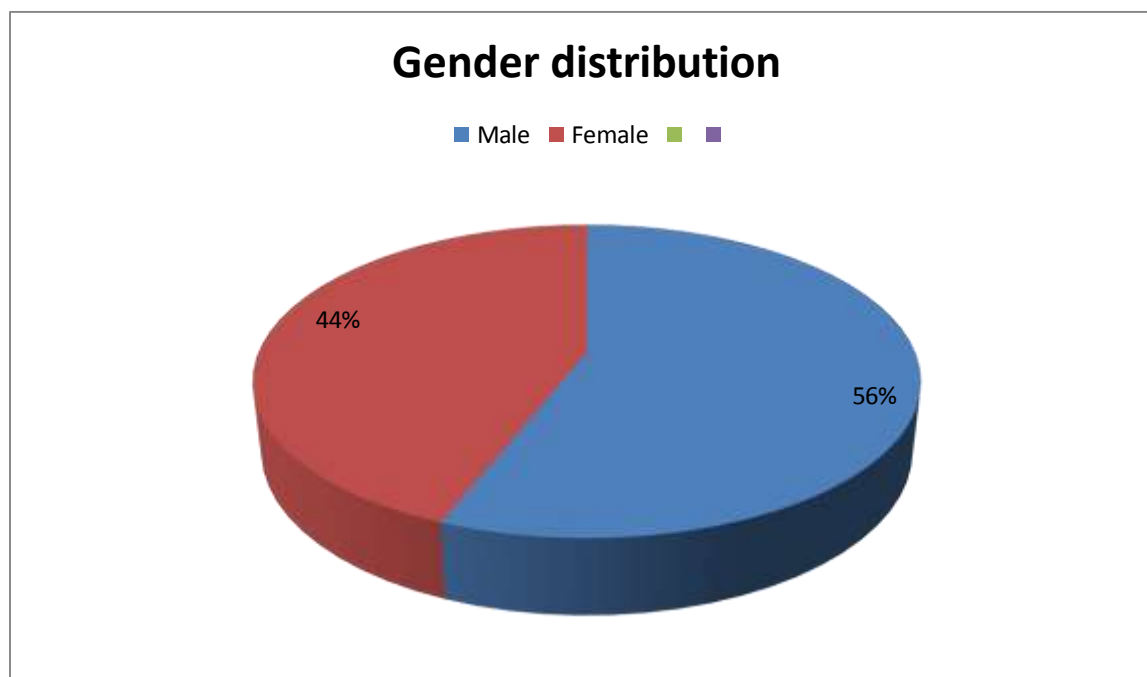


Figure 4.1.2: Gender Distribution of Respondents

Source: Field Data (2025)

The number reflects that 56 percent of the respondents were male and 44 percent were females. This resembles a lot of communities of refugees, where men are more visible in the street and community affairs, whereas women tend to have cultural or domestic duties preventing them.

A high proportion of women is significant as it portrays their unique problems of accessing education, employment, and social services. The problem of inability to access employment and to be independent was frequently noted by men respondents. Some of these barriers identified by female respondents include cultural requirements, maternal duties, and susceptibility to exploitation. The close equal representation of the genders helped in enhancing the research since it gave a comparative perspective of the differences in accessing right to refugee and the opportunities among youths of Rwandese origin.

4.1.3 Education Level of Respondents

Livelihood opportunities and social integration highly depend on education. The research was focused on educational background of respondents. The distribution is presented in figure 4.1.3.

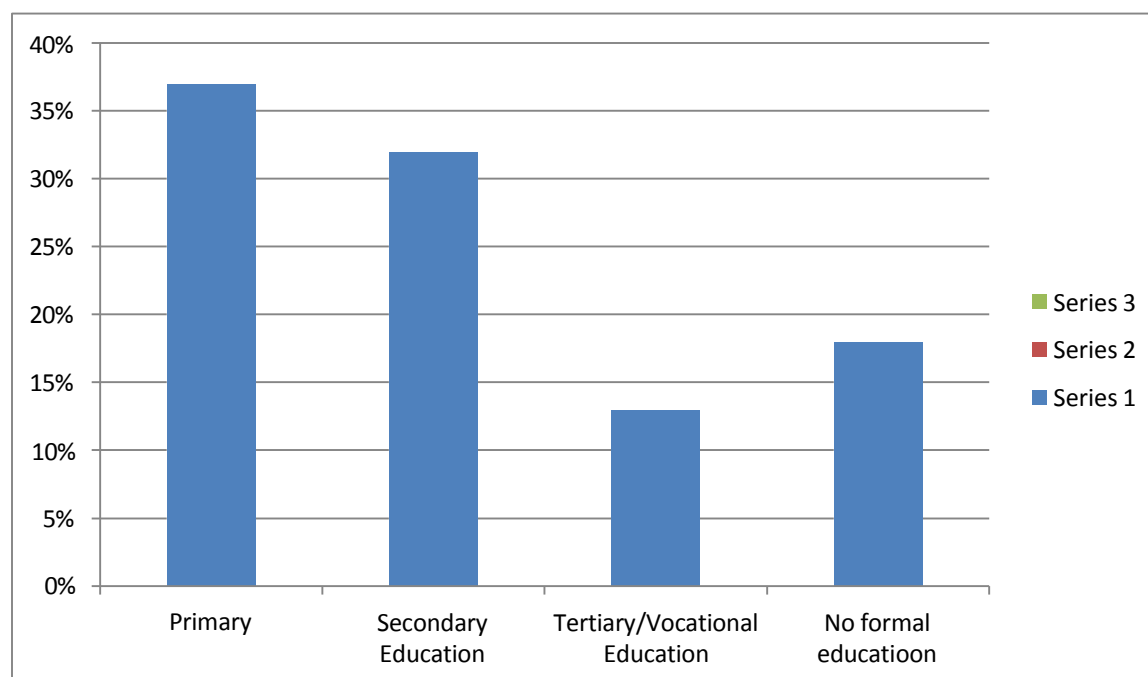


Figure 4.13 Educational level of respondents

Source: Field Data (2025)

As demonstrated in the figure, the majority of the respondents had limited formal education: 37 per cent completed only primary, 32 per cent completed secondary, 18 per cent did not have any formal education. Tertiary or vocational training was only 13per cent.

Migration, money constraints or the absence of documentation disrupts education. There are youths who struggled through secondary education but very few went beyond it.

Poor qualifications limit access to official jobs and developmental processes. Several respondents spoke of having high ambitions of becoming professionals yet their situations relegated them to a survival-level job. Such results contribute to the importance of greater safeguarding of education rights of refugees.

4.1.4 Occupation of Respondents

Occupation is an important dimension of socio-economic status, as it reflects how refugee youths are able to sustain themselves and their families within the host country. Exploring the occupational status of respondents provided insights into the kinds of livelihood opportunities available to them and the challenges they face in securing meaningful work. The distribution of respondents by occupation is shown in Table 4.1.4.

Occupation	Frequency	Table
Unemployed	46	46%
Informal trading	32	32%
Students	15	15%
Self employed	7	7
Total(n=100)	100	100

Table 4.4 Occupation

Source: Field Data (2025)

As indicated in the table, 46 percent were unemployed. This is because of structural barriers, including work-permit barriers, qualification and poverty that is prevalent.

Approximately 32 percent had informal trading or casual employment- selling small objects, piecework or providing services around the transit station. These are the activities that have little and uneven-income.

Students constituted 15 per cent, who are yet to attain education in the hope that they will secure decent jobs, yet many are skeptical that schooling will provide them with good jobs.

Seven percent were self-employed with small business ventures like tailoring or food selling, which they could withstand with little capital.

These findings demonstrate that a good number of youth have precarious, irregular, and in many cases substandard livelihood opportunities. The informal work and unemployment is the order of the day, as they survive on a day-to-day basis. Respondents lament that they have skills but

cannot legally make use of formal jobs. Other people resort to petty trade as the sole source of livelihood. Students have a hope of breaking out of poverty as they think that education could help them yet systemic problems render that hope weak. On the whole, the occupational structure is vulnerable but also showing the will to live with few opportunities.

4.2 Presentation of Findings

Results are structured according to the objectives of the study and they are thematic with the aim of highlighting common patterns in the narratives of the participants. Themes and sub themes present the reality of the Rwandese youths who are refugees in Makeni Transit Center. Direct quotes that have been taken verbatim boost the voices and give them authenticity. This method is used to make sure that the analysis is not only descriptive but also captures lived experiences, plights, and dreams in their own words of the respondents..

4.2.1 The Extent to Which Refugee Rights Were Upheld among Rwandan Youths at Makeni Transit Center

The first goal is covered in this subsection, which is to determine the extent to which the rights of refugees were observed. Our priorities were recognition and protection of basic rights, documentation, education, employment and freedom of movement. Themes were identified through the analysis.

Table 4.2.1: Extent to Which Refugee Rights Were Upheld

Finding	Frequency	Percentage
Access to legal education	18	18%
Right to education	22	22%
Right to work	15	15%
Freedom of movement	12	12%
Rights not fully upheld (general gaps)	33	33%

Source: Field Data (2025)

The percentage of respondents who considered their rights to be fully respected was very low. As an example, 22% of them could have education with few serious obstacles, 18% of them thought that their legal documents were sufficient, 15% of them thought that their right to work is not violated, and 12 percent of them could move without any restrictions.

The majority of respondents (33 percentage) noted that the rights of refugees were not completely respected in any of the areas, which indicates a discrepancy between the policy promises and the real life.

These results demonstrate that, even though there are youths who undergo partial recognition, the majority of the youths have structural and systemic challenges. One of the respondents remarked that they claim that we have rights, but then you go to school they demand money; you want to work, they demand permission to do something you cannot get. It is as though the rights are just a piece of paper. This shows the lack of connection between the law and practice.

The findings resonate with Muleya (2019), who observed that inefficiencies in bureaucracies and socioeconomic obstacles usually prevented access by refugees in Zambia to entitlement. In terms of network-theory, restricted rights do not provide the youths with the capacity to become a part of larger socio-economic networks and thus interfere with upward mobility.

As a matter of fact, the prevalence of the rights that are not being completely respected demonstrates that refugees live in uncertainty, education, employment, and mobility are not enshrined but negotiated. The argument by Shammout (2020) that in the presence of policies, host-country practices undermine the rights is supported. According to the social-capital theory, this uncertainty undermines bonding and bridging relationships and makes them not have full access to institutions and be members of the wider society.

The results thus highlight that realization of refugee rights would also be required in practice as a legal requirement and enhancing the socio-economic status of the displaced youth..

4.2.2 Socio-Economic Challenges Affecting Livelihood Opportunities

This subsection reports the findings of the second objective that determined socio-economic problems that limit the livelihood opportunities of Rwandan youths in Makeni Transit Center.

The participants were asked to outline different obstacles to their access to education, employment, and livelihoods that were sustainable. These critical issues are found in Figure 4.2.2..

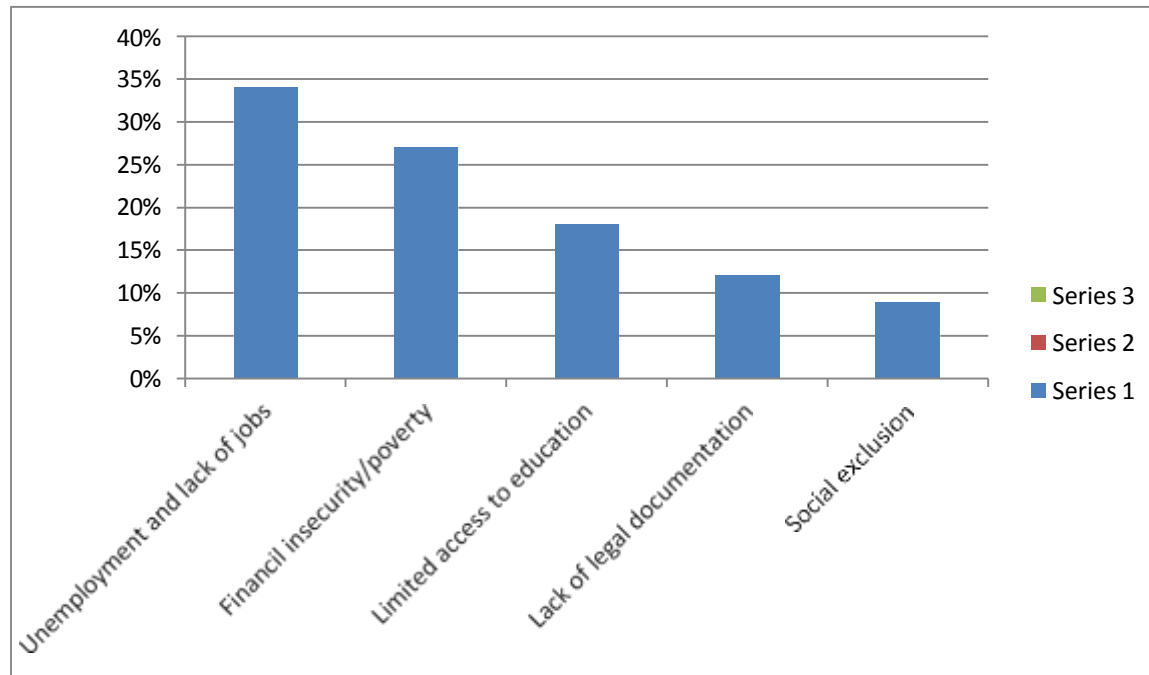


Figure 4.2.2: Socio-Economic Challenges Affecting Refugee Youths

Source: Field Data (2025)

The statistics indicate that 34 percent of the respondents chose unemployment as the most urgent problem. Others reported hoping to be employed but were constantly denied the opportunity due to their refugee status or due to their lack of legal permits.

One of the young men said, even in times when there is employment, they inform us that we cannot get a job due to us being refugees. We find ourselves simply sitting or attempting to sell small things. This is indicative of how the refugees in Zambia have been systemically shunned out of the formal labour market, with most being compelled to informal and unstable jobs. According to Betts et al. (2017), employment limitations negatively affect the self-reliance of refugees and place them in dependency cycles. According to network theory, it is the scarcity of formal employment that disrupts the potential of refugee youths to establish professional networks that may enhance their economic and social integration.

Unemployment was closely connected with financial insecurity and poverty, which 27% of the respondents indicated. Even when they exchanged small objects or conducted casual jobs, the participants explained that despite the income, the earnings were not enough to pay the basic needs such as food, rent, and education.

One of the young ladies remarked, we are selling vegetables by the roadside, and the amount we are getting is too small. Sometimes we sleep hungry.” These events show how refugee young people are much more concerned with their daily survival than their future planning. According to Jacobsen (2019), poverty among refugees is both about lack of income and inability to access opportunities and resources that make them more resilient. The theory of social capital demonstrates that financial insecurity reduces the capacity of refugees to construct or mobilize social relations since the survival needs are more important than the relations-building.

The other significant challenge was education, which was mentioned by 18 per cent of respondents. Most of them claimed they could not afford fees or learning materials and most others had problems admitting into schools as they did not have the right documents.

One respondent told me that he wanted to further his education but when they requested that we should give them documents, we were unable to do so. So I stopped.” This points out how a combination of economic and administrative barriers curtail access to education by refugee youths, which is a valuable right in disabling poverty cycles.

Unavailable documentation in the law, mentioned by 12% of participants, aggravated socio-economic difficulties. The respondents were subjected to unending harassment without valid permits, and they were not free to enjoy basic services and move freely to seek a better life.

One of them replied, I have no papers and that is why I cannot even go to town without being afraid. This makes life very hard.” Such is compared to the statement of Shammout (2020) that documentation is not a purely legal issue; it is a social and economic opening in a door that enables refugees to become full members of host societies.

Lastly, 9% of the respondents reported being socially isolated and discriminated against by the host communities. They narrated about being treated in a different or unjust manner due to being refugees.

One of the respondents mentioned that people name us names sometimes when we are going to the market and they tell us that we do not belong here. Although these stories are less numerous, they demonstrate the social divisions that diminish the sense of belonging and limit the opportunities of integration of refugee youths.

According to social capital theory, this exclusion undermines bridging relationships between refugees and host populations, which prevents youths to form networks that may enhance their socio-economic lives.

Combined, the research results indicate that socio-economic issues faced by refugee youths at Makeni Transit Center are compound in nature, such as unemployment, poverty, education access, documentation issues, and social exclusion.

The fact that unemployment and financial insecurity are the paramount issues reveals that the plight of refugee youths is rooted in structural aspects that deprive them of a way of life.

4.2.3 Strategies for Enhancing Socio-Economic Well-being of Refugee Youths

This subsection presents findings related to the third objective, which was to identify strategies that could enhance the socio-economic well-being of Rwandan refugee youths at Makeni Transit Center. Respondents shared practical suggestions based on their lived experiences, reflecting both immediate needs and long-term aspirations. The findings are summarized in Table 4.2.3.

Table 4.2.3: Suggested Strategies for Enhancing Socio-Economic Well-being

Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
Provision of employment opportunities	29	29%
Increased financial support and funding	24	24%
Access to affordable education	21	21%
Improved legal documentation	14	14%

processes		
Community engagement and awareness	12	12%

Source: Field Data (2025)

According to Table 4.2.3, the most common strategy proposed by the respondents was the employment opportunities, which 29 percent pointed. Most of the participants showed a great wish to work formally and earn their living rather than having to stay on humanitarian aid or hold informal irregular jobs.

According to one of the youths, the reason we are not waiting to be assisted is because we want occupations, so that we can live like the rest and support our families. This underscores the pivotal position of the employment in the reinstatement of the dignity, independence and stability to the refugee youths. It resonates the arguments of Betts et al. (2017), who state that formal employment is an essential channel of refugee self-sufficiency and assimilation.

Another strategy that was mentioned as significant by 24% of respondents was financial support. Participants highlighted the importance of small grants, micro-finance or livelihood schemes that can assist them to begin business or even increase the scope of business in the informal activities that they currently engage. They will not even provide us with jobs, but will enable us to start businesses through money. We are aware of working, and we have nothing to start with, one participant told us. This can explain the influence of financial capital in enabling the refugee youths to transcend the dependency cycle, creating personal and community resilience.

21 per cent of respondents recommended access to affordable education and training. The participants emphasized the need to have learning opportunities, and some were frustrated that they had to leave school because of the cost. Had we the opportunity to go back to school or receive training we would have a chance. We are not educated so that we do not go anywhere, a young woman explained. Education is consequently regarded as a long-term socio-economic change instrument to strengthen bonding and bridge social capital.

Better legal documentation processes were described as essential. Respondents reported that it took too long to obtain or renew permits to create insecurity and open the door to employment, education, and free movement. One young man said, we might do a great deal with haste and without trepidation given documents we could so easily get hold of. Simplified documentation is necessary to help the refugees enjoy full contributions in the host societies.

Lastly, 12% of the people cited community engagement and awareness as a strategy. They stressed the necessity of more conversations between refugees and the host population to eliminate stigma and discrimination. One of the respondents said that maybe, given a better understanding of us, the community would not consider us a burden but see us as individuals who can also do something to help. Establishing good relations within the community is of great importance in establishing bridging relations that will allow the refugees to interrelate and succeed with the host populations.

4.3 Discussion of Key Findings

The research results of this paper revealed a complicated and usually painful situation of Rwandan refugee youths of Makeni Transit Center. Although rights were established as a part of policy, they were not implemented in practice fairly and sufficient. In all the three goals, the themes of unemployment, poverty, educational barriers, lack of documentation and social exclusion, kept recurring. These themes create an image of youth who are trying to reach some dignity but are limited by the structural hindrances that are outside their reach. This was made real by the voices of participants. Youths talked of desiring to work but being in a locked out place of working, of wanting to complete their schooling but giving up because it was costly and of living in constant fear because their permits were allowed to lapse or expire. These lived experiences make the gap between the law and its life on the streets tangible, mirroring those that refer to the refugees as right in theory but denied in reality (Betts et al., 2017; Muleya, 2019).

Theoretically, the results hold true to the social capital theory and network theory. Denying or withholding rights weakened the ties of bonding among the refugee community as well as bridging ties with the host society, and the youths remained lonely and had poor socio-economic mobility. However, even with these difficulties, forward-looking strategies in the form of

creating employment, financial assistance, education, documentation and community involvement were also provided by participants. These recommendations emphasize not only their strength but also their active role in creating a greater future. It proves that the youths that are refugees are not mere consumers of aid but they think over their development. Their socio-economic issues need a combination of structural changes and empowerment programs that will appreciate their input.

4.3.1 Degree to which right of refugees was observed.

The results showed that few Rwandan refugee youths at Makeni Transit Center believed that their rights were being sufficiently observed, and most of them pointed out that there were considerable gaps in the implementation. The rights of refugees are acknowledged by international and national legal frameworks, yet the practical reality of the participants proved that these rights were usually on the paper than in the reality. The greatest percentage of all respondents (33) indicated that the rights of refugees were not completely respected in any of the districts, which reflected a general lack of connection between the promises in the law and reality on the ground. This was reflected in their stories as most of them talked of frustrations with regards to the continuous battles to get education, employment, documentation, and movement. One of the participants described it as follows; they discuss rights, and when they want to exercise them, they are not allowed to. To us, the survival is the only thing in life, not the rights. This emphasizes the denial of rights into everyday insecurity that made the refugee youths be unable to enjoy the rights that are supposed to protect their well-being.

Employment was the more burning issue with only 15% of the respondents feeling that their right to work was being adhered to. Most of them reported that they were excluded in the formal labor market where they were unable to get stable jobs because of absence of permits and qualification recognition. One of the youth told me, we make attempts to get good employment, and they here demand papers where we do not have them. That is why most of us are peddling small stuff in the streets. This observation highlights the institutional constraints that compelled the refugee youths to live in the informal and vulnerable lifestyles. Other authors have expressed the same, with Betts et al. (2017) claiming that although host governments may permit refugees to reside as legal residents, they tend to exclude them from formal employment opportunities and

cycles of poverty are perpetuated. Based on the social capital theory, not belonging to formal working environments further undermines bridging ties, so that refugee youths will not establish professional networks that will help them integrate into the socio-economic system.

The problem of legal documentation was also problematic. Though 18 percent of the respondents said the documentation processes were functional, a high number talked of delays and bureaucracies. Out of date permits put them at the risk of harassment and restricted their freedom of movement. One of the participants describes it as having to take months to renew my permit when it went out of date. At that period, I was scared of going anywhere as the policemen can stop me. This assertion portrays the helplessness and indeterminism of refugee youths in which the challenges of delaying paperwork directly translate into limitations of everyday existence. Muleya (2019) also observed that in Zambia, the accessibility of rights by the refugees is hindered by the administrative inefficiencies. Network theory in network theory terms, the isolation of youths by the unavailability of valid documents isolates youths and separates them from interaction with social and economic systems outside of the camp, undermining their chances of wider integration.

The right to education was partially realized, and 22% of the respondents stated they were successful in accessing it. Nevertheless, 42 percent cited financial constraints and some other cited difficulties in enrolment because of documentation.

One of the female participants described the reason as: I wanted to continue with secondary school education but my parents could not meet the school fees and I dropped off.

This is a demonstration of how both structural barriers and poverty came together to cripple the chances of education among refugee youths. Education is a legal right as well as one of the major avenues of future life. As pointed out by Betts and Collier (2018), unless educated, the refugee youths find themselves in the dependency and marginalization trap. This is in the context of bridging networks, which is less likely to be developed due to limited access to education within the context of social capital theory since education is the very tool that allows forming the bridging networks not limited to the refugee community.

Another weak right appeared to be freedom of movement. A minority, 12 percent of the respondents stated that their movements were not restricted, and most of the respondents reported having to experience harassment when they were trying to travel.

One of the youth said, I fear it, because I will be questioned to give documents, and I do not have them, even when I want to go out of Lusaka to seek employment.

These limitations restricted refugee youths to the transit center and its environs and curtailed their chances to seek a better livelihood. As discussed by Shammout (2020), they pointed out that the limitation of mobility rights is one of the most notable methods of host countries violating the rights of refugees even though international agreements ensure freedom of movement. To youths in Makeni, Rwanda, this restriction implied that they would not only have limited movement but they also would have limited access to socio-economic opportunities.

In addition to the material effects, the deprivation of rights had a strong psychological effect. The participants talked about being excluded, hopeless, invisible.

One of the respondents commented that at times it seems that we are not treated as human beings with rights. The future is nonexistent, we only live day by day.

These stories make the policy and reality divide more human, in which the loss of rights generates a lack of dignity and hope. Jacobsen (2019) has noted that such feeling of discardedness is typical of displaced people in which young individuals usually absorb the concept that their lives are in a state of suspension. The conceptual frameworks that informed this research explain that the absence of trust in structures that safeguard rights means that refugees will lack the networks that encourage resiliency and integration.

Meanwhile, the results also reported the cases in which the rights were partially observed, frequently as a result of NGOs and community organizations intervention. As an illustration, humanitarian assistance helped some of the young people to get schooling or training programs.

The reason given by one of the participants was, it is not ideal but organizations assist us in skills training or with school fees. That is the only way we manage.”

This proves that the state structure was too weak, but external actors also partially helped fill the gaps. Milner (2021) also proposed the same idea and suggested that NGOs and civil society should have an imperative place of supplementing governments in refugee protection. Nevertheless, the dependency of NGOs indicates the vulnerability of the process of rights realization, since these interventions are based on external funding, and they might not be long-term.

To conclude, the results of the analysis of the degree to which the rights of refugees were observed demonstrate that despite the existence of legal frameworks, there is an unequal level of their implementation in reality. Structural barriers undermined rights to work, education, documentation, and freedom of movement, leaving many youths in the state of uncertainty and exclusion. Combining the social capital theory and network theory underlines the reason why this is important: with the lack of upholding the rights, refugee youths are deprived of both bonding and bridging opportunities within the community and the broader society. This deep rooted marginalization and denies them an opportunity to achieve their potential. To the young people of Rwanda, who lived at the Makeni Transit Center, deprivation of rights was not something on paper, but something that was experienced every day, and influenced their survival strategies, curtailed their aspirations, and strengthened their weaknesses.

4.3.2 Socio Economic Problems that impact the livelihood opportunities.

The results demonstrate that the most significant issue among the Rwandan youths in Makeni Transit Center is unemployment. Thirty-four percent of the respondents indicated that they could not get employment. It is not inability to work but is a result of structural obstacles that do not allow them to enter the formal labor market because of their lack of willingness or skills. One participant said,

As we go to seek employment they inform us that we cannot work since we are refugees. Before we can even make an attempt, it seems to us as though the doors are closed.

This quote shows the marginalization and disappointment which prevails in the narratives of the participants. This is validated by the existing research. Betts et al. (2017) discover that most host-country policies prevent refugees to work formally, and they become unwounded, poorly-paid in

the informal sphere. Lacking the right to work, refugees will be on their knees and will struggle to establish sustainable livelihoods.

Poverty and financial insecurity, which are closely related to unemployment, were also brought up by 27 percent of the respondents. Most of them wrote about the difficulties they faced day by day to get food, shelter, and their basic needs. One of the female respondents indicated that we eat once in a day most of the days. We feed upon nothing when the business is no. That is our life here.” This demonstrates that poverty causes the youths to maintain the cycle of survival and there is little room to learn or develop a long-term strategy. According to Jacobsen (2019), poverty among refugees is not only an income problem but also lack of the opportunity to develop resilience. Poverty undermines social capital in that the youths are not able to participate in savings groups or community projects that would involve provision of financial assistance. This leads to their further isolation.

Another significant barrier is education with 18 percent of respondents reporting this. Even though education is a known right, it is difficult to access due to practical barriers such as school fees, uniforms, learning material to be used and so on. One young man narrated that he wanted to attend school but they sent him back because he did not have money. That is it, I now just sit in the transit center with no job. These tales demonstrate the difference between policy and reality in which financial hardship deprives youths of future investment. Muleya (2019) says that in Zambia, education of refugees is characterized by economic and paperwork obstacles that leave a significant number of children out of school. Lack of education keeps refugees at low-skill, dead-end jobs, further marginalizing them. According to theoretical perspectives, education plays an important role in the process of closing the gap in social capital, which involves widening the networks beyond the immediate community. The absence of education reduces the potential and the ambitions.

The other challenge, which is brought by 12 percent, is legal documentation. There was a lot of talk of not being able to access services, to move freely and to get employed without valid permits. One the respondent replied rudely, without papers, you are like a person who does not exist. Even to venture out you live in fear. Documentation is not just legal but it is an indicator of identity and belonging. According to Shammout (2020), documentation opens the door to other

rights and its lack leaves it vulnerable and isolated. Expired or delayed permits leave refugees in a strained day-to-day life, which restricts the opportunities. Documentation in the network theory connects people to formal systems, which means that without it, refugees would find themselves outside mainstream employment, schools, and services and would fall into informal and even exploitative spaces.

One out of every 9 respondents is socially excluded and discriminated. They told how they were treated unjustly or called derogatory names, or that people made them feel unwelcome in the places. One of the participants said, sometimes when we visit the market we are reminded that we are not part of them. It causes you to feel like a foreigner. These stories uncover the affective burden of displacement, in which social deprivation sustains material deprivation. Milner (2021) cautions that discrimination works against integration by leaving the refugees as social and economic outcasts. Socially, discrimination damages the binding relationships to host societies, eliminating the opportunity to gain support, mentors, or employment.

Such problems produce a circuit of weakness. An instance is the fact that being uneducated restricts access to jobs, joblessness exacerbates poverty, and that poverty results in a difficult ability to afford documentation or an education. One of the youth told me, it is a chain: there is no money, no school, no papers, and no work. Everything blocks us.” This demonstrates the connection of obstacles, and not isolation. Jacobsen (2019) emphasizes that the vulnerabilities of refugees are not one-dimensional but multidimensional, they should be treated holistically, and not in bits. In the case of the Makeni youths, this cycle entraps them in a no go situation with little opportunity of ascending up the ladder.

These difficulties bring about deep hopelessness and despair, psychologically. A number of the participants reported that they were stagnated in uncertainty. One of them replied, as I do not see a future when I look at my life. We feel like we are stagnated, we are just waiting. These lines emphasize the cost that cannot be seen, loss of hope, motivation, and dignity. According to Betts and Collier (2018), the inability to provide a safe future puts refugees at a risk of progressive disempowerment, damaging personal development and social stability. In the social capital theory, hopelessness diminishes trust and collaboration, where people are ready to move away in joint work at the time they see nothing better.

The results indicate that young people are resilient despite the struggles. They continue seeking survival measures like petty trading, creation of small support groups, or informal education. One of the young people mentioned that despite the lack of work, we give it a go round something small. We cannot just sit.” This resistance resembles that of Betts et al. (2017) that cite the so-called refugee economy where displaced individuals build livelihoods regardless of limitations. Theoretically, resilience depicts bonding social capital among the refugee community: youths support one another. However, resilience is not enough to substitute the structural change; youths cannot leave vulnerability without the recognition of rights and elimination of barriers.

Overall, socio- economic barriers, such as unemployment, poverty, education, documentation and social exclusion are all inter-dependent and form a web which restricts opportunities to the Rwandese refugee youths in Makeni. Material deprivation, psychological stress and social marginalization are found in their stories. The connection of these findings to literature and theory demonstrates that the plight of refugees is structural (impeded access to employment, education and permits) as well as relational (strained social networks, non-host inclusion). These issues require a comprehensive solution that safeguards the rights and empowers the youths and should understand them as the agents and not just the victims.

4.3.3 Approaches to Improving Socio-Economic Well-Being of Refugee Youths.

The study emphasizes that young people are aware of the measures required to enhance their well-being, and that they are agency and resolute. The most frequent recommendation is the establishment of job opportunities, which was stated by 29 percent of the respondents. The youths desire formal employment that will regain dignity and independence. One of the respondents remarked, we do not want to be dependent on aid. We desire employment in order to support our families and live respectably. It is a manifestation of an actual necessity to earn money and an inner need to be noticed and to be self-reliant. Betts et al. (2017) underline the fact that employment is the key to the power of refugees and their long-term integration. Theoretically, employment opportunities would empower bridging social capital, thereby allowing the youths to establish networks with the host communities and avoid marginalization.

Similarly linked is the demand to raise the financial support and funding, which is reported by 24 percent. According to many youths, small grants, micro-finance initiatives, or livelihood programs would help them to initiate business or even build on informal income-generating projects. One young man went on to explain that even in the event jobs are not available, when we have capital we can create businesses. We have no lack of knowledge as to how to work, but we have nothing to start with. It demonstrates the entrepreneurial culture of refugees, who do not want to take but to make. According to Jacobsen (2019), one of the most important enablers of refugee resilience is financial capital as it enables them to diversify livelihood. Financial support, in network terms, would empower individuals as well as enhance the collective networks as the youths share resources and also make joint efforts in community ventures.

Another strategy that is referred to as affordable a lot is access to affordable education and training, which is mentioned by 21 percent. To people, education is the solution to ending poverty and dependence. One of the female respondents said that given an opportunity to revisit school or get some skills training, we would have a future. Without learning we are only going round in circles. This is a long-term perspective that education is an investment on livelihoods in the future. Muleya (2019) discovers education to be one of the key factors determining integration of refugees in Zambia because it helps youths pursue their careers and be productive members of the community. Bonding and bridging social capital is also enhanced through education whereby one has an understanding and the confidence to interact with people outside their circles.

By 14 percent the level of legal documentation processes was improved. According to the youths, they have difficulty accessing services and opportunities because of the delay in acquiring or renewing the permit. One said, when we could get papers in good time, there are plenty of doors open to us: to work, to school, even to go where we please. Documentation is a door to other rights that promotes mobility, employment and education. Shammout (2020) also insists that an efficient and timely documentation is paramount to the integration of refugees. Network theory in network theory, documentation enhances formal ties with state institutions, employers, and schools, increasing socio-economic opportunities. In the absence of these papers, the refugees will continue to be sidelined and fragile.

A 12 percent of the respondents proposed community engagement and awareness programs as the method of reducing discrimination and enhancing relations with host populations. According to the participants, the communication between the refugees and the locals will be able to break the stereotypes and allow people to understand each other. One of the youths remarked, on the fact that, had people in the community known us better, they would not be perceived as a burden, but as people who can also contribute. This indicates that happiness is not solely based on the material means, but also social acceptance and belonging. Milner (2021) holds the view that integration requires positive views toward refugees in the host communities. Engagement activities develop bridging networks, which allow refugee children to acquire external support and opportunities.

These strategies show a high level of agency and self-awareness. Youths express viable solutions based on their experiences as opposed to being on the other end as recipients of help. A multi-dimensional concept of empowerment is evident through their focus on the employment, financial support, education, documentation and community involvement.

As one of the respondents has clarified, we know what we need. It is not only food nowadays, but there is tomorrow. This highlights their proactive efforts whereby although instant relief is important, the youths seek long term solutions.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

5.0 Introduction

The chapter presents findings of the study and provides real-life suggestions. It is based on the analysis of the previous chapter on whether the rights of refugees are honored, and the socio-economic difficulties encountered by the Rwandese youth of refugee status in Makeni Transit Center. The conclusions are based on the voices of the participants with the backing of the extant literature and theory. Observations provide recommendations to the policymakers, civil society, and other stakeholders to bridge the gaps identified. The chapter also identifies areas where future research could be conducted to gain a better insight into the experiences of refugees in Zambia.

5.1 Conclusion

The paper demonstrates that although Zambia is a signatory to the international agreements and has established national systems whereby refugees are supposed to be respected, the practical situation on the ground in Makeni Transit Center has not been fair in terms of the protection of refugees. The participants always said that the right to work, education, documentation, and freedom of movement are either partially or completely denied. This policy-practice gap requires action to be taken which can make the life of refugees better in their everyday life.

The most essential and at the same time limited right is employment. Out of the formal employment the youths are drawn into the poverty loops and depend on the unstable informal employment with minimal income or security. This is a blow to their ego and a curtailed employment opportunity. Terminating employment is simply not just an economic issue but a problem of social justice as it traps one into dependency and halts complete potential. Theoretically, disenfranchisement of formal labor market eliminates the opportunities of bridging social capital, which is crucial in facilitating necessary network formation with host communities and impairs integration.

Another right deficiency lies in the field of education. Even though there are youths who get to attend school, a lot of the youths have to pay, not provided with materials, and there are obstacles

to documentation. Education that is expected to empower is rather a sign of exclusion. In the absence of affordable and accessible education, youths will continue to traverse through the low-prospect low-skill cycles. This affects their future and the development of Zambia in general by missing potential human capital in the form of a young vibrant population.

Refugees are also alienated by legal documentation. Long queues to acquire or renew permits restrict movement, put people at the risk of being harassed, and make them in a state of constant fear. The documentation is not merely bureaucratic but it opens up other rights. Without it, the refugees can remain hidden to the state, unrecognized, and be left in suspense. Such invisibility destroys trust, network, and integration.

The paper draws a conclusion that socio-economic issues of unemployment, poverty, barriers to education, undocumented status, and discrimination are related. One problem strengthens another creating a chain of vulnerability in which refugees are in a trap. The limited resources, opportunities, and recognition have been demonstrated to restrict agency and augment reliance on aids. However, the refugees have resilience in the sense that they do petty trades, organize themselves into support groups, and manage to cope in little ways. However, systemic reform cannot be substituted by resilience, unless the system is changed structurally, precarious states will persist.

5.2 Recommendations

Increase the Employment and Education Opportunities of refugees:

The government in collaboration with UNHCR ought to enhance the access to formal employment, vocational training, scholarships, and expanded educational assistance among the young people in the refugee camps.

Streamline Legal and Documentation procedures:

The Department of Immigration is supposed to simplify the process of issuing and renewing the refugee documents and work permits to be able to access education, employment and business legitimately.

Enhance Social Integration and Co-ordination of Policies:

The agencies, the NGOs and the community groups will be required to work together to enhance social cohesion, psychosocial support as well as organizing refugee policies that empower the youth and enhance livelihood.

5.3 Future Research Recommendations.

Evaluate Long-term Socio Economic Incorporation:

The future study must be conducted to determine the impact of education, skills trainings, and employment on long term livelihoods among the refugee youth in Zambia.

Discover Gender and Community Aspects of Refugee Experiences:

The scholars ought to conduct studies of gender peculiarities and the impact of the host communities on the development of social cohesion and inclusion among the youth refugees.

Consider policy implementation of refugees in different contexts:

Future research needs to determine the efficacy of the legal framework of refugees in Zambia and juxtapose the experiences of the youth in urban and rural settlements to inform evidence-based policy and interventions.

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