

The Influx of Refugees in the United States and Libraries Housing of Religious Documents- Preserving, Protecting, Disseminating, and Conducting Interreligious Dialogues with Refugees

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Abstract:

The intricacy of the persistent influx of refugees is a worldwide concern for the United Nations (UN) and the United Nations High Commissioner to Refugees (UNHCR)—too often people have been forced to flee from their homes due to conflicts, persecution and various humanitarian crises. The UNHCR indicated that there were 108.4 million people who were forcibly displaced globally, with 35.3 million of them being refugees, in 2022.¹ Also, there were over 3 million refugees who have resettled in all 50 states in the United States of America, since 1975.² In 2022, the U.S. admitted 25,400 refugees³ and, in 2023, President Joe Biden is projected to admit an estimated total of 125,000 refugees in the U.S.^{3,4} Therefore, this exploratory study examines the following: how can libraries better serve the continuing influx of refugees' communities in the United States by housing religious documents, preserve, protect and disseminate them to refugees? And, how can libraries encourage the implementation of interreligious dialogue for refugees in their communities where they can share their experiences, skills and creativity? — This will enable libraries to increase universal awareness of the messages of peace in their collections and to better provide access to help refugees to learn about their religious roots. The United Nations 1946 Resolution 59 (I) stipulated that “[f]reedom of information is a fundamental human right and is the touchstone of all the freedoms to which the United Nations is consecrated.”⁵ Plus, the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 18

¹ UNHCR. 2022. Refugee Data Finder. Accessed May 25, 2023. <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/>.

² UNHCR. 2023. Refugees in America. The U.S. resettles the most vulnerable refugees and has been the world's resettlement leader for decades. Accessed May 25, 2023: UNHCR. <https://www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/usa/>

³ CBS News. “Biden Administration Falls 80% short of 2022 refugee admission target.” Published [03 October 2022] on CBS News. Accessed May 25, 2023. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/refugee-admissions-target-2022-biden-administration/>.

⁴ White House. 2022. Memorandum on Presidential Determination on Refugees Admissions for Fiscal Year 2023. Presidential Determination No. 2022-25. Accessed August 12, 2023. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2022/09/27/memorandum-on-presidential-determination-on-refugee-admissions-for-fiscal-year-2023/>.

⁵ UN General Assembly. (1946). *Calling of an International Conference on Freedom of Information*, 14 December 1946, A/RES/59, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3b00f975f.html> [accessed 20 August 2023]

indicated that “[e]veryone has the right to freedom of thought...and religion; this right includes...either alone or in community with others...to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.”⁶ Thus, refugees have the rights to practice their religion, to have access to religious documents and the right to interreligious dialogue. This research study employed content analysis and observational methodologies to review profuse literature, studies, the UN, UNHCR and U.S reports, treaties, protocols, conventions and declarations on refugees’ protection policies and procedures. This study found that libraries in the United States are failing their responsibilities to house religious documents, preserve, protect and disseminate information to refugees. Also, the findings show that libraries can properly serve refugees communities through interreligious dialogue via focus group discussions and interviews in order to shed light on refugees’ experiences, skills and creativity. This study hopes to shed light on libraries’ inexistence of housing of religious documents, and preserve, protect, disseminate and conduct interreligious dialogues with refugees, which is a crucial point for Sustainable Development.⁷

Keywords: Influx, Refugees, United States, Religious Documents, Interreligious Dialogue

INTRODUCTION

The United States of America has been accepting the vulnerable since World War II by accepting hundreds of thousands of Europeans who were displaced by WWII to welcoming persons absconding from communism in Europe and Asia during the Cold War. Also, the U.S. has assisted in defining protections for refugees based on international humanitarian law (Council on Foreign Relations, 2023). The United States is known for resettling the most vulnerable refugees and it is the global resettlement front-runner since the 1970s. The refugees who are resettled to the United States are usually the most vulnerable, comprising women and children who are at risk, women who run the households, survivors of sexual violence and torture, the elderly and individuals with severe medical needs (UNHCR, 2023). For these refugees, resettlement in the U. S epitomizes the opportunity to begin afresh and to live in safety as well as dignity free fear of persecution or violence (U.S Department of State, 2022).

According to the Department of State (2022), the United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) “mirrors [a] history as a country that receives immigrants, which exemplify the United States’ values on foreign policy as well as serving as an inspiration of hope for people who are persecuted globally — which is a significant, enduring, and continuing manifestation of the U.S.’ obligation to international humanitarian principles in order to save lives as well as to ease human suffering and of the U.S.’ commitment to support human rights, which comprises freedom of religion or belief as well as freedom of expression – which remains a definite prevailing proof of the United States’ persistent solidarity with the refugees’ population as well as the nations accommodating them” (U.S. Department of State, 2022).

It is true that Section 101(a)(42) of the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) defines “a refugee is a person who, generally, has experienced past persecution or has a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality,

⁶ UN. 1948. The United Nation Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Accessed May 25, 2023. <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>.

⁷ UN. 2023. General Assembly Economic and Social Council. General Assembly Seventh-eighth session

Item 19 of the preliminary list- Sustainable development. Accessed May 25, 2023.

https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-04/SDG_Progress_Report_Special_Edition_2023_ADVANCE_UNEDITED_VERSION.pdf.

membership in a particular social group, or political opinion” (U.S. Department of State, 2022, p.9). Also, Section 207(a)(3) of the INA stipulates that “admissions shall be allocated among refugees of special humanitarian concern to the United States in accordance with a determination made by the President after appropriate consultation” (U.S Department of State, 2022, p. 11). Therefore, President, Biden is projected to admit 125,000 refugees in the U.S. in 2023 (White House, 2022A; CBS News, 2022). These proposed U.S. statistics of refugee admissions to the U.S. for Fiscal Year 2023 is based on global regional resettlements from Africa (40,000); East Asia (15,000); Europe and Central Asia (15,000); Latin America/Caribbean (15,000); Near East/South Asia (35,000) and Unallocated Reserve (5,000), which can be utilized to admit additional refugees from any other region (U.S. Department of State, 2022).

As these refugees resettled in the U.S., they hold dearly their religion, cultures, experiences, skills and creativity that are fundamental to them. Hence, this research assessed how libraries can better serve the persistent influx of refugees’ communities in the United States by housing religious documents, and preserving, protecting and disseminating them to refugees, and how libraries can encourage the implementation of interreligious dialogue for refugees in their communities where refugees can share their experiences, skills and creativity. This will enable libraries to increase universal awareness of the messages of peace in their collections and to better provide access to help refugees to learn about their religious roots of culture.

The UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 18 has made it clear that “[e]veryone has the right to freedom of thought...and religion; this right includes...either alone or in community with others...to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance” (UN, 1948). Therefore, refugees have the right to exercise their religion, to have access to religious documentations and the right to interreligious dialogue. Also, it is vital to specify that the 1948 American Library Association (ALA)’s Bill of Rights denotes that an individual’s “right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background or view” (Library of Congress, 1948). And that “library should welcome the use of its meeting rooms for social [...] and cultural activities and discussion of current public questions. Such meeting places should be available on equal terms to all groups in the community regardless of the beliefs and affiliations of their members” (Library of Congress, 1948). Thus, it is the responsibility of libraries to house religious documents, preserve, and protect and disseminate them to refugees, which is a key for obtaining sustainable development. This is allied with the United Nations 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) goal 11, which aims to “make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable” (UN, 2015), therefore, libraries have a fundamental responsibility in protecting and preserving unique documentary heritage, in every form for the future generations (IFLA, 2018). The International Federation of Library Associates (IFLA) in 2018, strongly emphasized the United Nations SDG’s goal 11— that culture reinforces local communities as well as supports the inclusive and sustainable development of cities, therefore,

“libraries are at the heart of initiatives to promote this. With targeted services to reach the most vulnerable groups, libraries provide a safe space for older people, offering opportunities to socialize and take part in cultural activities. They are also a welcoming space for immigrants, people experiencing homelessness, and refugees, who sometimes face many of the same challenges” (IFLA, 2018).

This is consistent with the premises of this exploratory research study. It is important to note that refugees in the United States are lacking equal access to religious documentations. Also, there are no provisions for the preservation, protection and disseminating of religious documents to refugees — as stipulated by the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 that the “practice and teaching of religion or belief includes [...] the freedom [...] to prepare and distribute religious texts or publications” (UN, 1948). Similarly, refugees in the U.S. are eligible for the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 11, which promotes access to information and the integration of cultural and sustainable human settlements (UN, 2015). It is well-founded that the United States has admitted refugees from various religious and cultural backgrounds. Also, the United States has “admitted more Christian refugees than Muslim refugees in recent years. Christians accounted for 79% of refugees who came” (Krogstad, 2019) into the United States in the fiscal year of 2019 (Krogstad, 2019). The United States has admitted approximately 23,800 Christians, compared with approximately 4,900 Muslims and a reduced numbers of individuals from other religious groups (Krogstad, 2019). Thus, libraries can better serve these refugees’ communities in the U.S. by housing religious documents, preserving, protecting and disseminating them to refugees.

From an epistemological standpoint, it is important to signify that McCaffrey & Taha (2019) argued that “there is a lack of literature on the role of digital technology in refugee integration processes” (p. 27) and that the public libraries should cogitate on how their information practices as well as services can help with the integration of refugees. Similarly, Lau and Rodgers (2021) extensively argued that libraries should focus on the inclusion of refugees and for them to understand the refugee population because refugees were forced to leave their individual home in challenging and frequently very traumatic situations, therefore, a high degree of cultural proficiency is needed for libraries to create trust in these refugee communities, and to be a reliable and vital source of information to these refugees and for libraries to deliver assistance that tackle their distinct as well as cultural needs. Lau and Rodgers (2021) further underscore three substantial lessons for initiating cultural competency when engaging with refugees. The first competency is self-awareness as well as respect for cultural diversity, the second competence is cultural knowledge, and the third competence is having help from library leadership as well as collaborating with the community. These are crucial institutional reconstructions that libraries must incorporate in their practices in order to be inclusive and sustainable and to better serve the continuing influx of refugees in the U.S.

Before exploring libraries’ service to refugees, it is vital to first, review the resettlement assistance and services provided to the newly arrived refugees in the United States. Therefore, the subsequent sections will depict an in-depth evaluation on the above issues.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A Brief of the Resettlement Assistance and Services Provided to Newly Arrived Resettled Refugees in the U.S.

Based on the refugee act, known as the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), which was enacted on June 27, 1952⁸, —Congress delegated the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) in the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to provide the refugees with resettlement assistance which comprises employment training; English language training, cash assistance (in a fashion that fosters early self-sufficiency), as well as job placement, which includes providing women with equivalent employment opportunities as men. The ORR’s task is centered on assisting refugees with the transitioning processes into the U.S. by offering benefits as well as assistance to get integrated as quickly as possible. In order for the ORR to achieve their mission, the ORR funds as well as administers several programs (U.S. Department of State, 2022), which will be broadly discussed on the subsequent sections below.

Cash and Medical Assistance for Refugee

It is important to specify that refugees who are not eligible for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or those that are pending receipt of Supplemental Security Income are qualified to obtain Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) upon their arrival. Also, the refugees who are not eligible to receive Medicaid⁹ are qualified to receive Refugee Medical Assistance (RMA) upon their arrival. It statutorily authorized that refugees should receive RCA and RMA for approximately 36 months from the day of their arrival; unfortunately, due to funding restraints, RCA and RMA have been reduced to eight months of benefits (U.S. Department of State, 2022). Fortunately for refugees, on March 28, 2022 (Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2022), the ORR had revealed the increase of RCA and RMA to approximately 12 months of support for refugees whose date of entitlement for ORR benefits was on or after October 1, 2021 (Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2022 & U.S. Department of State, 2022).

The ORR is searching for possibilities to better assist refugees during this time period because of the increase in the costs of housing as well as the desire to properly pair employment with a skill level (U.S. Department of State, 2022). Likewise, the RCA and RMA are managed by states as well as **Replacement Designees**, which are considered private entities chosen by the ORR to oversee the refugee program in a particular state that has withdrawn from overseeing the program. However, for state-administered programs that basically manage a publicly administered RCA program, the RCA benefits are based on cash benefit levels furnished by state TANF established programs. On the other hand, for states that manage their RCA program via a Public-Private Program (PPP) model, the RCA benefit is established higher RCA rates as outlined in the ORR guidelines or based on the state TANF rates. On October 1, 2021, the ORR revealed a surge in the PPP rates utilizing the 2021 Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Poverty Guidelines.

⁸ Authenticated U.S Government Information GPO (n.a). Title 8—Aliens and Nationality. Accessed August 16, 2023. <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/USCODE-2021-title8/pdf/USCODE-2021-title8-chap12-subchapI-sec1101.pdf>.

⁹ “Medicaid is a joint federal and state program that provides free or low-cost health coverage to millions of Americans, including some low-income people, families and children, pregnant women, the elderly, and people with disabilities. The federal government provides a portion of the funding for Medicaid and sets guidelines for the program. Medicaid programs vary from state to state. They may also have different names, like “Medical Assistance” or “Medi-Cal.” See United States Government (n.d). Medicaid Program. Accessed August 16, 2023. <https://www.benefits.gov/benefit/606>.

Support Services for Refugees

The ORR likewise provides states as well as Replacement Designees with Refugee Support Services (RSS) funds. And, the ORR allocates this funding via a formula that is centered on the arrival of refugees and how it aided the ORR-eligible refugees for up to the prior three years, though, the subsidy is time-restricted, and the refugees only have access to RSS services for up to five years subsequent to their arrival. Essentially, these services encompass, English language instruction, employment services, vocational training, on-the-job training, case management, translation/interpreter services, health-related services, social adjustment services, home management, childcare, as well as transportation services (U.S. Department of State, 2022).

Furthermore, in order to assist certain sets of refugees or to target particular needs, the ORR carries out specialized RSS programs that are reserved, which comprises Services to Older Refugees (SOR), Youth Mentoring (YM), Refugee School Impact (RSI), and Refugee Health Promotion (RHP). Remarkably, also, in 2022, the ORR extended the RSI program to comprise “Early RSI” for promoting access to childcare, to ensuring that the ORR-eligible children are ready to thrive in formal schooling, and to fully serve the families of the eligible children. The good news is that children from birth and up to 18 years of age, as well as their families, are currently entitled to obtain services via the RSI program. Moreover, in 2022, the ORR have launched the Refugee Mental Health Initiative, which is within the RHP program in order to build capacity in communities to tackle the mental health necessities of the refugee populace, comprising helping them to overcome the stigma which is connected to mental health care as well as creating opportunities for social engagement in order to decrease isolation. Also, mental health services underneath the RHP are based on client-centered, strengths-based, trauma-informed, and culturally as well as linguistically appropriate services (U.S. Department of State, 2022).

The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) Matching Grant Program for Newly Arrived Refugees

Interestingly, this colossal ORR Matching Grant (MG) program is delivered within the nine national resettlement agencies—

- “Church World Service: New York, NY
- Episcopal Migration Ministries: New York, NY
- Ethiopian Community Development Council: Arlington, VA
- HUAS: Silver Spring, MD
- International Rescue Committee: New York, NY
- Lutheran Immigration Refugee Services: Baltimore, MD
- U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops: Washington, D.C
- U.S. Committee for Refugees & Immigrations: Arlington, VA
- World Relief: Baltimore, MD.” (U.S Department of Health & Human Services, 2022 & U.S. Department of State, 2022).

that deliver Reception and Placement (R&P) services as well as their resettlement partners in 43 states. It should be clear that the goal of MG is based on guiding the newly arrived refugee households on economic self-sufficiency by employment in eight months of program eligibility (this starts on the date of the refugee arrival in the U.S.). Based on the MG program, self-sufficiency is distinctively defined as the total household income from employment that (1) should surpass the established state income level for TANF eligibility, and (2) enables a family unit to sustain itself without depending on monetary assistance. For an individual MG applicant, the ORR bequeaths a per-capita grant to partaking national resettlement agencies, which then give the funds to their networks of local partners for direct services as well as administrative expenses. Agencies offer a 50 percent match to each federal dollar donated (U.S. Department of State, 2022).

It is captivating that through the structure of the ORR MG Program, the local service providers ensure basic support services for at least 240 days, which comprise housing, food, transportation, and a cash allowance. Also, patrons receive intensive case management as well as employment services all through the 240 days, they service allocated. For refugees who are not able to achieve self-sufficiency by the apportioned 240 days can access the RCA for the rest of the eligibility period, which is currently up to 12 months (U.S Department of State, 2022).

The Office of Refugee Resettlement on Refugee Health

The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) believes that the health of the refugees is vital. Therefore, the ORR provide services that focus on offering refugees with technical assistance based on domestic medical screening guidelines as well as refugee medical assistance, assessment as well as follow-up for infectious or communicable diseases, mental health awareness as well as linkages, suicide prevention, emergency preparedness and various health and mental health initiatives. It should be pointed out that the ORR funds Refugee Medical Assistance (RMA), and refugee medical screenings as well as refugee health promotion to assist refugee populations. Also, the ORR funds the Survivors of Torture program in order to provide culturally competent as well as strengths-based services, and client-centered treatment plans to reinstate dignity, augment resilience, and to rebuild the lives of survivors of torture, irrespective of their immigration status. Similarly, the ORR carries out mental-health first aid training to refugee-serving program staff as well as refugee community leaders to assist them in identifying and assisting refugees in emotional distress (U.S. Department of State, 2022).

The ORR Unaccompanied Refugee Minor Program

The ORR is providing funding to 15 states, which comprise the District of Columbia, and Replacement Designees in order to oversee 26 Unaccompanied Refugee Minors programs (URM). It is essential to note that the Unaccompanied Refugee Minors program is completely separate and different from the ORR's Unaccompanied Children Program; however, children who become qualified for URM during the care and custody of the ORR can be referred to for placement directly into the URM program. However, states and Replacement Designees go into contract with various local licensed foster care organizations that carry out specialized placements as well as services to unaccompanied refugee minors. And, the unaccompanied refugee minors reside in numerous placements

comprising traditional as well as therapeutic foster homes, group homes, independent living, semi-independent and residential treatment centers. However, the youths accept various services comprising educational and vocational training, English language training, social integration, cultural preservation, family tracing, independent living, permanency planning, medical care, and mental health care. The ORR guidelines necessitate states to offer services to unaccompanied refugee minors in equivalence with the state's Title IV-B¹⁰ as well as Title IV-E¹¹ foster care plans (U.S Department of State, 2022).

The Wilson-Fish TANF Coordination Program

Fortunately for the refugees, the Wilson-Fish (WF) Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Coordination Program assists with the development as well as implementation of novel or innovative programs within a state. Interestingly, these programs are designed to enable access to important, customized, culturally and linguistically suitable integrated services and provide resources that tackle refugees' particular strengths and challenges they confront in post-resettlement. Also, refugee families with children below 18 years of age, or usually those refugees who could be qualified for TANF, are qualified for the Wilson-Fish TANF Coordination Program, which is managed via a discretionary award to the state and non-profit grantees. The services that are provided by this program are obtainable for up to five years subsequent to a refugee's arrival to the United States (U.S. Department of State, 2022).

The ORR Preferred Communities Program (PC)

The ORR's Preferred Communities (PC) program delivers intensive case management to predominantly vulnerable refugees. The PC also supports a network of sites countrywide, which specialize in a variation of programs that are supporting predominantly vulnerable populations. The program is based on building the resettlement agencies' capability to place these refugees who are most vulnerable and provide long-term intensive case management to refugees with severe vulnerabilities, such as mental, physical, emotional or, family strengthening needs as well as single-headed households (U.S. Department of State, 2022). PC also provides support to meet the unmet needs of the unanticipated influxes of refugees (U.S. Department of State, 2022).

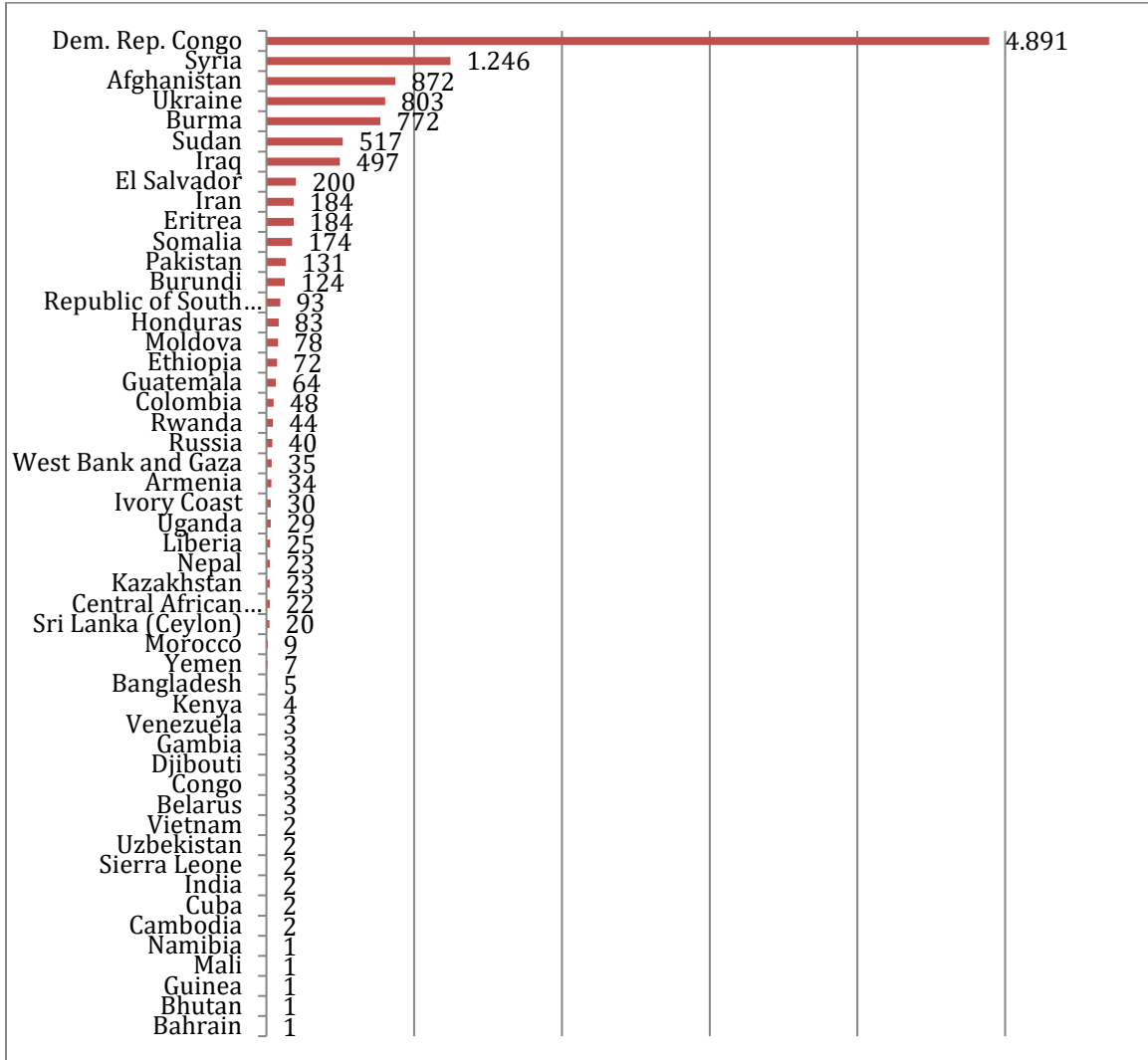
¹⁰ Title IV-B: "The Stephanie Tubbs Jones Child Welfare Services Program provides grants to States and Indian tribes for programs directed toward the goal of keeping families together. They include preventive intervention so that, if possible, children will not have to be removed from their homes. If this is not possible, children are placed in foster care and reunification services are available to encourage the return of children who have been removed from their families. Services are available to children and their families without regard to income." See U.S Department of Health & Human Services. 2020. Child Welfare Services: Title IV-B, Subpart 1 of the Social Security Act. Accessed August 17, 2023. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/grant-funding/child-welfare-services-title-iv-b-subpart-1-social-security-act>.

¹¹ Title IV-E: "The 1994 Amendments to the Social Security Act (the Act) authorize the Children's Bureau to review state child and family services programs to ensure compliance with the requirements in titles IV-B and IV-E of the Act. This includes systematic monitoring of the Title IV-E Foster Care Program, which provides funds to title IV-E agencies (states and Tribes) to assist with the costs of foster care maintenance for eligible children; administrative expenses to manage the program; and training for staff, foster parents, and certain private agency staff. Title IV-E foster care funds are awarded to the 50 States." See U.S Department of Health & Human Services. (n.d). Title IV-E Foster Care Program Eligibility Fact Sheet, Accessed August 17, 2023. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/fact-sheet/title-iv-e-foster-care-eligibility-reviews-fact-sheet>.

Libraries' Services to Refugees

Flinner (et al., 2019) argued extensively that as immigrants, refugees, and displaced persons first enter the U.S., they often go to public libraries for free as well as trusted services. More than “55 percent of new Americans” (new Americans are the newly arrived persons in the U.S., including immigrants and refugees) utilize their public library at least once a week, as specified by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), to access citizenship and civic educational programs, English-language learning classes, as well as a vibrant support network (p. 2). However, Flinner (et al., 2019) was concerned that the public library responses based on the needs of these consumers vary extensively throughout the country because of issues such as budgetary constraints, local priorities and shifting populations. But, Flinner (et al., 2019) specified that whereas there have been substantial efficacious case studies that were observed, but, presently there are no existence of field-wide best practices to support public libraries in aiding the distinct needs of new Americans. “This is a critical gap in library practice that needs to be addressed as immigration numbers continue to grow” (p.2). Also, Flinner (et al., 2019) indicated that the Migration Policy Institute had noted that “1.38 million foreign-born people have moved to the United States in 2015, an increase of 2 percent over the prior year” (p.2). Likewise, it is essential to specify that the refugees’ population in the U.S. is swiftly surging. In the Fiscal Year of 2021, the U.S. admitted 11, 411 (100.00%) refugees from 50 nations as depicted on this chart.

Figure 1: The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program by Country of Origin, Fiscal Year 2021



Note: Dr. Benedicta Obodoruku designed this Chart in 2023, by using data from Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, Refugee Processing Center (2022).

Figure 1, the first five countries with the majority of refugees who were admitted to the U.S. in 2021 were from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (4,891), Syria (1,246), Afghanistan (872), Ukraine (803) and Burma (772) (U.S. Department of State, 2022). Surprisingly, in the Fiscal Year 2021, fifty-four percent of all arriving refugees resettled in 12 states in the US. The majority of these refugees were resettled in California (8.6%), Texas (8.1%), New York (6.2%), Michigan (4.7%), and Washington (4.2%). Also, the states of Ohio (4%), Arizona (3.7%), Pennsylvania (3.4%), Illinois (3.2%), Georgia (3.2%), Minnesota (2.4%), and Florida (1.9%) likewise were among the top twelve states in the U.S where these refugees were resettled (U.S. Department of State, 2022). Similarly, President Biden specified that there would be 125,000 refugees who will be settling in the United States in 2023 (White House, 2022A).

Flinner (et al., 2019) broadly argued that the ALA as well as its divisions are developing a range of support materials to assist libraries to reach their immigrant clientele, comprising webinars as well as resources for immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers. It is important to note that the ALA's "Resolution on Improving Access to Spanish, Bilingual, and Books in Various Languages for Children in Detention Centers" (ALA Resolution, 2015) emboldens the director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services—to establish cooperation with the United States Customs and Border Protection agency in order to guarantee that unaccompanied refugee children in the U.S. have full access to books as well as programming in these refugees children's native languages, if they speak indigenous languages, Spanish, or other various tongues, then bilingual books should be available for them to access (ALA Resolution, 2015). Also, the ALA emboldens ALA members, the Reference & User Services Association, and other related ALA units and partners to produce materials that will meet the information as well as recreational needs of refugee children, teens, and their guardians, and also to disseminate the information to librarians who are located in other affected communities (ALA Resolution, 2015).

Stoner et al., (2022) predominantly argued on how best libraries can support the arriving refugees from Ukraine to the U.S. Sadly, it is unquestionable according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) that the Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, have prompted the evacuation of more than 4 million refugees from Ukraine (UNHCR, 2022 & Stoner et al., 2022) and the U.S. to accepting approximately 100,000 Ukrainian refugees (White House, 2022B, Keith, 2022 & Stoner et al., 2022). Therefore, Stoner et al., (2022) further maintained that, because American society relies heavily on technology for a range of socioeconomic needs, digital equity will be vital for refugees' mental well-being as well as social integration. Stoner et al., (2022) further argued that "at the same time, refugees are striving toward integration"(p.5). For Lloyd (2017), there are a few main indicators of integration which could comprise attainment of employment, housing, health, education, understanding, and acquiring citizenship as well as rights; forming social connections in groups as well as across the community; understanding the host countries' culture as well as community; and language competency. Stoner et al., (2022) argued that this is the avenue that digital technologies and services could promote the integration processes. Likewise, Stoner et al., (2022) further maintained that if libraries can implement programs that are specially made for the refugees' needs, it will be helpful in their social inclusion and improve their situation and their mental health.

Grossman, et al., (2021) comprehensively noted that it is very important to preserve culture and language throughout the integration process. Similarly, Rodriguez (2019) carried out research in the United States at the Hartford Public Library, which was based on immigrant youth who have resettled in the United States within the previous two years as well as the library's role in designing "a space for belonging" (p.141). Also, the library employees, in collaboration with schools and Rodriguez, designed a curriculum for these "immigrant students that gave them the opportunity to engage with digital technologies to learn about the city and community, and all of the resources available to them" (p. 141). It is captivating because the project comprises digital reference materials to help the newly arrived immigrant students in circumnavigating the school system. Additionally, the program designed generates opportunity for these newly

arrived immigrant students to acquire English language skills, and they were able to understand where the resources that were available to them, both in physical and in digital forms (Rodriguez, 2019).

For Biglin (2021), the library is considered a place designed for the fostering of social connections as well as alleviating the feelings of loneliness; nonetheless, it was a place with practical functionality in learning to speak English. Biglin (2021) further maintained that the act of the learning processes to speak the host country language enables refugees to fit right into the present society.

Similarly, ALA (2019) maintained that the main aspiration for several new Americans is to speak the English language competently and to have the confidence to relate with the native speakers. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2015), “between 2009 and 2013, the Census Bureau’s American Community Survey found that over 25 million people in the country speak English *less* than very well and over 60 million people speak a language other than English at home.”¹²

According to the ALA (2019), in responding to this growing need, the libraries offer English-language learning (ELL) opportunities. Also, the ALA (2019) noted that the ELL programs were most often-mentioned service largely among the various libraries that they visited. The ALA (2019) further noted that there were diverse methods to “English language teaching; some courses focus on building from the basics of grammar and vocabulary, while others attend to English in special settings, like doctor’s appointments. Recognizing the pragmatic needs of English language learners, some libraries offer English conversation opportunities” (ALA, 2019).

The ALA (2019) broadly argued that the new Americans are taking advantage of several other library programs as well as resources that are not essentially created for them as the key audience. These services include “notarization, multilingual collections, providing space for cultural groups to meet or host events, small business support or other financial skill-building services, and welcome corners (providing information necessary for integrating into a new community like transportation, taxes, and legal services aside from citizenship resources) are all examples of resources available to and frequently utilized by new Americans while not being advertised specifically for them” (ALA, 2019). April Witteveen (2016) likewise argued that to comprehend the needs of the new Americans in the United States community is a significant factor in contemplating of the kind ELL programming that libraries should be offering, for several reasons—because effective programs adapt to the changing cultural demographics of community as well as underscore the empowerment of the local people in the community. Thus, in order for libraries to be inclusive and sustainable they must fulfill their responsibilities in providing the needs of the continuing influx of refugees in the U.S. in the communities that they serve.

¹² U.S Census Bureau (2015). “Detailed Languages Spoken at Home and Ability to Speak English for the Population 5 Years and Over: 2009–2013.” Accessed: August 19, 2023. <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2013/demo/2009-2013-lang-tables.html>.

METHODOLOGY

Content Analysis and Observational Methodologies

This exploratory research study used content analysis and observational methodologies in reviewing and observing bounteous studies as well as scholarly journals. This content analysis method was explored in the review and analysis of various literature, studies, media publications and UN, UNHCR and U.S reports, treaties, protocols, conventions and declarations on refugees' protection policies and procedures. It is crucial to extensively note that the principle of this exploratory research has its grounding based on Gorman and Clayton (2005), exhausting utilizing the observational qualitative research method as well as content analysis method by Berg (2004) to analyze the qualitative data. Likewise, Jank (2010) has utilized a similar method while conducting research in the field of information studies. The various documents were comprehensively observed and analyzed based on their numerous contexts.

Data Collection

The main data was collected from the UN, UNHCR and the U.S documentations, and scholarly journals. This exploratory research study utilized various reports from UN, UNHCR and U.S' documentations. The study also reviewed the UN documentations based on the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees as well as its 1967 Protocol – which were founded by the United Nations General Assembly, and profuse documentations from the UN, UNHCR and the U.S in these research study areas. The processes of observing the documentations through note-taking techniques gave me the instant possibility in taking numerous notes as I was reviewing the enormous pile of documents I reviewed extensively with regard to the innumerable refugee protection policies. It is essential to indicate that Gorman and Clayton (2005) revealed that it is essential to take comprehensive notes as the events evolve, “or at least on the same day – and preferably both at the same time” (Gorman & Clayton, 2005, p. 120). Likewise, Berg (1995) proposed that field notes should be concluded instantly “following excursion into the field” (pp. 105-107), which I accomplished. After the observation as well as taking notes centered on keywords at the time of the exploratory research study processes following the analysis of several data, there was an immediate write up of the entire notes as Berg (1995) recommended.

Data Analysis

To completely understand the diverse contents that have been discovered during the observation processes and to appropriately interpret them subliminally as well as contextually, numerous methodologies centered on qualitative data analysis have been utilized, such as the sorting and sifting of entire data to completely identify several key events, phases and patterns (George & Clayton, 2005, p. 210). Hsieh and Shannon (2005) effectively defined qualitative content analysis as “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of the text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying theme of patterns” (p. 1278). Undisputedly, the construction of innumerable concepts or variables from earlier studies

or various theories are immensely beneficial for a qualitative research, primarily at the beginning of data analysis (Berg, 2001), which this exploratory research utilized by reviewing as well as analyzing innumerable studies to support this exploratory research is consistent with Berg's (2001) proposals that it is always a necessity to incorporate numerous concepts of numerous theories or prior studies at the very beginning of the content analysis.

Conclusively, it is important to stipulate that, when analyzing, evaluating, as well as making sagacious observations of the massive qualitative data gathered from the UN documentations as well as numerous scholarly journals, there was immense care furnished in order to create meaningful assessments, as well as decisions on the key importance of the data. Also, Patton (2002) maintained that, when analyzing documentation of "any qualitative reduction sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative materials and attempts to identify core consistencies and meaning" (p. 453) should be utilized. Similarly, Berg (1998) stipulated that content analysis enables researchers to extensively "examine artifacts of social communication – typically, these are written documents" (p. 223). It is vital to note that Berg (1998) further stipulated, "photographs [...] or any items that can be made into text are amenable to content analysis" (p. 224).

FINDINGS

In order to comprehend how libraries can better serve the ongoing influx of refugees in the United States, this research study will examine the following research questions on Table 1.

Table 1. Research Questions

- (1) How can libraries better serve the continuing influx of refugees' communities in the United States by housing religious documents, preserve, protect and disseminate them to refugees?
- (2) And, how can libraries encourage the implementation of interreligious dialogue for refugees in their communities where they can share their experiences, skills and creativity?

By examining the research questions on Table 1, this exploratory research study presented innumerable findings below. It is imperative to note that literature in the above topics is rare and there is limited research conducted on these topics. Therefore, more research is needed to give an all-encompassing in-depth understanding on these issues.

Findings on Research Question 1. How can libraries better serve the continuing influx of refugees' communities in the United States by housing religious documents, preserve, protect and disseminate them to refugees?

The findings of this study clearly show that, it is undisputed that in the U. S, the First Amendment in its totality guarantees the right of persons to believe as well as to “practice their religion or to practice no religion at all, and prohibits government from establishing or endorsing a religion or religions. Thus the freedom of, for and from religion, are similarly guaranteed” (ALA, 2016, p.2). Also, the First Amendment “guarantees the corollary right of individuals to receive information on religious topics. Libraries support this right by providing access to diverse religious thought without becoming a proponent of any of them. Adopted June 2016” (ALA, 2016, p. 2). Therefore, libraries have the right to house religious documents, preserve, protect and disseminate them to refugees.

Remarkably, in 2004, the Office of Citizenship (2004), in the United States Citizens and Immigration Services (USCIS), carried out a working group in support of its task to accelerate the civic integration of immigrants (including refugees) in the U.S. This working group comprises librarians, adult educators, as well as community- based organizations. The working group participants stalwartly gave recommendations to the libraries that want “to extend their holdings for a new immigrant group should first determine the groups’ needs. One tactic would be to form a subcommittee within the collection development committee to help select materials for immigrant patrons. The subcommittee might consist of representatives from the various units of the library, representatives of immigrant-serving agencies, and, of course, immigrants themselves. In addition to developing collections, this group can enable the library to build important connections in the community” (p.2). Correspondingly, Flinner et al. (2019) argued that libraries have a reputation of supporting communities by proving in-depth services, references and programs and they have they taken significant steps in assisting immigrants, refugees as well as asylum seekers who are arriving in the United States, with seeking help in procuring citizenship, learning English, and more (Flinner et al. 2019).

Flinner et al. (2019) further argued that United States “public libraries have a long history of service to immigrants, dating back to the nineteenth century when immigrant populations began contributing content to library collections in their native languages” (p.2). Also, Flinner et al. (2019) specified that the American Library Association (ALA) has specified its “support for immigrant rights in a January 2007 Council resolution” (p.2) that the ALA strongly “promotes equal access to information for all persons and recognizes the ongoing need to increase awareness of and responsiveness to the diversity of the communities [they] serve” (p.2), thus, refugees must have equal access to the information that they seek to fulfill their needs (Obodoruku, 2013, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2019).

We must not forget that the influx of refugees in the U.S. is increasing at a number that we have never seen before. In 2023, President, Biden proposed to admit 125,000 refugees to resettle in the U.S. (White House, 2022A; CBS News, 2022). Figure 2 comprehensively depicted the U.S Fiscal Year 2023 regional acceptance of refugee in

Figure 2. U.S Fiscal Year 2023 Regional Refugee Resettlements



Note: Global Region Resettlement numbers are shown in thousands.

Source: Constructed Dr. Benedicta Obodoruku in 2023 using the U.S. Department of State 2022 Statistical Fiscal Data.

the United States. These projected statistics of refugee admissions to the U.S. for Fiscal Year 2023 is grounded on regional resettlements from: Africa (40,000); East Asia (15,000); Europe and Central Asia (15,000); Latin America/Caribbean (15,000); Near East/South Asia (35,000) and Unallocated Reserve (5,000) which can be utilized to admit additional refugees from any other region (U.S. Department of State, 2022). Currently, in these regions where refugees are admitted to the U.S —the United States Secretary of State, Anthony Blinken, has termed some of the countries in these regions as a “Particular Concern under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998” (U.S Department of State, 2022, p. 33).

According to the U.S Department of State (2022), in **Africa**, the government of **Eritrea** is involved in accepting systematic, continuing, and “egregious violations of religious freedom” (p.34). Similarly, the U.S. Department of State (2022) reported repression of religious freedom in **East Asian** countries such as **the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), the People’s Republic of China (PRC), and Burma**. The U.S. Department of State (2022) noted that in the DPRK there are major restrictions of religious freedom, comprising organized religious activity, apart from that which is overseen stringently by officially well-known groups that are associated with the government. Though the constitutions of the PRC and Burma in practice offer freedom of religion, these governments, sadly, restrict or repress religious activities as well as freedom. Also, according to the U.S. Department of State (2022), the Burmese military coup, which took place in February 2021, has abolished those human rights that were cherished in the constitution as well as laws, which lead to more repression of religious freedom as well as its related rights. Likewise, the U.S. Department of State (2022), specified that in **Europe and Central Asia**, the governments of **Tajikistan and Turkmenistan** prohibits religious activities. Unhappily, Tajikistan law prevents persons less than 18 years old from partaking in public religious events, plus, “the government-

supported highest Islamic religious body bans Hanafi Sunni women from attending mosques” (p.34). Correspondingly, the Turkmenistan government has imprisoned an unidentified number of Muslims because of their religious beliefs, as well as conscientious protestors, predominantly Jehovah’s Witnesses. Also, the “Turkmenistan law prohibits all activity by unregistered religious groups and the grounds for approval of registration remain arbitrary” (p. 34).

Sadly, there are restriction of religious freedom in the **Near East and South Asia**, regions such as, **Iran, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia**. Unfortunately, the government of Iran, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia, utilize blasphemy and defamation of religion laws to systematically “restrict religious freedom, constrain the rights of religious minorities, and limit freedom of expression, and those accused face prison sentences and threats of violence” (U.S Department of State, 2022. p. 34). Likewise, as revealed in the **North Korean Human Rights Act**, the United States remains extremely apprehensive of the human rights condition of North Koreans—in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) and in several nations in the region. The U.S. started the resettling of interested and eligible North Korean refugees as well as their families in the year 2006 and stays dedicated to continuing the program. This is evidence that the U.S. is continuing to protect persons “who have been persecuted or fear” (U.S. Department of State, 2022) been persecuted because of religious discrimination or oppression. Also, the UN 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, Article 4 states that “Contracting State shall accord to refugees within their territories treatment at least as favorable as that accorded to their nationals with respect to freedom to practice their religion and freedom as regards the religious education of their children” (UNHCR, 1951). Therefore, the United States libraries have the responsibility to equally serve these growing and vulnerable refugee populations in the U.S. Also, we must not forget that the United States has “admitted far more Christian refugees than Muslim refugees in recent years. Christians accounted for 79% of refugees who came to the U.S. in fiscal 2019” (Jens Manuel Krogstad, 2019). And the United States has admitted approximately 23,800 Christians, paralleled with approximately 4,900 Muslims as well as smaller numbers based on other various religious groups (Jens Manuel Krogstad, 2019). Therefore, libraries must be inclusive and sustainable in order to better serve this vulnerable group of refugees.

From an epistemological standpoint, the findings have clearly shown that libraries are failing in their responsibility to better serve the ongoing influx of refugees’ communities in the U.S by failing to house religious documents, and preserving, protecting and disseminating them to refugees. Hence, libraries need to look for ways to fill this gap in order for them to fully obtain the UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11. This is because libraries have the fundamental responsibility in protecting and preserving distinctive documentary heritage, in each form for future generations (IFLA, 2018). This study recommends that: (1) libraries in the U.S. conduct interviews and focus group discussions with refugees in the communities where they serve in order to better understand their needs and to incorporate their findings in their services to refugees in order to better serve them; (2) Libraries design their collections to includes the housing of religious documents, and preserving, protecting and disseminating them to refugees. This will create inclusiveness and sustainability for libraries to fulfill their responsibilities and to better serve these underserved vulnerable groups; (3) libraries consult with the

UNHCR, U.S. refugees' resettlement agencies, resettlement organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), nonprofit organizations, and academia(s) that work with these refugees to seek more guidance through meetings, interviews, focus group discussions, conferences and seminars on how to better serve the persistent influx of refugees in the U.S. This would enable libraries to better serve these underserved population of refugees and for these vulnerable refugees to successfully integrates and resettles in the U.S.

Findings on Research Question 2: And, how can libraries encourage the implementation of interreligious dialogue for refugees in their communities where they can share their experiences, skills and creativity?

From an epistemological standpoint, it is crucial to note that libraries are confronting difficulties to provide wide-ranging services to refugees, several libraries are still searching for guidance to support refugee resettlement in order to better serve as well as understand refugees' needs (Project Welcome, 2016). Project Welcome¹³ (2016) further noted that, through the organization, librarians are swiftly "learning from each other's best practices" (p.2). Additionally, Project Welcome (2016) specified that "libraries, collaborating with refugee resettlement agencies, ethnic library associations and refugee community members, can better serve and understand refugee needs," (p.1) especially on how libraries can "build committee connections" in order to preserve and promote refugee cultural heritage and contributions (p.3). Figure 2 depicted how libraries



Figure 2. Denver Public Library: Photo Credit: Project Welcome (2016).

in Denver, Colorado, in the United States are enthusiastically engaging refugees as well as non-refugee populations in promoting multilingual, inclusive, and engaging services. It is made up of four actions (to learn, collaborate, connect and support) and important ideas

¹³ The Project Welcome is considered a Succinct, professional guide designed for public libraries as well as stakeholders to welcome as well as to effectively serve the refugees. The project was created by Mortenson Center at the University of Illinois Library in partnership with America Library Association (ALA) and key funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services. See Project Welcome. 2016. Project Welcome Quick Guide Public Libraries Serving Refugees. Accessed August 18, 2023. <http://publish.illinois.edu/projectwelcome/files/2018/06/180409-ProjectWelcome-quickguide-Final.pdf>.

(Project Welcome, 2016). Project Welcome (2016) indicated that in fiscal year 2017 (from October 2016 to September 2017), there were 53,716 refugees who were resettled to the U.S. And these included refugees from Africa (37%); Asia (9.5%); Near East and South Asia (40%); Europe (9.5 %) and Latin America and Caribbean (3%). Also, the top three countries of origin of these refugees were from (1) the Democratic Republic of the Congo, (2) Iraq and (3) Syria (Project Welcome, 2016).

Flinner et al., (2019) contended that libraries could “formalize the role of cultural liaison in staffing,” (p.10) with a staff associate from a new American community who will be leading the outreach at the cultural and religious centers, and individual outreach to several others who are new Americans—who are still not cognizant of or utilize library services. Interestingly, libraries have been taking this tactic in several cities successfully, predominantly when it supports part of a library’s obligation to a tactical plan. However, the cultural liaison position seems to be challenging to sustain because of budgetary limitations—not to state the funding needed to generate this position which could be totally out of reach for several libraries (Flinner et al., 2019).

Similarly, Dowling (2017) specified that Touger Vang, a programming and outreach librarian at the Yolo County (California) library, was among of one of the thousands of the Hmong refugees who came into the United States from Laos during the 1980s, subsequent to the Vietnam War. Dowling (2017) alluded that Vang strongly emphasized that every culture is diverse, and libraries are required to work in order to comprehend them as much as possible while creating and delivering services.

Dowling (2017) extensively argued that an inclusive as well as “sustainable approach is the cornerstone of the guide. Libraries don’t need to act alone. They can better serve and understand the needs of refugees by working with ethnic organizations and refugee community members. Project Welcome recommends an integrated service approach to address the needs of refugees and nonrefugees. This approach should strive to be multilingual and work with community engagement librarians; share information with relevant community organizations using email and diverse and appropriate media; and be inclusive, interactive, and engaging” (p.6)

Yes, it is true as argued by Flinner et al., (2019) that “[f]or a city or town to successfully integrate new members [including refugees], cultural awareness is key. And what better place to help foster dialogue about culture than the library?” (p.13). Also, libraries can foster interreligious dialogue for the refugees’ population. On the other hand, this research finding has shown that there is an inexistence of libraries’ promoting interreligious dialogue with refugees in the U.S.

Likewise, the finding shown the United States has definitely admitted more Christian refugees than that of the Muslim refugees in recent years. Christians made up 79% of refugees who were opportunely admitted to the United States in 2019’s Fiscal Year. Also, the United States has admitted approximately 23,800 Christians, compared with almost 4,900 Muslims as well as smaller numbers of various religious groups (Jens Manuel Krogstad, 2019).

These interreligious groups are growing steadfastly and they are under served. So, libraries have to close this gap in seeking for ways to better serve these vulnerable refugees. There is a need for libraries’ intervention, and to institute an equilibrium between the cultural and didactic values of this heritage, in order for its gratification and respect for the precise identity of which it is a conveyor.

For Marques (2017), who carried out a case study in Portugal exploring libraries' interreligious dialogue and proposed that it is essential to develop "a communication plan for interreligious dialogue that is capable of combining the efficiency and effectiveness of the ethical and moral values underlying the various religions and, above all, that can determine the impact of this Type of activities developed by libraries to create a happier and safer world both locally and globally" (pp.12-13). He further noted that a "practical Example for a Library' [...] is to know religious creed and sacred texts" (p.13):

1. [To] "Identify the books and sacred texts of the various religions - Bible / Christianity; Koran / Islam; Torah or Hebrew Bible / Judaism; Dhammapada / Buddhism; Bhagavad Gita / Hinduism, etc. —[In order to] Know how they are structured? How old are they and what is their role in their religions? etc.
2. Identify religions that do not have sacred books - oral - African, indigenous, etc.
3. Identify lesser-known religions and promote isolated activities of religious deepening;
4. Identify the social and economic impact of interreligious dialogue in promoting humanitarian causes" (pp.12-13).

Marques (2017) has extensively shown that interreligious dialogue is possible to implement by libraries globally. Thus, libraries have to lead the process of interreligious dialogue for the influx of refugees in their communities that they serve to be inclusive and sustainable.

Thus, this finding to the above research question has extensively shown that there is no existence of the libraries' activities furnished in the purview of interreligious dialogue. Therefore, libraries in the U.S. are failing in their responsibilities to implement interreligious dialogue with refugees in their communities where they can share their experiences, skills and creativity. If libraries conduct interreligious dialogue, it will promote debate on multiculturalism, which will inform individuals to interreligious dialogue as an approach to be familiar with various cultures and to skirmish religious bias. By conducting interreligious dialogue with refugees group libraries will promote human rights, peace, environmental protection, cultural dialogue and fight against illiteracy (Marques, 2017 & Obodoruku, 2017).

Thus, this research study recommends libraries to (1) to engage with refugees through interviews and focus group discussions and conduct interreligious dialogue with refugees. In order for refugees, to share their experiences, skills and creativity, then refugees could contribute to their communities and libraries can better understand their interreligious needs in order to better serve them. These evaluation tools would nurture relationships and the refugees using these libraries will be able to see improvements, which were made to better serve them with their needs and will recognize that the libraries are devoted to supporting them to thrive; (2) libraries should consult with humanitarian organizations, religious organizations, churches, Muslim organizations, mosques, and other social institutions working with refugees to better serve refugees based on their various religious needs and affiliations; (3) libraries should hire bi- or multilingual staff, interfaith staff and create an interreligious center. Refugees and the community can access libraries for interreligious meetings and discussions. This will create trust with refugees and the libraries because this vulnerable group will know that the libraries are attending to their religious needs and providing access to religious documentation, protecting, preserving, and disseminating them for refugees which is a *critical point for Sustainable Development*.

CONCLUSION

This exploratory research study utilized content analysis and observational methodologies to review bountiful literature, studies, as well as scholarly journals. The content analysis method was explored in reviewing and analyzing copious literature, research studies, media publications, UN, UNHCR U.S, IFLA, and ALA reports, conventions, protocols, treaties, and declarations on refugees' protection policies as well as procedures. The findings of this study have broadly shown that libraries in the U.S. is failing in their responsibility to better serve the continuing influx of refugees' communities in the United States by failing to house religious documents, preserving, protecting and disseminating them to refugees. Also, the findings show that libraries can properly serve refugees' communities through interreligious dialogue via focus group discussions and interviews in order to shed light on refugees' experiences, skills and creativity, but libraries are failing to do so. According to Project Welcome (2016) "librarians are learning from each other's best practices" (p.2). And, if libraries can cooperate with refugee resettlement agencies, ethnic library associations as well as refugee community members, then libraries can better serve as well as understand the need of refugees, particularly on how libraries can "build committee connections" to preserve and promote refugees' cultural heritage and contributions (Project Welcome, 2016, p.3).

Therefore, for libraries to obtain the UN sustainable development goal 11, libraries need to be all-inclusive and all encompassing in their approach to be able to adapt new approaches in serving the persistent influx of refugees in the U.S. Similarly, ALA (2019) argued that across the various sites they visited, the library professionals advocated for professional development opportunities in order to build the skills in order for staff as well as volunteers to efficiently work with the new [including refugees] communities. Several of these skills are vital for public programming. Also, ALA (2019) noted that the skills that the employees found critical encompassed:

- "Volunteer management skills;
- A broad approach to collections management that includes community resources outside the library's physical collections;
- Administrative and organizational skills, such as time management;
- The ability to gain buy-in from administrations;
- Teaching skills; and
- Cultural competency, particularly with specific groups who use one's library" (ALA, 2019).

ALA (2019) further maintained that the libraries that serve diverse communities have distinctive needs —and the New American groups [including refugees] have different ranges of cultures, goals, and aspirations. ALA (2019) basically acknowledged that the general cultural competency or inclusivity trainings frequently "lack the details library workers feel they need to work with new Americans in their communities" (p.10). The ALA (2019) further noted that in the location that they visited, they saw that the library personnel extremely value certain cultural knowledge. For example, the library staff have found it very useful to comprehend how new American clientele at their

library choose to build rapport. The ALA (2019) further noted that if the library employees are equipped with this specific information, they could build stronger connections as well as better serve their clientele (ALA, 2019).

Similarly, these vulnerable refugees in the United States have the rights to religious documentations. The First Amendment “guarantees the corollary right of individuals to receive information on religious topics. Libraries support this right by providing access to diverse religious thought without becoming a proponent of any of them Adopted AC 2016” (ALA, 2016). So, libraries in the United States are failing in their responsibility to better serve the continuing influx of refugees’ communities in the United States by failing to house religious documents, preserving, protecting and disseminating them to refugees. ALA (2019) argued that most libraries fail to serve the refugee communities because for the majority of libraries, communication might present one of or if not, the major operational dares in serving the new Americans [including refugees]. This concern is related to the sharing of information throughout the library field concerning the new American services in regards to: “what has been done, what works well, what has failed, and special considerations for working with particular communities” (p.10). ALA (2019) further recommended that throughout the board, that libraries in the location that they visited have expressed “the need for a strategy for improving communication within individual library systems, between libraries and community partner organizations, and across the library field as a whole. Better communication, they hope, will help them improve services to new [including refugees] Americans without reinventing the wheel” (pp. 10-11).

It is important to note that the UN 1946 Resolution 59 (1) specified that “Freedom of information is a fundamental human right and is the touchstone of all the freedoms to which the United Nations is consecrated” (UN, 1946). Also, the UN 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 18 distinctly indicated that “[e]veryone has the right to freedom of thought...and religion; this right includes...either alone or in community with others...to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance” (UN, 1948). Hence, refugees in the U.S have the rights to practice their religion, to have access to religious documentations and the right to interreligious dialogue, which libraries in the U.S. are failing to provide. This is a breach of the refugees’ rights. Hence, there is the need for sustainable library services for refugees and this requires libraries to make commitments in understanding their needs and providing services to these underserved vulnerable refugee groups in the United States.

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