Refugee and asylum-seeker youths' experiences of education in Ireland: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

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A Thesis Submitted to the Department of Educational Psychology, Inclusive and Special Education,

Mary Immaculate College,

In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Educational and Child Psychology

Word count: 30,967 (excluding tables and figures)

Submitted to Mary Immaculate College, April 2022

Abstract

Background: School can play an important protective role in the lives of refugee youth. While a substantial body of research relates risk factors to subsequent psychosocial and educational outcomes for refugee youth, less is known about their experiences of education in countries of resettlement, with no studies in an Irish context.

Aims: This study explored the lived experiences of youth from refugee and asylum-seeker backgrounds in relation to their education in Ireland. Drawing on a holistic understanding of resilience, the research focused on factors within education which participants viewed as enabling or hindering to their long-term resettlement experiences.

Sample: The study utilised purposive sampling to select participants in accordance with inclusion criteria. Participants were nine post-primary students, aged between 15 and 17 years old, and of first generation refugee or asylum-seeker status. All students arrived in Ireland four or more years ago which allowed for reflection on initial and more recent experiences.

Method: The research utilised a qualitative design and adopted an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis approach. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews in order to gain a deep insight into participant experiences.

Results: Analysis of interview transcripts resulted in the generation of three overall themes which reflect participants' experiences of education in Ireland - their persistence and perseverance in learning; their perceptions of the policies, supports, and teachers in their schools; as well as an understanding of their lives as a balancing act of which school is only one part.

Conclusions: The findings extend the limited empirical literature on educational experiences of refugee and asylum-seeker youth from their own perspective, particularly within an Irish context. Results are discussed in relation to implications for practice in Educational Psychology as well as wider fields, including training, practice, and policy implications for education. Links to future research are also considered.

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original research and does not contain the work of any other individual, save those identified and acknowledged in the usual way.

Name: Sophie Gallagher

Signed: 

Date: 29th April 2022

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, thank you to the nine young people who offered their time to share their stories. This research was only made possible by your willingness to reflect upon your personal experiences. I would also like to share my utmost appreciation to their parents and schools for allowing them to be part of the research.

My sincerest gratitude to both of my research supervisors for your continuous guidance and support throughout. While at times the process of planning, undertaking, and writing up a research project could be challenging, the encouragement and expertise that you both provided was invaluable.

Thank you to my DECPsy 2022 peers, it has been a privilege to be part of this group. We have navigated a Doctorate in the pandemic together, and I now look forward to our next chapter as colleagues.

To my friends and family, I am forever grateful for your continued words of encouragement, motivation, and at times, much needed distraction!

Lastly, a very special thanks to my parents for their unequivocal and loving support, and to mam in particular for the many hours of discussing, refining, proof reading, and most of all for ensuring I believe in myself whatever life may bring.

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List of Abbreviations

APA American Psychological Association

DCYA Department of Children and Youth Affairs

DECPsy Doctorate of Educational and Child Psychology

DES Department of Education and Skills

DP Direct Provision

EAL English as an Additional Language

EP Educational Psychologist

ERIC Educational Resources Information Centre

EROC Emergency Reception and Orientation Centre

GET Group Experiential Theme

HSE Health Service Executive

IPA Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

IPO International Protection Office

IRC Irish Refugee Council

IRRP Irish Refugee Protection Programme

LCA Leaving Certificate Applied

MIC Mary Immaculate College

MMAT Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool

NCCA National Council for Curriculum and Assessment

NEPS National Educational Psychology Service

PET Personal Experiential Theme

PRISMA Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review

PSI Psychological Society of Ireland

TEAL Transforming Education Through Dialogue-English as an Additional Language

TEP Trainee Educational Psychologist

UK United Kingdom

UNCRC United Nations Children's Rights Commission

UNHCR United Nationals High Commissioner for Refugees

UNICEF The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

US United States

WoE A Weight of Evidence A

WoE B Weight of Evidence B

WoE C Weight of Evidence C

WoE D Weight of Evidence D

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Overview

This chapter introduces the international context for the current study. A brief overview of the experiences of refugee and asylum-seeker youth is outlined, with a particular focus on their education in Ireland. A reflexivity statement is then presented which highlights the author's personal interest in this area, serving as inspiration and motivation for the overall research. The chapter concludes with details of the current study and an outline of the structure of the thesis.

1.2 International and National Context

With over 26 million refugees worldwide, the number of individuals seeking asylum in Ireland continues to rise year on year (International Protection Office, 2021). In 2021, when the interviews for the current study were conducted, there were approximately 7,000 people living in accommodation centres in Ireland, with one third or these being young people (International Protection Office, 2021; Irish Refugee Council, n.d). However, writing of displaced children and their families in Ireland, Corcoran (2020) noted that as "this situation could happen to any or all of us…the impact and consequences of displacement must be understood as a universal possibility and viewed with a compassionate and humanitarian lens" (p. 59). As I put the final touches to this thesis in April 2022, hundreds of thousands of people are fleeing Ukraine. The number of people seeking refugee across Europe is likely to continue to rise in the coming weeks and months, with already over 20,000 Ukrainians having arrived in Ireland (Irish Refugee Council, 2022).

Facing a unique set of experiences across their journeys, research continues to document the negative impact of adversity and trauma on the wellbeing of refugee children and young people (Bronstein & Montgomery, 2011; Fazel et al., 2012). The

post-migration context within countries of resettlement is increasingly recognised as important to consider in relation to the continued development and wellbeing of refugee youth. In particular, school is often cited as having a significant role in supporting their resettlement (Birman et al., 2007; Minhas et al., 2017; Peterson et al., 2017).

According to the Education Welfare Act (2000) all children between the ages of 6 and 16 are required to attend school or otherwise receive an education, with this no different for children and young people newly arriving in Ireland. Although national health and education policy espouse promoting equality of access and quality of supports for culturally diverse individuals (Department of Justice, 2017; HSE, 2018; NCCA, 2005), in practice, little policy or supports are tailored to refugee or asylum-seeker youth but targeted for migrant populations in general (Children's Rights Alliance, 2019; Corcoran, 2020; Horgan et al., 2021). As a result, there are challenges in accurately identifying and supporting the needs of refugee youth in Irish schools.

1.3 Reflexivity Statement

My interest in this area arose from both personal and professional experiences. A white woman born and raised in rural Ireland, I hope for the country to be as open to and accepting of difference as I strive to be, but unfortunately am also acutely aware that this is not always the case. Growing up, I lived nearby one of many accommodation centres for refugee and asylum-seeker families, and although having witnessed many acts of solidarity and support, this was alongside whispers and debates within my own community.

From my own background in psychology and previous work supporting migrant communities, I am aware of challenges that may arise after arriving in a new country and having to adapt accordingly, a stress regardless of their reasons for leaving their

countries of origin. Further, during an initial two-week school placement as part of my doctoral training, I was linked with a young student from a refugee background who had recently joined the school. Teachers expressed their uncertainty in knowing where to start with little guidance available on how to best support newly arrived students.. Such discussion continued throughout my doctoral placements, with schools seeking guidance in relation to specific approaches or resources available. My interest in the area was further affirmed by media coverage of young people within accommodation centres in Ireland speaking of their experiences during the Black Lives Matter movement and the Covid-19 pandemic.

As a trainee educational psychology (TEP), I realise that support, practices, and policy must be appropriate to the needs of those availing to ensure they are of benefit. With key roles of educational psychologists (EPs) both that of conducting research to inform practice and supporting the elicitation and integration of student voice into practice and policy (Fallon et al., 2013), I was eager to join these facets in the current study.

It is both my personal and professional view that wellbeing and psychosocial difficulties alike are not solely defined by individual factors but co-constructed within the environmental and social context in which we live (Narvaez & Witherington, 2018). As such, this research is positioned within a social constructivist paradigm with an assumption that reality is constructed through our interactions with the world around us (Merriam, 1998).

1.4 The Current Study

With a need to understand the unique experiences of refugee youth, the current study aimed to explore the educational experiences of refugee and asylum-seeker youth in Ireland. Drawing from a resilience perspective with both risk and resource factors

working in tandem to support wellbeing (Masten & Narayan, 2012), this research sought to identify factors which may either facilitate or hinder positive resettlement experiences within the context of their education. Considering the likelihood of varied pre- and post-migration experiences, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith & Osborn, 2003) was adopted in this research, aiming to give voice to participants and allow the individuality of their experiences to be acknowledged.

Following this introduction, the thesis is presented across three chapters. Chapter two presents a review of the literature with a particular focus on the role of education in the lives of refugee youth. The review culminates in the identification of the specific research question of the present study - 'How do refugee and asylum seeker youth understand their experiences of education in Ireland?' Chapter three presents the empirical paper describing the research study. Lastly, chapter four presents a critical review and reflection on the overall research process, as well as possible implications of the research on policy and practice within schools and for the role of educational psychology. This final chapter concludes with a succinct statement summarising the purpose, findings, and impact of the current research.

Chapter 2 Review Paper

2.1 Overview

This chapter reviews relevant literature relating to the area of refugee youth and their experiences of education in Ireland. The topic is first situated within the broader international and national context, with the process of migration and resettlement then discussed with a focus on its impact on the wellbeing of refugee youth. Resilience theory is then explored in relation to understanding and supporting the wellbeing of youth from refugee backgrounds, before discussing the role of education in greater depth. The second part of this chapter consists of a systematic review of empirical studies which explore the educational experiences of refugee youth in countries of resettlement. The findings from the review are synthesised with gaps in the literature to date contributing to the rationale for the current study. The chapter concludes with the specific research questions which guide the current study.

2.2 International Context

The United Nations Convention defines a refugee as an individual who has a "well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion" (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 1951). Worldwide, over 80 million people are displaced from their homes, with latest figures indicating that over 26 million people are registered as refugees, approximately half of whom are under the age of 18 (UNHCR, 2020). Many of these are described as 'Programme Refugees' who are brought into countries under specific resettlement programmes. However, approximately a fifth of refugees are considered asylum-seekers, having moved across international boundaries seeking to be recognised as refugees while awaiting the authorities to decide on their international protection applications (UNHCR, 2020). Throughout this review, the term 'refugee'

will be used to refer to both those from refugee and asylum-seeker backgrounds, with the terms generally used interchangeably in research.

2.3 National Context

While often overlooked in academic and broader discourse, the Irish state has its own history of inward migration, with associated linguistic, ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity (Fanning, 2018). Ireland is a signatory of the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951), thus obliged to provide protection to people leaving their country for the reasons outlined above. While there is a history of state-sponsored international protection schemes (Ćatibušić et al., 2019), mirroring the trend across European countries the number of those seeking asylum in Ireland has increased considerably in the past decade, with approximately one third of all asylum seekers and refugees being children (International Protection Office, 2021; UNHCR, 2019).

In response to the increasing numbers of refugees coming to Ireland, the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRRP) was established in 2015. Considered the largest refugee programme undertaken in the history of the state, Ireland initially committed to accepting 4,000 people by 2019 and extended this commitment to welcome a further 2,900 refugees by 2023. Those coming into Ireland as Programme Refugees benefit from accelerated procedures and, initially housed in Emergency Reception and Orientation Centres (EROCs), do not tend to spend as long as asylum seekers in accommodation centres (Arnold et al., 2021; Arnold et al., 2018). Beyond resettlement programmes, many refugees arrive in Ireland seeking to have their claim for asylum recognised. While a large proportion of those arriving in Ireland through the IRRP are from Syria, the asylum-seeking population in Ireland is diverse with the largest groups arriving from countries including Nigeria, Afghanistan, Somalia, Georgia, and Pakistan (International Protection Office, 2021; Department of Justice & Equality, 2017).

2.3.1 *Direct Provision*

Direct Provision (DP) is how the Irish Government meets its obligations towards international protection applicants. Set up as a temporary emergency measure in 2000, it is intended to provide for the basic needs of people while their international protection application is being processed. A weekly payment is provided of 38.80 euro per adult and 29.80 euro per child. More than 7,000 people are currently living in DP, 30% of whom are children (Irish Refugee Council, n.d; Thornton, 2020). While accommodation centres are advertised as temporary, normally ending if the Department of Justice grants permission to remain in Ireland, in some cases they can be longer term (McMahon, 2015), with the wider housing crisis in Ireland making it difficult to facilitate settling into new homes in Irish communities (Arnold et al., 2018).

This institutional system has raised international concerns, argued that it creates social, economic, and legal barriers which isolate people from Irish society (Kinlen, 2011; Lentin & Moreo, 2012; Mooney, 2015). The Covid-19 pandemic has further highlighted the extant issues within the system, with life for refugee youth further complicated as home-schooling in these conditions can be challenging (Murphy, 2021). However, the recent Day Report (Government of Ireland, 2020) outlines the intention to end DP by 2024 and transition this for-profit system to a new not-for-profit reception system.

2.3.2 Policy Context in Ireland

Since the mid 1990s, Ireland has rapidly become a more diverse country. It is estimated that 11.6 per cent of the population is now of non-Irish nationality, with more than half a million people speaking a language other than Irish or English in the home (Central Statistics Office, 2016). This has challenged all aspects of society to adapt policies and practices to reflect such diversity.

With a specific commitment to addressing inequalities of vulnerable groups in Ireland, respect for children's rights is a guiding principle of the national policy framework, 'Better Outcomes Better Futures', for children and young people (Department of Child and Youth Affairs [DCYA], 2014). Further, both the Equal Status Act 2000 and Equality Act 2004 prohibit discrimination on nine grounds, of which two are race and religious beliefs, with this applying across a range of services including that of education. Drawing on international children's rights, both article 29 and article 30 of the United Nations Children's Rights Commission (UNCRC, 1989) note that a young person's education should include the development of and respect for their own cultural, linguistic, and religious identity, even if not shared by the majority in the country where they are living.

Reflecting both international and national legislation and policy, current educational policy in Ireland adopts an intercultural approach (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment [NCCA], 2005; Department of Education, 2010). Moving beyond an idea of multiculturalism, interculturalism intends to work towards diversity being the norm within society (Fischer, 2016). However, striving to have classrooms where all cultures and languages are valued, with a focus predominantly on the celebration of difference within Irish schools, it appears that interculturalism can be difficult to enact on the ground (Parker-Jenkins & Masterson, 2013). However, both 'The Intercultural Education Strategy 2010-2015' (Department of Education and Skills [DES], 2010) and 'The Migrant Integration Strategy: A blueprint for the future' (Department of Justice, 2017) specify several actions to ensure all students experience an education which respects the diversity of values, beliefs, languages, and traditions in Irish society.

Acknowledging varied circumstances prior to coming to Ireland, it is safe to say that a number of the children and young people from refugee backgrounds require

English language supports in order to access the Irish school system. Although some youth arriving through EROCs can avail of language specific classes within these centres, once at school, these students fall under the umbrella of 'English as an Additional Language' (EAL). Developed in response to growing diversity within Irish schools, the Department of Education Circular 0015/2009 'Meeting the needs of pupils learning English as an Additional Language (EAL)' (DES, 2009) aimed to address the need for school policies and procedures to facilitate the inclusion of every student and provide appropriate professional development opportunities for teachers. However, it is argued that a lack of resources and training for teachers has limited the impact of such strategies (Horgan et al., 2021; Ní Dhuinn & Keane, 2021; Rodríguez-Izquierdo & Darmody, 2019). Acknowledging there is more to be done in this area, the TEAL (Transforming Education Through Dialogue – English as an Additional Language) project, recently developed in Mary Immaculate College Limerick, aims to support the children of migrant families and their teachers on their language learning journey in schools (MIC, 2019).

Although youth from refugee backgrounds are likely to encounter a unique set of experiences, the majority of integration supports within Irish education are for migrants overall and not targeted to the specific needs of refugee students (Arnold et al., 2018; Darmody & Arnold, 2019). In this regard, there is a need for Irish policy and practice to reflect international obligations to ensure that refugee children and young people have the same rights and access to services as their Irish peers (House of the Oireachtas, 2019). This need is reaffirmed by the establishment of a working group within the National Educational Psychology Service (NEPS) to support cultural diversity and inclusion within Irish schools, with a particular focus on students from refugee and asylum-seeker backgrounds.

2.4 The Process of Migration

To understand the unique experiences and needs of refugee youth and best support their continued development and wellbeing, it is important to consider their lives both prior to coming to Ireland and following their arrival. In discussing the process of migration, the stresses that many refugees are exposed to can be understood as occurring through different stages (Hodes, 2000) - in their country of origin or 'pre-migration', during their journey to safety or 'trans-migratory', and 'post-migration' stresses associated with resettlement in a new country.

2.4.1 *Pre- and During Migration Factors*

Pre-migration experiences, often also cited as the reasons for fleeing, include war, personal injury and torture as well as witnessing the violent death of family members (European Commission, 2017; Fazel et al., 2012). While international research has focused primarily on traumatic experiences endured by refugees prior to migration, challenges can continue and develop during the process of migration with political unrest, witnessing acts of violence, insufficient living conditions, fear, and poverty all frequently reported (Brenner & Kia-Keating, 2016; Burbage & Walker, 2018; Merali, 2008).

One of the most reported difficulties for refugee youth is the erratic and disrupted experiences of education and schooling during the period of displacement, with neighbouring countries often having frail education systems themselves (UNHCR & UNICEF, 2019). Although all children and young people have a fundamental right to education, in practice the type, quality, and duration of schooling can vary considerably for refugee youth (DeCapua & Marshall, 2010; Dryden-Peterson, 2016; Koehler & Schneider, 2019).

2.4.2 *Post-Migration Context*

Refugees face particular challenges related not only to the nature of their prior experiences, but also due to conditions in countries of resettlement (Matos, Indart, et al., 2021). For example, youth may be separated from family members and have to adapt to a new culture and community, all within the context of navigating a new educational system (Correa-Velez et al., 2015; Dryden-Peterson, 2015). While some students may not neatly fit in to the academic level associated with their age in the resettlement country, there is also the significant impact of having to study through a new language (MacNevin, 2012). Housing and institutional barriers can continue in countries of resettlement, such as overcrowding and insufficient living conditions, lack of access to services, as well as experiences of isolation, marginalisation or discrimination (Burbage & Walker, 2018; Correa-Velez et al., 2010). Research in Ireland highlights the particular negative psychosocial impact relating to the DP system (Dolan & Sherlock, 2010; McMahon, 2015; Murphy, 2021; Ní Raghallaigh et al., 2016; Thornton, 2014).

Integration in countries of resettlement can be understood as a two way process – adapting to the host country while not relinquishing their identities in order to feel accepted by the majority culture (Arnold et al., 2021; Oppedal & Toppelberg, 2016). Refugee youth in particular can be caught between the old and new cultures, with 'acculturation' referring to adaption process that occurs when two cultures come in contact (Berry, 1980). Highly sensitive to social and environmental contexts, difficulties arising in this area are described as 'acculturative stress' (Krishnan & Berry, 1992), with research indicating an association between such stress and poorer mental health outcomes for refugee youth (Albeg & Castro-Olivo, 2014; d'Abreu et al., 2019; Keles et al., 2017). Arguably one of the the central tasks for refugee youth in countries of resettlement, Berry et al. (2006) considers integration as a desire to both

maintain their own cultural identity while also develop relationships within their country of resettlement. In contrast, assimilation refers to adoption of the new culture alongside the loss of their own cultural identity (Eriksson, 2013).

2.5 Psycho-Social Wellbeing of Refugee Youth

As outlined above, there is a consensus within practice and research that youth from refugee backgrounds are likely to have endured significant hardships. While the circumstances of their experiences prior to, during, and post migration greatly vary, the extraordinary experiences that child refugees often face can pose an increased risk for difficulties relating to their development and wellbeing (Bronstein & Montgomery, 2011; Fazel et al., 2012; Lustig et al., 2004a; Sirin & Rogers-Sirin, 2015). International research indicates that mental health difficulties can manifest in various ways for this unique group of young people, including post-traumatic stress symptoms, depression and anxiety, emotional and behavioural problems, as well as sleeping difficulties and hyperactivity (Bronstein & Montgomery, 2011; Fazel et al., 2012; Lustig et al., 2004a; Sirin & Rogers-Sirin, 2015). Learning and academic outcomes are also of concern for children of refugee backgrounds (Dryden-Peterson, 2015), with higher rates of school dropout than non-refugee peers reported (Moinolnolki & Han, 2017). Within Ireland, research indicates that children in DP are more likely to present with stress related illness and experience poorer mental health than typically developing peers (O'Brien & Crushell, 2020).

Notably, research indicates an association between the length of time in the country of resettlement and refugee well-being, with poorer mental health outcomes associated with a shorter period since arriving in the country of resettlement and difficulties appearing to reduce with time (Fazel et al., 2012; Montgomery, 2010). Conversely findings from a small scale Irish study with Syrian refugees indicate that

symptoms of trauma may only become apparent after the initial phase of resettlement (Ćatibušić et al., 2019), highlighting that needs may evolve throughout resettlement.

2.5.1 Application of Resilience Theory to Refugee Youth Experiences

This section outlines resilience theory and the role it can play in understanding and supporting refugee youth in countries of resettlement.

While literature is filled with examples of risk and associated psycho-social challenges for refugee youth, there is a growing recognition that there is no singular way in which children experience adversity and that the relationship between trauma and psychopathology may only partially describe the experiences of refugee youth, many of whom do not develop future difficulties (Porterfield et al., 2010). Researchers and practitioners alike are acknowledging that focusing on risk alone may present an incomplete picture of refugee youths' experiences (Masten & Narayan, 2012; Pieloch et al., 2016; Simich, 2014). Proponents of a resilience perspective to understanding and supporting refugee youth argue that "although challenging to survive under severe circumstances, many refugees do survive in their adopted lands, and many even thrive" in the wake of adversity (Simich & Andermann, 2014 p.2). Therein, taking a resilience lens may support our understanding of their unique experiences as well as provide insight into how to best support the adjustment and ongoing wellbeing of refugee youth (Tozer et al., 2018).

With various definitions proposed, resilience involves the positive adjustment and coping under conditions of stress, trauma, or chronic forms of adversity (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005; Luthar et al., 2000; Masten et al., 1990). Incorporating both positive resource factors and negative risk factors, resilience can be understood as an interactive process which incorporates various individual, social, and contextual factors (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005). Understood as the capacity of the individual to navigate exposure to trauma or adversity, resilience is increasingly recognised as being highly

sensitive to the social and cultural context in which an individual exists (Ungar, 2008). In this way, adopting a social-ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) to resilience may support our understanding of the interactions among various factors in the lives of refugee youth (Bronstein & Montgomery, 2011; Ungar, 2021). From a resilience perspective, having resource factors in place in the country of resettlement can contribute to continued development and positive adjustment of refugee youth despite prior experiences (Matos, Costa, et al., 2021; Motti-Stefanidi & Masten, 2013). For example, Zwi et al.'s (2018) longitudinal study investigating protective factors for social-emotional wellbeing in refugee children in Australia indicated that the presence of four or more protective factors reduced the risk of poorer social-emotional well-being for refugee youth.

Numerous resource and risk factors specific to the experiences of refugee populations have been identified in research. Resource factors include positive familial and peer relationships, having a connection to home culture alongside acculturation into the culture of resettlement, as well as religion and spirituality (Daud et al., 2008; Montgomery, 2010; Pieloch et al., 2016). The positive effect of social support on mental health symptoms and fostering resilience is also noted in research with refugee populations (Hodes et al., 2008; Sierau et al., 2019). However, such associations are sensitive to the conditions (e.g., accommodation, access to services) and experiences (e.g., bullying, discrimination) individuals may encounter in the country of resettlement (Jore et al., 2020), where barriers to resilience include limits to language proficiency as well as experiences of racism and discrimination in the country of resettlement (Hutchinson & Dorsett, 2012; Samara et al., 2020).

One of the most widely cited protective factors for all children is education, perhaps especially pertinent for children and young people who have extraordinary experiences (Bethell et al., 2019; Moore & Ramirez, 2016).

2.6 Role of Education in Resettlement for Refugee Youth

Current policy in Ireland recognises the vital role that schools and education play in promoting the wellbeing of all students, noting that "all children and young people need access to equitable, fair and inclusive opportunities to develop their wellbeing in ways that are responsive and suitable to their particular needs and contexts" (Department of Education and Skills [DES], 2019). For refugee youth, schools are often one of the first systems they engage with on arriving in a new country, and as such are often regarded as one of the most influential during the resettlement process (Birman et al., 2007; Children's Rights Alliance, 2019; Peterson et al., 2017). While so many other aspects of their lives are in flux, with the right supports, schools can provide a sense of security, routine and normality following displacement (Hayward, 2017; Selimos & Daniel, 2017). They have a role in meeting the academic, socio-emotional and mental health needs of refugee youth (Birman et al., 2007; Fazel et al., 2016), as well as in the acculturation process, introducing refugee youth to the local culture, helping build relationships with local people and learning the country's language (Dryden-Peterson et al., 2017; Schachner et al., 2018). Yet, international literature notes that schools can be a site of both inclusion and exclusion, with numerous resource and risk factors within the school context identified (Graham et al., 2016; Selimos & Daniel, 2017).

2.6.1 Resource Factors within Education

Previous reviews on the education of refugee students identify high academic and life ambition, and indicate parental motivation and involvement in education as key protective factors in their lives (Graham et al., 2016; McBrien, 2005). Language is also identified as a key facilitator of integration (Ager & Strang, 2008) and noted as a protective factor for refugee youth when acquired more quickly (Porterfield et al., 2010; Todorova et al., 2008).

Often conceptualised as the level to which people feel accepted, respected, and included within their environment (Prince & Hadwin, 2013), a sense of belonging, particularly within their schools, is frequently cited as important consideration for supporting the wellbeing of refugee youth (Tozer et al., 2018). Fostering a sense of belonging in school is acknowledged within school-based wellbeing promotion in Ireland (DES, 2019), and for students who may have left much behind and been separated from family and community, the role of school in developing pathways to belonging may be especially vital, providing opportunities for connection both with peers and the wider community (Blackwell & Melzak, 2000; Correa-Velez et al., 2015; Peterson et al., 2017; Picton & Banfield, 2020). Notably, a study of refugee youth in the United states indicated a greater sense of school belonging, regardless of past traumas, as associated with reduced mental health difficulties (Kia-Keating & Ellis, 2007).

Supportive teacher and peer relationships can also contribute to more positive resettlement experiences (Blackwell & Melzak, 2000; Fazel et al., 2016; Hek, 2005a; Tozer et al., 2018). Findings from a study of refugee youth in Sweden suggest that positive relationships with peers within schools can be a protective factor (Daud et al., 2008), while a recent study in the UK highlights the protective role of friendship quality and number of friends for refugee children (Samara et al., 2020).

2.6.2 Risk Factors within Education

Although research has indicated the central role that education plays in the lives of refugee youth, missed learning opportunities pre- and during-migration may be exacerbated by a lack of familiarity with the education systems and language of instruction in the country of resettlement (DeCapua & Marshall, 2010). While evident that child and adolescent refugees derive significant psychological benefit from feeling they belong in school, this can be significantly compromised if they have limited

knowledge of the local language, culture, and school system (Children's Rights Alliance, 2019; Graham et al., 2016). Further, with a potential for peer relationships to have a positive influence on refugee youths' school experiences, for some students, developing and maintaining friendships within their new school environments can be a struggle (Graham et al., 2016; Hope, 2008).

While a diverse group of students, youth from refugee backgrounds share the experience of being a cultural minority which may also result in exclusion within their schools and wider communities (Schachner et al., 2018). Refugee youth are more likely than native born students to be victims of bullying and perceive unfair treatment by teachers (UNHCR & UNICEF, 2019). Another important aspect to consider is the impact of teacher's perceptions of students from migrant and refugee backgrounds. Teachers' opinions and assumptions are likely to impact on students' sense of acceptance as well as their sense of safety within their school environments and can potentially act as a barrier to positive adjustment and wellbeing (Bartsch et al., 2021).

Concern also has been raised about how children living in DP integrate and are supported by the mainstream schooling system in Ireland (Horgan et al., 2021; Ní Dhuinn & Keane, 2021). Challenges include poverty and social inclusion, as well as difficulty in participating in extra-curricular activities or lack of transportation to friends' homes (McMahon, 2015; O'Brien & Crushell, 2020). The Irish Refugee Council 'Powerless' report (2020) notes the impact also of the absence of school during Covid-19, reducing these youths' engagement with peers and potential difficulties accessing online education within DP settings. Further, while links between school and parents are cited as a positive factor for refugee youth (Harmon, 2018; Hek, 2005a), a small-scale Irish study indicates that parents may feel somewhat excluded from their children's schools (Martin et al., 2018).

2.7 Critique of the Literature

The overwhelming majority of research with refugee youth provides a snapshot of the psychosocial well-being or mental health difficulties of participants. With a focus on traumatic experiences across the process of migration and the consequences of being a child refugee, the impact of resettlement experiences is often overlooked (Fazel et al., 2016; Fazel et al., 2012; Porterfield et al., 2010). Further, immigration research predominantly focuses on practitioner perspectives with less attention given to what the youth themselves consider meaningful and significant. Although research has begun to qualitatively examine refugee experiences of resettlement, perhaps reflecting the marginalisation that migrants' may experience in general, the voices of young refugees continue to be largely absent from the research (Corcoran, 2020; Dolan & Sherlock, 2010; Kanics, 2016).

2.7.1 The Importance of Student Voice

Reflecting article 12 (UNCRC, 1989), the right of children to express their views and have their opinions given due weight, the Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice (DES, 2019) notes the importance of having systems in place for the voices of all stakeholders, including that of the child or young person to be heard. This is in line with international research and practice which outlines the need not only to listen to the voices of young people, but that their voices are respected and acted upon in order to have impact and influence on matters which affect them (Harmon, 2020). As endorsed by the Irish government in the National Framework for Children and Young People's Participation in Decision Making (Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, 2021), Lundy's (2007) rights-based model of participation, which includes space, voice, audience, and influence, can support appropriate incorporation of student voice within research and practice. In summary, there needs to be a safe and inclusive space for young people to express their

views; their voice elicited in an appropriate manner, not limited to the spoken word; and an audience to ensure that those who can effect change hear their voices, while the idea of influence refers to those listening being able to act on the students' voices (Harmon, 2020). Here the role of Educational Psychology is pertinent, advocating for the expression of children's individual views being core to the role (Harding & Atkinson, 2009).

The growing international interest in student voice in education research highlights the link between having a say, feeling valued and heard, with students' sense of belonging and subsequent wellbeing (Flynn, 2013, 2017; Simmons et al., 2015). Additionally, student voice is acknowledged as an opportunity to empower students, while also provides an opportunity for deepening professionals understanding of the experiences of marginalised groups (Flynn, 2013). Thus it is not surprising that the recent Irish 'Safe Haven' exploratory study carried out by the Children's Rights Alliance (2019) highlights the need to consult with refugee youth following their resettlement in order to determine how resources can be best utilised to meet their unique needs.

2.8 Rationale for Systematic Review

The review thus far has synthesised a broad range of research on factors which can impact on the lives of refugee youth, particularly relating to their education. Given the central role schools can play in these young people's lives, it is pertinent to better understand their experiences first hand (Children's Rights Alliance, 2019; d'Abreu et al., 2019). It is also important to listen to their voices and opinions in order to provide appropriate supports and to ensure that all students are heard within their schools. From the best available knowledge, no other systematic review has focused specifically on refugee youth's perceptions of their educational experiences post-migration in countries of resettlement. The aim of this review is to systematically identify, evaluate

and synthesize peer-reviewed studies in this area to further understand the educational experiences of refugee youth in countries of resettlement and to inform future directions for research (Sandelowski et al., 2007). This review will focus on two questions:

- What research has explored the perspectives of refugee youth on their educational experiences in countries of resettlement?
- What are the perspectives of refugee youth on their educational experiences in countries of resettlement?

The following sections present the systematic search for and summary of studies through the weighting of relevant empirical studies (Gough, 2007), followed by a thematic synthesis integrating the content of findings into themes.

2.9 Literature Search

2.9.1 Search Strategy

This review is informed by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review (PRISMA) guidelines (Liberati et al., 2009), which ensured transparency in the search and resulted in a thorough yet concise review of the literature. The search was conducted in July 2021 through EBSCO host using a combination of three electronic search databases – Academic Search Complete, ERIC and APA PsychInfo. To retrieve relevant literature, the search was set to identify papers in which the key terms outlined in Table 1 were in the abstract or title of records.

Table 1

Systematic Review Database Search Terms

Stage 1 Population	Stage 2 Age	Stage 3 Setting	Stage 4 Study focus
Refugee*	Child*	School*	Perspective*
Asylum seek*	Youth*	Educat*	View*
Asylum-seek*	Adolescen*		Experience*
	Student*		
Combined with Boolean operator ***OR***	*Combined with Boolean operator* ***OR***	*Combined with Boolean operator* ***OR***	*Combined with Boolean operator* ***OR***
Combined with Boolean operator ***AND***			

2.9.2 Inclusion and Exclusion criteria

A range of inclusion and exclusion criteria were employed as a means of exploring the existing relevant academic literature which integrated specific components of the research area. Peer-reviewed journal articles written in English with content concerning the experiences of refugee students in primary or secondary education were included in the review. See Appendix A for a detailed list of inclusion

and exclusion criteria and accompanying rationale. Given the limited research conducted in this area to date, no limits were placed on date published or geographic location. While all types of research were included to capture the various aspects of refugee youths' experiences, it was expected that the 'stage 4' search terms would result in predominantly qualitative or mixed-methods research examining student experiences of education.

2.9.3 Results of the Search

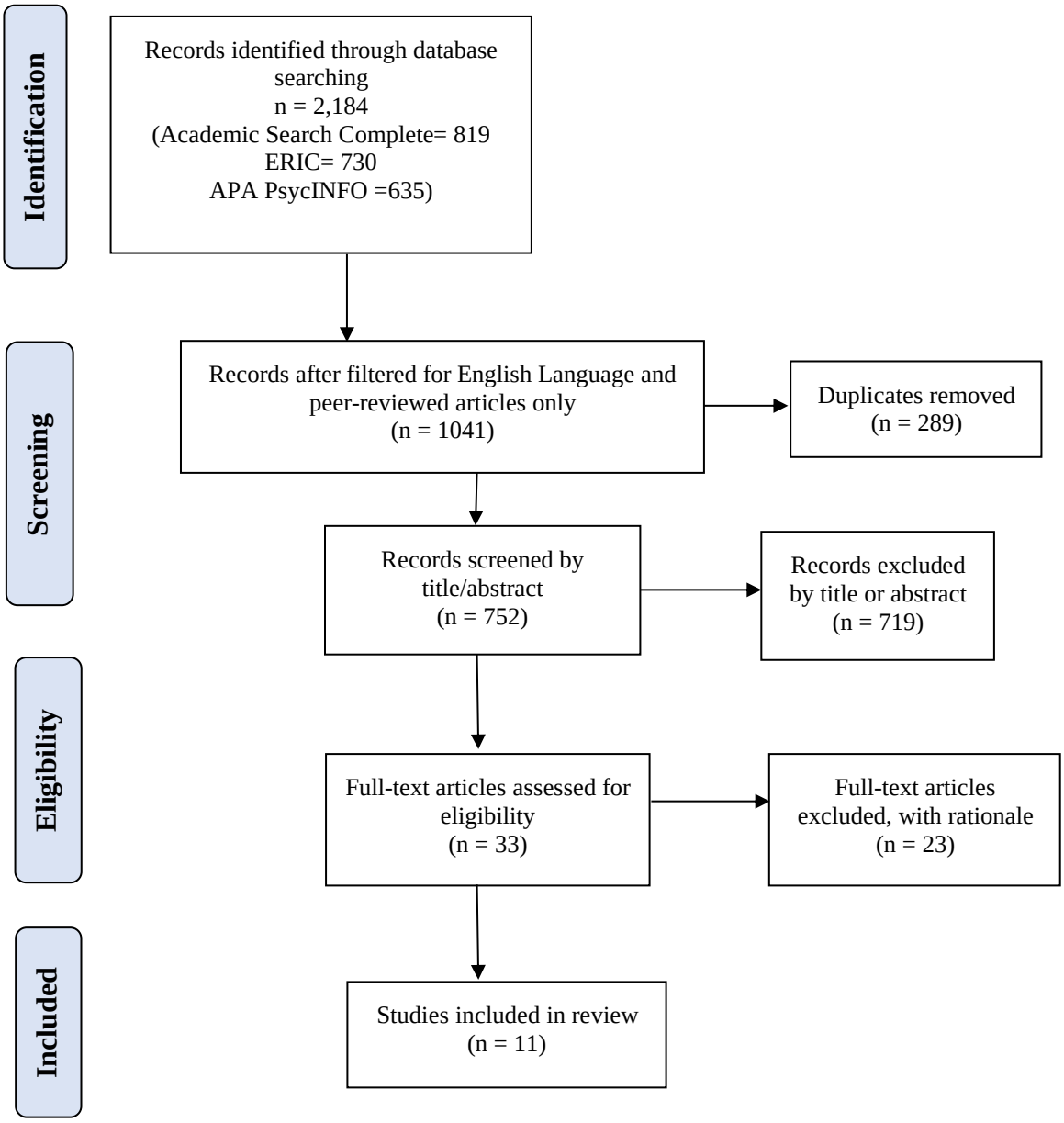
Initial search results were collated in EndNote reference management software and duplications removed. Titles of the articles were screened and those clearly not relevant to the review were removed. Remaining studies were screened by abstract according to inclusion and exclusion criteria, and if doubt remained, included in a full-text review. Figure 1 presents a visual representation highlighting screening and study selection process. A summary of the eleven included studies is presented in Appendix B, with a list of excluded full-text studies and associated along rationale presented in Appendix C.

2.9.4 Data Extraction

Data extraction included the study design and method, setting, sample size, participant type and demographics (where available) as well as recruitment procedures. As the purpose of qualitative synthesis is to 'go beyond' primary studies, study findings or results, which largely consisted of varying themes specific to educational experiences in countries of resettlement, were also extracted in full.

Figure 1

PRISMA Flow of Screening and Study Selection Process



2.10 Systematic Review of the Literature

The systematic search resulted in eleven studies which met the inclusion criteria for the current review. The following sections critically appraise the selected studies and describe the characteristics and features evaluated including the study design, sampling methods, data collection and analysis. A thematic synthesis of key findings from the studies relative to the review question is then presented (Thomas & Harden, 2008).

2.10.1 Quality Appraisal of Studies

Each of the studies was critically appraised using Gough's (2007) Weight of Evidence (WoE) framework. This ensured a consistent and systematic approach to critiquing the methodological quality and relevance of the included studies. The WoE framework consists of three components (A-C) which are averaged to calculate a fourth and overall WoE D (Gough, 2007). Studies were allocated a 'High', 'Medium' or 'Low' rating according to coding criteria set by the researcher.

WoE A is a generic judgement measuring the study's general quality of design and methodology. To ensure reliable critique of the studies, published coding protocols and quality criteria checklist were applied, namely Letts et al. (2007) and The Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (Hong et al., 2018). WoE B and WoE C were devised specific to this review, assessing the relevance of the study design and the extent to which the study and its findings are relevant to answering the review question (Gough, 2007). Presented in Table 2, the three categories were then averaged to create an overall WoE for each paper, which considers the overall degree to which the study contributes to answering the specific review question. See Appendices D-F for an outline of the criteria and overview of the WoE ratings for each of the reviewed studies.

All studies were included in the following synthesis, with the three studies rated as 'High' (Bartlett et al., 2017; Bešić et al., 2020; Hek, 2005b) contributing most to answering the review question (Gough, 2007; Hannes, 2011). See Appendix G for a summary of research focus, study design, methods, and analysis.

Table 2

Systematic Review Overview of Weight of Evidence Ratings (Gough, 2007)

Study	WoE A *Methodological quality*	WoE B *Methodological Relevance*	WoE C *Study topic relevance*	WoE D *Overall WoE*
Bartlett et al. (2017)	2.2 (Medium)	3 (High)	3 (High)	2.7 (High)
Bešić, et al. (2020)	2.8 (High)	3 (High)	3 (High)	2.9 (High)
Due et al. (2016)	2.2 (Medium)	3 (High)	2 (Medium)	2.4 (Medium)
Guo et al. (2021)	1.6 (Medium)	2 (Medium)	2 (Medium)	1.9 (Medium)
Hastings (2012)	2.4 (Medium)	1 (Low)	2 (Medium)	1.8 (Medium)
Hek (2005)	1.6 (Medium)	3 (High)	3 (High)	2.5 (High)
Mendenhall et al. (2017)	2 (Medium)	2 (Medium)	2 (Medium)	2 (Medium)
Ryu & Tuvilla (2018)	1.6 (Medium)	1 (Low)	2 (Medium)	1.5 (Medium)
Uptin et al. (2013)	1.6 (Medium)	2 (Medium)	2 (Medium)	1.9 (Medium)
Stewart (2012)	1.4 (Low)	2 (Medium)	2 (Medium)	1.8 (Medium)
Ziaian et al. (2018)	1.8 (Medium)	3 (High)	2 (Medium)	2.3 (Medium)

Note. Low <1.5, Medium = 1.5-2.4, High =>2.5

Study Design. Exploratory or descriptive in design, ten of the reviewed studies were qualitative in nature, with one mixed-methods study (Ziaian et al., 2018). Six of the reviewed studies utilised predominantly the student voice (Bešić et al., 2020; Due et al., 2016; Hastings, 2012; Hek, 2005; Ryu & Tuvilla, 2018; Uptin et al., 2013).

Reflecting the important role of triangulation in exploratory research, five of the studies incorporated multiple perspectives (Bartlett et al., 2017; Guo et al., 2021; Mendenhall et al., 2017; Stewart, 2012; Ziaian et al., 2018).

Four studies utilised semi-structured interviews with refugee youth as the sole data collection method (Bešić et al., 2020; Hastings, 2012; Hek, 2005; Ryu & Tuvilla, 2018). Three studies adopted a qualitative case study design including individual interviews and focus group interviews with student and adult participants (Bartlett et al., 2017; Mendenhall et al., 2017; Stewart, 2012), while Guo et al. (2021) adopted a focus group methodology with refugee parents' interviews analysed to inform follow-up focus groups questions with the refugee youth. In Ziaian et al.'s (2018) mixed-methods study, focus groups with refugee youth were accompanied by parent, teacher, and self-reports of behavioural and affective symptoms. However, for the purpose of this review, the qualitative component of this study is discussed alongside the other studies as the quantitative data was not relevant to the review question. Two of the reviewed studies lacked sufficient detail regarding the study design, where it was unclear whether both interviews and/or focus groups were conducted with participants (Due et al., 2016; Uptin et al., 2013). Of note, the potential impacts of social desirability biases in participant responses were not considered in the reviewed studies which could limit the credibility of the findings (Mertens, 2015). Three studies employed visual methodologies in the form of photo-cued discussions with students where authors noted the benefit of such methods for students with limited English proficiency (Bartlett et al., 2017; Mendenhall et al., 2017) and for younger students who had recently arrived (Due et al., 2016).

Recognising the importance of a theoretical perspective on study design and analysis (Letts et al., 2007; Mertens, 2015), less than half of the reviewed studies reported such details. Earning a 'High' rating on the design feature of WoE A, three

studies stated and described the theoretical perspective of their research sufficiently (Bartlett et al., 2017; Hastings, 2012; Stewart, 2012). This was reflected in the specific designs utilised, where both the Bartlett et al. (2017) and Hasting's (2012) studies aligned with an interpretivist paradigm by prioritising the students' own understandings of their experiences. The Stewart (2012) case study design reflected the Bioecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1999) in which it was framed. While lacking information on details regarding data collection and analysis, Guo et al. (2021) outlined the guiding conceptual framework for their research of student voice, offering a way of exploring school improvement from the students' perspectives.

Sampling. While two studies were assigned a 'Low' rating on the sampling feature with no details of recruitment (Ryu & Tuvilla, 2018; Stewart, 2012), a purposive sampling method was employed in all other studies, with refugee students, teachers, parents, and other key informants recruited due to their closeness to the phenomenon of interest. Five of the studies received a 'High' rating for this feature providing detailed information about recruitment processes (Bešić et al., 2020; Due et al., 2016; Hastings, 2012; Hek, 2005; Uptin et al., 2013).

In the Ziaian et al. (2018) it is unclear whether all participants were from a refugee background with the term 'most' used to describe refugee background, thus limiting interpretation and transferability of findings, and emphasising the need for strict inclusion criteria in such research. Further, students self-selected for participation in both the Bartlett et al. (2017) and Mendenhall et al. (2017) studies, leaving a potential issue of participants presenting themselves in a favourable light during data collection.

This review includes qualitative data from 250 student participants (see Appendix H for a summary of participant demographics). Students were predominantly adolescents/young adults at the time of participation, with three studies including

younger students in primary schools (Bešić et al., 2020; Due et al., 2016; Guo et al., 2021). Although multiple perspectives were included in five of the reviewed studies (Bartlett et al., 2017; Mendenhall et al., 2017; Stewart, 2012; Uptin et al., 2013; Ziaian et al., 2018), demographic information was only provided for student participants.

Studies which clearly described the key characteristics of participants were rated higher on the WoE A 'sampling' feature lending to greater transferability of the findings, with some studies including the specific languages spoken by participants and age at displacement (Ryu & Tuvilla, 2018), level of education prior to migration (Stewart, 2012), as well as age at arrival (Guo et al., 2021; Hek, 2005). Notably, only two studies explicitly identified language proficiency as eligibility criteria for participants (Bešić et al., 2020; Hastings, 2012) which could have significantly impacted on participants ability to express ideas throughout the research process.

Six of the eleven studies reported the length of time participants had been resettled in the country in which the study took place, ranging from less than 12 months (Due et al., 2016; Guo et al., 2021) to between one and 11 years (Hek, 2005; Mendenhall et al., 2017; Ryu & Tuvilla, 2018; Ziaian et al., 2018). Noting the potential impact of time since resettlement on experiences as outlined previously in this chapter, this may limit the comparability of experiences both within and between the studies.

Likely to increase the transferability of findings, most studies reported that participants originated from a range of countries, although the Hek (2005) study did not specify countries of origin due to concerns of anonymity, while two studies explored experiences of specific groups of refugees, that of Syrian (Guo et al., 2021) and Burmese (Ryu & Tuvilla, 2018) students only. As reflected in WoE C ratings, half of the reviewed studies included participants from multiple schools, again potentially increasing transferability of findings (Bartlett et al., 2017; Bešić et al., 2020; Hek, 2005; Ryu & Tuvilla, 2018; Ziaian et al., 2018). As school types varied from

mainstream public schools to International Network Schools (Bartlett et al., 2017; Mendenhall et al., 2017) and separate programmes with a focus on English language learning offered by the school system attached to mainstream schools (Due et al., 2016; Guo et al., 2021), comparability of findings across studies is cautioned.

Despite the inherent ethical considerations in refugee research, evidenced by the WoE A ratings on this feature, only six of the studies provided information regarding ethical approval and procedures for informed consent and ongoing assent from child participants, with details provided varying considerably (Bešić et al., 2020; Due et al., 2016; Guo et al., 2021; Hek, 2005; Uptin et al., 2013; Ziaian et al., 2018). Notably, Guo et al. (2021) acknowledged the lack of guarantee of anonymity and confidentiality in group interviews where participants may know each other.

Data Collection. Where reported, data collection largely took place within schools (Due et al., 2016; Hek, 2005; Mendenhall et al., 2017; Bartlett et al., 2017) or community youth clubs (Bešić et al., 2020; Ryu & Tuvilla, 2018; Ziaian et al., 2018), with one study conducting focus groups in local public libraries close to the participants' residences (Guo et al., 2021). Three studies did not report data collection procedures, limiting the dependability of the data collection process, thus rated as 'Low' on the data collection feature (Hastings, 2012; Stewart, 2012; Uptin et al., 2013).

Although it was assumed data collection was conducted in the language of the specific country of resettlement, one study noted the presence of a bilingual youth worker during the focus groups to assist if any communication difficulties arose (Ziaian et al., 2018), with another providing the option of data collection in native languages (Guo et al., 2021). While this brings with it the need for translation of transcripts and associated difficulties, Guo et al. (2021) noted that it was desirable to increase participants comfort in expressing difficult or culturally embedded ideas (Davies, 2008). Studies varied in provision of details of the interview/focus group questions,

with one study presenting the full interview schedule (Hastings, 2012), thus increasing credibility in the data collection process. Notably, this study also conducted participant checking interpretations throughout, further ensuring authenticity in the data.

Acknowledging the role of the researcher as a primary tool for data collection in qualitative research (Mertens, 2015), the studies varied as regards documenting researcher credentials, with the level of information provided impacting on the confirmability of the data collection process. Four studies provided no information on the researcher contributing to 'Low' ratings on this feature (Guo et al., 2021; Hastings, 2012; Ryu & Tuvilla, 2018; Stewart, 2012). The Bešić et al. (2020) study was rated 'High' on the data collection feature, reporting the cultural backgrounds of each team member and the roles they played in the research process.

Analysis. Aligning with the exploratory nature of this review, most studies utilised inductive type analysis, with one adopting a deductive approach imposing predefined categories (Due et al., 2016) and another developing codes from both approaches (Bešić et al., 2020). Reflected in WoE A ratings, there was considerable variation in descriptions of analysis methods. Gaining 'High' ratings, two studies provided in-depth detail of the specific analysis utilised - Directed Qualitative Content analysis (Bešić et al., 2020) and Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (Hastings, 2012). Six of the studies employed a thematic type of analysis in the interpretation of the gathered data (Bartlett et al., 2017; Due et al., 2016; Guo, et al., 2021; Mendenhall et al., 2017; Ryu & Tuvilla, 2018; Ziaian et al., 2018). Credibility of the data was increased where studies included multiple members of the research team in data interpretation, coding and composing themes (Bartlett et al., 2017; Due et al., 2016; Mendenhall et al., 2017; Ryu & Tuvilla, 2018).

2.10.2 Synthesis of Findings

Thematic synthesis provided a systematic approach to organise, integrate, and present the qualitative data from the included studies (Thomas & Harden, 2008). Analysis of the reviewed studies suggested four interrelated yet distinct areas of refugee youths' experiences that contribute to their overall perceptions of education in countries of resettlement. Encompassed within the four themes considered below, all studies discussed the significant impact of language proficiency on various aspects of experience.

Multi-Faceted Peer Relationships. The role of peer relationships varied from assisting in creating a sense of school belonging to providing linguistic, academic, and socio-emotional support, with the development of friendships also reducing feelings of loneliness (Bešić et al., 2020; Hastings, 2012). The important role of language in developing friendships is also evident (Bešić et al., 2020; Hek, 2005; Uptin et al., 2013), with difficulties as a result of language barriers noted by both students and teachers (Bartlett et al., 2017; Bešić et al., 2020; Mendenhall et al., 2017). In contrast, there is also a distinct role for peers as facilitators for language learning (Bartlett et al., 2017; Bešić et al., 2020; Hastings, 2012; Hek, 2005; Mendenhall et al., 2017; Uptin et al., 2013).

A reoccurring theme was the benefit of having friends with similar cultural, ethnic, or linguistic backgrounds (Bartlett et al., 2017; Bešić et al., 2020; Due et al., 2016; Hek, 2005; Mendenhall et al., 2017; Uptin et al., 2013; Ryu & Tuvilla, 2018), having an understanding of the collective struggles and easing the transition to school (Bartlett et al., 2017; Bešić et al., 2020; Hek, 2005). In contrast, the Guo et al. (2021) study suggested such friendships may limit opportunities to interact with non-refugee students. However, it is important to note that students in this study were attending a separate programme for new arrivals where such experiences may not be reflective of

more mainstream school circumstances. Nonetheless, perspectives from the Ryu and Tuvilla (2018) study shed a similar perspective on relationships with peers from similar backgrounds, due mainly to the marginalisation they experienced. However, as reflected in the 'Low' WoE C rating, this study focused on perspectives of Burmese refugee youth, perhaps drawing on a more nuanced experience of youth from this background.

Four studies highlighted the need for mixing with other backgrounds, notably assisting in language learning (Bartlett et al., 2017; Bešić et al., 2020; Hek, 2005; Ryu & Tuvilla, 2018), with one student in the Bartlett et al. (2017) study discussing the positive impact of children making an effort to mix with peers regardless of language. Overall, the reviewed studies emphasised the importance of connection with peers, which was often facilitated by co-nationality or a shared language, but also highlighted the initial challenges in making friends.

Perceptions of the Role of Teachers. The role of teachers was presented as multifaceted across the studies, some speaking of teachers going above and beyond their duties (Bartlett et al., 2017; Bešić et al., 2020; Hastings, 2012; Mendenhall et al., 2017) while other experiences were presented more negatively (Guo et al., 2021; Hek, 2005; Ryu & Tuvilla, 2018; Stewart, 2012; Uptin et al., 2013; Ziaian et al., 2018). In the Due et al. (2016) study students displayed excitement when talking about their teachers. However, this study included newly arrived students in Intensive English Language classes. It is assumed that these teachers have more experience working with non-native children, and the authors question whether such positive perceptions continue after the transition to mainstream classes.

Aligning with the potential for school type to impact on students' perceptions of teachers, both the Bartlett et al. (2017) and Mendenhall et al. (2017) studies drew on case study data from 'International' schools, describing positive relationships with

teachers but also alluding to variations between their experiences in the current school versus in schools previously attended. Nonetheless, similar reports were noted for students in mainstream schools with teachers adjusting to the range of students in their class (Hek, 2012), encouraging collaboration between peers (Bešić et al., 2020), and supporting problem solving in the event of any difficulties arising (Hastings, 2012). Despite overall positive student-teacher relationships reported in the Bartlett (2017) study, one student suggested that teachers should be more sensitive to students' backgrounds (Bartlett et al., 2017, p. 116).

The dichotomy of the student-teacher relationship was evident between studies, but also within studies examining student experiences from multiple schools (Bartlett et al., 2017; Hek, 2005). Studies highlighted some negative or discriminatory experiences with teachers (Guo et al., 2021; Hek, 2005; Ryu & Tuvilla, 2018; Stewart, 2012; Ziaian et al., 2018), with such perspectives triangulated by teachers (Bartlett et al., 2017; Stewart, 2012). There was also a sense of disappointment with teachers not acknowledging the difficulties associated with these students' experiences (Uptin et al., 2013; Ziaian et al., 2018) and lacking proper interventions when it came to addressing bullying or racist remarks in the classroom (Guo et al., 2021).

Four studies referred to the benefits of a teacher or teaching assistant speaking their native language (Bešić et al., 2020; Guo et al., 2021; Hek, 2005; Mendenhall et al., 2017). In comparison, students also spoke of teachers not being supportive of their native language and insisting they spoke English only in the classroom (Hastings, 2012), with one student sharing his experiences of being reprimanded by the teacher for speaking Arabic in class (Guo et al., 2021).

School Ethos. The importance of a diverse and inclusive school culture was captured by the majority of the studies, outlining the positive impact of schools allowing the expression of students' identities and feeling safe in doing so (Bartlett et

al., 2017; Bešić et al., 2020; Hastings, 2012; Hek, 2005; Mendenhall et al., 2017; Uptin et al., 2013). Guo et al. (2021) noted the role of school in providing opportunities for children to socialise and develop friendships through playing team sports and attending extracurricular activities, all of which brought a sense of normalcy to their lives. The positive impact of school activities reflecting the identities and values of students also emerged. This included celebrating national holidays, having international clubs, allowing students to wear clothing from home cultures (Bartlett et al., 2017; Mendenhall et al., 2017), and having posters reflecting diversity in students' lives (Due et al., 2016). In contrast, where school policy did not reflect the diversity of students, this resulted in marginalisation and students "not feeling included within school life" (Hek, 2005, p.165), as well as feeling vulnerable to bullying due to accents or ethnicity (Bartlett et al., 2017; Hek, 2005; Mendenhall et al., 2017).

Indicating the impact of school protocols on student and wider family engagement, the level of connection with parents or caregivers was also highlighted (Hek, 2005; Mendenhall et al., 2017; Stewart, 2012; Ziaian et al., 2018). Promoting contact with parents or making interpreters available at parents' evenings resulted in students feeling more part of the school (Hek, 2005), whereas the Stewart (2012) study noted that communication with home can be difficult, turning to utilising students as translators for their parents. However, students were older in this study than in others and with various participant and school types included in this review, it is difficult to draw comparisons on such practices.

Personal Struggles and Coping. Although not a specific focus of the review, older students referred to negative experiences prior to and during the process of migration (Hek, 2005; Ryu & Tuvilla, 2018; Stewart, 2012), with both students and teachers referring to the psychosocial impact (Bartlett et al., 2017; Stewart, 2012; Ziaian et al., 2018).

Arrival in the country of resettlement and new schools was narrated with mixed emotions including excitement, relief, and hope, in tandem with worry, disappointment, and frustration as everything may not be as they had expected (Bartlett et al., 2017; Guo et al., 2021; Hastings, 2012; Ryu & Tuvilla, 2018). Stewart (2012) further distinguishes these phases as initial excitement, followed by challenges and a period of adjustment, while Mendenhall et al. (2017) notes that language acquisition can continue to be a challenge for students. However, acknowledging that all studies were conducted at one time point only and with huge variation in the period since arrival, it is difficult to draw comparisons across time.

Student participants discussed experiences of being bullied due to limited English (Bartlett et al., 2017; Hastings, 2012; Mendenhall et al., 2017; Ryu & Tuvilla, 2018), with half of the students in the Bešić et al. (2020) reporting that it was the main reason for their loneliness, while Guo et al. (2021) concluded that limited language proficiency was one of the biggest hurdles in school integration.

Evident that language is not the only hurdle students face, most studies noted experiences of racism and exclusion and discussed feelings of 'otherness' (Bartlett et al., 2017; Bešić et al., 2020; Guo et al., 2021; Hastings, 2012; Ryu & Tuvilla, 2018; Uptin et al., 2013; Ziaian et al., 2018). Students noted that "they would pick on you sometimes because you are new, or you are not from their country" (Guo et al., 2021, p.9), "they were trying to put me down because I am from a different place" (Hek, 2005, p. 166). Uptin et al. (2013) further provides a breakdown of otherness as being due to the colour of their skin or having an accent. Although unable to determine due to the heterogeneity of participants across studies, a comparison can be drawn between the initial largely language-based difficulties, and more long-term challenges due to ethnic discrimination or marginalisation.

Overall, a sentiment of self-reliance and reluctance to ask for help was formed throughout this review (Bartlett et al., 2017; Bešić et al., 2020; Ryu & Tuvilla, 2018; Uptin et al., 2013), with students not wanting to be seen to take teaching time away from others (Bešić et al., 2020), draw attention to their sense of difference, or indeed invite peers or teachers to underestimate their competency (Guo et al., 2021; Ryu & Tuvilla, 2018).

The strength of these young people was evident across studies. They were eager to learn and motivated to succeed in school (Bartlett et al., 2017; Bešić et al., 2020; Hastings, 2012; Hek, 2005; Ryu & Tuvilla, 2018; Stewart, 2012; Uptin et al., 2013). Students described coping mechanisms and strategies to deal with the challenges such as praying, listening to music, or participating in after-school clubs (Bartlett et al., 2017), as well as "helping new arrivals" (Hastings, 2012, p. 343). Drawing on multiple perspectives, teachers in the Bartlett et al. (2017, p. 113) described an "immigrant optimism", while students also spoke of how pre-migration experiences had shaped their ambitions, and contributed to their motivation and determination (Hek, 2005; Ryu & Tuvilla, 2018).

2.10.3 Systematic Review Conclusion and Limitations

This review systematically identified eleven studies which explored the perceptions of refugee youth on their experiences of education in countries of resettlement. Although no timeframe for publication was set, through the systematic search the scarcity of high-quality research in the area was evident. Nonetheless, all but one of the studies were published within the last decade indicating the growing interest and need for research to support the resettlement of refugee youth. The review highlighted a distinct need for research in an Irish context, with three studies each conducted in the United States (Bartlett et al., 2017; Mendenhall et al., 2017; Ryu & Tuvilla, 2018), Australia (Due et al., 2016; Uptin et al., 2013; Ziaian et al., 2018), and

European contexts (Bešić et al., 2020; Hastings, 2012; Hek, 2005), with two studies conducted in Canada (Guo et al., 2021; Stewart, 2012).

A thematic synthesis of study findings resulted in the identification of four themes which synthesise current understandings of refugee youth perceptions, including the distinct roles of peers and teachers, the importance of an inclusive school ethos, as well as personal struggles and coping strategies. The difficulties associated with limited language proficiency were central in all studies. This review highlighted generally positive experiences of education, particularly if schools catered to the needs of newcomer youth (Bartlett et al., 2017; Due et al., 2016; Mendenhall et al., 2017). However, a statement from the Bartlett et al. (2017) study captures the reality that students also experienced challenges, "every day is good, but sometimes it's hard" (p. 115). Similar to previous reviews of refugee youth psychosocial wellbeing (Bronstein & Montgomery, 2011; Fazel et al., 2012), both students and teachers spoke of the impact of pre- and post-migration experiences on current psychosocial needs.

Aligning with literature on protective factors, this review highlighted the diversity in individual experiences along with a resilience which can often be overlooked in refugee research (Masten & Narayan, 2012; Pieloch et al., 2016). With a growing evidence base on the importance of student voice (Flynn, 2017), the synthesis of findings from qualitative research in the area affirms the rich and informative knowledge that can be gained from conducting research with refugee youth.

Acknowledging limitations in the above-described review process, the studies included may not be exhaustive as ancestral searches or grey literature searches were not completed (Mertens, 2015). Important research could have been excluded due to inclusion criteria of peer-reviewed and English language only, particularly noting the population of interest in the current review (Morrison et al., 2012). Notably, only one researcher, the author, searched for, appraised, and synthesised study findings

potentially resulting in biases in the review process (Hannes, 2011). Another critique of the above review process is that WoE B ratings were based on set data saturation points (Guest et al., 2006). This may be considered unrealistic by some qualitative researchers, for example in IPA research a small sample is widely accepted (Gil-Rodriguez & Hefferon, 2011; Hastings, 2012).

Although each of the reviewed studies provided empirical data on student experiences of education, as reflected in WoE ratings, several methodological weaknesses were noted. This includes the provision of limited details as regards theoretical perspectives or paradigms, as well as ethical procedures, data collection methods and heterogeneity in reporting analytic processes. Comparison of experiences between and within studies was constrained due to considerable variation in countries of origin and resettlement, participant demographics, as well as the types of schools attended. While the review points to a variation in experiences across the process of resettlement, data was collected at one time point only providing a snapshot of the participant lives, with only six studies reporting length of time since arrival (which varied considerably).

2.11 Rationale for the Current Study

The current review called attention to research that has begun to incorporate the voice of refugee youth and demonstrates how listening to their perspectives can provide valuable insights for the professionals supporting these young people (Pieloch et al., 2016). In contrast, the sparse literature in this area to date was revealed as well as the heterogeneity of quality in design, methods and ethical procedures utilised in such research. By attending to the gaps evident in the existing literature base and the methodological weaknesses identified in the reviewed studies, this would ensure quality research and strengthen the capacity to inform educational policy and practice.

Considering the significant role of education in the lives of refugee youth, research and policy development is necessary to support the unique social, emotional, and academic needs of refugee students. In Ireland, while preliminary guidelines have been published for practitioners who work with refugee youth, support for refugee students within schools varies considerably, with little known of how refugee youth themselves experience education (Children's Rights Alliance, 2019; Harmon, 2018). Further, while it is important to understand experiences of initial transition into education in the country of resettlement, to ensure lasting integration attention needs to be paid to temporal experiences and to investigate the longer-term resettlement process of refugee youth (Ní Raghallaigh, 2018; Ní Raghallaigh et al., 2016). As Ireland continues to welcome refugee youth, providing a space for this group to share their perspectives would also be a springboard for much needed guidance to professionals. This may aid in the development of appropriate emotional and academic supports, as well as informing teacher education in order to best support their positive long-term integration into Irish society.

In the context of resettlement, adopting a holistic approach to resilience, determined not only by individual traits but also influenced by relational and environmental factors, may provide a conceptual framework for understanding protective process and highlight potential avenues for development or support within the school context (Lynnebakke et al., 2020; Masten & Narayan, 2012; Sleijpen et al., 2017). Thus, the overall aim of the current study is to explore experiences of refugee youth of education in Ireland. Acknowledging the importance of providing space for young people to share their perspectives and act upon them (Flynn, 2017; Lundy, 2007), this study aims to examine their subjective perceptions of experience through exploring the specific facilitators and barriers as well as their comparison of initial and longer-term experiences of education in Ireland. It is hoped that such insight will

inform further research in the area and aid the long-term successful resettlement and integration of this growing population in Ireland. This research will have theoretical contributions by building on gaps in the current literature and, from a practice perspective, may guide school-based strategies to support refugee youth, inform teacher education, and ultimately ensure services appropriate to the unique needs of these young people in Ireland. The following research questions emerged from this review:

- How do refugee and asylum seeker youth understand their experiences of education in Ireland?
    - Drawing from both their current and initial experiences of education in Ireland, what aspects of education do refugee and asylum-seeker youth identify as supportive or hindering in relation to long term resettlement?

Chapter 3 Empirical Paper

3.1 Overview

Chapter three describes the current study. The Introduction positions the research within the wider context and outlines the need for research to inform appropriate supports for students from refugee backgrounds. As informed by the review of the literature in chapter two, the research question and aims are then presented. The Methodology section describes the study design, recruitment, and data collection as well as ethical considerations and the approach to data analysis. This is followed by the results of the current study. The chapter concludes with a discussion of study findings in relation to previous literature and outlines strengths and limitations, implications of the research, and directions for future research.

3.2 Introduction

Over 26 million people are registered as refugees worldwide, around half of whom are under the age of 18 (UNHCR, 2020). Mirroring international trends, in the last decade the number of refugees and asylum-seekers coming to Ireland has increased considerably (Irish Protective Office, 2021).

With a likelihood of experiencing significant trauma and adversity across the process of migration and resettlement, children and young people from refugee backgrounds are recognised as at increased risk of developing emotional and behavioural difficulties (Bronstein & Montgomery, 2011; Fazel et al., 2012; Sirin & Rogers-Sirin, 2015), with learning and academic outcomes also a concern (Dryden-Peterson, 2015; Moinolnolki & Han, 2017). These young people face challenges related not only to the forced nature and uprootedness of their experience, but also due to the conditions in countries of resettlement (Hodes, 2000). This includes separation from family members, having to adapt to a new culture and community, potential

experiences of isolation or marginalisation, as well as navigating the education system and instruction in a new language (Correa-Velez et al., 2010).

3.2.1 Resilience of Refugee youth

Despite an increased risk for mental health and academic difficulties due to experiences of adversity or trauma (Fazel et al., 2012), researchers are increasingly holding the viewpoint that it is important to view the experiences of refugee populations through a lens of recovery and resilience (Masten & Narayan, 2012; Pieloch et al., 2016; Simich, 2014). Influenced by personal and familial factors as well as the wider context and culture, resilience involves the positive adjustment of individuals under conditions of adversity (Porterfield et al., 2010), with numerous positive resource factors and negative risk factors identified (Luthar et al., 2000; Masten et al., 1990; Rutter, 1995). Thus, in seeking to support the continued development and wellbeing of youth from refugee backgrounds, there is a need to harness protective factors and minimise risk factors to support their continued positive adjustment across resettlement (Motti-Stefanidi & Masten, 2013).

3.2.2 Education in the Lives of Refugee Youth

Education is regarded as an important protective factor for all children, but perhaps particularly so for young people who have experienced extraordinary circumstances (Bethell et al., 2019; Moore & Ramirez, 2016). Schools are often one of the first systems that refugee children and young people engage with in a new country and, with the right supports, can play an important role in their lives (Birman et al., 2007; Children's Rights Alliance, 2019; Peterson et al., 2017). Schools can provide a sense of security, routine, and normality following displacement (Hayward, 2017). They can also facilitate connection with peers and provide access to required resources, all of which can contribute to the resilience of refugee youth (Peterson et al., 2017;

Sleijpen et al., 2017). Further, schools have a role in the acculturation process, introducing refugee youth to the culture and learning the country's language (Dryden-Peterson, 2017; Schachner et al., 2018).

Despite the important role of school in the lives of these young people, international literature also documents varied experiences of education for refugee and asylum-seeker youth (Selimos & Daniel, 2017), with more negative experiences likely to reduce the protective capacity that school can serve. Research indicates that refugee youth are more likely than native born students to be victims of bullying and perceive unfair treatment by teachers (UNHCR & UNICEF, 2019), with the stress of limited language proficiency and having to study through a new language also widely acknowledged (Children's Rights Alliance, 2019; Graham et al., 2016; Ćatibušić et al., 2019).

3.2.3 Research Exploring the Experiences of Refugee Youth

To date, research relating to educational experiences of refugee youth has been largely dominated by quantitative research and practitioner perspectives, with less attention given to what the youth themselves consider meaningful and significant in their lives (Kanics, 2020). In response to the need for greater understanding of how to best support refugee youth, there is a recent growth in qualitative research conducted with the young people themselves in order to explore their experiences of education in countries of resettlement (Bartlett et al., 2017; Bešić et al., 2020; Due et al., 2016; Guo et al., 2021; Hastings, 2012; Hek, 2005; Mendenhall et al., 2017; Ryu & Tuvilla, 2018; Stewart, 2012; Uptin et al., 2013; Ziaian et al., 2018). This growing body of research highlights the individuality of experiences both pre- and post-resettlement as well as the value of the in-depth knowledge that can be gained from exploratory qualitative approaches. However, to date no such research has been conducted within an Irish context.

3.2.4 The Present Study

Given the variability in national policies, procedures, and societal norms, as well as the diversity in experiences both pre- and post-migration, it is necessary to tailor supports to the unique needs of refugee youth in the country of resettlement. As Ireland continues to accept refugee and asylum-seeker youth, it is pertinent to better understand their experiences of education in order to provide appropriate supports. While important to understand and support their initial transition to education in Ireland, to ensure lasting integration attention also needs to be paid to the longer-term resettlement process of refugee youth (Children's Rights Alliance, 2019; Ní Raghallaigh, 2018; Ní Raghallaigh et al., 2016; Tozer et al., 2018).

Adopting a holistic approach to resilience (Betancourt et al., 2015; Masten & Narayan, 2012), the present study sought to gain an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of refugee and asylum-seeker youth in relation to their education in Ireland. Examining initial and more long-term experiences, the research aimed to identify factors within education which facilitate or hinder positive resettlement experiences, with the hope that the voices of refugee youth themselves will inform policy and practice within Irish schools.

3.3 Methodology

3.3.1 Research Design - Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

The research adopted an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach (Smith & Osborn, 2003; Smith et al., 2021), aiming to give voice to individual understandings of experience while also remain sensitive to the diversity of participant experiences. IPA is considered particularly valuable when researching an area that has previously lacked exploration (Eatough & Smith, 2008; Reid et al., 2005) as is often the case with experiences of individuals from minority populations (Noon, 2018).

3.3.2 Sampling and Recruitment

Participants were purposively selected due to their lived experience of the phenomenon of interest (Mertens, 2015). As outlined below, strict inclusion criteria ensured as homogenous a sample as possible (Patton, 2002; Smith et al., 2021). Details of the rationale for each criterion is presented in Appendix I.

- Currently enrolled in post-primary mainstream education in Ireland
- Aged between 12 and 17 years old
- First generation refugee or asylum-seeker status disclosed to the school
- In Ireland a minimum of 4 years
- English language proficiency to a level comfortable to discuss experiences

Recruitment was facilitated through gatekeepers with school principals asked to put forward participants whom they felt the interview process would be an appropriate and comfortable forum (see Appendix J for school information sheet). Principals shared study information and consent/assent forms with eligible students and their

parents/guardians (see Appendix K), with voluntary consent sought prior to contacting the researcher to begin data collection.

3.3.3 Participants

Study participants were nine post-primary students attending five mainstream post-primary schools located in Northern Connaught and Leinster in the Republic of Ireland. Four of the five schools were mixed and located in rural communities, the fifth being an all-girls school located in a more urban area. A summary of participant information is presented in Table 3, with thumbnail sketches of participants presented in Appendix L. To protect participant anonymity pseudonyms were allocated, length of time since arrival rounded to the nearest year, as well as countries of origin grouped. The four male and five female students were aged between 15 and 17 years old and had arrived in Ireland between four and six years ago. All students from Southern African countries had previous experience of education through English; students from Middle Eastern countries had no experience of English prior to coming to Ireland.

Table 3

Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	School year group	Region of Origin	Years in Ireland
Abbud	Male	16	5th year	Middle East	4
Chad	Male	15	Junior Certificate year	Middle East	4
Badia	Female	17	Leaving Cert Applied	Middle East	5
Ghaya	Female	15	Leaving Cert Applied	Middle East	5
Zola	Female	17	Leaving Certificate year	Southern Africa	4
Kofi	Male	15	5th year	Southern Africa	4
Omari	Male	17	Transition Year	Southern Africa	4
Nala	Female	15	Junior Certificate year	Southern Africa	5[a]
Ada	Female	15	Leaving Cert Applied	Southern Africa	6[a]

[a] Participant joined education in Ireland at primary school level, all others joined formal education in Ireland at post-primary level

3.3.4 Measures

With a requirement for data in the form of "rich, detailed, first-person" accounts of experience (Smith et al., 2009, p.56), this study utilised semi-structured interviews with the option of drawing throughout the interview to support discussion (Barker & Weller, 2003; Ogina, 2012). An interview guide (see Appendix M) was developed

based on research questions which arose from a review of the empirical literature. It included the experience of starting school in Ireland as compared to current experiences, exploration of helpful or more difficult aspects of school, the role of language, as well as asking participants to share advice for other students who may come to Ireland, or advice for peers and teachers in Ireland. Questions were open ended to allow participants to raise topics not previously considered, with prompts utilised to encourage elaboration of discussion of experiences (Robson & McCartan, 2016; Smith & Osborn, 2003). Drawings were not intended for analytical purposes but to ensure accessibility and engagement, as well as support a relaxed atmosphere throughout data collection (Barker & Weller, 2003).

3.3.5 Pilot Study

The interview guide was informally piloted with DECPsy peers in relation to the suitability of content and phrasing of questions prior to a pilot study with two eligible students from participating schools. The researcher listened back to audio recordings to reflect upon the process and content of the interview (Kim, 2011). Due to the limited access to schools due to Covid-19 restrictions and minimal changes to the research process arising from the pilot, the data of the second interview was included in the final analysis. Although the first participant consented to engaging for the purpose of the pilot, they did not wish for their data to be shared as part of the study.

3.3.6 Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted by the researcher between May and October 2021. Interviews were conducted through English and audio recorded with consent and assent. A visual schedule was utilised to support participants' understanding of the interview process (see Appendix N). In the context of Covid-19 restrictions, ethical approval was granted for online data collection and two interviews took place over Zoom. Remaining interviews took place in person

within a private room in the participant schools. Interviews ranged from 29 to 63 minutes, with an average duration of 43 minutes.

Each interview began with an informal conversation about participants interests and favourite subjects. The researcher also shared information about their favourite subjects at school, and assured participants that they were not a teacher, but a researcher interested in hearing their unique stories. Interviews ended with a summary of the content to check if the key points accurately reflected participants' understanding of the interview discussion. Four participants drew throughout the process while the remainder opted for the verbal discussion only. After the interview, the researcher reiterated the next steps of the research and how their stories would be used to support the write up of the research. The researcher shared an information sheet outlining contact details of local support services with participants and their schools (see Appendix O).

Important to establish the reliability and validity of qualitative research, the researcher evaluated the study against specific quality criteria (Yardley, 2008). Discussed further in chapter four, the research was also considered against markers of 'trustworthiness' of the data and study findings, including that of credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1986).

3.3.7 Researcher Reflexivity

IPA explicitly acknowledges and embraces the role of the researcher as the data collection instrument (Smith et al., 2009). Reflexivity is central to ensuring transparency in the research process, with provision of information on the researcher's background lending to the dependability of the study (Lander & Sheldrake, 2010).

For this, I am switching to my voice, Sophie, a Trainee Educational and Child Psychologist. A white Irish woman in her twenties who grew up in rural Ireland, I was explicitly aware that my own experiences of education in Ireland were likely to be

different to those I interviewed. Cognisant of this, I went into the research process open-minded and flexible. Throughout the research, I was supervised by two research supervisors who acted as a sounding board, providing methodological guidance, and engaging in peer debriefing across the project, particularly in relation to the analysis and interpretation of narratives. I kept a journal throughout the process, from initial interest in the topic, field notes relating to data collection, and through to write up, to prompt reflection on my own values, beliefs, and interests and how these may have influenced the research in any way (Ortlipp, 2008).

3.3.8 Ethical Considerations

The study was guided by the Psychological Society of Ireland 'Code of Professional Ethics' (Psychological Society of Ireland, 2019) and Children's First National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children (Department of Child and Youth Affairs, 2017). Ethical approval was granted from Mary Immaculate Research Ethics Committee, Limerick (See Appendix P).

The intersectionality of conducting research with young people from refugee or asylum seeker backgrounds resulted in specific ethical and methodological considerations to ensure fair, relevant, and valid research (Hynes, 2003; Porterfield et al., 2010). In line with international children's rights and Irish policy, the researcher asked the young people about their own experiences (Flynn, 2017; Lundy, 2007). To ensure informed voluntary consent, relevant information was provided in a clear format with translations of parent information/consent forms provided to schools to utilise as required (see Appendix K). Acknowledging issues of trust and transparency, particularly in research with child and refugee populations (Porterfield et al., 2010), participants and their parents/guardians were informed that participation was for research purposes only with no other outcome as a result. Interview topics were outlined on information sheets (Smith et al., 2009) with it stated clearly that

participants would not have to answer any question they did not feel comfortable in doing so (see Appendix K). Given the open-ended nature of interviews, iterative consent was sought throughout to ensure comfort in discussion around any unanticipated areas (Seagle et al., 2020). Participants and their parents/guardians were informed of the use of pseudonyms throughout, with no identifiable characteristics or anecdotes reported in the study (e.g., country of origin, details of school, specific aspects of prior experience).

While being given the space to speak and be heard can be a positive experience (Blackwell & Melzak, 2000; Flynn, 2013, 2017), the nature of the study required participants to reflect on their experiences which could potentially resurface traumatic or distressing experiences. The effect of the interviews on participants was continuously monitored with the researcher, a TEP, sensitive to body language and indications of discomfort, ensuring not to encourage a participant to continue if uncomfortable or distressed. Space was provided to each participant at the end of the interview to discuss any issues with a designated member of school staff, with specific protocols in the event of student distress developed in conjunction with each school.

3.3.9 Data Analysis

The researcher transcribed audio recorded interviews verbatim into Microsoft Word. Names and any potentially identifiable information were removed at this stage to protect confidentiality of participants.

Consistent with the study design, as outlined in Table 4 data analysis largely followed Smith et al.'s (2009) six phase approach, utilising updated terminology from Smith et al.'s (2021) approach. The researcher initially listened to recordings and read transcripts simultaneously to ensure full immersion in the data, with transcripts analysed manually to allow for flexibility and creativity throughout the process. Of

note, ongoing interpretation and refining during the development of the narrative write-up is considered part of the analysis (Smith et al., 2009).

Table 4

Description of Stages in Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis Process

1.	Reading and re-reading	Analysis began with close examination of each transcript, with the researcher referring to field notes as a way of improving rigour of the study (Vaismoradi et al., 2013)
2.	Exploratory commenting	The researcher made exploratory notes in the right-hand margin of transcripts relating to any aspects which appeared significant. Initial annotating was done line by line, with short chunks of the data numbered. Presented in Appendix Q, notes were divided into three areas and colour coded into descriptive, conceptual, and linguistic (Smith et al., 2009)
3.	Developing experiential statements	Exploratory notes were used to identity patterns and move from elemental experiences to the development of experiential statements, with the researcher assigning labels that they felt captured salient aspects for each participant (Smith et al. 2021)
4.	Searching for connections across themes	Connections were made between experiential statements which shared commonalities, moving toward more abstract and interpretative Personal Experiential Themes (PETs). A table of PETs was compiled for each interview (see Appendix Q)
5.	Moving to the next case	Central to IPA and its idiographic nature, the above-described process was repeated with each interview transcript, approaching each case as individual (Smith et al., 2009)
6.	Looking for patterns across cases	PETs were aggregated and printed for each interview. The researcher creatively applied a process of grouping, re-grouping, and refining in order to identify patterns of similarity and difference across cases (see Appendix R). This involved going between transcripts, individual analysis, and reviewing field notes, with a final table of Group Experiential Themes (GETs) and group level sub-themes identified from the data.

Although often in qualitative research there is an assumption that the most common thing in the dataset is the most important, convergence and divergence within themes is central to IPA (Smith & Osborn, 2003). Final PETs were identified based both on their prevalence, recurrent if central to four of more participant accounts, as well as the salience of the essence of the themes captured within individual accounts (see Table 5). Verbatim quotes were chosen to reflect a pertinent aspect or a divergent perspective within each theme and subtheme (Nizza et al., 2021; Shenton, 2004), with themes presented through a summary of participants' views, capturing shared and unique features of experiences (Smith et al., 2013). Within the results, verbatim extracts are presented in the format of (pseudonym, chunk number).

3.4 Results

The analysis detailed three group experiential themes which relate to varied aspects of participants experiences of education in Ireland. Group level sub-themes illustrate discrete yet inter-related areas within each theme. Presented in Figure 2, themes included participants persistence in learning, their understanding of various aspects of their schools, as well as the necessity to view their experiences of school in the context of their wider lives. Table 5 presents the prevalence of themes across cases, with one of the key features of the data being the individuality of perspectives despite commonality of experiences - "we're all just human beings with different stories" (Ada, 17).

Figure 2

Summary of Group Experiential Themes and Group Level Subthemes

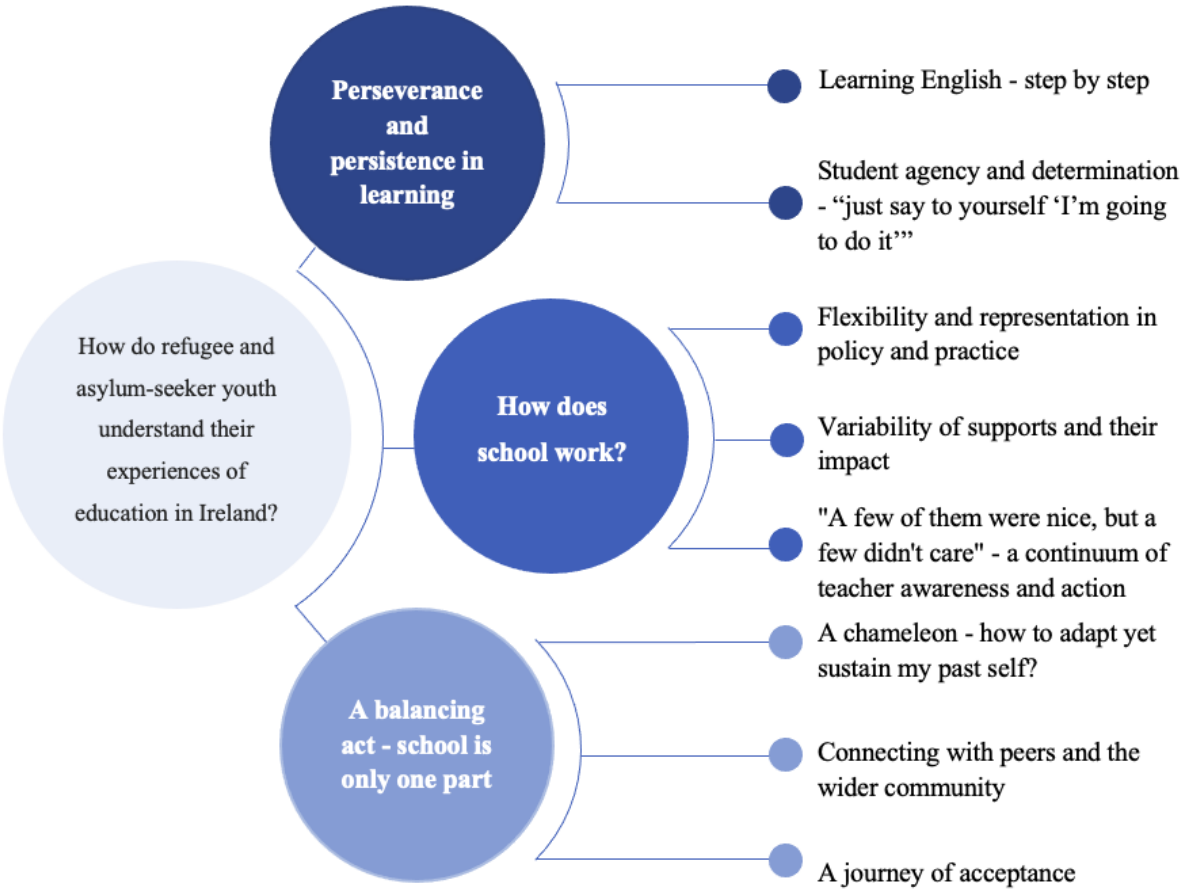


Table 5

Prevalence of Group Experiential Themes and Group Level Subthemes

Themes	Participants								
Group Experiential Themes	Abbud	Chad	Ghaya	Badia	Zola	Kofi	Omari	Nala	Ada
Group Level Subthemes									
Perseverance and persistence in learning									
Learning English - step by step	x	x	x	x	x			x	x
Student agency and determination	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
How does school work?									
Flexibility and representation in policy and practice	x			x	x	x		x	x
Variability of supports and their impact	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
A continuum of teacher awareness and action	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
A balancing act - school is only one part									
A chameleon – how to adapt yet sustain my past self?	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Connecting with peers and the wider community	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
A journey of acceptance	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

3.4.1 Theme one: Perseverance and Persistence in Learning

Participants held a profound self-awareness of their strengths and limitations as well as a determination to succeed despite any challenges they may face. Examining the ways in which they sought to make sense of their personal learning experiences, two subthemes were identified.

Learning English - Step by Step

A perseverance in learning was particularly central to the accounts of those who had the task of learning English.

"It's always about language first of all" (Abbud, 47). Language skills were recognised as impacting significantly upon various aspects of their personal, social, and academic lives - a prerequisite for connecting with peers and supporting their parents with translation in the community, and necessary to succeed in education in Ireland - "you have to learn the language, know the language, and you learn for your future and to get a job" (Ghaya, 2).

Language learning was constructed as a complex and somewhat daunting undertaking. Perhaps in an attempt to quench the vastness of this task, participant accounts progressed across various stages of learning, starting "from zero English" (Badia, 4) and approaching it in a step-by-step process. With a distinct requirement to first learn the language for communication, increased proficiency in the initial months brought with it greater opportunities for social connection – "I think before I was just scared to find people, to speak with somebody like, it's so hard. Then after when you get your language, you get to chat to friends" (Badia, 24). Next was utilising the language for learning, difficult to adjust to subject specific language while still in the process of learning English. Chad reflected a shared view that it was "so hard with all the new subjects and through a new language as well" (Chad, 8). An ongoing process

rather than a distinct endpoint, progression was not always linear. Although in Ireland nearly 6 years Badia continued to struggle with areas of learning - “still, for me, it’s so difficult to write” (Badia, 19), within her account eager that the persistence of her difficulties was heard.

With a conscious awareness of the steps to their language learning, a picture emerged of schools not always recognising or accepting of it being a staged process. Once perceived as able to chat and interact with peers there appeared to be a premature assumption of fluency from their teachers. This in turn resulted in increased expectations as well as reduced tolerance for difficulties, where many participants felt an urgency and pressure to progress in their learning, Abbud recollecting that after the initial months he “got given out to so much for doing so many mistakes in the language or in the subject itself” (Abbud, 16).

Despite the complexity of the process, learning English was a fundamental way in which the young people came to adapt to life in Ireland and viewed as a gateway to experiencing success in their new worlds. Throughout their stories, increased proficiency equated to a general easing into school life as well as a sense of pride regarding their progression. However, with a deep recognition of the continuation of language learning, there was a shared wish for others to be aware and understanding of it being an ongoing process.

Student Agency and Determination - “just say to yourself ‘I’m going to do it’”

Participants’ motivation to succeed sat alongside an acute awareness of potential barriers, with each making a conscious effort to support their own learning.

Particularly evident for those who had the initial task of learning English, participants utilised a range of creative independent strategies to support their learning. This included encouraging themselves to go out and speak with people in their

communities, imitating friends or teachers with their siblings at home to practice English, or even keeping a personal dictionary. The importance of applying prior learning and skills, making links where possible was also evident - “I had a book like this notebook - the left was English, and right was Arabic, and I’d write something in English and translate it to Arabic, and then I’d read the words for something that I needed” (Abbud, 51).

Media and technology served as crucial learning tools, utilising the internet to support homework, informal learning through watching TV with subtitles or listening to lyrics, and even, for Chad, developing English through playing the PlayStation - “because it’s not face to face, it’s easier” (Chad, 7). There was also a sense that the pandemic had resulted in increased opportunities to utilise such strategies, where online learning and virtual classes providing more time and control over learning and perhaps a more comfortable environment to make mistakes - “during the covid period and online schooling, I actually took my time a lot in learning things, I got better in maths and engineering and when I came back to school, things were much easier” (Abbud, 31).

Across accounts, explicit depictions of student agency were coupled with an undeniable self-reliance, where beneath participants enthusiasm to support their learning was a sense of forcing themselves to do so.

“Even if you don’t like the people, encourage yourself to talk to them…even if you don’t like a subject, even if you hate it, you have to do it, like get yourself to like it, just say ‘I like it, I’m going to do it’…life is hard and if you do one thing and you feel it’s hard, you have to go again and even if you fail lots of times, you have to do it again” (Ghaya, 38).

A reflection of the majority, this extract alluded to the difficulties Ghaya and her family had faced prior to coming to Ireland, appearing to owe her determination to such challenges. However, demonstrating the individuality of perceptions and experiences, her sister appeared to question this norm of pushing through difficulties. Badia disclosed her continued struggles due to negative memories of prior education, emphasising a need to be kind to yourself and try to not become overwhelmed by external pressures.

"My advice to new students, like I was, if you can do it, do it. If you can't do the reading or the writing, do the speaking, do what you like and what suits you. Don't panic for the people around you, to the teacher, to the family, to the other students" (Badia, 28).

Perhaps in this extract Badia delineates another aspect of student agency, that of the strength to resist normative expectations.

With varied facets to their determination, each participant had put a pressure on themselves to progress in Ireland. A perceived onus on them to make the most of their opportunities, in contemplating future plans and aspirations participants shared challenges related to personal competence as well as external resources. Echoing the majority, Zola noted the need to work hard as well as potential financial barriers to progression.

"I would really like to go to college, but I don't know. My mom said that the chances might be that if I don't get a scholarship, I might not go directly 'cause we don't have the funds for it, but I guess I will have to work really hard to get that scholarship because, I really do want to go to college" (Zola, 44).

Of note, all participants from Southern Africa were eager to pursue third level education whereas participants from Middle Eastern regions more commonly expressed

a desire to work after finishing school. This may suggest that their more interrupted prior experiences of schooling as well as the added task of learning English on arrival had implications for both progression within secondary education and their aspirations for further education.

Despite a marked awareness of potential barriers across their educational journeys, participants presented such hurdles as further insistence to persist. While the determination and perseverance emanating from their stories may indeed be a personal quality it appears most likely a response to the context in which they find themselves time and time again.

3.4.2 Theme two: How does School Work?

Participants shared largely positive impressions of school in Ireland and were grateful for the opportunities it has afforded them. However, inferred from accounts were various aspects which could lend to feeling more understood and supported within their schools. Their reflections were largely across three levels of their school experiences – the policies and guidelines, the availability and type of supports, as well as their perceptions of the role of teachers.

Flexibility and Representation in Policy and Practice

Each participant endeavoured to feel heard and represented within their schools. However, in providing advice to their schools, participants offered a glimpse into an apparent inflexibility in policies and guidelines which impacted on them feeling understood and accepted. Striving to come up with a solution, participants spoke of the value of choice and voice. Kofi described how being able to choose subjects contributed to him feeling success in his learning -

"The subjects in 2nd year were already given so we didn't get to choose. In 3rd year I had a choice of my own subjects, so the subjects I chose were those that I felt like I could actually do good in and be interested in learning" (Kofi, 29).

Conversely, Abbud expressed his frustration at a lack of flexibility regarding requirements despite him just starting to learn English.

"I was forced to do the exams and that was really tough. I only came down to the school at Christmas, and then we did the subjects for three and a half months and jumped to the exams and they were completely un-understandable for me" (Abbud, 16).

Perhaps most central to Abbud's account, the compulsory examinations curtailed his pride in his progression, adamant that any new student arriving in the middle of the year should "not be forced to do the exams, it's not the most important thing" (Abbud, 44).

The young men in particular spoke of the value of feeling heard within their schools, striving for their views to be incorporated into daily practice, eager to have a say and for everyone's opinion to be heard, whether asking individual preferences or including a wider range of voices on student councils. With a key element throughout of personal experiences being political, consideration of student voice is perhaps even more important due to a perceived lack of control over their journeys thus far - "for any new student that is a refugee coming to Ireland, they have freedom of speech, they can say whatever they feel like, so if they don't want to do this they don't have to" (Abbud, 49).

More salient across the young women's accounts was the importance of feeling represented within their schools, yet a reality rarely experienced. They expressed a wish for their schools to celebrate cultural and religious events and for subjects such as

history and religion to encompass diverse groups. There was a distinct sense that this would likely contribute to increased feelings of belongingness as well as the added benefit of deepening others awareness of diversity.

"In this school there's no special days, like history or culture. I would like if there was. In Ireland they celebrate Christmas, Halloween, they celebrate everything, but for us…they just celebrate in the Christian religion, but I would like it to be in all religions, Muslim, Buddhism, any religion, they should celebrate. That would be good, to get people to know about the other religions and that's good for the school also, for everyone else, and for us to feel like you're in your home, your country" (Ghaya, 37).

Extending this discussion of cultural celebration, Nala emphasised the need to go beyond a checklist of activities, but recognition and respect for diversity to underscore all policy and practice.

"In our school we're only allowed to dye our hair a natural hair colour, so my friend [from the accommodation centre] came into school with blonde hair because it's natural 'cause people have blonde hair. But the teacher gave out to her about why she dyed her hair, and she told the teacher that it's a natural hair colour but then, it was as if the teacher wasn't acknowledging that what was in the school rules was natural hair colours and blonde is a natural hair colour. They think that if we have a different kind of skin colour…like how she was black skin colour, so she can't have blonde hair because black people don't have blonde hair, but there's actually some of us who do have blonde hair as well" (Nala, 21).

Speaking of her friend's experience Nala switched between the third person to the collective narrative, likely also to have felt the effects of rigid adherence to normative policies leading to exclusionary practices.

With a restrained frustration across accounts there is indication that not everyone is equally accounted for within school policies. Where guidelines and practices did not encompass diversity or allow for flexibility dependent on students' individual circumstances, this led to participants questioning whether they were truly accepted within their schools.

Variability of Supports and their Impact

The impact of varied supports was visible across accounts; what participants felt worked well and areas less effective in supporting their adjustment and learning.

Reflective of reactive strategies in place for refugees in general, pathways to education in Ireland and the nature of supports considerably varied. The positive impact of initial language supports was palpable, ranging from individual tutoring or specific classes within accommodation centres to individualised or small group supports when they joined their schools - "it was a special class for us, from the zero English they help us learn how to speak, the writing and reading" (Badia, 4). While experiences of support were more conspicuous in accounts of those who had the task of learning English, there appeared to be some "mentoring for everyone coming from the accommodation centres" (Kofi, 8), but some confusion regarding the target of supports, for Nala, adapted on a whim to support her "to learn Irish as [she] already knew English" (Nala, 2).

The benefit and enjoyment gleaned from initial intensive supports was contiguous with a perception of support significantly reducing after the initial integration period, a feeling of being somewhat deserted once they had grasped the basics. While students continued to access some language supports in school, Abbud appeared to question the model of support - "it's in general, for people with dyslexia, for people who do not talk Irish" (Abbud, 35).

Notably, more positive attitudes were attributed to schools initially attended in more urban areas, with a perception that these schools were better equipped and more used to supporting students from refugee backgrounds. Suggesting the importance of collaboration, especially at the early stages, Ghaya felt that it was the close relationship between her school and accommodation centre that led to such individualised supports - “they were aware of everything. The hotel we were in, they used to tell the school everything” (Ghaya, 11).

Despite sharing similar experiences, two students offered drastically different perspectives on assessment within their school. While for Kofi it demonstrated the school’s eagerness to support him and determine his strengths and needs, as outlined in the following extract, Zola viewed it as irrelevant and undermining her ability.

“After I started here, they called each one of us who lived at the centre to do this task. We had to read things, and they didn’t tell us what the reason was behind it. It was the easiest English words and I felt like they thought we didn’t know English. Okay, in some situations there are kids who are not really good in English yet, but we had already been here for a really long time, we converse with them, we do our homework, we never showed any signs of like struggling, so I personally felt really undermined. I know many parts of Africa are not really developed in English but it’s not necessary to generalise it on all of us” (Zola, 18).

Across their stories participants shared this desire to be seen as individual, not categorised based on their country of origin or their status in Ireland, with the above extract highlighting potential consequences of adopting a one-size-fits all approach to both assessment and provision of support.

Extending from the support gained within one-to-one or small group settings, the value in feeling part of the larger class group was also clear. Easing into larger

classes for practical subjects such as PE or Home Economics provided opportunities to connect with peers while also allowed for less pressured learning environments in which to feel success - "definitely my woodwork and metal really helped [me settle in] at the start, because those are not all just reading and learning. It's just hands on" (Chad, 10). An extension of such thinking, three participants had chosen to do Leaving Certificate Applied with a mutual feeling that practical subjects were more suited to their learning and less pressured as regards language.

Overall, participant experiences are indicative of schools adjusting to support refugee youth within the context of finite resources. The need for student-centred approaches to assessment and support is evident, recognising each students' abilities and experiences as individual rather than a group with collective needs.

"A few of them were nice, but a few didn't care" – A Continuum of Teacher Awareness and Action

Perceptions of teachers ranged from extremely helpful and supportive to, in some cases, biased and unfair.

Whether an intentional method of support within their schools or a natural tendency to seek a close relationship with one specific teacher, participants valued the support and motivation gained from this relationship. Having one teacher looking out for and checking in with them contributed to feeling supported both academically and socially in their schools, encouraging and facilitating opportunities to connect with peers, and for Ada, her teacher fostering her interest in baking.

"She's the teacher who encouraged me to do stuff 'cause she saw that's what I loved and that's what I was good at, so during covid she sent me some recipes, she even sent me TikToks, she was like 'you should try this out'…she has really helped me the most, she's the one who has been there, understanding me" (Ada, 41).

Notably, gratitude for support from teachers was accompanied by a sense that subtlety and discrete supports were most appropriate. Like many, Abbud perceived attention from teachers as distinguishing him as different from his peers, something he was eager to avoid –

"There is a negative and positive explanation of it - I did like the help, it was really good support, but at the same time when everyone is quiet and the teacher just walks over to me and everyone looks at me in the classroom, it just felt awkward" (Abbud, 15).

This extract emphasises a shared wish to be seen as regular teenagers, with overt attention from teachers potentially disrupting the key task of fitting in.

With an implied reality of microaggressions across accounts, a key role of teachers was seen as responding to discrimination in class. Likely to impact on students' feelings of acceptance and, quite possibly, their safety within their schools, illustrated by Zola in the extract below, this was not always the case.

"Funny enough, yesterday there was an incident. We were having a sub teacher and there were these boys sitting behind her and one constantly mimicking her accent as she wasn't from Ireland. It's not something new, he constantly tries to mimic an African accent. Most of the time teachers will brush it off and never talk about it but she was the first to put him on the spot and call him out for it. She was like 'it is wrong, it offends other kids and makes them feel uncomfortable and maybe it's something you shouldn't do'. And that was probably the first time that I've seen a teacher stand up to him" (Zola, 29).

Notably, Zola felt that having teachers from diverse backgrounds "was something that made them a little bit more relatable to us" (Zola, 20), perhaps due to first-hand experience of feeling biases in action?

With a profound self-awareness of personal strengths and struggles, there was an unshakable disappointment where some teachers were perceived as indifferent to students' unique journeys - the huge transition in coming to Ireland, the significance of earlier experiences of education, as well as the potential impact of trauma and adversity.

"The teachers are like "why are you not doing your work" and they won't understand the position that you are in. They don't understand the feeling or where you come from, or what's still back there or what you're thinking of… because I have so many things in my head and if you have lots of things in your head you won't concentrate, even like 1% in studying or school" (Badia, 45).

Participants also advised teachers to be more understanding of student presentations in the classroom, Kofi noting that "some students may break the rules a little bit because they don't know the rules, someone has to explain it to them" (Kofi, 42).

With teachers presented as more understanding in the initial months, there was a distinct portrayal of only having a certain period where it was acceptable to struggle. Indicative of a need for greater continuity and consistency in support, Abbud described how increased expectations and reduced tolerance from teachers negatively impacted on his adjustment and learning.

"Between those three months [since I joined], teachers changed. The teachers who were actually giving me support, half of them just went to different classes or just took days off, and then new teachers came in and they didn't really know that I knew anything, so I got given out to so much for doing so many mistakes in the language or in the subject itself. I couldn't just say, 'oh, I'm new to the subject'. I just got it bad at that time" (Abbud, 16).

The impact of some teachers' assumptions of student ability was also apparent, with prior learning not always acknowledged or valued. Although proud of their previous education, each of the female students from Southern Africa perceived a lack of faith in their ability to succeed due to their background; Ada feeling that her teacher "judged [her] for where [she] was coming from and also because [she was] black" (Ada, 14), while Zola noted that her teacher continued to skip over her in class when it comes to reading excerpts of the class textbook each day. Thus, it was not surprising that the most persistent advice was for teachers to be open to students' individual strengths and needs and sensitive to their unique experiences, and that if teachers were curious rather than assuming this would contribute to feeling "more comfortable and more confident in the class" (Ghaya, 28). In this way Kofi felt his experience "was much easier because I think they understood what I'm going through, it's a new country and all but they're supportive" (Kofi, 25).

Despite varied perceptions participants displayed a maturity within their accounts, not blaming or criticising but feeling that teachers "try their best" (Abbud, 3) within the context of finite resources and rigid systems. There was also an impression of teachers' uncertainty on how to approach students, sometimes asking inappropriate questions such as Africa being a nice holiday spot, or a fear of political correctness and the potential of offending students.

"I think most teachers know what's happening with refugees here, but maybe they're not that open to talk about it, or they just haven't got the chance or the platform to go around talking about it. So even if they know, they might be scared 'but what if I talk about this and then they're offended and then I get into trouble'…like what's allowed or not okay to say" (Omari, 36).

Overall, teachers played a critical role in supporting both academic and social pursuits and contributing to a welcoming and safe school environment. However,

participants reflections upon teachers' awareness and action are suggestive of a need for greater compassion towards their unique experiences. Most important was having a genuine interest in each student and endeavouring to understand what might be going on for them rather than responding based on prior assumptions, with Ghaya advising that teachers should "put yourself in their shoes. if you went to a new country, you would be the same, in the same position they are in now" (Ghaya, 30).

3.4.3 Theme three: A Balancing Act of which School is only one Part

This final theme explores participants lives in totality, choosing to bring in wider aspects of their lives which they perceived as essential to make sense of their school experiences – the process of adapting to a new culture, connecting with peers and their wider communities, as well as it ultimately being a journey of acceptance.

A Chameleon – How to Adapt yet Sustain my Past Self?

In recollecting the acculturation process, participants highlighted the central role of school in adapting to "the Irish ways" (Omari, 27). There was a balance between their wish to preserve their linguistic, cultural, and religious backgrounds while also fit in and feel accepted within their schools. Participants shared a willingness to hide part of themselves to fit in, which resulted in presenting different sides of themselves depending on context - "When I'm with my parents or my family I'm a totally different person. When I'm with my friends, I'm just another different person. I kind of have to go between the two cultures" (Abbud, 22).

Particularly for participants who had the initial task of learning English, there was a conflict in utilising their first languages in school - "it feels good though to have English, but I don't want to forget my own language" (Ghaya, 50). Largely perceived as a barrier to learning English, school echoed this idea of it being a hindrance with

Abbud recollecting his first teacher in Ireland telling him he "would have it a lot more tough" (Abbud, 11) if he continued speaking Arabic with peers.

This challenge to sustain first languages extended to cultural and religious practices. Driven by a lack of awareness and representation of diversity, "because most of the teachers don't know about our religion or culture too much" (Ghaya, 26), participants accepted these areas as beyond the realms of school, instead viewing their parents as role models. However, for two of the young women in particular, explicit expression of religious beliefs was seen as a barrier to integration. With a common thread across accounts of sharing anecdotes of friends' experiences, perhaps in an attempt to sustain more positive self-presentations, Zola reflected on her friend reconsidering wearing a hijab in order to feel accepted by peers.

"When [my friend] first came here, she's Muslim so she wore a hijab, she told me that she thinks that she's going to take hers off because she feels she's not getting enough friends and her hijab could be the reason…and the next day she took her hijab off, and then, I guess she was right. Now everyone was her friend, everyone was complimenting her hair. For me, when she had hijab, nobody wanted to be her friend, but now she has it off everybody wants to be her friend. It's not my experience but that's what I have felt" (Zola, 25).

A stark example of feeling othered, this also begs the question if those who choose to express their cultural or religious beliefs through varied practices may find adjustment more difficult, especially at the stage of adolescence where image may be particularly important.

Whether due to their choice of clothing or the way they talked or looked, participants faced being identified as embodying difference, something not always welcomed by their peers or teachers. From day one, Nala drew attention to the fact that

“it was [her] first time being surrounded by a lot of white people, ‘cause usually [back home] it’s mostly black people so that was different as well” (Nala, 2). This extract portrays her sense of difference, perhaps also reflecting the isolation that some participants reported after first joining their schools.

With anticipation of negative attitudes, it is not surprising that some participants were hesitant in sharing too much of their backgrounds within school, unsure whether assumptions about their country of origin or status in Ireland would result in them being treated differently - “I feel like I more fit in because not everyone knows your background and not everyone’s going to judge you for your background.” (Ada, 14). Again, expressing an empathy towards their peers and teachers, such attitudes were largely attributed to a lack of prior awareness of or contact with refugee students, and suggested as something which could be improved.

“I think it would definitely be helpful if students actually understood what we are going through, because I don’t really think that they understand why we had to come and all, but it would be good if before [I came here] they had talked about it more” (Kofi, 42).

Irrespective of ethnicity, country of origin, or religion, a struggle with identity binds participant experiences. They are in a process of making sense of where they have come from, attempting to sustain their past selves alongside their current lives in Ireland. While proud of their backgrounds, participants contemplated whether they belong and how to adapt to feel like they do – proud chameleons but perhaps no option but to?

Connecting with Peers and the Wider Community

Asked what helped her settle in her school Ada echoed a sentiment of all when she replied that "it was the friendships I had, and the connection, like somebody just welcoming you into their friend group" (Ada, 5).

The far-reaching impact of friends radiated across accounts, supporting learning, assisting understanding of school rules, and introducing them to wider social networks, all of which contributed to a sense of belonging. However, participants also reflected on challenges in connecting with peers including language barriers, slotting into established friendship groups, and the reality of it taking time to develop trusting relationships, particularly within post-primary settings.

The importance of connecting with peers outside of school was central to accounts, with bonds then filtering through to support school experiences. Essential "to meet people outside of school, and enjoy things with [peers], not like learning in school" (Badia, 35), participant experiences included meeting peers during the summer before starting school, attending youth clubs, and particularly for the boys, joining local sports clubs. Kofi and Omari viewed Gaelic football as a significant outlet in their lives in Ireland and something which supported integration in their communities.

"One of the most important things that helped me settle was the sport, playing Gaelic. It really lets you know about the community, the type of people that's around, and that's where you mostly meet your friends, it really connects you with people." (Kofi, 20).

Their accounts depicted sport as providing them with an identity admired by mainstream youth which ultimately contributed to feeling accepted and included in their schools - "by playing sport I just had to interact with everyone and my teammates, they were open with me" (Omari, 8). With teachers apparently also aware of this, each

of the young men were encouraged to get involved in sport, perhaps seen as an informal environment to find common ground; a forum in which norms can be pushed aside?

Undoubtedly, the most pertinent area of connection in participants lives was the wider refugee and asylum-seeking community in Ireland. This extended beyond individuals from the same country or who spoke the same language but comprised a diverse group of individuals with the shared experience of being forced to flee their homes. Participants expressed their gratitude for peers from accommodation centres in supporting their adjustment to school, the language and learning, as well as dealing with challenges "like getting used to the people, remembering names, remembering classes where we have to go." (Kofi, 22). With a tension throughout participant dialectics of wanting to be understood but not necessarily wanting to share their full stories, participants presented their refugee peers as a source of security and solidarity amongst "people who wouldn't understand what happened us back home" (Nala, 28). Coupled with the strength gleaned from these friendships however was the stress when separated. Transitions in Ireland resulted in being forced to leave those peers who played a key role in their adjustment to life in Ireland, and particularly for the young women, meaningful connection was hard to gain but even harder to lose.

"The move from my first school to here was the one that really made me sad. We cried, me and my friends cried for so long because we got to form this whole friendship and now, all of a sudden, we had to move" (Zola, 13).

Invariably, meaningful connection with peers was central to more positive perceptions of their school experiences, where often a shared interest or understanding of eachother outside of school facilitated. Words of advice to their classmates highlighted the positive impact of openness and taking an interest in new students, and in the context of participants making every effort to fit in and succeed in Ireland,

participants help a shared view that it could be helpful if other students made the first move.

"it's no harm to greet the person first, you're showing that you're welcoming them, and then that person will be like okay, I know it's my first day here but at least I know that's who that one person is" (Omari, 21).

A Journey of Acceptance

With numerous areas of their lives in flux, acceptance was a fundamental component in shaping participants' adjustment to their lives in Ireland.

Across accounts the emotional impact of the initial transition to education in Ireland was evident, constructed as a double-edged sword – confused but relieved, nervous yet excited.

"I felt excited and at the same time I felt anxious and nervous…you have all these mixed emotions in your head and mixed feelings, and you don't know what's going to happen or not, I just probably had the fear of the unknown" (Ada, 4).

Mirroring pre-migration experiences, participants continued to experience multiple transitions in Ireland. Each transition brought its own challenges, whether moving to different accommodation, a new school, or a different location in Ireland. Like many others Ghaya described her third move in Ireland as particularly difficult, clear that joining a new school after being in Ireland several years can feel just as significant as the initial transition.

"When I started in this school it was so hard for me to move to another new school, it was a huge change, a 3rd change, with new people, new teachers, new students, lots of things new. I was a little bit shy, and it was stressful, the third move" (Ghaya, 14).

Keen to share the non-linear progression of resettlement, there was a collective expression of resettlement not being static but requiring ongoing flexibility and adaption, and likely continuing to do so.

Striving to present themselves as having overcome challenges, participants presented their experiences as a continuum of adjustment over time, easing due to increased competency in the language, familiarity with culture and the development of friendships, as well as increased feelings of security within their wider communities. The whispering relief and undeniable optimism across accounts was captured in participants advice to newcomer students - “honestly, all I can say is it might be scary and difficult, but just hang in there, and you’ll get the hang of it all and it will be normal, like you never even moved” (Zola, 33). Asked is this what it feels like for her, Zola responded “eventually over time it has, I’m getting there” (Zola, 34). Delineating a distinct sense of hope alongside awareness of challenges, acceptance appeared to serve as a key tool for coping, having made a conscious choice to accept their circumstances - “now, it’s like, everything is fine right now, we just had to accept that this is what our lives are like, we are now here” (Omari, 33).

Participants’ stories illustrated ongoing journeys of negotiating the structures in which they continue to find themselves up against. From initial fear of the unknown, to elation to being safe in Ireland, and everything in between, their lives are in a delicate balance.

3.5 Discussion

The current study set out to explore how refugee and asylum seeker youth make sense of their experiences of education in Ireland. Analysis of interview transcripts resulted in the generation of three overall themes as central to understanding experiences. In the following sections, each theme is discussed in relation to the literature with an emphasis on possible implications for practice in schools. Specific implications relating to the work of educational psychologists are then outlined. The chapter concludes with a summary of study strengths, limitations, and directions for future research.

3.5.1 Summary of Findings

Aligning with research on resilience and the role of education in the lives of refugee youth, study findings indicate the juxtaposition of resource and risk factors within the school context (Betancourt et al., 2015; Graham et al., 2016; Selimos & Daniel, 2017). Overall, findings suggest an overarching desire to be seen as typical yet individual, a regular teenager not categorised based on their ethnicity, religion, or status in Ireland. Adaption to their lives in Ireland emerged as a two-way process - one of personal effort and acceptance, as well as dependent on the openness, understanding, and support of the people and systems around them. This interplay between individual, social, and contextual factors supports an ecological model to support understanding of the experiences of refugee youth (Bronstein & Montgomery, 2011; Sleijpen et al., 2017) and emphasises that there is no one size fits all approach to supporting these young people in Irish schools, instead requiring holistic consideration of various factors.

3.5.1.1 Perseverance and Persistence in Learning

Widely cited as one of the main challenges on coming to a new country (Guo et al., 2021; Hutchinson & Dorsett, 2012), language learning was the initial task for students from Middle Eastern countries. Study findings draw a striking resemblance to research on the stages of language development - first required to connect with peers, considered basic interpersonal skills (BICS), with cognitive academic proficiency coming later (CALP) (Cummins, 2000, 2008). Evident that the ongoing process of language learning requires patience from both the learners and those supporting them, findings indicated increased expectations once students had grasped initial communication skills, with little recognition that academic language can continue to be a challenge. This reflects a previous evaluation of EAL support in primary schools which noted an over emphasis on the acquisition of social language and less emphasis on the cognitive language required to access the curriculum (DES, 2008, p. 35). To ensure realistic expectations and appropriate continued support of students' overall academic progression, teachers need to be aware of current research and best practice on second language development, as well as ongoing language supports available for students.

Study findings demonstrate the determination and motivation of students, as well as a self-reliance and agency in supporting their own learning (Bartlett et al., 2017; Bešić et al., 2020; Hastings, 2012; Stewart, 2012). This suggests the value in schools adopting a strengths-based approach to support which values and leverages students' pre-existing knowledge and skills, as well as encourages and fosters creativity and autonomy in supporting their own learning (Matos et al., 2021). Within the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, a novel finding is the facilitative role of technology for learning in both formal and informal settings and suggests a benefit of increased

utilisation of such strategies within classrooms as well as the requirement for access to technology and internet at home to support students autonomous learning.

Reflective of an "immigrant optimism" often noted in research (Bartlett et al., 2017, p.113), study findings allude to pre-migration experiences as contributing to participants high motivation at school as well as future aspirations (Keles et al., 2017; Lynnebakke et al., 2020; Peterson et al., 2017). However, aware of potential barriers to accessing further education, continued guidance and support is required to assist students in reaching their full potential. This may include advice and information on financial supports as well as the varied pathways into third level education available. Such guidance may be particularly pertinent for students who arrived later in secondary school or experienced gaps in formal education prior to arriving in Ireland (DeCapua & Marshall, 2010; Horgan et al., 2021).

3.5.1.2 How School Works?

Despite various educational policies in place, the current findings suggest that practice has not yet shifted adequately to ensure equality and "ethical intercultural education" for all students (Corcoran, 2020, p.67). Study findings indicate a need for inclusive policies which allow for difference and diversity, and account for students varied experiences both past and present. Study findings suggest that when school policies and guidelines are not flexible to the diversity of student experiences, this can inhibit feelings of acceptance and inclusion within their schools (Bartlett et al., 2017; Hek, 2005b; Mendenhall et al., 2017). This includes protocols for subject choice and exam requirements as well as uniform and self-expression policies, where all students should feel comfortable in expressing their self-identity in their school (Rougier, 2013).

The centrality of choice and voice in study findings may be compounded by the fact that many young refugees may have little autonomy across their migration

journeys (Hewson, 2020; McIntyre et al., 2020; Pieloch et al., 2016). Reflective of self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) and the importance of relatedness, competence and autonomy in motivation and well-being, listening to students to determine appropriate approaches to support and assessment can lend to feeling more in control of their learning and valued within their schools (DES, 2019; Flynn, 2017). Practices such as greater representation on student councils may also ensure that "everyone's opinion" (Omari, 25) is heard.

While previous research notes a positive impact of activities that reflect student identities and values (Bartlett et al., 2017; Mendenhall et al., 2017), current findings outline a need to go beyond tokenistic celebrations but a respect for diversity to underscore everyday practice. In this way, study findings conflict with UNCRC article 29 (1989) with a sense that not all cultures, religions, and languages were represented in school practices or curriculum. Schools should endeavour to ensure greater representation, which would likely foster feelings of belongingness for students as well as contribute to increased awareness of the wider school community.

Current findings illustrate the varied pathways into education in Ireland for refugee youth, with provision of supports dependent on locality, availability of resources and timing of arrival (Harmon, 2018). This begs to question when does education begin in Ireland for these young people - in accommodation centres, specific language classes provided within some schools, or when joining mainstream education - all having implications for approaches to support. Central to study findings and in line with previous Irish reports, intensive initial supports were not always sustained to a level to support ongoing needs and academic requirements (Children's Rights Alliance, 2019; Horgan et al., 2021), where waning supports coupled with increased expectations from teachers resulted in students perceiving only a short period available where it is acceptable to struggle. Clear that emotional and academic challenges can persist,

findings present a need for provision of targeted and on-going supports. Further, there is a wish for subtly and discreteness in attention and support, with students aspiring to feel regular within their classrooms. Crucial that students have opportunities to enjoy their experiences within school, it is important also to consider the role of practical subjects in supporting integration, where more hands-on subjects may also reduce language demands.

With support within schools attended in urban areas perceived more positively, likely due to having greater experience of supporting refugee youth (Bartlett et al., 2017; Mendenhall et al., 2017), this suggests a role in developing networks of practice in which schools who have previously welcomed refugee students could share their experiences and knowledge. Further, although the importance of collaboration between home and school is noted in research (Harmon, 2018; Hek, 2005a), findings of this study indicated minimal links between participants parents and schools. It is imperative that schools value and foster engagement with parents, perhaps through having translators available for parent teacher meetings or open evenings where there may also be a role for a home school liaison type staff member to ensure collaboration between those who support the student in their wider lives.

Current findings present a multifaceted role of teachers - providing academic support and motivation, bolstering student confidence, and encouraging interaction with peers (Bartlett et al., 2017; Bešić et al., 2020; Hastings, 2012). Comparable to the concept of 'one good adult' (Dooley et al., 2015; Sterrett et al., 2011), more positive perceptions were associated with feeling that one teacher was consistently looking out for them and indicates the benefit of having a consistent point person in the school who may have a responsibility also to liaise with students', their teachers and their families.

Reflective of international research, the impact of some teachers overlooking the individuality of students' experiences was evident, resulting in unrealistic

expectations of their learning or behaviour and, in some cases, presumed limits to their ability (Bartlett et al., 2017; Uptin et al., 2013; Ziaian et al., 2018). Indeed, previous Irish research suggests that teacher judgements and expectations of academic ability can be influenced by students' ethnic backgrounds (Devine, 2011), particularly evident for students from Southern African countries in this study. With a distinct need for culturally competent teachers who are aware of the potential impact of any biases or assumptions they may have, opportunities should be provided for school staff to reflect and appropriately act on any biases they may bring to their classrooms. Study findings also point to a need for wider implementation of trauma informed practices in schools to support students' individual needs (Berger, 2019). Further, while this study suggests a reality of microaggressions within school, some teachers were perceived as lacking suitable interventions when it came to addressing bullying or racist remarks in the classroom (Guo et al., 2021). Schools have a role in promoting fairness and encouraging respectful relationships (Montero et al., 2012), with it essential that policies and practices are developed to ensure zero tolerance for bullying and discrimination to ensure that all students feel safe in their school environment. It is also important that staff feel confident in interacting with all students and foster acceptance and respect in the wider school community (Bryan, 2010; Koehler & Schneider, 2019).

A notable finding is more positive perceptions of teachers who they themselves are from diverse backgrounds, with students more likely to feel that they belong if represented by those who work with them (McIntyre et al., 2020). Consequently, the persistent ethnic and linguistic homogeneity of the teaching profession in Ireland is of concern (Heinz & Keane, 2018; Horgan et al., 2021) with an urgent need for policy and training requirements to encourage and allow access to individuals from diverse backgrounds.

3.5.1.3 Balancing Act of which School is only one Part

A key finding of this study was the apparent acculturative stress participants were experiencing in adapting to education in Ireland (Krishnan & Berry, 1992). While acculturation entails both adaption to the culture of the host country alongside being supported to sustain knowledge and skills in the heritage culture (Oppedal & Toppelberg, 2016), due to experiences of discrimination, lack of student and teacher awareness, or simply wanting to feel like a regular Irish teenager, participants were willing to hide part of themselves in the process of adapting to Irish culture. Despite a growing body of research indicating sustaining home cultures as a resource factor in the development of resilience (Juang et al., 2018; Keles et al., 2017; Schachner et al., 2018), there was limited explicit consideration of or opportunities to enhance students linguistic, cultural, and religious backgrounds within their schools. Indicating a deficit model of EAL prevailing in Irish schools (Devine, 2011; Horgan et al., 2021), students were discouraged from speaking their first languages in school with it largely perceived as a hinderance to learning and integration (Guo et al., 2021; Hastings, 2012). With over 182 languages now spoken in Ireland (Census, 2016), it is essential that linguistic diversity is respected and encouraged and that school communities are aware of the educational and social benefits related to maintenance and continued development of first languages (Cummins, 2000). Further, as spirituality can serve as a key coping tool and contribute to resilience (Bartlett et al., 2017; Schachner et al., 2018), schools must recognise the potential role of religion in the lives of refugee youth and provide opportunities to enrich such parts of students' lives.

Undoubtedly the most consistent finding was the role of peers in navigating their schools, providing linguistic and academic support, and fostering a greater sense of school belonging (Bešić et al., 2020; Daud et al., 2008). With challenges to developing friendships within school particularly evident for those older on coming to

Ireland, connection within the wider community was essential, with sports and youth clubs identified as key avenues to support integration. Further, study findings suggest that the admiration gained from excelling in sporting activities led to greater peer acceptance, particularly for the male students from African countries (Atencio, 2006). While each of the young men encouraged by teachers to get involved in sports, there appears a need for more nuanced approaches to encourage friendships with young women. Cognisant also of potential challenges within DP to participation in extracurricular activities such as cost or transportation (McMahon, 2015; Ní Raghallaigh et al., 2016; O'Brien & Crushell, 2020), current findings suggest a role for schools in fostering ties with community groups to ensure access to activities (e.g., sign up to local groups in school) which are sensitive to individual preferences in relation to gender, familial, or cultural preferences.

With the benefit of co-national peers or those who speak the same language noted in previous research as easing school experiences (Bartlett et al., 2017; Bešić et al., 2020), the present study extends this to the wider refugee community to Ireland. In contrast to previous research suggesting that such friendships may be largely due to experiences of marginalisation and limited opportunities to interact with non-refugee students (Guo et al., 2021; Ryu & Tuvilla, 2018), this study portrays the mutual understanding embedded within these friendships as an undeniable source of support within their lives. Similar to the idea of 'flocking' in solidarity in the face of adversity and limited resources, friendships with peers from similar backgrounds supported positive adjustment and points to resilience as a collective process (Ebersöhn, 2012). The strength gleaned from this community identity does not negate from the negative aspects of the asylum system in Ireland (McMahon, 2015; Murphy & Vieten, 2020) but stresses the need for any future adaptions to systems and practices to acknowledge the support and resilience gained from being part of this community. Evident that post-

migration experiences can be as disjointed as prior and each transition within Ireland can potentially be as challenging as the first (Koehler & Schneider, 2019), it is pertinent to consider the significant negative impact when youth are separated from peers who have been central to coping with their transitions to Ireland (Children's Rights Alliance, 2019; Sleijpen et al., 2017). This suggests a role for schools and community groups to facilitate opportunities for sustained connection with peers, perhaps developing peer tutoring schemes in accommodation centres, establishing peer groups across schools in neighbouring localities, or even pen pals across different locations in Ireland.

Overall, despite varied personal, educational, or societal challenges refugee and asylum-seeker youth may encounter, the findings of the current study delineate their strength and optimism (Simich & Andermann, 2014). With acceptance of where they are now constructed as a fundamental coping strategy (Folkman, 1997), this lends to a conceptualisation of resilience as the capacity of an individual to adapt in order to maintain positive wellbeing in response to the wider context in which they find themselves (Simich & Andermann, 2014; Ungar, 2008). While this study sheds light on the resilience of refugee youth within Irish education, it has likely arisen within the context of numerous systemic barriers and should not lessen the obligation of countries of resettlement to provide continued targeted intensive supports. As aptly questioned by Bottrell (2009) “at the policy level there needs to be a question of limits – to what extent will adversity be tolerated, on the assumption that resilient individuals can and do cope? How much adversity should resilient individuals endure before social arrangements rather than individuals are targeted for intervention?” (p. 335).

3.5.2 Implications of the Research for Educational Psychology Practice

As highlighted in the above sections, a responsive, integrated, and multifaceted approach is required to support the individual linguistic, academic, and socio-emotional needs of refugee and asylum-seeker youth in Irish schools. Participant voices in this study point to numerous avenues to reflect upon and support further (see Appendix S for summary), with educational psychologists positioned to support schools in a variety of ways. This includes contributing to initial teacher education as well as targeted continued professional development within schools in a variety of areas, such as:

- Knowledge of second language development and benefits of supporting first language development in school.
- Provision of information and support regarding utilisation of technology to support learning.
- Best practice evidence on varied curricular and assessment approaches to meet the needs of all students.
- Cultural competence and the importance of representation within the wider school community. This may include the review and implementation of culturally responsive anti-bullying policies, as well as supporting the development of opportunities for all students to safely express their respective cultural identities and practices.
- Provision of training and implementation support relating to trauma informed practice. This would likely benefit a large cohort of students, not limited to those from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds.

In addition to consultation within schools and provision of training, there is a role for EPs in contributing to the awareness of colleagues and the wider teaching profession regarding the potential impacts of past experiences on students' initial expectations of

school, their presentation in the classroom, and their psycho-social wellbeing. Further, EPs may have a role in supporting school staff in relation to the impact of vicarious trauma and supporting student disclosures of trauma within school (Mayor, 2021). With increased knowledge and awareness of their school communities sought within the current study, EPs can support schools to appropriately prepare students and teachers before welcoming new arrivals into their classrooms, which may include the development of resources to inform education programmes for students in Irish schools. Lastly, as outlined in current educational wellbeing policy in Ireland (DES, 2019), EPs should continue to advocate for and support the elicitation of student voice within schools (Harding & Atkinson, 2009), important that all students' ideas and opinions are reflected within policy development and practice (Flynn, 2017).

3.5.3 Strengths and Limitations of the Current Study

In evaluating the current study against quality criteria for qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Yardley, 2008) various factors were identified which may limit findings (discussed further in chapter four). As younger students within primary school settings were excluded from this study as well as students attending special schools, future research should target these groups to tailor specific recommendations to varied stages and types of education.

Although a convenience sampling technique is considered useful in qualitative studies (Mertens, 2015), it is likely that findings are not generalisable to all refugee and asylum-seeker youth in Ireland. However, lending to the transferability of current findings, study participants were from a range of religious and cultural backgrounds and attended five different schools in Ireland, while the provision of participant demographics allows the reader to make a judgement about the applicability of findings to varied settings or target groups (Hannes, 2011). Notably, with a key finding being urban schools perceived as more equipped to support refugee youth, four out of the five

schools included were located in rural areas. This may have contributed to students' overall perceptions of their schools and warrants future comparative research between jurisdictions.

While a merit of this study lies in the fact that youth were asked about their personal experiences, as IPA relies on participants' ability to communicate their experience verbally and all interviews were conducted through English, this may have impacted on participants expression of psychological or culturally embedded concepts (Davies, 2008; Tuffour, 2017). It is also important to acknowledge a potential sampling bias with gatekeepers likely to put forward more articulate students who they had more positive relationships with, as well as a potential for social desirability biases throughout the interview process (Mertens, 2015). Nonetheless, participants offered perspectives on both personal and collective experiences with numerous areas identified which can inform support for wider groups of students.

3.5.4 Directions for Future Research

Relating to directions for future research, larger scale research is required to determine the gaps in existing support systems and tailor support to the needs of refugee youth in Ireland. Although participants in this study were asked about initial and current experiences, this study was cross-sectional in nature with interviews conducted at one time point only. With evolution of needs indicated in the current findings, future research may adopt a longitudinal design to explore any changes in experiences over time (Porterfield et al., 2010).

While a key rationale for this research was the importance of student voice, this research excludes key stakeholders such as parents, teachers, and school leaders. Future research should explore triangulation of multiple perspectives (Larkin et al., 2019) which may identify barriers to supporting the adjustment, integration, and resilience of

refugee youth. With limited connection between schools and parents indicated in this study, this is an important avenue to investigate within an Irish context. Although not a focus of this research, current findings indicate school as hugely influential in the formation and maintenance of students past and present cultural identities, with further exploration warranted to support schools in this area (Eriksson, 2013).

3.5.5 Conclusion

In exploring the lived experiences of the education of refugee youth in Ireland an understanding emerged of their experiences as dependent upon multiple factors across ecological domains. Analysis of interview transcripts resulted in the generation of three themes which reflected participant experiences of education in Ireland - a persistence and perseverance in learning; their understanding of school policies, practices, and support as well as their teachers; and the need to understand their lives within the context of their culture and wider communities. Findings touch on constructs described in the literature relating to refugee education and resettlement at large, but also highlight the nuanced experiences for these young people in Irish schools. The study highlighted the diversity in experiences along with a distinct resilience which can often be overlooked in refugee research (Masten & Narayan, 2012; Pieloch et al., 2016), with findings extending the limited empirical literature in this area, particularly within an Irish context. Adding to a growing evidence base on the importance of student voice, study findings affirm the rich and informative knowledge that can be gained from conducting research with refugee youth, where research and practice should continue to listen to and incorporate their voices to ensure that all students feel welcomed, included, and supported within Irish education.

Chapter 4 Critical Review and Impact Statement

4.1 Overview

The purpose of this final chapter is to critically reflect upon the process of undertaking the research. The research paradigm and epistemological stance of the researcher is considered before reflecting upon the research design and specific methods utilised. The study is then evaluated in relation to both Lincoln and Guba's (1986) and Yardley's (2008) criteria for appraising qualitative research. The penultimate section outlines implications of the research for policy and practice. To conclude, a summary of the authors personal reflections on the research process is presented, with a final statement outlining the impact of the current research.

4.2 Research Paradigm

A research paradigm can be understood as a set of beliefs which influence how we understand and address certain problems, including what we should observe, the kinds of questions to be asked, and how results should be interpreted (Khun, 1970; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Important that the guiding paradigm and the researcher's position are explicit from the outset (Carr, 2007), a social constructivist paradigm closely approximated the researcher's own worldview and is consistent with a social ecological model of educational psychology practice (Fallon et al., 2010). With a core assumption being that reality is constructed through our interactions with the world, it requires an understanding of the relationships between an individual and the multiple systems in which they operate, as well as the broader systemic and cultural influences (Merriam,1998; Willig, 2013).

A paradigm can be considered in terms of four elements, that of axiology, ontology, epistemology, and methodology (Guba & Lincoln, 2005), with each discussed in turn in the following sections.

4.2.1 Axiology

Axiology refers to the nature and value of ethics which need to be considered within the research (Mertens, 2015). From a social constructivist lens, the researcher acknowledges that they act in a value laden fashion (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017), thus essential that their background, experiences, and beliefs are outlined from the outset of the study, as is done in chapter one. The researcher also utilised a reflective journal across recruitment, data collection and subsequent interpretation and analysis, to enable reflection upon any feelings or biases they may bring to the research process (Mertens, 2015).

4.2.2 Ontology

Ontology is concerned with the nature of reality. Adopting a relativist ontology, a social constructivist paradigm assumes multiple realities, with phenomenon interpreted based on personal and professional lenses as well as wider family, cultural, and societal beliefs (Willig, 2013). As this study aimed to gain understanding of the educational experiences of refugee and asylum-seeker youth, consideration of relevant learning theory was also important. Similar to the individuality of reality in social constructivism, social constructionism outlines that educators should be aware of the varied skills and experiences each student brings with them to a classroom in order to best support their learning (Wang et al., 2021). In this way, the researcher was interested in both similar and divergent experiences of participants, recognising the individuality of experiences across their lives so far.

4.2.3 Epistemology

Epistemology is concerned with the nature of knowledge (Mertens, 2015). In this case, the researcher attempted to understand the complexities of experience from the point of view of those who live it, with an inevitable interaction between the researcher and participants (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

Drawing from an interpretivist stance, the researcher was interested in how participants understood their experiences (Larkin & Thompson, 2012). Pertinent to the aims of the current research, an interpretivist view provided a framework for exploring specific issues in participants' lives as well as identifying potential methods to support them (O'Donoghue, 2018). Further, it allowed a voice to be given to those who are often spoken about rather than spoken to (O'Donoghue, 2018) which resulted in the prioritisation of the young people's understanding of their unique experiences of education in Ireland.

4.2.4 Methodology

Underpinning the overall research strategy, the methodology question asks how the researcher should go about finding out knowledge (Mertens, 2015). A range of exploratory approaches were considered to ensure the most suitable method to meet the research aims. For example, although narrative inquiry may have suited the researcher's philosophical position and allowed for the detailed examination of experience, considering an aim of this study was to identify specific aspects within their education, such inquiry is more concerned with the process of experiences and how participants talk about this chain of events (Chamberlain, 2011). An IPA approach (Smith & Osborn, 2003) was deemed most appropriate to gain insight into the experiences of this relatively new group of students in Ireland.

4.2.4.1 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Concerned with the detailed exploration of participants' accounts of their lived experience (Eatough & Smith, 2006), IPA is considered an appropriate approach when researching an area that has previously lacked exploration as the inductive nature allows for novel and unexpected experiences to arise (Reid et al., 2005). Further, the approach can be useful when studying the experiences of people from marginalised or

minority populations whose voice may often go unheard or underrepresented in research (Bailey, 2011; Noon, 2018; Sohn et al., 2017).

While thematic analysis was considered as an alternative approach to answering the research question, it does not fit as well as IPA with questions which focus on ideography, as is the case of this research (Willig, 2013). Adhering to the phenomenological basis of IPA, the study focused on participants' subjective experiences, with the idiographic nature allowing for sensitivity to the diversity of each participant's experience (Patton, 2002). The intention was not to provide an objective explanation of their experiences, but to explore the personal impact of various factors identified by participants as enabling or hindering positive resettlement experiences.

Reflecting the centrality of researcher reflexivity, IPA research consists of a two-stage interpretative process, or 'a double hermeneutic' (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). It relies on the researcher's past knowledge and understanding to interpret participant data, with "the participants trying to make sense of their world and the researcher trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their worlds" (Smith & Osborn, 2003, p.51).

4.2.4.2 Methods – Semi-structured Interviews

As the current study sought to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences of youth from their own perspective, it was necessary to ensure that data collection methods were appropriate and engaging, as well as flexible and responsive to the young people's needs (Lundy & McEvoy, 2017). With the ontological assumption of multiple realities, varied qualitative data collection methods were considered. Although focus groups offered the potential to gain multiple perspectives in a short time, it was felt that the group setting may discourage students from participating due to shyness or from sharing personal information as anonymity cannot be ensured (Adler et al., 2019; Guo et al., 2021).

Semi-structured interviews allowed for exploration of the participants individual experiences, with open-ended questions utilised to gain an in-depth understanding of their perspectives (Smith & Osborn, 2003). Nonetheless, interviews are not without drawbacks with the potential of the interviewers' questions or prompts framing participant responses (Letts et al., 2007). Further, there is a potential for social desirability biases or positive self-presentation at play which may limit credibility of study findings (McIntosh & Morse, 2015; Van de Mortel, 2008).

With data in IPA research largely collected via verbal accounts, it is important to acknowledge that some facets of lived experience may be challenging for research participants to verbalise (Boden et al., 2019). To ensure an appropriate space for all voices to be heard (Flynn, 2017; Lundy & McEvoy, 2017), the value of visual methods in psychological and educational research is increasingly recognised. In the current study, participants had the option of drawing throughout the interviews as a springboard for discussion. This aimed to provide a visual reference point to express themselves, while also supporting rapport and trust between the researcher and participant (Barker & Weller, 2003; Ogina, 2012). The drawing task was informed by 'the Ideal Self' activity as developed from a Personal Construct Psychology approach (Beaver, 2011; Kelly, 1955). Similar to interview questions, it allowed exploration of an ideal school as compared to past and current experiences. However, from the pilot interviews it was clear that making the drawing activity a requirement could act as a barrier to rapport within the interview process, thus it was made optional. Three participants opted to draw throughout their interviews. While drawings were not analysed due to limits within the doctoral research process and limited experience of the researcher in analysing visual methods, this may be an important avenue to consider in future research, particularly with younger participants or EAL students earlier in their stage of language learning (Barker & Weller, 2003; Due et al., 2016).

4.3 Critical Appraisal of the Research – Study Strengths and Limitations

It is important to reflect upon both methodological strengths and limitations of the approach taken, as well as the overall process of undertaking the research. The quality of qualitative research is largely concerned with that of 'trustworthiness', which includes concepts of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). Through reflection on study strengths and limitations, each of these criteria are considered belong alongside quality markers as proposed by Yardley (2008) - transparency and coherence, sensitivity to context, commitment and rigour and impact and importance.

4.3.1 Credibility

The credibility of a study is concerned with the plausibility of the findings - whether the presentation of the data fits the views of the participants, and the confidence a reader can have in the researcher's interpretations of the data (Shenton, 2004).

Developing rapport is essential to ensure the validity and credibility of self-report data (Alase, 2017; Dodson et al., 2007). Conscious of how the participants may view the researcher, at the beginning of each interview the TEP shared some information about her school experiences and favourite subjects to support the development of a sense of partnership within the interview. Attempting to minimise the potential impact of social desirability bias, the researcher asserted a neutral position throughout the interviews, phrasing questions carefully and expressing empathy both verbally and non-verbally.

Although member checks and peer debriefing are suggested as contributing to the credibility of qualitative research (Mertens, 2015), member checks are not essential when the researcher adopts an interpretivist stance. However, informal member checks

were used at the end of each interview to summarise what had been said and check if the researcher's initial interpretations accurately reflected participant understandings (Flynn, 2017; Letts et al., 2007). Acknowledging that English was not the first language of participants, the researcher also checked for interpretation and understanding of information throughout the interview process (Hastings, 2012). On reflection, some topics raised within the interviews could have benefited from further exploration. It is important perhaps in future research to include an option for follow-up interviews or contact with participants to clarify points after the initial interview.

Interpretation within IPA research requires opportunities for social discussion (Smith et al., 2009). Throughout the process, the researcher discussed data collection and analysis with research supervisors and within an IPA peer supervision group formed with two DECPsy peers who also utilised the approach. This collaboration promoted the researcher's own reflexivity throughout the process and supported the development of coherent and plausible interpretations of the data (Smith et al., 2021).

Another facet of credibility is the prolonged and persistent engagement of the researcher with participants (Mertens, 2015). While the researcher sought to engage in deep conversation with participants and reflect upon earlier experiences, with interviews conducted at one time point only the study does not claim to measure changes in experience over time, simply participant interpretations of such. However, considering the impact of personal perceptions of events as sometimes more psychologically impactful than the event itself in varied psychotherapeutic approaches (e.g., CBT), perhaps this is a relevant source of information when considering pathways to well-being for refugee youth.

Drawing from the multiple realities assumed within a social constructivist paradigm, it may be suggested that multiple perspectives should be sought on a specific phenomenon (Mertens, 2015). In the current study the use of semi-structured

interviews with the youth themselves was the only source of data collection, where triangulation from multiple sources may have provided a deeper understanding of the phenomena in question and offer the opportunity to understand the data from different viewpoints.

4.3.2 Dependability

Dependability refers to the consistency and replicability of the research (Mertens, 2015). However, replicability may not be possible within a constructivist paradigm as it is unlikely that any other researcher would create an exact replica (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Nonetheless, provision of details of the researcher's background, with utilisation of a reflexive journal throughout to monitor developing constructions and document any changes in the research process, lends to dependability of the research (Smith et al., 2021). Memos recorded by the researcher before and after each interview enabled further reflection (Ortlipp, 2008).

Dependability also relates to the provision of evidence of the analysis being grounded in the data and clear presentation of an audit trial (Mertens, 2015). As presented in the Appendix Q, colour coded participant transcripts can be tracked from initial steps of analysis right through the process to the final structure of experiential themes (Smith et al., 2021).

4.3.3 Transferability

Within qualitative research, the concept of generalisability is often referred to as transferability, where understanding phenomena in context is a key feature. While a sample of nine participants is considered sufficient within IPA research (Gil-Rodriguez & Hefferon, 2011), it is not possible to make generalisable conclusions from the study findings. However, IPA research is concerned with understanding the perceptions of a particular group within the specific setting, rather than uncovering what occurs in all settings (Gil-Rodriguez & Hefferon, 2011). It is the researcher's responsibility to

provide sufficient details so that the reader is able to understand the research setting and participants in order to make judgement about the applicability of the findings to varied situations (Hannes, 2011; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). The specific area of exploration of the study was made clear and demonstrated through strict inclusion criteria, with provision also of demographic information in the form of thumbnail sketches and details of the schools where participants were attending (see Appendix L).

While non-probabilistic sampling approaches are appropriate for research that explores a specific area within a specific context, the process of purposive sampling methods could be viewed as a limitation within the current study (Etikan et al., 2016). As recruitment was done through gatekeepers, school principals were likely to put forward students with whom they had more positive relationships with, and those students then volunteering to take part, thus potentially presenting themselves in a favourable light during data collection.

4.3.4 Confirmability

Confirmability parallels that of objectivity or, perhaps more suited to qualitative research, that of neutrality. However, the concept of confirmability may not be applicable to approaches inspired by phenomenology in which the researcher becomes part of the process (Morse, 2022). In this way, there was no attempt to achieve objectivity within the current study, with participants reflecting on their experiences in a subjective manner and the researcher employing a double hermeneutic in trying to make sense of participants' interpretations (Smith et al., 2021). This does not lessen the importance of listening to participants' voices with their perceptions essential in understanding their experiences, but it is imperative that the research process is both systematic and ethical with researcher reflexivity required to ensure transparency. Lending to confirmability of the study, the researcher sought to be open and honest throughout the research process, providing a chain of evidence (see Appendix Q and

R), possible to track data from the source as well as making explicit the logic used to interpret the data (Mertens, 2015).

4.3.5 Sensitivity to Context

Sensitivity to context refers to the socio-cultural context as well as across the research process, from recruitment and data collection to analysis and write-up (Yardley, 2008). Sensitive to the limited empirical literature in the area thus far, the choice of IPA and the open and flexible nature of the interviews allowed for exploration of unanticipated topics (Noon, 2018). This permitted participants to spontaneously share stories of their past to support understanding of their current perceptions of education. Further, with previous research suggesting that young refugees may initially provide surface narratives (Hynes, 2003), the interview design allowed for exploration of the ideal through asking participants to give advice to other students or teachers. This provided insight into areas that participants may not have been as comfortable sharing directly with the researcher or within the school setting.

Although in Ireland four or more years, a key finding of this study was that language learning is an ongoing process. In turn, conducting interviews through English may have impacted on participants comfort in expressing aspects of their experiences or culturally embedded ideas (Davies, 2008). This may also indicate that findings are more representative of those students who are getting on relatively well within Irish education. Further, limiting the sample to under 18 years of age is likely to have excluded some refugee youth who are older in secondary school due to possible delays in schooling with migration (McBrien, 2005).

Relating to the interview process, sensitivity to context is demonstrated through the appreciation of the interactional nature of the interview process itself. The method was adapted to ensure participants were supported in sharing their experiences. A more structured approach to interviewing than is usual for IPA research, this included

rephrasing questions, providing lots of prompts, and clarifying meaning behind what participants had said. Acknowledging the importance of trust in research with refugee populations (Porterfield et al., 2010), iterative consent was sought throughout the interviews, with specific consent sought in relation to the inclusion of anonymised quotes in the write up.

In adherence with ethical obligations, in the event of participants becoming distressed during the interview or displaying hesitancy in speaking of particular experiences the researcher changed the line of questioning. This potentially limited a full exploration of the emotional impact of some experiences and the psychological depth required in IPA research (Dickson et al., 2008). Further, the relatively formal interview setting in schools may have created power differences within the interview process and impacted on participants openness to speak about more negative aspects of school or share specific examples (Lynnebakke et al., 2020). At times, rapport was inhibited by announcements on the intercom or breaks for lunch or class pictures, important for future research to ensure the interview setting is completely free from distraction, sometimes difficult to achieve within busy school settings. Another factor to consider was the potential impact of Covid-19 social distancing requirements during interviews, and two interviews taking place online, which perhaps impacted on rapport and openness to share personal stories.

4.3.6 Commitment and Rigour

This criterion refers to the researcher's deep engagement with the topic area and methodological rigour in data collection and analysis (Smith et al., 2009). In relation to the researcher's knowledge and competence in conducting the research, although a novice to IPA research in September 2019, the researcher undertook supplemental trainings in addition to training as part of the professional programme to ensure competence in conducting the research. The researcher also engaged in ongoing

reflection, utilising supervision to explore and develop interpretations and conclusions. The pilot provided the researcher an opportunity to engage with the practicalities of undertaking such exploratory qualitative research, reflect upon personal skills and abilities, and refine the interview schedule (Kim, 2011).

Considering the parameters of the sample, participants were recruited to match the research question with the intention of being relatively homogenous on the level of their experience of being a secondary school student from a refugee background (Patton, 2002). As indicated by the varied cultural and linguistic backgrounds within the study sample, Smith et al. (2021) suggest that purposive homogenous sampling is not seen as treating members of the sample as if they were identical but making them as uniform in terms of factors relevant to the study, thus enabling examination of other forms of variability within the group. Although there was some grouping across accounts, for example in relation to initial experiences of language acquisition in Ireland or type of accommodation within Ireland, participants' shared experiences of being a refugee in Ireland are perhaps most important to consider as most likely that any supports would be considered solely on their refugee or asylum-seeker status within Ireland. However, it may be interesting in future research to consider the impact of different pathways into the international protection system in Ireland, for example comparison of experiences between programme refugees and those seeking asylum in Ireland.

The thorough and systematic analysis, as informed by Smith et al.'s (2009) six step process, lends to transparency and rigour within the study. Nonetheless, Langdridge (2008) suggests that analysis rests on the researcher's ability to interpret participant accounts. Admittedly the researcher at times struggled to keep close yet separate from participant accounts and to move beyond descriptions to more interpretative accounts of meaning. Perhaps related to the age and varied level of

fluency of participants, data consisted of an abundance of shining gems (Smith, 2011) with explicit statements of experience regularly made. However, this could also be due to cues being missed or the researcher not prompting sufficiently to encourage deep elaboration, resulting in somewhat top-level data and subsequent analysis (Smith et al., 2021).

4.3.7 Transparency and Coherence

Another marker of quality is that of transparency and coherence in terms of clarity in aims, methods and data presentation (Yardley, 2008). Lending to the transparency of the research, the stages of the research process were explicitly stated within the methodology, from development of the interview schedule and recruitment, through to data collection procedures and steps in analysis.

During the write-up it was important also to construct a coherent, compelling, and unfolding narrative (Nizza et al., 2021). This was done through careful selection and interpretation of extracts from participants, along with the presentation of multiple verbatim quotes which grounded the researchers' interpretations of participant experiences. However, as a sample of nine participants is larger than generally recommended within IPA research (Gil-Rodriguez & Hefferon, 2011) it proved challenging at times to present the idiographic nature within the write-up.

4.3.8 Impact and Importance

Most central to research within a professional doctorate is reflection upon whether meaningful and useful knowledge has been produced. Cognisant of the increased focus on listening to and acting upon student voice (DES, 2019; Flynn, 2017), this research placed participants' voices at its core. Highlighting the importance of providing appropriate forums for students to share their voices, participants shared positive sentiments relating to taking part in the research -

"It's been good, like going through all these things, you never really get the chance to actually say what you feel, and what you've gone through because it's something you keep inside and just this opportunity to get to talk to someone and just let it out… it's a good experience" (Kofi, 50).

However, it is not sufficient to provide a space for children and young people to express their views without their voices having an influence on policy and practice (Lundy, 2007). Therein, it is the researcher's responsibility to collaborate with practitioners in order to integrate and translate findings into policy and practice, with a need also for educational researchers to advocate for change and collaborate with schools and wider communities (Corcoran, 2020).

In this regard, preliminary findings were presented at the Psychological Society of Ireland's conference (2021) and shared with the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) Working Group for Diversity and Social Inclusion in February 2022 as well as at a NEPS regional team meeting in March 2022. The research will be presented to the staff and two cohorts of the doctoral programme at Mary Immaculate College during a research summer school in May 2022. Further, an adaption of the empirical paper presented in chapter three will be submitted for publication to an appropriate journal in the coming months.

This leads into the following section on implications of the research findings in enriching knowledge in the area and informing future research, as well as practical implications in relation to national policy and provision of supports. This includes provision of guidance for schools and teachers and the important role of educational psychology in supporting children and young people from diverse backgrounds.

4.4 Implications of the Research

4.4.1 Implications for Theory, Knowledge, and Future Research

This research extends our understanding of the experiences of education for refugee and asylum seeker youth in countries of resettlement, particularly within an Irish context. The study explored both the initial and more long-term experiences of refugee youth which contribute to knowledge on their ongoing experiences and needs (Ní Raghallaigh, 2018; Ní Raghallaigh et al., 2016).

Adopting a qualitative approach allowed for exploration of facets of experience not previously considered in research, for example, the role of technology in supporting learning as well as the strength gleaned from the wider refugee community in Ireland. Such findings affirm IPA as a particularly useful method when researching an area with limited previous empirical investigation (Reid et al., 2005).

Encompassing national educational wellbeing policy which aims for student voice to contribute to school culture and ethos along with enhancing the development, review, and update of school policies (DES, 2019), this study illustrates the value in asking refugee youth about their own experiences.

Through a lens of resilience theory, findings delineated both the strength and optimism of refugee youth along with challenges across their resettlement journeys (Masten & Narayan, 2012; Pieloch et al., 2016). Highlighting the impact of wider cultural, social, and systemic factors on resilience (Ungar, 2008), the distinct yet interrelated themes presented in this study indicate a need to work at an individual level to develop resilience, while also advocate for a top-down approach to support systemic changes.

4.4.1.1 Directions for Research

An important consideration of the impact of the research is acknowledging the scope of the current study and highlighting areas which may be necessary to explore further. Cognisant of the variance in experiences within this study and across the wider literature base, larger scale longitudinal research is warranted to track experiences and identify need for specific supports across different stages of resettlement (Pieloch et al., 2016; Tozer et al., 2018). As the stage and age of the young person appears relevant in relation to their experiences of school, future research should include younger children within primary school settings. Conscious that each of the study participants came to Ireland with their families, it would be interesting for future research to consider the unique experiences and needs of unaccompanied minors in Ireland. Research which explores the views of varied stakeholders would also be important in gaining the unique views of those who support refugee youth, and to triangulate current findings. Such research may include teachers and school leaders, parents, and those who may support refugee youth within their wider communities. This study highlighted the importance of a suitable space and method to support elicitation of student voice, where participatory visual methodologies may allow refugee youth to portray their own experiences while also disrupt any power disparities that may occur in the research (Vecchio et al., 2017). Future research could utilise drawing or photovoice methods, particularly so with younger children or those with difficulty expressing themselves verbally.

The noted role of video games and the internet in the lives of participants may be considered within future research, perhaps incorporating Johnson and Puplampu (2008) techno-subsystem of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory which considers the influence of media and technology in our lives. With factors relating to student autonomy, relatedness, and competence identified in this study, such research

may be revisited through the lens of self-determination theory in order to better understand pathways to wellbeing as well as inform suitable interventions (Farello et al., 2019; Turan et al., 2019; Weinstein et al., 2016). Challenges relating to the development of varied cultural identities within Irish schools are also important to explore further to inform appropriate guidance and support in this area (Eriksson, 2013). Further, noting the distinction in perceptions of schools in more urban and rural areas, a comparative study may provide valuable insight and lead to more nuanced development of supports in individual schools and jurisdictions. Study findings also suggest a limit to peers' awareness of refugee systems and broader cultural and religious diversity. Research conducted with wider student cohorts examining attitudes to diversity may inform suitable educational programmes to develop awareness and understanding of those welcoming students into Irish schools.

4.4.2 Implications for Policy

A key aim of the national policy document 'Better Outcomes Brighter Futures' relates to addressing inequality for those most vulnerable groups of young people in Irish society (DCYA, 2014). However, the findings of research indicate a degree of unmet educational and social needs for students from refugee backgrounds, with a need to further respect key rights within their education in Ireland (e.g., article 29 and 30; UNCRC, 1989). This study reaffirms the requirement for targeted policy development to support the integration and continued adjustment of refugee populations in Ireland (Corcoran, 2020; Darmody & Arnold, 2019; Horgan et al., 2021). Study findings may also support the development of policies which aim to strengthen protective factors and promote wellbeing of refugee youth and their families. While the role of schools in promoting wellbeing is central to educational policy (DES, 2019), current findings suggest that more needs to be done to both foster resilience as well as ameliorate challenges for all students, particularly so for those at increased risk of future

difficulties. This study presented schools as doing what they can within the context of finite resources with a lack of resources evident. This needs to be considered at a state level to ensure adequate funding and teacher allocations to allow schools to implement truly inclusive practice which "foster connectedness, acceptance, and celebration of diversity" (DES, 2019, p.44).

With the continued heterogeneity of both primary and post-primary teachers in Ireland (Heinz & Keane, 2018), governmental and educational institutions need to be flexible in relation to entrance requirements to encourage individuals from diverse backgrounds to pursue teacher education in Ireland. They should also consider job requirements (e.g., Irish language speaking) as greater diversity in staff would likely translate to students feeling more represented within their schools.

Lastly, while Irish educational policy adopts an intercultural approach (NCCA, 2005), the current findings suggest that such an approach does not always play out as equal within classrooms. With a potential for an intercultural approach to ignore structural inequalities which often lie at the root of racial inequality (Bryan, 2010), ethical intercultural education requires the promotion of equality and human rights, and challenges prejudice and discrimination (Corcoran, 2020; NCCA, 2005). Additional work is required to equip schools with the skills and knowledge to enable confidence in working with complexity and diversity in Irish classrooms, where ensuring equality sometimes requires the acknowledgement of students unequal footing and facilitation of opportunities to rectify this.

4.4.3 Implications for School Practice

As previously discussed in chapter three and summarised in an information sheet for schools highlighting the specific implications which arise from this research (see Appendix S), various avenues for consideration in relation to supporting refugee youth are indicated. Such considerations relate not only to the initial stages of

integration but also to supporting long-term resettlement. This includes developing awareness and representation of cultural diversity in schools, fostering supportive teacher-student relationships and respectful peer interactions, and perhaps most importantly, viewing each student as unique and being sensitive to the impact of their individual experiences. Schools should also acknowledge and be proud of the wide-ranging role they play in student lives while linking with community groups/organisations to ensure suitable access to extra-curricular activities. A key rationale for the research design and a pertinent finding in the study highlights the importance of schools continuing to value and incorporate student voices within policy and practice (DES, 2019; Flynn, 2017). This may include development of individualised student-centred support plans and greater flexibility in relation to uniforms and self-expression practices, exam requirements and subject choice. Important for all students to feel represented in student forums or councils, this should filter through to aspects such as inclusion of parents from diverse backgrounds on boards of managements (Martin et al., 2018).

4.4.4 Implications for Educational Psychology Practice

As outlined in the discussion of chapter three, this research lends to deeper understanding of how educational psychology can play a key role in supporting the continued adjustment, learning and wellbeing of students from refugee backgrounds. This includes advocating for policy change, working with colleagues and schools to best support this group of students, while also directly working with individual students with more complex needs both in health and school-based settings.

EPs are well positioned to implement change at a systems level by working with key professionals to develop and review educational policies and practices. The current findings present a real opportunity for collaboration between schools and EPs in

understanding student experiences and formulating plans, while also including the value of student voice in the development of policy and practices (DES, 2019).

With a consultation and training role within schools (Fallon et al., 2010), EPs are uniquely positioned to promote awareness in a variety of areas. This includes EAL development and the value of supporting first languages in school, and doing so appropriately and respectfully e.g., differentiation and varied forms of assessment; evidence-based practice in relation to language development; cultural competence and the impact of implicit biases; culturally responsive discipline practices and promoting teachers' confidence to intervene; and trauma informed practices. Further, EPs could contribute to such topics at the level of initial teacher education which may have lasting influence on future professional practice (Tessier et al., 2010).

Important to share knowledge with EP colleagues to be able to support wider ranges of schools within Ireland, the researcher has already shared preliminary findings as part of a NEPS regional team training in March 2022. Further, greater collaboration across services and sharing information of experiences and best practices may be supported through the wider work of EPs, for example through facilitation of group supervision or development of school networks or communities of practice both within the profession as well as supporting schools in setting up links to share and learn from each other's experiences (Patton & Parker, 2017). The value of such was recently demonstrated on an Irish National Teachers Organisation webinar in relation to welcoming Ukrainian refugees into Irish schools, where a school with prior experience of welcoming Syrian refugees shared best practice tips to schools who this was a new experience for.

With a key role in advocating for and supporting the elicitation of the voice of children and young people (Harding & Atkinson, 2009), participants shared positive remarks on taking part noting that it was the first time they had spoken about their

experiences in Ireland, and for some, it appeared to have a therapeutic function – "I found it good, because I'm also like expressing how I feel, so it's like, it's good talking to someone, just let it all out and talk" (Omari, 47). Notably, Erikson (1950, 1968) also argued that the creation of a coherent account of who we are and how we came to be that way is a critical developmental task of adolescence. This reaffirms the role of both educational and mental health professionals in providing space for young people to share their stories, perhaps providing an opportunity to reflect upon and uncomplicate all that is going on in their lives and make sense of their individual narratives (Hastings, 2012; Lustig et al., 2004b). A role is also indicated for EPs to support school staff who may engage in such work.

Lastly, acknowledging the increased risk of psychosocial difficulties, EPs are increasingly likely to come across refugee and asylum-seeker youth in their work. In relation to specific interventions for refugee youth who present with psycho-social difficulties, this study highlighted the inter-relationship of past and present experiences across varied ecological domains (e.g., their living situation, family circumstances, immigration status), with a need to consider and address a range of factors in relation to well-being rather than focusing solely on pre-migration or trauma experiences (Hodes, 2000). Of note, the National Intercultural Health Strategy 2019-2023 (HSE, 2018) aims to enhance accessibility of services to service users from diverse ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds, and support the provision of culturally responsive services. Increasingly employed within public health service in Ireland, the findings of this research transcend to the work of EPs in a variety of areas and lend to greater understanding of the experiences of refugee youth.

4.5 Personal Reflection

The reflective nature of this chapter is consistent with the EP as a scientist practitioner, continually drawing from and evaluating theory and research in relation to practice (Fox, 2003). A rewarding yet challenging process, I am proud of the research I have completed which, I believe, makes an original and practical contribution. Encountering some challenges along the way, primarily the recruitment of young people in the initial stage, I was also apprehensive that the young people would trust me with their stories, but subsequently overwhelmed by the richness and depth of the experiences they shared within the interviews.

I had significant concerns around the progress of the study during the recruitment phase with limited interest or openness to the research from schools, in part due to the Covid-19 pandemic. I was surprised that many of the schools contacted appeared to have limited record of student backgrounds, making it difficult to ascertain whether there may be eligible students within their schools. This lack of awareness of student backgrounds was evident within student findings, particularly if the school was not their first to attend in Ireland. However, schools that did take part were supportive of the research process and saw the value in the project, eager to be informed of the findings after completion.

A novice to IPA research at the beginning of this journey, I acknowledge that, at times, my apprehension may have impacted on both data collection and analysis. However, my interviewing skills improved with each interview, no doubt a skill I will continue to utilise within my future EP practice. Considering data analysis, at times it was challenging to resist the urge to interpret what I was being told while the interview was still under way (Smith et al., 2021), and indeed when it came to the final write up, it was difficult to leave some important divergent features of individual accounts behind, perhaps also impacted by the relatively large sample size and constraints of the

wordcount of the professional doctoral thesis. In turn, I now have greater trust in the phenomenological and idiographic value of smaller samples in such in-depth research (Smith et al., 2009).

Naively, I went into the research thinking that areas may be identified that could be easily rectified to support the resettlement of refugee and asylum-seeker youth. However, what I was faced with was deep-rooted systemic attitudes and practices that these young people regularly faced in their lives, something not so easy to change with a list of recommendations. Nonetheless, interpreting the study findings in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic, there was a distinct dissonance in their perceptions and my expectations of their experience, where more often than not, the pandemic was presented as providing space to take control over their learning, rather than a hinderance. This reaffirms the need for a strengths-based approach to understanding and supporting the lives of young people in Ireland, not ignoring challenges but supporting their autonomy and resilience.

In an unprecedented turn of events, the need for this research has unfortunately amplified since the onset of war in Ukraine in March 2022. While I am proud of Ireland's outpouring of support to the Ukrainian people, I am astounded that such a crisis has been perceived by society and media, and indeed many schools, as a new phenomenon in the state. I cannot ignore the question if this warm Irish welcome is most evident when sought by fellow Europeans, and it leaves me thinking that while Ireland has accepted, or perhaps tolerated, refugee populations in the past, it is only now that the wider society is truly welcoming. In this way, it will be interesting in the years to come to explore the experiences of this particular group. Undoubtedly my engagement in this project and knowledge gained will continue to feature in my future professional work as a psychologist, with a hope that each and every one of us will not

view those seeking asylum as a homogenous group but recognise, respect, and support their complex and diverse individual experiences.

4.6 Impact Statement

This study aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of refugee youth in relation to their education in Ireland. It represents the first study to explore their experiences in Ireland from the perspectives of the youth themselves. The researcher sought to explore initial and more long-term experiences to inform the development of appropriate supports, with an exploratory qualitative approach adopted to identify factors which have impacted on their experiences of education thus far. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine adolescents from refugee and asylum-seeker backgrounds across five post-primary schools in the Republic of Ireland.

With an ever-changing landscape within Irish schools together with ongoing refugee migration across the world, the study was timely and provided insight into the educational experiences of refugee and asylum seeker youth in the Irish context. An understanding of the experiences of these young people was developed across the study as dependent upon multiple factors across ecological domains. In turn, this study adds important systemic dimensions to the majority of existing research and indicates factors within the context of resettlement which can be adapted or developed. Study findings also illustrate the diversity in experiences along with a distinct resilience which can often be overlooked in refugee research (Masten & Narayan, 2012; Pieloch et al., 2016). With a key role of teachers in making students feel welcomed, supported, and accepted into their new environments, the study highlights the negative impact of a one size fits all approach to support which overlooks individual needs and strengths and loses sight of their diverse backgrounds. In this way, the study contributes to our understanding of the role schools play in supporting resilience and ameliorating challenges, particularly for minority populations within Ireland. This research also

extends the limited empirical data on youth who have been in countries of resettlement for a number of years and offers insight into both their initial transition as well as their nuanced experiences over the process of resettlement. Adding to a growing evidence base on the importance of student voice, the findings from this study affirm the rich and informative knowledge that can be gained from conducting research with youth themselves (Flynn, 2017; Lundy, 2007).

Study findings hold varied implications for policy and practice within schools, such as the need for a flexible and individualised approach to supports, provision of appropriate training and support for staff, together with the importance of linking with wider communities. Crucial that policy, practice, and wider professions are aware of the role of school in the lives of refugee youth, the study also indicates how the work of educational psychologists can support the development and implementation of targeted supports within schools and wider services.

Considering the current international context in 2022, it is more important than ever to be able to guide schools and professionals in supporting youth from refugee backgrounds and ensure environments where all students feel understood, accepted, and respected. Findings and implications of this study will be disseminated through presenting the research at relevant conferences as well as submission of the empirical paper to a peer-reviewed education journal. Thus far, findings have been shared with psychology peers and colleagues at the PSI annual conference and through NEPs events and team meetings. An information sheet for schools with key recommendations and reflections arising from the research was also prepared which can be shared with EPs and schools to support incorporation of research findings into practice.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Systematic Review Rationale for Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

	Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion	Rationale
1	Peer reviewed	Study is published in a peer reviewed journal	Study is not peer reviewed	Independently assessed for quality ensuring a high level of methodological rigour
2	Language	Study is published in English	Study is published in a language other than English	With no access to translation services for this review, for the study to be understood it must be published in the English language
3	Availability of the article	Full-text available	Full-text not available	Due to limited resources of the researcher, only papers available online or through the MIC library services were included
4	Research design and resulting data	Empirical study focusing on or included students accounts of educational experiences	Not an empirical study (e.g., reviews, commentaries, theoretical papers) or study concerning impact of intervention; student perspective not presented	Empirical data allows examination of the data presented; qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods are eligible for inclusion once related to the experience of education
5	*Participants:* Background	First-generation refugee or asylum seeker background (according to UN definition)	Migrant background; not from a refugee background	Direct link to research question; refugee children are likely to have a different schooling experience from migrant children (McBrien, 2005)
	Age	School aged children or adolescents; over 18 included if in fulltime secondary education	Children younger than 4 or adolescents not in education; students in university or in tertiary education	Direct link to research question. As the mean age for refugee youth participants may be over 18 due to possible delays in school progression experienced by some refugees
6	Research focus	Experiences of primary or secondary school/education in country of resettlement	Focus not on experience of primary or secondary education in country of resettlement	Direct link to research question; focus on primary and secondary education in this review
7	Research Setting	Research conducted in mainstream school in country of resettlement	Not included if conducted in country of origin or in refugee camp schools	Related to aim of the review to inform school supports in primary and secondary settings in country of resettlement; experiences in country or origin or refugee camp schools are likely to not be comparable

Appendix B – References of Eleven Studies Included in Systematic Review

References of Included Studies
Bartlett, L., Mendenhall, M., & Ghaffar-Kucher, A. (2017). Culture in acculturation: Refugee youth's schooling experiences in international schools in New York City. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 60,* 109-119.
Bešić, E., Gasteiger-Klicpera, B., Buchart, C., Hafner, J., & Stefitz, E. (2020). Refugee students' perspectives on inclusive and exclusive school experiences in Austria. *International journal of psychology*.
Due, C., Riggs, D. W., & Augoustinos, M. (2016). Experiences of school belonging for young children with refugee backgrounds. *The Educational and Developmental Psychologist, 33*(1), 33-53.
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Mendenhall, M., Bartlett, L., & Ghaffar-Kucher, A. (2017). "If you need help, they are always there for us": Education for refugees in an international high school in NYC. *The Urban Review, 49*(1), 1-25.
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Appendix C – References of Excluded Full-text Articles and Rationale for Exclusion

Rationale for exclusion	Reference of excluded study
Availability of the article - Full-text not available	Candappa, M. (2000). The right to education and an adequate standard of living: Refugee children in the UK. *The International Journal of Children s Rights*, *8*(3), 261-270.
Research setting - Conducted in refugee camp school	Karakuş, M. (2019). Views of teachers and students on the problems of Syrian children in a refugee school in Turkey. *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies*, *7*(2), 211-219.
Research focus - Not on general educational experiences	Beauregard, C., Papazian-Zohrabian, G., & Rousseau, C. (2017). Making sense of collective identity and trauma through drawing: The case study of a Palestinian refugee student. *Intercultural Education*, *28*(2), 113-130. Brown, J., Miller, J., & Mitchell, J. (2006). Interrupted schooling and the acquisition of literacy: Experiences of Sudanese refugees in Victorian secondary schools. *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy, The*, *29*(2), 150. Bonet, S. W. (2018). "So Where are the Promises of This America? Where is the democracy and where are the human rights?": Refugee youth, citizenship education, and exclusion from public schooling. *Curriculum Inquiry*, *48*(1), 53-69. Closs, A., Stead, J., & Arshad, R. (2001). The Education of Asylum-Seeker and Refugee Children. *MCT*, *20*(1), 29-33. Dávila, L. T. (2017). Newly arrived immigrant youth in Sweden negotiate identity, language & literacy. *System*, *67*, 1-11.

Thommessen, S. A. O. T., & Todd, B. K. (2018). How do refugee children experience their new situation in England and Denmark? Implications for educational policy and practice. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *85*, 228-238.

Fazel, M., Garcia, J., & Stein, A. (2016). The right location? Experiences of refugee adolescents seen by school-based mental health services. *Clinical child psychology and psychiatry*, *21*(3), 368-380.

Bang, H. (2017). Iraqi refugee high school students' academic adjustment. *Diaspora, Indigenous, and Minority Education*, *11*(1), 45-59.

Fruja Amthor, R. (2017). "If only I did not have that label attached to me": Foregrounding self-positioning and intersectionality in the experiences of immigrant and refugee youth. *Multicultural Perspectives*, *19*(4), 193-206.

Kia-Keating, M., & Ellis, B. H. (2007). Belonging and connection to school in resettlement: Young refugees, school belonging, and psychosocial adjustment. *Clinical child psychology and psychiatry*, *12*(1), 29-43.

de Wal Pastoor, L. (2015). The mediational role of schools in supporting psychosocial transitions among unaccompanied young refugees upon resettlement in Norway. *International Journal of Educational Development*, *41*, 245-254.

- Focus on pre-migration educational experiences

Dryden-Peterson, S. (2016). Refugee education in countries of first asylum: Breaking open the black box of pre-resettlement experiences. *Theory and research in education*, *14*(2), 131-148.

Research Design/data

- Youth voice not included

de Haymes, M. V., Avrushin, A., & Coleman, D. (2018). Educating unaccompanied immigrant children in Chicago, Illinois: A case study. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *92*, 77-88.

Pryor, C. B. (2001). New immigrants and refugees in American schools: Multiple voices. *Childhood Education*, *77*(5), 275-283.

	Hughes, N., & Beirens, H. (2007). Enhancing educational support: Towards holistic, responsive and strength-based services for young refugees and asylum-seekers. *Children & Society*, *21*(4), 261-272.
- Discussion paper	Maadad, N., & Matthews, J. (2020). Schooling Syrian refugees in Lebanon: building hopeful futures. *Educational Review*, *72*(4), 459-474.
Participants	Brinegar, K. (2010). "I Feel Like I'm Safe Again": A Discussion of Middle Grades Organizational
- Data for immigrant and refugee youth not presented separately	Structures from the Perspective of Immigrant Youth and Their Teachers. *RMLE Online*, *33*(9), 1-14.
- Mean age over 24, focus on post-education aspirations	Morrice, L., Tip, L. K., Collyer, M., & Brown, R. (2019). 'You can't have a good integration when you don't have a good communication': English-language learning among resettled refugees in England. *Journal of Refugee Studies*.
- University students	Sheikh, M., Koc, Y., & Anderson, J. R. (2019). A Qualitative Exploration of the Tertiary Education Experiences of Refugee and Asylum Seekers in Australia. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk (JESPAR)*, *24*(4), 346-368.
	Haffejee, B. (2015). African refugee youths' stories of surviving trauma and transition in US public schools. *Journal of Muslim mental health*, *9*(1).

Appendix D – Weight of Evidence A Criteria and Scoring

WoE A is a general rating of the quality of the study design and methodology (Gough, 2007). Letts et al. (2007) criteria was applied to the ten studies with a qualitative design. This coding protocol enabled the quality of studies to be evaluated according to five separate features of the studies which are then averaged to give an overall rating (study design, sampling and participants, data collection, analysis, and overall rigour). As all studies presented with sufficient information in relation to research aims, conclusions and references to relevant literature, these criteria were excluded from the rating process. The Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT; Hong, 2018) was utilised to appraise the overall quality of the one mixed-methods study included in this review (Ziaian et al., 2018). This study was rated overall as medium quality with adequate rationale for utilising a mixed methods design to address the research question and integrating both study components effectively, although there was a focus on the qualitative data in interpreting the findings. The final aspect of the MMAT (Hong et al., 2018) is consideration of quality criteria from both the qualitative and quantitative components of the study. For the purpose of this review, the qualitative component was appraised using Letts et al. (2007) review framework.

The table that follows presents descriptions of each criterion of the qualitative and the qualitative component of the mixed-methods study, assigned a ‘High’, ‘Medium’ or ‘Low’ rating, and is followed by specific ratings for each study.

WoE A Rationale for ratings based on Letts et al. (2007) critical review criteria

	High evidence	Medium Evidence	Low evidence
Design	Fulfil three criteria for qualitative research: design appropriate to the study question; theoretical perspective identified; suitable method used (participant observation, interviews, focus groups etc.)	Fulfil two of the criteria for qualitative research	Fulfil one or none of the criteria for qualitative research design
Sampling	Reference to all three of the following: process of purposeful sampling described and appropriate to research; participant details described in sufficient detail; informed consent obtained	Fulfil two of the criteria or if any of the three are not described sufficiently	Fulfil one or none of the criteria for sampling in qualitative studies
Data collection	Reference to each of the following criteria: clear and complete description of site and participation; role of researcher and relationship with participants described; identification of assumptions and biases of researcher; adequate procedural rigour	Fulfil two/three of the above criteria and each described sufficiently	If one or none of the criteria for quality data collection described sufficiently
Analysis	Reference to each of the following aspects: analysis process described adequately and systematically; decisions of the researcher for transformation of data to codes and themes presented; present a meaningful picture of the phenomena under study with connections made with related research	Reference to two of these aspects and described in sufficient detail	Reference to one or none of the features of high-quality qualitative analysis
Overall rigour	Evidence of credibility (data collected over a prolonged period; triangulation of sources, methods or by researchers; reflexivity of researcher; involvement of participants in verifying interpretations of the data) Evidence of confirmability (strategies used to limit bias in the researcher such as a reflective journal, peer review checking, checking with participants about ideas and interpretation of data, having a team of researchers)	Some evidence of credibility and confirmability procedures	Little or no evidence of credibility or confirmability procedures

Assigned Ratings in accordance with Quality Criteria for WoE A

Study author, year	Design	Sampling	Data Collection	Analysis	Overall Rigour	WoE A rating (Average scores)
Bartlett et al., 2017	3	2	2	2	2	2.2 (Medium)
Bešić et al., 2020	2	3	3	3	3	2.8 (High)
Due et al., 2016	2	3	2	2	2	2.2 (Medium)
Guo et al., 2021	2	2	1	1	2	1.6 (Medium)
Hastings, 2012	3	2	2	3	2	2.4 (Medium)
Hek, 2005	2	3	1	1	1	1.6 (Medium)
Mendenhall et al., 2017	2	2	2	2	2	2 (Medium)
Ryu & Tuvilla, 2018	2	1	1	2	2	1.6 (Medium)
Uptin et al., 2013	2	3	1	1	1	1.6 (Medium)
Stewart, 2013	3	1	1	1	1	1.4 (Low)
Ziaian et al., 2018 (qualitative component of mixed method studies)	2	1	2	2	1	1.6 (Medium) 1.8 overall WoE A rating

Note: 'High'=>2.5, 'Medium' = 1.5-2.4, 'Low' <=1.4

Appendix E – Weight of Evidence B Criteria and Scoring

WoE B is a review-specific judgement which addresses the appropriateness of methodological design for the specific review question, in this case, exploring the educational experiences of refugee youth in countries of resettlement. The criteria for the WoE B weighting was devised by the reviewer in accordance with the quality criteria used for WoE A as well as specific inclusion and exclusion criteria, one aspect of which was related to study design. Due to the relatively narrow inclusion criteria and the term 'experience' in the systematic search, as expected, all studies were deemed of a sound design to answer the specific review question (Gough, 2007). With regards to interview and focus group methods, saturation is seen as a gold standard by which purposive sample sizes are determined (Guest et al., 2006). Thus, this was integrated into WoE B ratings, where a 'high' rating was allocated to interview and focus group studies with evidence of data saturation assigned as a minimum of 12 interviews or three to six groups for focus group designs (Guest et al., 2006; Hennink & Kaiser, 2019). This is in line with Letts et al. (2007) criteria where sampling should be done until redundancy in data is reached.

WoE B Scoring

Study	Description	Rating
Bartlett et al. (2017)	23 students took part in interviews; 3 focus groups divided by grade level	High
Besic et al. (2020)	55 students took part in interviews	High
Due et al. (2016)	15 students took part in 'photovoice' interviews	High
Guo, Maitra & Guo (2021)	3 focus groups with 18 children	Medium
Hastings (2012)	Six students took part in interviews	Low
Hek (2005)	15 students took part in interviews	High
Mendenhall et al. (2017)	3 focus groups divided by grade level	Medium
Ryu & Tuvilla (2018)	Ten students took part in interviews	Low
Uptin et al. (2013)	12 students took part in interviews; no reporting of number of focus groups or participants in each	Medium
Stewart (2012)	13 students took part in interviews; two focus groups with adult participants	Medium
Ziaian et al. (2018)	13 focus groups with 85 adolescents, allocated based on age, gender and ethnicity	High

Appendix F - Weight of Evidence C Criteria and Scoring

WoE C considers the focus on the study's evidence in answering the review question (Gough, 2007), evaluating characteristics of the sample and of the study. This then allows the findings to be generalised to answer the specific review question. While all of the included studies met the relevant inclusion criteria, some of the findings are considered less transferable due to specific aspects of study design. For the purpose of this review, ratings were based on whether perspectives included in the study were from multiple schools and if refugee youth participants were from varying countries of origin, lending to the transferability of study findings. If a study satisfied both criteria, it gained a 'High' rating, if only satisfied one, then a 'Medium' rating was assigned, with none of the criteria met resulting in a 'Low' rating.

WoE C Scoring

Study	Participants attending multiple schools	Participants from varying countries of origin	WoE C
Bartlett et al. (2017)	Yes	Yes	High
Besic et al. (2020)	Yes	Yes	High
Due et al. (2016)	No	Yes	Medium
Guo, Maitra, & Guo (2021)	Yes	No	Medium
Hastings (2012)	No	Yes	Medium
Hek (2005)	Yes	Yes	High
Mendenhall et al. (2017)	No	Yes	Medium
Ryu & Tuvilla (2018)	Yes	No	Medium
Uptin et al. (2012)	No	Yes	Medium
Stewart (2012)	No	Yes	Medium
Ziaian et al (2018)	Yes	Yes	Medium

Appendix G - Summary of Studies Included in Systematic Review

Author (year) Origin	Method (measures where available)	School type	Number and type of participants	Analysis	Study focus (interviews/focus group duration)
Bartlett et al. (2017) United States	Photo-cued interviews and focus groups with students, interviews with teachers and guidance counsellors. (Written questionnaire from voluntary school tutors but not reported in findings)	4 High Schools in New York City part of an 'International Network' of schools catering for newly arrived youth	23 students; 3 teachers; 2 guidance counsellors; 6 International Rescue Committee staff members; 6 voluntary university tutors	Thematic type analysis (not explicitly stated)	Explored academic and socio-emotional needs of refugee students in NYC International High Schools, considering how school practices foster academic, social and emotional needs (focus groups lasted 30-45 mins)
Bešić, et al. (2020) Austria	Semi-structured interviews	Primary school, new middle school and academic secondary school upper cycle (2 participants in immediate vocational education)	55 refugee students [b]	Directed qualitative content analysis	Examined refugee students' experiences in the Austrian mainstream school system, with a focus on school connectedness and social support (Interviews lasted an average of 29 mins)
Due et al. (2016) Australia	Photo elicitation methodology with accompanying interview or focus groups	3 government run mainstream schools with Intensive English Language centres	15 students [b]	Thematic analysis	Examined student experiences and understandings of school belonging
Guo et al. (2021)	3 Focus group interviews with refugee youth, informed by focus-groups with parents of refugee youth.	Unclear - "some children came from the same school"	18 refugee students [b]	Thematic analysis (Patton, 2015)	Explored initial integration experiences of Syrian refugee children in Canadian schools (Focus groups lasted between 45mins and 2 hours)

Hastings (2012) United Kingdom	Semi-structured Interviews	1 all-boys community secondary school	6 students	Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis	Investigated the experience of refugee youth during their transfer and adaption to a secondary school
Hek (2005) United Kingdom	Semi-structured interviews	2 secondary schools in London	15 students (interviewed key staff also but not reported in study)	Not reported	Explored perspectives of young refugees on factors that helped them settle in school
Mendenhall et al. (2017) United States	Photo-cued focus group discussions and interviews with students; interviews and focus groups with school staff (draws from same dataset as Bartlett et al. 2017)	1 International Network High School in New York	Students and school staff (numbers not explicit in article)	Thematic analysis described but method not made explicit	Examined how an International Network High School responds to the needs of refugee students
Ryu & Tuvilla (2018) United States	Semi-structured interviews	Students attended one of two local public high schools	10 students	Thematic analysis described	Explored understandings of school experiences (Interviews lasted approx. 1 hour)
Stewart (2012) Canada	Qualitative case-study design using semi-structured interviews, document analyses and focus group interviews	1 high school	51 participants overall: 13 students; 16 individuals from the school/home environment such as teachers, administrators, counsellors, school psychologists; focus groups with 22 counsellors from reception centre, service workers, government consultants,	Thematic type analysis described	Examined educational experiences of refugee students who have immigrated to Canada with an aim of understanding how educators and administrators could best support the needs of these students
Uptin et al. (2013) Australia	Semi-structured interviews followed by focus groups	Not stated	12 former refugee students and one youth worked aged 23	Not reported	Individual narratives of young former refugee's experiences of high schools (academic and social)

Ziaian et al. (2018) [a] Australia	Mixed methods approach: Children's depression inventory; Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire completed by parents, teachers, and adolescents; focus groups with refugee adolescents	Not stated	Multi-ethnic sample of 495 children and adolescents; 85 refugee adolescents (focus groups)	Non-parametric statistical analyses to investigate the extent of cross-informant agreement; thematic approach to qualitative data	Explored refugee youth experiences of education and related it to parent, teacher, and self-reports of mental health (Focus groups lasted 70-120 minutes)

[a] Mixed-Methods study

[b] Includes primary school aged participants

Appendix H – Systematic Review - Summary of Participant Demographics and Study Information

Study	Number of participants Gender breakdown	Age (or class level if available)	School type	Country(s) of origin	Number of years in country of study
Bartlett et al. (2017)	n=23 16 female; 7 male	- (9^{th}-12^{th} grade)	International Networks High schools	Guinea, Honduras, Iraq, Ivory Coast, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Tibet	Implied some participants in country less than four years but not clarified for all participants
Bešić, et al. (2017)	n=55 31 female, 24 male	8-21 years (M=12.05 years)	Primary school (n=11); New middle school (n=22), Academic secondary school upper cycle (n=1), school for intermediate vocational education (n=2) (36 of participants lived in areas where schools had high proportion of schools with migrant backgrounds)	Iran, Afghanistan, Iraq, Chechnya, Turkey, Mongolia, Somalia	Not reported
Due et al. (2016)	n=15 8 female, 7 male	5-13 years -	Intensive English Language Centre attached to Government run mainstream primary schools	The Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Syria and Zambia	Less than 12 months enrolled in Intensive English Language Centre (only eligible if in Australia less than 12 months)
Guo et al. (2021)	n=18 5 female, 13 male	10-14 years -	Students enrolled in English language programme offered by the public school system designed for recent arrivals who have had interrupted schooling and limited or no	Syria	Up to one year, the majority were at least 11 months with one arriving only 5 months prior to taking part in the research

			literacy in English or their first language.		
Hastings (2012)	n=6 All male	12-16 years -	All boys non-selective, non-denominational community secondary school in the UK	Afghanistan, Somalia, Turkey	Not reported
Hek (2005)	n=15 Six female, nine male	13-17 years -	Two mainstream Secondary Schools	Came from a range of national and ethnic backgrounds with diverse migration experiences	Between a year and seven years
Mendenhall et al. (2017)	N=11	- (9^{th}-12^{th} grade)	International Networks High school	Guinea, Ivory Coast, Iran, Nepal, Myanmar, Pakistan, India	Relative 'newcomers' – four years or less
Ryu & Tuvilla (2018)	N=10 8 female, 2 male	- (10^{th}-12^{th} grade)	High school (schools known for enrolling large number of Burmese students, 17% Asian)	Burma	Ranged from 2.5 to 11 years at time of interview (Reported age of displaced between 4 and 16)
Stewart (2012)	N=13 4 female, 9 male	18-21 years (10^{th}-12^{th} grade)	High school	Sudan, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Afghanistan, Rwanda	Can be estimated (date of arrival between 2003 and 2006)
Uptin et al. (2013)	N=12	16-19 years -	Not reported	Burma, Myanmar, Burundi, Southern Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, Togo	Not reported
Ziaian et al. (2018)	N=85 41 female, 45 male	13-17 years -	Not reported	Africa, Middle East, South Asia, Former Yugoslavia	Approximately 65% adolescents migrated to Australia within the last 5 years

Appendix I – Rationale for Study Sample Inclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria and Associated Rationale

Criteria	Rationale
First generation refugee or asylum status disclosed to the school	Experienced in the phenomenon of interest; first-generation refugee/asylum-seeker youth likely to have a different schooling experience from other migrant children (McBrien, 2005)
Currently enrolled in post-primary mainstream education in Ireland	Limited to post-primary mainstream education due to perceived level of engagement in the interview process and ability to reflect on previous experiences
Aged between 12 and 17 years old	As students of 18 years or more would not require parental consent, this may be in conflict with individual school procedures and protocols for consent/assent
Resettled in Ireland a minimum of 4 years	The timing of any investigation with refugee populations may affect the degree of burden on them, with distance from initial migration period recommended to reduce the risk of re-traumatisation (Saglam, 2011). In addition, after three years of residency in Ireland, refugee and asylum-seeker students are entitled to same financial supports as Irish students in relation to third level education. This may be specifically relevant for senior cycle students where school may be seen as a means to gaining entry to further education. Ensures participants have had considerable experience of education in Ireland to be able to reflect on initial and longer-term experiences, thus enabling their views to inform practice in the area (Thommessen, Corcoran, & Todd, 2017).
Proficient in English Language	Necessary to ensure sufficient expression of psychological, social, and educational experiences throughout interviews; all interviews conducted by researcher through English with limited resources meaning unable to acquire translators to support interview process.

Appendix J – School Information Sheet

School Information Sheet

RE: Research project on exploring perceptions of refugee youth on their experiences of education in Ireland

Dear Principal/Board of Management,

As part of my doctoral thesis, I am carrying out research on the experience of refugee youth in education in Ireland. The following details describe the project and what it would entail for your school and prospective students.

Who is undertaking it? My name is Sophie Gallagher and I am a Trainee Educational and Child Psychologist, completing a Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology with Mary Immaculate College, Limerick. I am currently on professional placement with the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) and completing my doctoral thesis under the supervisor of Dr. Trevor O'Brien and Dr. Marc Scully (see details below).

What is this study about? This study aims to explore refugee youths' experience of education in Ireland. Interested in their unique perspectives, this research will explore what has helped them and perhaps what they feel could be better supported. This approach however does not focus on the specifics of this school or an evaluation of such, but more so on the understandings of the youth themselves on the importance of education during their own process of resettlement in Ireland and longer-term. This project is for research purposes only and it is not an inspection of any kind.

Why is it being undertaken? With limited research in this area, both nationally and internationally, this research aims to inform policy, practice and continued development of appropriate supports for students from refugee backgrounds. The goal is to provide a space for these students to share their views. It is vital to understand these students unique experiences and listen to what they have to say as this could highlight aspects for further targeted support.

Who is eligible to take part in the study? I am aiming to recruit up to 8 students to partake in the study. Students are eligible to take part it they are of first-generation refugee or asylum-seeker status and have been in Ireland a minimum of 4 years, have an adequate level of spoken English to engage in the research, and are under 18 years of age.

What will parents/guardians of the study participants have to do? Should you permit me to collect data in your school, I will provide you with information sheets to distribute to parents/guardians of eligible students. This information sheet details the background and nature of my research project so that they can make an informed decision about whether they would like their child to take part or not. These sheets will be also made available in different languages if you feel it is required for specific parent/guardians.

What will participating students have to do? The study will involve an interview with students. Student assent is central to the research, with potential participants asked for their own assent to participate in the research. The data will be collected through a single interview in which each participant will be asked questions about what they think is important in school, their initial experiences of school in Ireland and how that compares to their experiences now. The participants will be given an opportunity to draw, to accompany their interview, if they so wish. The estimated total time of the data collection will be no more than one hour per participant. While it is hoped interviews would be conducted in person adhering to social distancing and PPE protocols of the school, in light of the current restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic there is also the option of completing interviews online over Zoom within the school setting on a school laptop/computer. In this case, verbal assent would be gained prior to discussing the interview questions, with a staff member introducing the student initially and the student inviting the staff member to conclude the interview when they are finished. It is important to note that the role of the primary investigator will be strictly that of a researcher. Should the interview bring up the need for any further support for the young person, the parents/guardians will be offered guidance on referral to a relevant professional. Please note also that the researcher is Garda vetted, and following the preparation of a full risk assessment, a Child Safeguarding Statement has been prepared in accordance with MIC policies.

What if prospective participants do not want to take part? Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Student assent will be sincerely respected, and students will not have to participate even if their parents/guardians give their permission. There will be no consequences for this. Taking part or not taking part in the research will not have any impact

on your school's access to services or supports, not students or their families access to services, supports or on any applications in relation to immigration or legal status.

Can students withdraw at any stage? Yes. Participants can choose not to answer any question if they so wish. Students will be free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason. There are no consequences for changing your mind about being in the study. Participants are free to withdraw from the study at any stage prior to or during data collection stages as well as during the transcription stages of the research process, after this point when combined for analysis and write up, it will not be possible to withdraw data from the research. Likewise, parents/guardians can withdraw their consent prior to, during or after the interview taking place, up to the date at which the transcribed anonymised interview data will be combined into themes during analysis and for write up. Participants who chose to withdraw will be immediately removed from the study along with any interview data recorded. Their data will be deleted and destroyed by the researcher and a letter sent to both the school and parent/guardians outlining this and thanking them for their engagement in the study.

How will confidentiality and anonymity be ensured? All information gathered will remain confidential. With the parent/guardian(s) and student's consent, the interviews would be recorded on a digital recording device. The recorded data will be deleted from the digital recorder on the day of the interview and transferred to a secure flash drive which only I will have access to. The data from the interview would then be transcribed, with pseudonyms used on transcriptions of the data and no regional data will be included. The anonymity of the student(s) and your school is assured. Any potentially identifiable information shared during the interviews will be de-identified during the transcription phase, and pseudonyms will be used throughout data analysis and write up. The anonymised interview transcripts will only be seen by the researcher and their supervisors. All data will be stored securely.

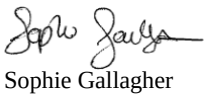
What happens to the information? At the end of the study the information will be used to form the results section of my doctoral thesis. The results of the study may be published in academic journals or presented at academic conferences, however, neither the school nor the participants will be identifiable. The information that is collected will be kept private and stored securely and safely on the researcher's password protected computer. No potentially identifying information (linked to either the participant or school) will appear on any findings linked to this research. In accordance with the MIC Data Retention Policy, anonymised data may be retained indefinitely as required by the researcher. Recommendations made post

thesis review will be sent to participating schools as a resource around supporting youth from refugee backgrounds.

What if prospective participants or parent/guardians have more questions or do not understand something? If parents/guardians have any questions, queries or issues regarding this study they may contact the principal investigator – Sophie Gallagher (details below). I would ask that all questions from prospective participants be mediated with the researcher through the parent/guardian or member of school staff. It is important that prospective participants feel that all of their questions have been answered prior to committing to engage in this study.

Thank you for taking time to read this. I would be extremely grateful if you would consider your school's participation in this study. Should you require any further clarification or would like to set up a meeting to discuss this further please do not hesitate to contact me by email. I look forward to hearing favourably from you.

Yours sincerely,



Sophie Gallagher

Trainee Educational and Child Psychologist

Mary Immaculate College, Limerick

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Lecturer in Psychology

Department of Psychology

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This research study has received Ethics approval from the Mary Immaculate College Research Ethics Committee (MIREC) (Research number: A20-059). If you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent authority, you may contact: Mary Collins, MIREC Administrator, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick Telephone: 061-204980 E-mail: mirec@mic.ul.ie

Appendix K – Participant and Parent/Guardian Information Sheet and Consent Forms

Parent/Guardian Information Sheet – English

Parent/Guardian Information Sheet

Educational experiences of refugee and asylum-seeker youth in Ireland

My name is Sophie Gallagher and I am a second year student at Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, in the process of completing a Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology.

What is this study about? My research is concerned with refugee and asylum-seeker youths' experience of education in Ireland - what has helped them, and perhaps how they feel they could be better supported. This is not an inspection of any kind and does not focus on the specifics of this school or an evaluation of such. Instead, I am interested in how your child sees the role of education and general aspects of school as impacting on their resettlement in Ireland. This research aims to inform policy, practice and continued development of appropriate supports for young refugees arriving in Ireland. The goal is to provide a space for students to share their voices, with their own opinions being listened to in order to inform supports, training and policy in the area.

Why have I been provided with information about this research? You have been provided with this information as I am currently recruiting participants for this research. Participants will comprise of secondary school students who have a refugee background aged between 12 and 17 and living in Ireland four or more years. Since your child fulfils these criteria, he/she can take part in this project.

What would happen if my child takes part? With your permission, your child would be invited to take part in an interview with me. A time during school hours would be arranged with for the interview to take place. While it is hoped that this would take place in-person in the school, considering Covid-19 restrictions, there is also an option to take part via Zoom during school hours on a school computer. Only students whose parents/guardians have given written consent will be asked to take part. If you decide to consent to your child taking part in the interview, a member of school staff will go through the participant information sheet with your child to ensure they understand the reasons for the research and what it would involve. They will also be asked to sign their consent. This will be repeated at the start of the interview to ensure your child understand the process and is happy to proceed. A copy of you and your child's consent forms will be copied and stored on file by the school. During the interview I will ask participating students some questions about school such as:

- What they think are the most important aspects of school?
- Any advice they would give to other young person's starting school in Ireland

During this interview your child would also be invited to draw if they so wish. The estimated total time of the interview would be maximum 1 hour and, with your permission, would be recorded on a digital recording device.

What are the risks? While the interviews will focus on positive aspects of school, if you decide to allow your child to volunteer in the study there is a possibility of fatigue, frustration or anxiety/distress. It is important to note that my role will be strictly that of a researcher. Should the interview bring up the need for any further support for the young person, you will be notified and offered guidance on referral for suitable professional help. Please note also that the researcher is Garda vetted, and following the preparation of a full risk assessment, a Child Safeguarding Statement has been prepared in accordance with Mary Immaculate College policies.

What if my child does not want to take part? It is up to you and your child to decide whether they would like to take part in this study or not. If you decide you do not want your child to take part, your child will not be interviewed. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and participants can choose not to take part or to stop their involvement in this study at any time. Your child may also decide during the interview that they do not want to answer a question. They do not have to answer any question that they do not wish to. Taking part or not taking part in the research will not have any impact on your child's or their schools' access to services, supports or on any applications in relation to immigration or legal status.

What if me or my child change our mind? If you and your child give permission to take part in this study, your child is still free to withdraw at any time before or during the interview, or any time after the interview before their information is combined with what other young people taking part in the study say. At this stage it will not be possible to withdraw your child's information from the research. You or your child do not need to give a reason if you change your minds and there are no consequences for doing so. Just let the school know or contact the researcher and your child's interview be deleted from the researchers files and you will be sent a letter confirming this.

Will me or my child's information be shared? All information that is collected will be kept private and stored securely on the researcher's password protected computer. The interview will then be typed word for word, with made up names used to identify participants in the study. Only I, the researcher, and my supervisors will have access to the interview data, which will be stored securely on a password protected laptop. No potentially identifiable information (you or your child's names, schools, country of origin or specific personal experiences/linked to either the participant or school) will be included in any write up of this research.

What will happen to the results of the study? The information gathered will form the results section of my final research. Recommendations from the young peoples' views will be provided to schools in relation in how best to support young people from refugee backgrounds. However, any information shared will not identify student or school names or specific details. Any quotations which may be used will be anonymous and will not be used to identify individuals.

Thank you very much for taking time to read this information sheet

Should you wish that your child takes part in the study, kindly complete the attached consent form, and return it to the school principal. Please keep this sheet for your own information.

Further information: If you require any assistance or have any questions about the research study, please feel free to contact me (see details below)

Primary Investigator/Researcher

Sophie Gallagher

Trainee Educational and Child Psychologist,

Mary Immaculate College, Limerick

Email: 19083211@micstudent.mic.ul.ie

Research Supervisors

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Department of Psychology
Email: marc.scully@mic.ul.ie

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Parent/Guardian Consent Form – English

Parent/Guardian Consent Form

Title of Study: Educational experiences of refugee youth in Ireland

Please tick the box to indicate you agree with the terms of the study

- I have read and understand the information sheet for parents/guardians for the above research study. ☐
- I understand what the project is about and what the results will be used for. ☐
- I am fully aware of all of the procedures, and of any risks or benefits associated with the study. ☐
- I have had time to consider whether I want my child to take part in this study and any questions have been answered satisfactorily. ☐
- I understand that my child's participation is voluntary (that my child and I have had a choice as to whether he/she participates) and that my child is free to refuse to answer any questions or withdraw at any time if he/she chooses to do so without giving a reason. ☐
- I understand that the study will be submitted as part of the researcher's studies and that the information collected may be presented and/or published in academic journals and at conferences. ☐
- I am aware that information about my child will be treated in strict confidence and will not be named in any written work arising from this. ☐
- I agree for my child to take part in the above study. ☐
- I agree to have my child's interview audio recorded. ☐

Child's Name (In block letters): ……

Parent/guardian name (In block letter): ……

Parent/guardian signature: …… Date: ……..

A copy of this signed consent form will be sent back to you for you to keep

Parent/Guardian Information Sheet – Arabic

ورقة معلومات للوالد/لولي الأمر

الخبرات التعليمية للشباب اللاجئين وطالبي اللجوء في أيرلندا

اسمي صوفي جالاجار وأنا طالبة في السنة الثانية بكلية مريم الطاهرة في ليمريك وأعمل حاليًا على استكمال درجة الدكتوراة المهنية في علم النفس التربوي وعلم نفس الطفل.

عما تدور هذه الدراسة؟ يهتم بحثي بخبرات الشباب اللاجئين وطالبي اللجوء وتجاربهم المتعلقة بالتعليم في أيرلندا - ما الأمور التي ساعدتهم وآرائهم حول كيفية تقديم الدعم لهم بصورة أفضل. هذه الدراسة ليست نوعًا من التفتيش على المدرسة بأي حال ولا تركز على التفاصيل الخاصة بها أو لعمل تقييم لها. وإنما أنا مهتمة بكيفية رؤية أطفالك لتأثير دور التعليم والجوانب العامة الخاصة بالمدرسة على إعادة توطينهم في أيرلندا. يهدف هذا البحث للاسترشاد به عند وضع السياسات والممارسات ومواصلة تطوير وسائل الدعم المناسبة للشباب اللاجئين الوافدين إلى أيرلندا. والهدف منه توفير مساحة للطلاب لمشاركتنا ما يودون قوله والاستماع إلى آرائهم الخاصة للاسترشاد بها عند توفير وسائل الدعم وعمل التدريبات ووضع السياسات في المنطقة.

لماذا تم إعطائي معلومات تخص هذا البحث؟ لقد أعطيت هذه المعلومات لك لأنني في الوقت الحالي أعمل على ضم مشاركين لإجراء هذا البحث. وسيتألف المشاركون من طلبة المدارس الثانوية الذين لهم خلفية تتعلق باللجوء والذين تتراوح أعمارهم من 12 إلى 17 سنة ويقيمون في أيرلندا منذ أربعة أعوام أو أكثر. وبما أن أطفالك تنطبق عليهم هذه المعايير، فإنه يمكنهم المشاركة في هذا المشروع.

ماذا سيحدث إن شارك أطفالي؟ بعد موافقتك، ستوجه الدعوة لأطفالك كي يشاركوا في إجراء مقابلة معي. سيتم ترتيب موعد خلال ساعات الدوام المدرسي لإجراء المقابلة. وعلى الرغم من أننا نود إجراء المقابلة وجهًا لوجه في المدرسة، إلا أنه بعد أخذ القيود المفروضة بسبب انتشار جائحة كوفيد-19 في الاعتبار سيكون لدينا الخيار كذلك في إجراء المقابلة من خلال برنامج Zoom أثناء ساعات الدوام المدرسي باستخدام أحد أجهزة الحاسب الآلي الخاصة بالمدرسة. ولن توجه الدعوة للمشاركة إلا للطلبة الذين قام ذووهم/أولياء أمورهم بإعطاء الموافقة الكتابية. إذا قررت أن توافق على مشاركة أطفالك في المقابلة، فسيقوم أحد موظفي المدرسة بتوضيح محتوى ورقة المعلومات الخاصة بالمشاركين لأطفالك للتأكد من أنهم يفهمون جيدًا أسباب إجراء هذا البحث وما الأمور التي من الممكن أن يتضمنها. وسيُطلَب منهم أيضًا التوقيع على الموافقة الخاصة بهم. وسنكرر القيام بهذا الأمر في بداية المقابلة للتأكد من أن أطفالك يفهمون العملية جيدًا ويرغبون في الاستمرار. سيتم عمل نسخ من استمارات الموافقة الخاصة بك وتلك الخاصة بأطفالك وستحتفظ المدرسة بسجل يحتوي على هذه النسخ. أثناء المقابلة، سوف أوجه للطلبة المشاركين عدة أسئلة حول المدرسة مثل:

- ما هي أكثر الجوانب أهمية فيما يتعلق بالمدرسة بحسب رأيهم؟
- أية نصائح يرغبون في إعطائها للشباب الآخرين الذين سيبدأون الدراسة في أيرلندا.

وأثناء هذه المقابلة من الممكن أن نطلب من أطفالك أن يرسموا إذا ما رغبوا في ذلك. سيكون الزمن الإجمالي المتوقع للمقابلة ساعة واحدة على الأكثر، وبعد موافقتك، ستُسَجَّل المقابلة بواسطة جهاز تسجيل رقمي.

ما هي المخاطر؟ على الرغم من أن المقابلات ستركز على الجوانب الإيجابية للمدرسة، إلا أنه إذا قررت السماح بأن يكون أطفالك متطوعين في الدراسة، فهناك احتمال أن يشعروا بالتعب أو الإحباط أو القلق/الضيق. ومن المهم التنويه إلى أنني سأقوم بدور الباحثة فقط على وجه التحديد. وفي حال تطلبت المقابلة وجود أي وسائل دعم إضافية للشباب، فسيتم إخطارك بهذا وتقديم الإرشاد لك بخصوص الحصول على المساعدة المهنية الملائمة. يرجى العلم أيضًا أنه قد تم التحقق من هوية الباحثة وفحص سجلها، وأنه قد تم إعداد إقرار لحماية وصون الطفل وفقًا للسياسات المعمول بها في كلية مريم الطاهرة وذلك بعد إعداد تقييم كامل للمخاطر.

ماذا إن كان أطفالي لا يرغبون في المشاركة؟ الأمر عائد لك ولأطفالك لتقرير ما إن كانوا يرغبون في المشاركة في هذه الدراسة أم لا. إذا قررت أنك لا ترغب في أن يشارك أطفالك، فلن تجرى مقابلات معهم. المشاركة في هذه الدراسة طوعية واختيارية تمامًا ويمكن للمشاركين أن يختاروا ألا يشاركوا فيها أو أن يوقفوا مشاركتهم فيها في أي وقت. كما يمكن لأطفالك أن يقرروا أثناء المقابلة أنهم لا يريدون الإجابة على السؤال الموجه لهم. ليس عليهم أن يجيبوا على أي أسئلة لا يرغبون في الإجابة عليها. ولن يؤثر قرار المشاركة أو عدم المشاركة في البحث بأي حال من الأحوال على أطفالك أو على تلقي مدارسهم للخدمات أو على وسائل الدعم الخاصة بهم أو على أي طلبات تتصل بالهجرة أو الوضع القانوني.

ماذا إن غيرت أنا أو أطفالي قرارنا؟ إن وافقت أنت وأطفالك على المشاركة في هذه الدراسة، فسيظل لأطفالك الحرية في أن ينسحبوا في أي وقت قبل المقابلة أو أثناءها أو في أي وقت بعدها وقبل دمج المعلومات الخاصة بهم مع ما قاله الشباب الآخرون المشاركون في الدراسة. ففي هذه المرحلة لن يكون من الممكن سحب المعلومات الخاصة بأطفالك من البحث. ولا يتوجب عليك أنت أو أطفالك إبداء الأسباب إن غيرتم قراركم ولا توجد هناك أية آثار مترتبة على تغييركم لقراركم. فقط قم بإعلام المدرسة بهذا أو تواصل مع الباحثة وستُحذَف المقابلات الخاصة بأطفالك من أوراق الباحثين وسجلاتهم وستُرسَل لك رسالة لتأكيد هذا.

هل ستتم مشاركة المعلومات الخاصة بي أو بأطفالي؟ سيتم الحفاظ على سرية كافة المعلومات التي يتم جمعها وسيتم تخزينها على نحو آمن على جهاز الحاسب الآلي الخاص بالباحثة والمحمي بكلمة سر. ثم سيُكتَب ما قيل في المقابلة حرفيًا مع استخدام أسماء وهمية للمشاركين في الدراسة. ولن تُتَاح إمكانية الوصول لبيانات المقابلات التي ستُحفَظ على نحو آمن على حاسب محمول محمي بكلمة سر إلا لي، الباحثة، ومن يشرفون على بحثي فقط. ولن يتضمن أي عمل مكتوب ناتج عن هذا البحث أية معلومات من الممكن أن تحدد الهوية (اسمك أو أسماء أطفالك، أو مدارسهم، أو بلادهم الأصلية أو أي خبرات شخصية محددة أو أمور تتصل بالمشاركين أو بالمدرسة).

ماذا سيحدث لنتائج الدراسة؟ ستشكل المعلومات التي تم جمعها محتوى القسم الخاص بالنتائج في بحثي النهائي. وسأقدم إلى المدرسة توصيات ناتجة عن آراء الشباب والتي تتعلق بالكيفية المثلى لدعم أولئك الشباب الذين لهم خلفية تتصل باللجوء. وعلى كل حال، لن تحدد أي معلومات تتم مشاركتها اسم الطالب/الطالبة أو المدرسة أو أي تفاصيل محددة عن الطلبة. وأية اقتباسات قد نستخدمها لن يتم الكشف عن هوية قائلها ولن تستخدم لتحديد هوية الأشخاص.

ولكم جزيل الشكر على الوقت الذي أمضيتموه في قراءة ورقة المعلومات هذه.

إن رغبتم في أن يشارك أطفالكم في الدراسة، فضلًا قوموا بملء استمارة الموافقة المرفقة وأعيدوها إلى مدير/مديرة المدرسة. يرجى الاحتفاظ بهذه الورقة لاستخدامكم الخاص.

معلومات إضافية: إن أردتم الحصول على أي مساعدة أو ترغبون في الحصول على إجابات لأية أسئلة تتعلق بالدراسة البحثية، رجاءً لا تترددوا في التواصل معي (راجعوا بيانات الاتصال أدناه).

الباحثة/المحققة الرئيسية

صوفي جالاجار

أخصائية نفسية متدربة في علم النفس التربوي وعلم نفس الطفل

كلية مريم الطاهرة، ليمريك

البريد الإلكتروني: 19083211@micstudent.mic.ul.ie

المشرفون على البحث

دكتور/ تريفور أوبراين
أستاذ محاضر في علم النفس التربوي الشامل والخاص،
قسم علم النفس التربوي،
التعليم الشامل والخاص
البريد الإلكتروني: trevor.obrein@mic.ul.ie

دكتور/ مارك سكالي
أستاذ محاضر في علم النفس
قسم علم النفس
البريد الإلكتروني: marc.scully@mic.ul.ie

لقد حصل هذا البحث على الموافقة الخاصة بأخلاقيات البحث العلمي (*A20-059*) من لجنة أخلاقيات البحث العلمي بكلية مريم الطاهرة. إن كانت لديك أية مخاوف أو شواغل حول هذه الدراسة وترغب في التواصل مع أحد الهيئات المستقلة، يمكنك التواصل مع: ماري كولينز، المسؤولة عن لجنة أخلاقيات البحث العلمي بكلية مريم الطاهرة، كلية مريم الطاهرة، ليمريك الهاتف: *061-204980* البريد الإلكتروني: *mirec@mic.ul.ie*

Parent/Guardian Consent Form – Arabic

استمارة موافقة الوالد/ولي الأمر

عنوان الدراسة: الخبرات التعليمية للشباب اللاجئين في أيرلندا

من فضلك ضع علامة على المربع لتعلن أنك توافق على شروط الدراسة.

- لقد قرأت ورقة المعلومات الموجهة للوالد/لولي الأمر والتي تخص الدراسة البحثية أعلاه وفهمت محتواها. ☐
- أفهم ما يدور بشأنه المشروع ولأية أغراض ستستخدم نتائجه. ☐
- أنا على دراية كاملة بكافة الإجراءات وأي مخاطر أو منافع متعلقة بالدراسة. ☐
- لقد كان لدي الوقت الكافي للنظر فيما إن كنت أرغب أن يشارك أطفالي في هذه الدراسة وقد تمت الإجابة على أية أسئلة بصورة مقبولة. ☐
- أعي أن مشاركة أطفالي طوعية واختيارية (أي أنني وأطفالي قد كنا نملك الخيار بخصوص ما إن كان أطفالي سيشاركون أم لا) وأعي أن لأطفالي الحرية في أن يرفضوا الإجابة على أية أسئلة أو ينسحبوا من الدراسة في أي وقت إن رغبوا في هذا بدون إبداء أسباب. ☐
- أعي أن الدراسة سيجري تقديمها كجزء من الدراسات التي تجريها الباحثة وأن ما تم جمعه من معلومات قد يتم تقديمه في المؤتمرات و/أو نشره في المجلات الأكاديمية. ☐
- أنا على دراية أنه سيتم التعامل مع المعلومات الخاصة بأطفالي في سرية تامة وأن أسمائهم لن ترد في أي عمل مكتوب ينتج عن هذه الدراسة. ☐
- أوافق على أن يشارك أطفالي في الدراسة الواردة أعلاه. ☐
- أوافق على عمل تسجيل صوتي للمقابلة مع أطفالي. ☐

اسم الطفل (بحروف كبيرة): .....

اسم الوالد/ولي الأمر (بحروف كبيرة): .....

توقيع الوالد/ولي الأمر: ..... التاريخ: .....

سيعاد إرسال نسخة من استمارة الموافقة الموقعة هذه إليك كي تحتفظ بها.

Student Participant Information Sheet

Student Information Sheet

Educational experiences of refugee and asylum-seeker youth in Ireland

My name is Sophie Gallagher. I am studying Educational and Child Psychology at Mary Immaculate College, Limerick. I am doing some research to try to understand how young people from refugee backgrounds find school. This form is called an information sheet and will explain what my research is about. After reading this you can decide if you would like to be part of my research or not or ask any questions you may have.

What is my research about? For my research project I would like to find out about what secondary school students, like you, think about school. I want to listen to what you have to say and then make suggestions to other schools and teachers on how to best support other young refugees who are living in Ireland.

What happens if I take part? As you are under the age of 18, I will need to ask for your parent/guardian(s) permission for you to take part. If you would like to be part of my research and your parents allow you to take part, I would arrange a time to come to your school to meet with you or maybe do this online in school over Zoom.

You will be asked to answer some questions such as:

- How you feel about school?
- How school has helped since arriving in Ireland?
- Advice you might give to someone like you just starting out in school in Ireland.

You can also draw to help with your answers. There are no right or wrong answers so don't worry. You are free to share as much or as little as you want and can change your mind or stop at any time. Our interview will be audio recorded (just our voices), so I do not forget anything important. If you like, you can also draw a picture to help you in our conversation. It will take about 30 minutes to 1 hour.

What if I do not want to take part? If you decide that you don't want to be part of the study that's okay too. Taking part or not taking part in the research will not have any impact on you, your family, or your schools' access to supports.

What are the risks? While the interviews will focus on positive aspects of school, if you decide to take part in the study there is a possibility you may get worried or upset during the interview. However, as my role is only that of a researcher, if you would like some further support we can talk to

your parents or teacher about this. You will also be provided with an information sheet with lots of organisations suitable for young people to contact for support or information.

Can I change my mind? Yes. If you decide that you would like to take part, you can still change your mind before the interview and leave at any time during the interview, even after we have started. You can also decide you don't want your interview to be included in the project after I meet with you. You do not have to give a reason if you change your mind, just let me or your school know. There will be no consequences for changing your mind about taking part.

Will anyone know that I took part in the research? I will keep what you say private unless something is said that suggests you or someone else might get hurt. You can choose to tell or not to tell about your taking part in the research - only you and your parent/guardian, your school principal or staff member and me will have to know that you are taking part in the interview. After we meet, I will type up our discussion word for word, but will use made up names. Your name, the name of your school or friends, or any specific details you share that may make someone recognise that it's you will not be written up in the study. A written copy of our conversation will be kept private and stored securely on my password protected computer. Only two lecturers who are helping me with my research and I will have access to this. Although other people may read words that you said during your interview, they won't know that they belong to you. Your name will not be used but what you say will be included with what some other children from different schools say.

What will happen to the results of the study? The information shared with me by the young people taking part in this project will help me to understand why school is important to young people like you. Whatever I find out will be written about in my project for college. Any quotations which may be used will use made up names. When I finish writing up my project into a book, other people can read my project book but it won't have your name or school name in it, as I'm not allowed to put that in. My project might be put into some magazine journals or it might be shown at a project fair.

What if I have any questions or worries before, during or after the study takes place? If you have any questions or would like to find out some more information you can talk to your teacher or parents about this and they can contact me with your questions. If anything in the interview upsets you or makes you feel worried about yourself, your family or your friends you can talk to a teacher at school.

Thank you!

Student Participant Assent Form

Student Assent Form

Title of Study: Educational experiences of refugee and asylum-seeker youth in Ireland

Please tick (✓) the boxes you agree with and put an X beside the points you do not agree with…

- I have read and understood the information sheet ☐
- I understand what the study is about and I know what I'll be doing during my interview ☐
- I know that I have a choice about taking part in this study and I can decide not to take part in the interview without giving any reason. ☐
- I can change my mind and stop taking part in the interview at any time by telling my parents, school or the interviewer about this. ☐
- I know that my name will not be used in the final project ☐
- This form has been explained to me and I am happy to take part in this study ☐
- I agree to have the interview audio recorded ☐
- If I do not understand anything, I can ask questions ☐

Name (print name):…….

Signature: ……. Date:……

Appendix L – Participant Information and School Details

Abbud (attending school 1 – a mixed community post-primary school in rural area)
Abbud was nearly 16 years old at the time of the interview. After arriving in Ireland four years ago, he initially attended a specific English class in the EROC centre before transitioning to his new community with his family and joining his current school. He started in the school in the middle of 2nd year and is now in 5th year. Originally from the Middle East, Abbud lived in two different countries during the process of migration, learning three different languages across the migration period. He had no experience of English prior to coming to Ireland.

Chad (attending school 2 - a mixed community post-primary school in rural area)
Chad is a 15 year old boy who arrived in Ireland from the Middle East nearly four years ago. With previous experience of English, he was home-schooled for four months prior to starting in 1st year in his current mainstream secondary school. Chad is in 5th year, and is eager to finish school as soon as he can to get a job.

Badia (attending school 3 – a mixed community school in a rural area)
Badia, a 16 year old girl, came to Ireland nearly 6 years ago with her younger sister (Ghaya) and her parents. Before joining their current school, both sisters had attended a school close to their initial accommodation centre for nearly 2 years. The family were then moved to a smaller community in Ireland due to availability of housing. Both Badia and Ghaya spoke of their lives in the Middle East, as well as the difficult journey to Ireland. Badia was currently in her second year of Leaving Certificate Applied and was eager to finish school as soon as possible and work as a hairdresser.

Ghaya (attending school 4 – a mixed community school in a rural area)
Ghaya, Badia's younger sister, was 15-years old at the time of interview. Despite similar overall experiences to her sister, Ghaya spoke more positively of her education in Ireland. At the time of interview, Ghaya was in her first year of Leaving Cert Applied. Neither of the sisters had any experience of English prior to coming to Ireland.

Zola (attending school 4 – a mixed community school in rural area)
Zola was nearly 18 at the time of interview. Originally from Southern Africa, she had come to Ireland with her parents nearly four years ago. She started school in Ireland in 3rd year in a large city school with a large number of other students from refugee backgrounds. Zola joined her current school in 5th year and is currently in Leaving Certificate. Her education prior to coming to Ireland was predominantly through English, and she continues to speak English interchangeably at home with her parents.

Kofi (attending school 4 – a mixed community school in rural area)

Similar to Zola, Kofi began school in Ireland in a large city school and only moved to his current school in the past year. He is 15 years of age, having come to Ireland at age 12 from Southern Africa with his family. Kofi is currently in 5th year and eager to pursue a degree in Engineering after school. He speaks both his first language and English interchangeably at home.

Omari (attending school 4 – a mixed community school in rural area)
Omari was 17 years of age at the time of interview. This was the only school he had attended in Ireland. He started in 2nd year and at the time of interview was in Transition Year. Prior to settling in this community, he lived in three different locations across Ireland. Back home, his education was completed through English.

Nala (school 5 – all female school in an urban area)
Now in her Junior Certificate year, Nala was 10 years old when she arrived in Ireland, starting in 4th class in primary school in Ireland. Now 15 years old, Nala has been in Ireland for nearly 6 years. She completed her education in her home country through English and speaks numerous languages.

Ada (school 5- all female school in an urban area)
Ada, aged 16 at the time of interview, was in her first year of Leaving Certificate Applied. She joined in 4th class in primary school and has been Ireland over 6 years. Both her and Nala were the only two students who began education in Ireland at Primary level. Ada moved from her home country to a neighbouring country for two years prior to coming to Ireland and was home-schooled by her mother due to fears of safety at that time. Her education prior to coming to Ireland was predominantly through English.

Appendix M – Interview Guide

Introduction

- Review the purpose of the study and the participant information sheet
    - Outline the right to withdraw at any stage and their choice in saying as little or as much as they feel like; assure participants that there are no right or wrong answers.
    - Explain confidentiality and limits of confidentiality - potential or past harm to self or others, criminal activity, or abuse
    - Reconfirm that participants are happy to proceed; confirm that it is okay to record their voices and demonstrate voice recorder; sign assent form
- To allow time to settle into the interview, before beginning ask some general questions about school – what class they are in, favourite subjects.
- Explain that participants can begin with a drawing task before we start the interview or draw/doodle throughout the interview if they wish to. Their drawings will not be shared with anyone but sometimes can help us think of different ideas while we're talking.

If participants are happy to engage in drawing task, begin with this and explain that we will first draw and then I'll ask some questions.

Drawing activity

- Draw a picture representing your school now
    - *Prompts:*
        - Maybe include your classrooms, other people in the school, or maybe the things you most enjoy in school
        - Tell me about what you have drawn? Can you tell me three things about this school?

- Draw another picture, and in this picture draw how your school could better support you, or your ideal school – it might just be like your school now or a little different
    - *Prompts*
        - Tell me three things about this school - what the classrooms might be like, or other young people or adults might be like
- Think again about your current school. Can you tell me three things that others could do to help your school be more like your ideal school?

Initial experience of education in Ireland

- Can I ask you how long you have been in Ireland? What class/year were you in when you came to Ireland?
- I wonder if we could go back in time a bit and think about when you first started school in Ireland. Can you tell me a little about this time?
    - *Prompts:*
        - What was it like starting in school in Ireland?
        - Was there anything that has been/was good or not so good about the school?

- Is there anything that helped you when you first came to the school? Can you tell me a little more about that?
- Is there anything that was a little harder when you first started school in Ireland? Can you tell me a little more?

Experiences now in school

- How do you feel about school now compared to when you first arrived?
- Would you have any advice for new students like you were, teachers, or other students in the school?
    - *Prompts:*
        - Imagine there is a student like you about to start school in Ireland, what advice would you give them?
        - Imagine you had the power to go back to when you first started in school here and tell the teachers and other students in the school what they could have done to have helped you, what would you say?
        - Is there anything you think schools should know about students like you from refugee or asylum-seeker backgrounds, when starting in a new school and learning in Ireland?

Role of language (*If not spoken about previously, ask about language competency if relevant)*

- Can you tell me a about the languages you speak and how you use them?
    - *Prompts:*
        - What languages do you speak now? When did you learn them?
        - What is it like for you speaking English? Is it different that using your first language?
        - How do you choose what language to speak?

Conclusion

- Is there anything that I should have asked you but didn't or anything else you think is important
- Summarise and check for understanding and accuracy of initial interpretations of the information discussed
- Ask participants how they have found taking part in the interview? Was there anything that was good to talk about or anything more difficult to talk about?
- Provide students with list of supports - "Just in case that we brought up anything you might want to talk about further, we have some contact numbers for support services here. We give them out to everyone. Feel free to use them as you see fit."
- Inform students of the individual protocol developed in conjunction with each school.
- End with a conversation about wishes for the future

Appendix N – Interview Visual Schedule

Exploring experiences of refugee youth of education in Ireland

	Hello and welcome Explain the research	✓
	Will you take part?	
	Drawing your school	
	Questions about school ○ Arriving in Ireland ○ Now	
	The languages you speak	

Appendix O – Supports Information Sheet

How to access support services?

Service	Description	Contact information
Aware	The Aware Support Line service is free and available to anyone, aged 18 years and over, who is seeking support and information about issues relating to their own mood or the mood of a friend or family member, or who experiences depression or bipolar disorder.	www.aware.ie Freephone 1800 804848 Monday-Sunday 10am-10pm
Childline	Childline is open every day and is there for all children and young person up to the age of 18 in Ireland. You can talk with Childline in confidence, about anything that might be on your mind, and they won't judge. Childline is there to listen and will help to figure out the best solution for you.	www.childline.ie Freephone 1800 66 66 66 Free Text 50101 Live Chat available on the website
Diversity Sligo	Diversity Sligo supports refugees and asylum seekers through information, advice, advocacy, donations, activities and a variety of additional services.	www.diversitysligo.ie 086-2325951 helo@diversitysligo.ie
Doras Luimni	Doras Luimni is based in Limerick and provides direct support services to asylum seekers and refugees which includes a legal service and an information and advice centre as well as campaigning on policy and working on integration planning.	www.dorasluimni.org
Irish Refugee Council	The Irish Refugee Council is a national non-governmental organisation which works with and for refugees in Ireland. They operate a drop-in support service, a law centre and run campaigns on a variety of relevant issues. They also provide Youth Work and Education supports, with information on grants available.	www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie
IOM Ireland	The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is an inter-governmental organization providing services and advice to governments and migrants. In Ireland, IOM provides assistance with voluntary return, family reunification, counter-trafficking and resettlement.	www.iomireland.ie

Irish Red Cross	In Ireland the Red Cross work on various issues of concern to public health and building awareness. A main aim of their work in Ireland is restoring family links.	www.redcross.ie
Jigsaw	Jigsaw offers a listening ear, and give expert advice and support to young people aged 12 – 25 years-old. Jigsaw also can give families, teachers, and those who support young people's mental health ways to cope and skills to be there for young people	www.Jigsaw.ie Freephone 1800 JIGSAW (544729) Mon-Fri 1-5pm Text 'call me' to 086 180 3880 Email: help@jigsaw.ie
Mayo Intercultural Action	Mayo Intercultural Action is a local community organisation promoting the positive effects of interculturalism and the meaningful participation of refugees, asylum seekers, migrants and their families in all aspects of the community in County Mayo.	www.intercultural-action.mayo-helplines.mayo.tel/
National Youth Council of Ireland	NYCI is the representative body for voluntary youth organisations in Ireland. They have developed an online resource to support young asylum seekers and refugees to take part in youth groups and your work activities in their area.	www.Youth.ie
Samaritans	Speak with Samaritans directly, they are a helpline and provide a free listening service.	www.samaritans.ie Freephone 116 123 or Email at jo@samaritans.org
Spun Out.ie	Provide information online about the importance of wellbeing and how good health can be maintained, both physically and mentally.	www.spunout.ie
Text 50808	Text 50808 is a free 24/7 text service, where you connect with a trained Crisis Volunteer. The crisis Volunteer will introduce themselves, reflect on what you've said, and invite you to share at your own pace. You'll text back and forth, online sharing what you feel comfortable with.	Text 50808

Appendix P – Ethical Approval

Mary Immaculate College Research Ethics Committee

MIREC-4: MIREC Chair Decision Form

APPLICATION NO. A20-059 Final

1. PROJECT TITLE

Perceptions of refugee youth on their experiences of education in Ireland

2. APPLICANT

Name:	Sophie Gallagher
Department / Centre / Other:	EPISE
Position:	Postgraduate Researcher

3. DECISION OF MIREC CHAIR

☐	Ethical clearance through MIREC is required.
☐	Ethical clearance through MIREC is not required and therefore the researcher need take no further action in this regard.
✓	Ethical clearance is required and granted. Referral to MIREC is not necessary.
☐	Ethical clearance is required but the full MIREC process is not. Ethical clearance is therefore granted if required for external funding applications and the researcher need take no further action in this regard.
☐	Insufficient information provided by applicant / Amendments required.

4. REASON(S) FOR DECISION

A20-059 – Sophie Gallagher - Perceptions of refugee youth on their experiences of education in Ireland

I have reviewed this application and I believe it satisfies MIREC requirements. It is, therefore, approved.

5. DECLARATION (MIREC CHAIR)

Name (Print):	Dr Marie Griffin
Signature:	
Date:	20th December 2020

Appendix Q – Annotated Transcript Excerpt and Table of Personal Experiential Themes

The following pages present an extract of the transcript from Ghaya's (participant 4) interview (6:40-13:57 minutes), with exploratory noting on the right-hand margin and subsequent personal experiential statements presented on the left-hand column. Meaningful chunks of the data are numbered sequentially, with 'R' representing the Interviewer/researcher. As suggested by Smith et al. (2009, 2021), initial exploratory notes are separated based on whether they relate to descriptive, linguistic, or conceptual features of the data. Personal experiential statements (in the left-hand column) are coloured coded relating to personal experiential themes which were subsequently developed by the researcher. The table that follows the transcript presents personal experiential themes for Ghaya's interview.

Personal Experiential Statements	Chunk	Speaker	Extract	Exploratory notes
		R	Okay, and then thinking about before you started in the small class in that school, how did you feel before you started?	
Mixed emotions starting So much newness Huge transition – school is only one part	8	P4	I was like, a little bit, ehhh like how do you say it, like excited and shy and scared also, like meeting new people, and new teachers, and a new, like everything is new, and getting to like to understand the teachers or the people in this community, in this city, it's a little bit hard, it's big, it's a lot of change.	Mixed emotions before starting school Lots involved in starting – 'everything is new' Huge transition/change SO much to consider – so much change! School adjustment just one part of it, school is just one part of it! Huge change is hard
		R	Yes exactly. and how did you feel then once you had started. How long did it take to settle in?	
It takes time	9	P4	It did take a few weeks, or actually a few months, maybe four five months until I settled down and I understand the teacher. You know, like in our school now, I understand every single thing the	Took time to settle and be able to understand teachers

Awareness of limits to competence Awareness of need for clarity of language in instruction			teacher says, but like sometimes I don't understand them as they might say it in a different way, in a more difficult way.	Now confident in her understanding but still aware of limits to competency Paused in clarifying that she still doesn't understand everything Aware doesn't understand everything still?
		R	Yeah of course, English is a funny language too.	
Additional family responsibilities – burden?	10	P4	Yeah, like sometimes, when you like go to the Doctor, like I go to translate with my Dad a lot because my dad is sick sometimes, I am the interpreter of the house. I go to translate for him, and sometimes it's hard, like especially with the doctor or in the hospital, it's hard, like any different parts of the body and some words that I don't know and I don't understand. And I get very stressed sometimes…	Additional responsibilities – family responsibilities? Role of translator for hospital appointments with dad Translating medical terms – can be a stressful role, a burden? Also burden/worry re. dads health? Recognises individual impact of this role even though she's the youngest
		R	Yeah and that's a big thing for you having to translate everything too. And if you think about the first school that you first arrived in, were there good things about that?	
Disappointment that level of support didn't continue? More support initially Difficulty articulating experience	11	P4	Yeah, I'm going to say they were more understandable, and they give us lots of supports, and they were like, ….oh I have everything in my head but it's hard to get it out…	More supports/understanding in school when first arrived in Ireland (1st school in Ireland More positive experience initially due to more supports initially? Disappointment supports weren't continued? Hesitant in articulating experience?

		R	that's okay, we can take some time, there's no rush.	
Positive initial experience Teachers are more than teaching – encouraging connecting Recognise need for support to connect with peers Force yourself to make friends – determination/effort?	12	P4	Yeah, well everything was really good there. Like I can't say there is anything that wasn't good, like everything was good, a good school, good students, they took us, like the teachers took us to the other girls at the break so we could meet other students, go talk to them and not just stay in the home room, not just be in the class not talking to anyone. She said, you can come with me, so we went with her and she said you can talk with girls and make friends, that it's not great staying in the home room, staying on your own, you have to go outside and make some communication with people and make some friends. It's not like really good to emmm, it's not to stay on your own.	Positive initial experience of school Role of teachers to support/facilitate friendships outside of the classrooms Teachers encouraged them to make friends The need to be supported to integrate Forcing self to make friends? Encouraged them to meet and talk to other students Importance of connecting with peers
		R	Yeah okay, so they encouraged you?	
Teachers as more than teachers – encouraging participation and connection Feeling involved in class – having a purpose Interactive learning – facilitating connection	13	P4	Yes exactly, they encouraged us to do lots of things, like art, sports, working in teams, cooking, giving out our advice like in Home Ec, like some of them in Home Ec, they used to cook and then we'd taste the food and give our advice, like is it good or bad, or very salty or something like that.	Teachers encouraged to take part in teams; utilised strengths to engage in class activities Importance of feeling involved, having a purpose/ a role? Teachers made learning enjoyable and interactive, facilitating social communication Joint experience of her and her sister
		R	So lots of ways to interact with the other students as well. And then, when did you find out you had to move school, or how did	

			you feel, you had just started in this school and you were there about 8 months…	
Continued transitions – doesn't always get easier with time Difficult to be new again	14	P4	It was so hard for me. To move to a new school, I was a little shy, I didn't like when I started in here. When I started in this school, it was a huge big change, a 3rd change in here and new people, new teachers, new students, lots of things new. I was a little bit shy and it was stressful, the third move.	Recognises individual emotional impact, unique response to experience Transition to new school in Ireland harder than when first started; More negative second start to school It doesn't always get easier with time? Third move - stressful
		R	And was it different to when you started in the first school?	
Mixed emotions	15	P4	Hmm a little bit different, a little nervous, excited and shy	Mixed emotions when starting a new school, even if not 1st experience in Ireland
		R	That is hard, after been through it all already	
Difficult to be new again	16	P4	Like new people, new students, you don't know them, you don't know their names and every time you need to go, like in the first day, you go into the class and need to say your name, where you come from, like your age and all things about you, and on the first day, it was only talking about us.	Present tense – not 'I didn't' but still don't know them – ongoing aspect of experience? Difficult to be 'new again' Fed up – cycle of all new AGAIN? Lots of attention on them – introducing selves etc.
		R	and what would it have been, like maybe if you had another first day, what would you like it to be like?	

Initial focus on getting to know people – not academic	17	P4	Ehh the same day, the same talking, and not only studying, writing, and reading, but more talking. I'm into talking to people, I'm interested in people, in talking about where I come from or about my religion and everything,	When starting school, nice to focus on talking and getting to know people, less of a focus on academics Personal pronouns - recognises not everyone may want to talk about their backgrounds – individual preference Likes sharing with people – her background, religion
		R	So having a chance to talk to people is important?	
Personal coping – likes to make friends, chatting	18	P4	Yeah, I like making new friends, maybe someone sitting beside you, you talking to him or her and make some communication with them.	Likes making new friends, chatting to new people
		R	Okay great, so getting a chance to being able to talk with other students?	
	19	P4	Yeah exactly	
		R	And then you've shared lots with me, but are there any things that made it hard when you first started school in Ireland?	
Language initially most important Pride of personal effort; requirement of effort to speak with people, to get friends (get rather than make?)	20	P4	Emm, [at my first school], there was the language, that was the main thing. We used to study in our school in [back home] but the school were not that interested in English, so when we came here, I put my head down, I started to go out with people too and speak and encourage myself to speak with people and get new friends, and it was the same in the school. The main thing is language.	Language initial difficulty – now more varied? When started initially – language the most difficult Little previous knowledge of English Proud of personal effort made to integrate, to connect

Ghaya – Personal Experiential Themes

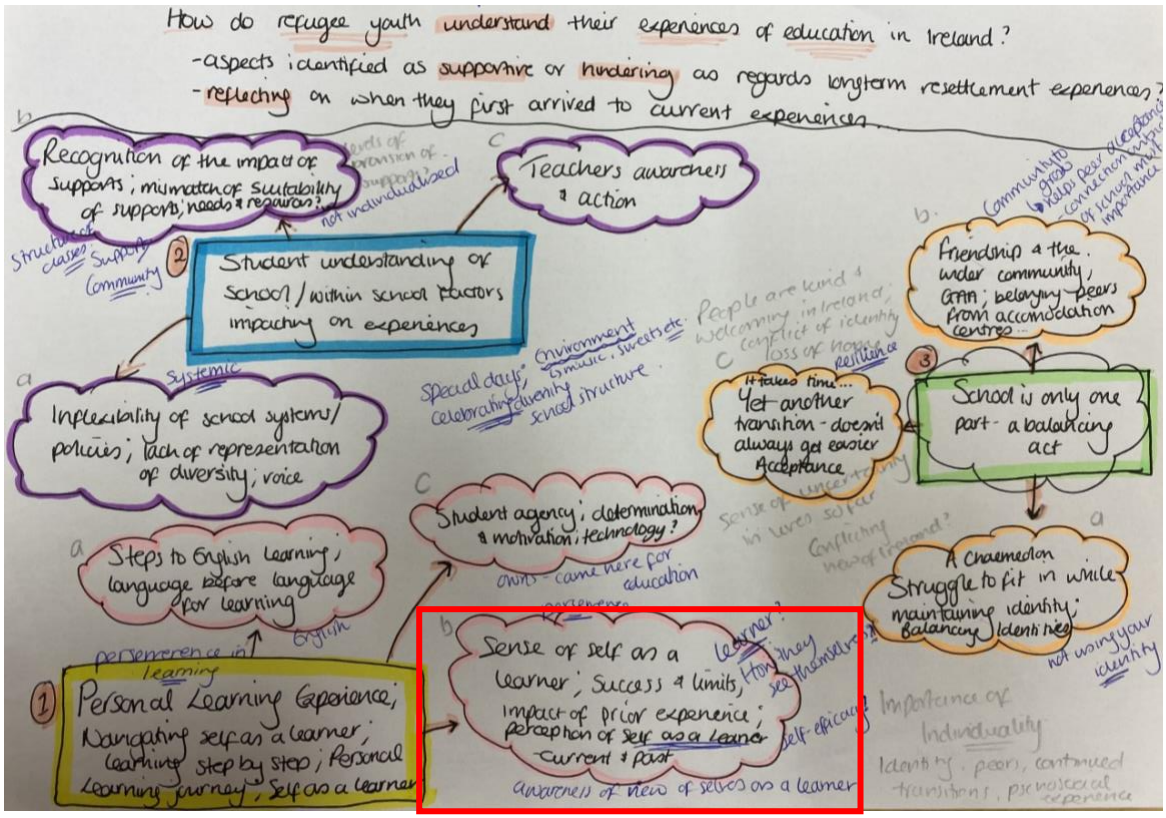
Emergent theme	Colour code	Description
Teachers as more than teachers		Perceives the role of teacher as more than education -their understanding, awareness, and sensitivity to diversity of experience/potential impact of prior experiences on difficulties; positive impact of teachers encouraging connection and providing support
Determination to keep going		Sometimes you've no choice but to get on with it; a sense of determination to succeed and push through; recognises the need to work hard; motivated to continue in education
Self-awareness of competency and limits to competence		Aware of need for help and grateful for supports; proud of skills so far and progression but also aware still some areas difficult to understand
Impact of the format of support and classes		Benefit of one-to-one support vs whole class; positive experience of initial small group supports; Important role of practical subjects to facilitate connection
Levels to English learning		Language initially most important to support connection with peers; distinction between English for communicating and using it for learning
School is only one part of the transition		Huge transition - school/academics is only one part of the adjustment
Individuality coping and struggles		Mixed emotions starting schools; burden of family responsibilities such as translating; preparing for future; support of extracurricular outlets
Temporal Experience		A sense of adapting over time as well as experiences changing over time; continued transitions in Ireland but a sense of it not always getting easier with time
Balancing languages, a balance of identities balancing identity?		A struggle to sustain Arabic with increasing fluency in English; trying to balance both; proud of strong faith but not always supported in school
Impact of past experience on current practices		Multiple transitions previously and varied experiences of education impacting on current experiences; to a certain extent happy to keep background private from peers.

Appendix R – Cross Case Data Analysis Examples

Step six of the IPA process (Smith et al., 2009) consisted of a process of the researcher creatively grouping, re-grouping, and refining colour coded PETs for each of the nine cases to identify patterns of similarity and difference across cases. This involved going between transcripts, individual analysis, and reviewing field notes and memos.

As presented in the image below, this process was admittedly somewhat chaotic, with minimum 6 personal experiential themes per case resulting in over 54 cut-outs to group, re-group, and aggregate.

After re-grouping and referring to interview memos, transcripts, and initial exploratory notes, a structure to group experiential themes and group level subthemes began to emerge, as presented in the drawing below. Of note, during debriefing with DECPsy peers and research supervisors, subtheme 1b (in the red box) was collapsed within the two other subthemes within theme 1.



Appendix S – Information Sheet for Schools arising from Research Findings

Considerations for schools based on the findings of a small-scale qualitative study with refugee youth on their experiences of education in Ireland

Sophie Gallagher, April 2022

Supervised by Dr Trevor O'Brien and Dr Marc Scully, MIC, Limerick

From this exploratory research it is clear that there is no one size fits all solution to supporting students from refugee backgrounds. However, feelings of belongingness, understanding, and respect can be bolstered through consideration of various factors, some of which are outlined below.

- Invite students and their families into the school prior to starting to become familiar with classrooms, school rules and practices, to reduce any initial fear of the unknown.
- Continue to encourage connection with parents, perhaps supported through a home school liaison type role, with translators available for parent teacher meetings or open evenings. Students should not have to translate for parents relating to issues within school.
- Provision of training for teachers to ensure greater awareness on current research and best practice on second language learning/EAL development and the need for ongoing language supports (e.g., pre-teaching subject specific vocabulary).
- Ensure a sense of predictability and consistency in approaches, particularly relevant for secondary schools where there may be numerous different teachers.
- Provision of a key staff member within the school that students feel they can go to for support or advice.
- It is important that all staff are aware of their own attitudes and behaviours, as well as the potential impact of any biases or assumptions they may have.
- Value students' first languages and cultures within the school and facilitate opportunities for sustaining and developing heritage cultures e.g., language or culture clubs, celebration days, fostering ties with local community

organisations, as well as inclusion of diverse cultures and religions within curriculum.

- Review and reflect upon school policies and guidelines to ensure that all students are equally accounted for and accommodated. For example, does current uniform policy need to be adapted? Is there scope to provide a prayer space for students within school? Do protocols around subject choices and exam requirements allow for flexibility depending on individual circumstances?
- Adopt strengths-based student-centred frameworks, asking students about preferences and needs, valuing and leveraging their creativity as well as pre-existing knowledge and skills. This may be developed in conjunction with accommodation centres/families prior to starting school but also reviewed on an ongoing basis with the student in the school.
- Offer a variety of curricular approaches and assessment strategies (e.g., portfolio assessment) to accommodate students as they transition to their new environment and for some, the language of instruction.
- Utilise technology in supporting language learning e.g., translation apps, online learning etc.
- Offer a range of practical subjects to ease transition. This may reduce language demands and bolster feelings of competence, as well as support integration with the larger class group
- Recognise the importance of choice and provide opportunities for student voice to be incorporated into school practice and policy. This may range from individualised support plans to greater representation of diversity on student councils.
- Emphasise the role of guidance counsellors in encouraging students to continue in education and exploration of varied avenues to further education and employment; provide information about scholarships, access routes etc.
- Ensure safe environments free from discrimination, with a need for zero tolerance policies for bullying and ethnic discrimination as well as taking appropriate and quick action to ameliorate any such difficulties experienced. Teachers should be supported in feeling confident in responding to bullying or discrimination within their classrooms in a culturally responsive manner.

- Encourage students to pursue hobbies and interests within and outside of school, facilitating varied opportunities for connection with peers. This would likely support informal learning of language as well as integration with their wider communities. This may be particularly important for girls, with indication that they may experience greater challenges in connecting with peers.
- Schools should foster ties with community groups to ensure suitable access to extra-curricular activities, being sensitive as regard individual preference, gender, cultural, or familial preferences e.g., sign up days in schools 'clubs & socs day'; coaches coming to open evenings to introduce themselves to parents etc.
- Recognise the important role of refugee youth supporting eachother and ensure opportunities are available for these young people to continue to connect after leaving accommodation centres or moving to varied locations in Ireland e.g., tutoring schemes in accommodation centres, linking with local youth clubs or societies, establishing peer groups/pen pals across schools in neighbouring localities.
- Establish links with schools who have experience of welcoming and supporting youth from refugee backgrounds. This could support the development of appropriate practices and policies, as well as provide and a forum for discussion of any challenges which may arise.
- It is important that the wider student body are prepared for the arrival of new students and have an awareness and respect for the diversity of backgrounds, as well as knowledge of the asylum and refugee system in Ireland at a level appropriate to their age and stage.
- Consider the potential impact of earlier educational disruption and trauma on the lives of children and young people from refugee and asylum-seeker backgrounds. Schools should also be aware that each transition within Ireland, whether location, accommodation type, of school, can be as difficult as the first.