

Review

A Female Refugees' Career: A Review and Agenda for Future Research

Rūta Salickaitė-Žukauskienė¹, Meda Andrijauskienė¹ , Asta Savanevičienė¹ , Natalija Mažeikienė^{1,2},
Gita Šakytė-Statnickė^{1,3}  and Rūta Čiutienė^{1,*} 

¹ School of Economics and Business, Kaunas University of Technology, LT-44029 Kaunas, Lithuania; ruta.salickaite@ktu.lt (R.S.-Ž.); meda.andrijauskiene@ktu.lt (M.A.); asta.savaneviciene@ktu.lt (A.S.); natalija.mazeikiene@vdu.lt (N.M.); g.statnicke@kvk.lt (G.Š.-S.)

² Department of Social Work, Faculty of Social Science, Vytautas Magnus University, LT-44248 Kaunas, Lithuania

³ Faculty of Business, Klaipėdos Valstybinė Kolegija, Higher Education Institution, LT-91274 Klaipėda, Lithuania

* Correspondence: ruta.ciutiene@ktu.lt

Abstract

Recent geopolitical events have led to an increased research focus on the experiences of female refugees. As careers play a crucial role in socio-economic integration, this study aims to examine the scope and characteristics of research findings on the careers of refugee women in host countries. Following the general research questions for bibliometric analysis, the major trends and intellectual structures of the research field of women refugees' careers were identified. Four hundred and fifty-three articles selected from the Web of Science database (search by title, abstract, and keywords) for the period 2000–2023 were analyzed using VOSviewer (1.6.20). The results show that key challenges faced by forcibly displaced women include mental health disorders, language barriers, discrimination, downward career mobility, and pressure of traditional gender roles. The research reveals that critical enablers for female refugees' workforce participation and economic independence are language training, culturally sensitive healthcare, and access to childcare. Simultaneously, empowerment strategies, including entrepreneurship and participation in professional networks, are proved to foster resilience and create pathways for successful career steps.

Keywords: refugee; women; female; integration; labor market; career; literature review; bibliometric analysis



Academic Editors: Andrea Zammiti, Angela Russo, Gerardo Petruzzello and Jarosław Grobelny

Received: 29 January 2026

Revised: 23 March 2026

Accepted: 10 April 2026

Published: 15 April 2026

Copyright: © 2026 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the [Creative Commons Attribution \(CC BY\) license](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

1. Introduction

According to the United Nations Refugee Agency, the global population of forcibly displaced people has increased from 2.1 million in the 1950s to 117 million in 2025, with women comprising half of this figure [1].

Since women account for a significant proportion of the displaced population, their experiences have become an increasingly important focus of academic studies. However, most of the existing research on refugee women has concentrated on their displacement journeys, experiences in refugee camps (including exposure to violence), and the long-term mental health consequences of forced migration. While these perspectives are vital, there remains limited systematic attention to the economic integration of refugee women, particularly in relation to their careers [2–5]. Careers are generally defined as occupations undertaken over a significant period of a person's life, offering opportunities for progress.

They play a pivotal role in successful adaptation to host countries by supporting financial independence, social inclusion, and long-term well-being [6,7]. The traditional concept of a career is associated with vertical movement up the career ladder and job security; however, a sustainable career concept shifts the focus to human and career development over time, through proactivity, contextual fit, and adaptive trajectories [8,9]. A sustainable career is particularly important for female refugees, as it emphasizes not only employability but also meaningful participation in the host society.

Nevertheless, refugee women continue to face significant barriers to formal employment, including language obstacles, cultural biases, limited childcare, educational opportunities, and non-recognition of prior qualifications [10]. These challenges are compounded by gender norms that restrict women's career prospects, creating a "double burden" of navigating both refugee status and gender-based disadvantage [11,12]. This study addresses a critical gap by systematically mapping and analyzing research on refugee women's careers in host countries, a topic that has received much less attention compared to studies on displacement, camp experiences, or health. A comprehensive review of the existing literature from 2000 to 2023 is provided, combined with a bibliometric analysis and visual representation using VOSviewer software.

This study aims to systematically map and synthesize the existing research on female refugees' careers in the host countries by combining bibliometric analysis with a systematic literature review. The study addresses the following research questions: (1) What is the scope and intellectual structure of the research on female refugees' careers? (2) What main themes, barriers, and enabling factors related to female refugees' career development are emphasized in the existing literature? (3) What knowledge gaps and future research directions emerge from the current body of studies?

The findings are intended to inform policymakers, practitioners and scholars, offering insights that can guide initiatives to improve career outcomes and long-term integration for this vulnerable population.

2. Female Refugees' Career: Theoretical Background

Migrant and refugee are among the many terms used to describe people looking for a new home in foreign countries. These terms are particularly relevant around the world as many people flee violence, political repression, poverty, and environmental disasters in their home countries in search of better and safer opportunities elsewhere. The reasons for resettlement are exactly what determine the differences between the use of these terms. A migrant is a person who opts to relocate. According to Eldridge [13], migrants choose to move and do so for a variety of reasons, including economic well-being, the pursuit of better education, etc.

A refugee, on the other hand, is defined as an individual who, due to a legitimate fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, political views, or belonging to a specific social group, finds themselves outside their home country and is either unable or unwilling to use that country's protection [14,15]. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [16], refugees are individuals who are escaping armed conflict or persecution and for whom denial of asylum could have potentially deadly consequences. It is important to underline that existing studies have considered the concepts of migrant and refugee women cumulatively [17,18]. This might be attributed to the overlapping challenges that migrant and refugee women encounter (such as lack of language skills). Challenges and vulnerabilities can be very similar for people who share the same journeys routes and modes of transport and are also exposed to human rights violations, xenophobia and abuse [19]. Nevertheless, there are some observable differences in the specific challenges each group faces. For example, compared with migrant

women, refugee women have lower education levels and are overrepresented among those lacking basic qualifications [20]. Female refugees arriving in Europe are often less educated and lack work experience, many have experienced abuse, including physical and sexual violence [18].

Although the challenge of integrating refugees is a well-known and debated topic among researchers, there is still a lack of a comprehensive, gender-sensitive approach [18]. According to the researchers, refugee women warrant special consideration [18]. Approximately 50 percent of the population of refugees, internally displaced or stateless population consists of female refugees: women and girls [21]. However, the needs and priorities or voices of refugee and migrant women are frequently absent from the policies intended to protect and support them [22]. The female perspective is also underrepresented in academic literature on refugee and migrant issues, including women's experiences as well as gender differences in employment outcomes or forecasts [23].

Work and career profoundly influence an individual's quality of life, impacting physical and mental health, financial stability, and overall happiness. Research indicates that job and career satisfaction are closely linked to general life satisfaction [24,25]. Consequently, individuals often prioritize their career paths, seeking opportunities that resonate with their values, interests, financial needs, and aspirations for professional advancement. Evolving labor markets, globalization, technological advancements, future uncertainties, and shifts in work conditions are making career development more dynamic, complex, and unpredictable. This reality of the career environment is changing attitudes toward careers, shifting from the traditional career model to the concept of a sustainable career [9]. Career sustainability refers to the "sequences of career experiences reflected through a variety of patterns of continuity over time, thereby crossing several social spaces, characterized by individual agency, herewith providing meaning to the individual" [26]. Newman (2011) links the concept of sustainable careers to the preservation and strengthening of human capital, renewal, flexibility, and adaptability possibilities, encompassing and integrating various areas of life and experiences [27]. A sustainable career is described by three perspectives (individual, context, and time) and three dimensions (health, happiness, and productivity) [8]. When it comes to the individual perspective, personal resources play a key role. Research shows that psychological capital, health, and the ability to learn throughout life [8], adaptability, and self-reflection are critical factors in a person's competitiveness in the labor market and career satisfaction [28]. Institutional and organizational factors, such as market conditions, management support, organizational culture, and inclusive career policies, create a context that facilitates the development of long-term and meaningful careers [8,26]. Sustainable career development is a dynamic process that changes throughout the stages of life and depends on a person's ability to remain employable and healthy in the long term [8]. Furthermore, the time dimension allows us to understand how career decisions are made at different stages of life [29]. The health dimension encompasses physical and psychological well-being, which enables employees to remain productive and resilient [8,30,31]. The dimension of happiness is related to subjective job satisfaction, engagement, and a sense of meaning. Psychological capital directly contributes to career satisfaction even during crises, strengthening the dimension of happiness [32]. Productivity in a sustainable career is expressed not only in employability potential and long-term survival in the labor market, but also in future orientation, goal pursuit, and value creation [7].

Refugee women experience more challenges related to trauma and/or physical violence due to the difficult conditions they face in refugee camps or on a challenging journey, as well as access to medical and psychological care to overcome such traumatic experiences [18]. To address the topic of careers in the context of forcibly displaced women, the unique challenges that these women face before, during, and after their departure and

arrival in the host country are highlighted. Refugee women are particularly vulnerable at various stages of their migration. Women and girls face risks including early and forced marriage, transactional sex, domestic violence, rape, sexual harassment, and physical assault [16]. Following resettlement, women often encounter further obstacles, such as insufficient educational backgrounds, limited literacy in their native languages, childcare responsibilities [18], and a lack of formal skills, all of which can impede their entry into the workforce.

Numerous post-migration factors impact the mental health of migrant and refugee women, including unemployment, unrecognized skills and qualifications, poverty, unstable housing, discrimination, Islamophobia, social isolation, family violence, gender role stress, ongoing family separation, pressure or desire to remit money to family abroad, insecure visa status (especially for asylum seekers), visa processing delays, child-related stresses, and language barriers [17].

While considerable research has been conducted on the employment of individuals from refugee backgrounds in general [18] and knowing that women seeking asylum are known to face more barriers than their male counterparts in beginning a new life in their host country [33], exclusively, the employment experiences and careers of female refugees are not sufficiently addressed in research. UN Women emphasizes the need for a thorough examination of the dynamics and policies that obstruct effective and sustainable employment opportunities for women seeking asylum [22].

A growing number of systematic reviews have examined selected aspects of refugees and migrant women's experiences, demonstrating increasing scholarly attention to this field. However, as noted previously, even when this is relevant, career-related dimensions are often addressed or embedded only indirectly within broader themes such as health (e.g., [34]) or education and social integration (e.g., [35,36]). This indicates that, despite the growing body of literature, a comprehensive and focused understanding of female refugees' careers remains limited.

Some reviews have concentrated on specific segments of economic integration, particularly entrepreneurship as an alternative pathway of agency and labor market participation. For instance, Al-Hamad et al. (2024) [37] analyzed refugee women's entrepreneurship and found that entrepreneurial activities might contribute to improved socio-economic outcomes and well-being, while simultaneously being constrained by structural barriers, gendered inequalities, and limited access to institutional support. Similarly, Sarihasan et al. (2023) [38] synthesized the research on immigrant entrepreneurship and gender, demonstrating that female immigrant entrepreneurs faced disadvantages related to human capital, social capital, family support, and discrimination.

The most closely related studies in terms of employment and career-related outcomes include [39–42]. A mixed-methods systematic review of refugee women's employment and economic inclusion identified key predictors such as language proficiency, education, demographic characteristics, and family structure, alongside a synthesis of barriers and facilitators to labour market participation [39]. A national-context review focusing on employment integration experiences in Canada highlighted persistent underemployment, skills mismatch, and downward occupational mobility, with refugee women often disproportionately affected [40]. The concept of displacement plurality was introduced to explain how displacement-related factors shape refugee women's work engagement and organizational inclusion [41]. Expanding beyond forced migration, a review of migrant women's career development concluded that existing research predominantly focuses on paid employment in economically developed countries, while insufficiently capturing the broader, dynamic, and context-dependent complexity of women's careers [42].

Building on these insights, this study adopts a combined approach by integrating bibliometric analysis with a systematic literature review. This allows not only to map the scope and intellectual structure of research on female refugees' careers, but also to identify the key themes, barriers, and enabling factors, as well as to uncover the existing knowledge gaps and outline directions for future research. In doing so, the paper addresses a critical limitation of prior reviews, which tended to focus on fragmented aspects of integration rather than providing a comprehensive, career-oriented perspective.

3. Methodology

We followed the standard procedure for conducting a systematic literature review [43], complemented with bibliometric analysis, VOSviewer-based visualization, and qualitative expert analysis of the selected papers. The search terms are presented in Table 1. Various combinations, synonyms, and fragments, such as "employment", "labor market", "job", "work", "economic integration", and "entrepreneurship", were used to reflect career-related themes. For the second topic, "female refugees", terms "refugees", "migrants", and "displaced persons" were selected. The term "refugee women" was employed as the primary analytical category, while references to "migrant women" were retained only when cited studies employed that terminology. "Female" and "women" were treated interchangeably. The symbol "*" is used to include multiple word variations sharing the same root (e.g., "employ" captures "employ", "employee", "employment").

Table 1. Search terms.

Topic	Search Term
Career	"career" OR "employ*" OR "lab * market" OR "job" OR "work" OR "econom * integrat*" OR "entrepr" AND
Refugee	"refuge*" OR "migrant" OR "displac * person*" AND
Female	"wom*" OR "female"

Figure 1 illustrates the logical sequence of stages applied throughout the process. The review was conducted between January and March 2024. Scientific papers from 2000 to 2023 were included in the analysis to capture the general trends in the context of female refugees' career. The query was limited to titles, abstracts, and keywords within the Web of Science (WoS) database by Clarivate Analytics.

During Stage 1, 8068 papers published in WoS database were identified and retrieved to be processed ($n = 8068$). In Stage 2, five exclusion criteria were applied. Using the first criterion EXC1, all papers with technical issues (e.g., the language of the main body of the study was other than English/the content was not fully available/form of meeting abstracts, etc.) were removed. Studies that used search terms as a cited expression were omitted from the analysis as well (EXC2). For example, "Further research will <...> female entrepreneurs <...> refugee background". The third exclusion criterion (EXC3) helped in bypassing those studies where one essential part of the research topic was missing, i.e., focus on career. For instance, when employment acts as a factor that leads to other effects (e.g., female refugees get a job and as a result stop contacting their relatives or job affects female refugees' citizenship practices or employment is episodically mentioned in the context of other analyzed topics, e.g., mental health). Using the fourth exclusion criterion (EXC4), the authors eliminated research that analyzed refugee/migrant career, but females were not at all considered as a part of a broader group or were only mentioned in related works or comparisons with other studies. Finally, the fifth exclusion criterion (EXC5) assisted in eliminating the studies with the problematic keyword issues (e.g., domestic migration, where women leave an agrarian lifestyle and start their lives in the city or

internal displacement in large countries like Turkey; female migration in the context of bird species that migrate to other countries).

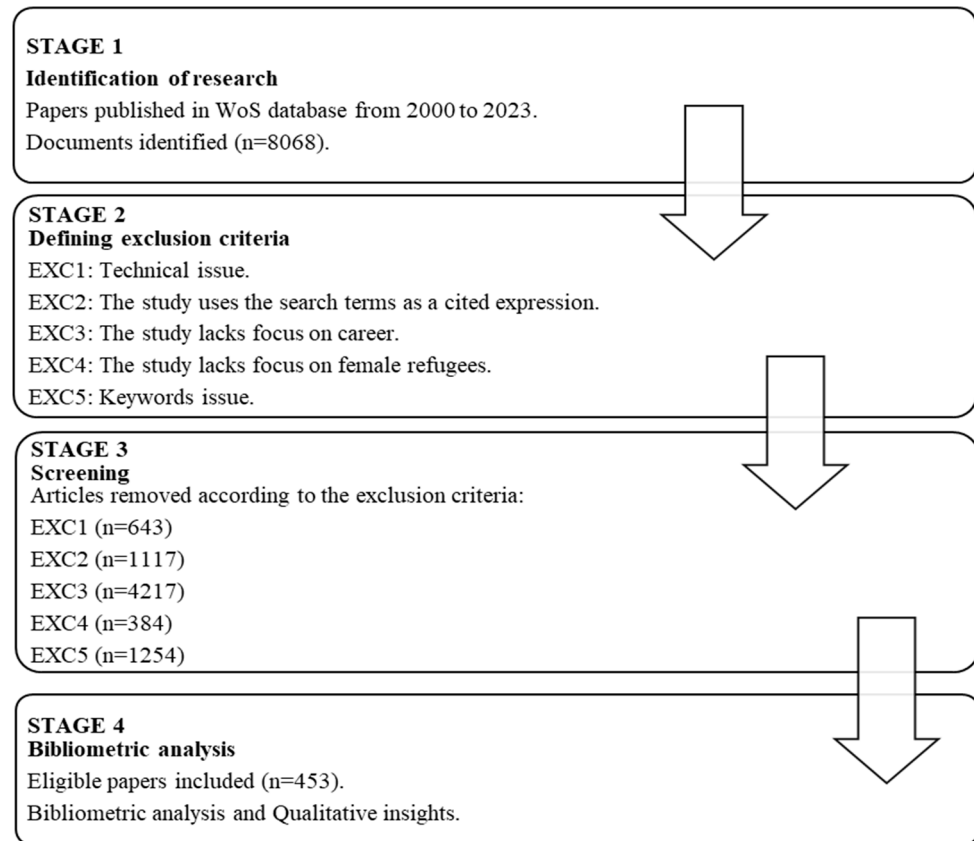


Figure 1. Sequence of methodological procedure.

The full number of articles removed in the screening stage was $n = 7633$. Figure 2 shows the number of publications over time from 2000 to 2023, divided into two categories: before screening and after screening. The trend suggests a growing interest and research output in this field, with an accelerated increase from around 2016 onward. It is worth mentioning that the publication count for 2023 might be incomplete, as the analysis was conducted in early 2024. Hence, there is a possibility that not all articles of 2023 had yet been included in the system at that time.

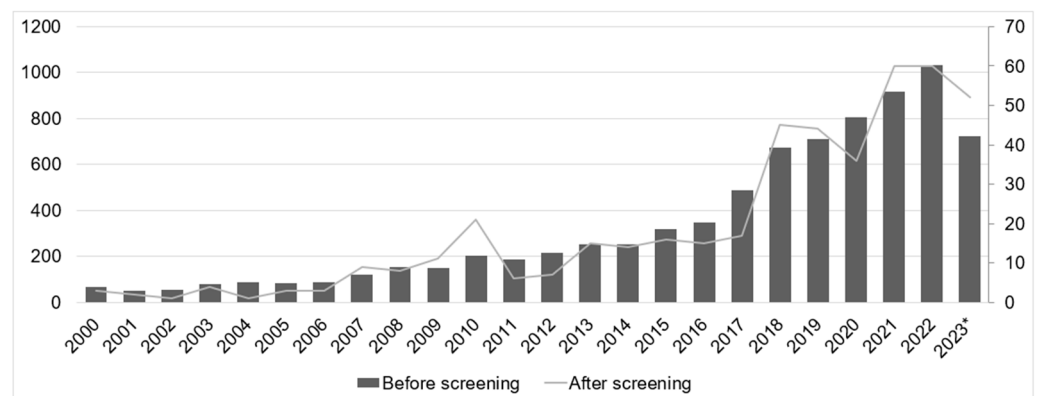


Figure 2. Before and after screening. * Note: 2023 data may be incomplete due to indexing delays.

Lastly, Stage 4 was devoted to bibliometric analysis, visualization using VOSviewer software, and the qualitative expert analysis of the selected papers ($n = 453$). The reviewed

studies were not systematically coded according to research design or type of empirical data. However, an additional screening of the abstracts suggested that the field was methodologically diverse, including both small-scale qualitative studies (e.g., interviews, case-based and ethnographic approaches) and quantitative studies based on surveys, panel, or administrative data, with qualitative inquiries appearing more frequently.

VOSviewer software utilizes the VOS (Visualization of Similarities) mapping method to organize data. This interactive application supports cluster mapping and offers the ability to explore specific areas of the map in detail. The software enables users to create, visualize, and analyze bibliometric networks. In this study, the VOSviewer software (version 1.6.20) was used as the principal tool for visualizing and analyzing data. It was chosen for its capacity to handle large datasets, track research developments over time, and identify key themes, authors, and publications within a field. Following the general research questions for bibliometric analysis [44,45], the major trends of the research field of career of women refugees were identified.

For bibliographic coupling analysis type, with countries as the unit of analysis, the limits were set to a maximum of 25 countries per document and a minimum of 5 documents per country. For keyword co-occurrence analysis, a minimum of 5 keyword occurrences was set as a threshold level in the analysis (no keywords were manually removed). For key terms analysis, the information fields from which the terms were extracted included the title and abstract. The minimum number of occurrences of a term was set to 15. Out of 94,558 terms, 144 met the threshold. For each of the 144 terms, a relevance score was calculated. Based on this score, the most relevant terms were selected. The default choice was to select 60% of the most relevant items. The number of terms to be selected was 86. No terms were manually removed. Finally, other research constituents (the most influential publications, countries) were analyzed.

4. Results

To provide a clear overview, the results of the analysis were summarized in terms of the leading countries, most cited articles, main keywords, and key themes.

4.1. Mapping Research Clusters Across Countries

To examine research clusters and the connections between countries studying refugee women's careers, a bibliographic coupling analysis was employed. Bibliographic coupling is based on the premise that two documents sharing a substantial number of references are likely to be similar in content [46]. In this way, coupling analysis highlights the extent to which publications are linked through common references, serving as an indicator of the collaborative and thematic proximity of the countries associated with those publications. For this analysis, the threshold was set at a maximum of 25 countries per document and a minimum of 5 documents per country. The resulting network captured 25 interconnected countries. Figure 3 presents the network visualization, which reveals four primary country clusters.

Figure 3 presents the country analysis through bibliographic coupling, shown as a network visualization of four main clusters. The largest and most prominent is the red cluster, which includes Australia, the United States of America, and Canada. The United States has long been one of the world's major refugee-receiving countries [47], although admission numbers have fluctuated across different administrations. The country provides a range of integration programs, including labor market access, language training and vocational training, etc. (such as Targeted Assistance Program, Refugee Family Literacy Program), which are important factors for the career prospects of refugee women [48]. Because of its large number of academic institutions and research centers (e.g., the Center for Migration

Studies of New York), the United States has also generated extensive scholarship on refugee integration. Australia has similarly played a significant role, welcoming more than 180,000 refugees over the last decade [49]. The country operates under a structured migration framework, divided into two main streams: the Migration Program for skilled and family migrants and the Refugee and Humanitarian Program for those seeking humanitarian protection [23]. Australia has a rich body of research on refugees and employment more broadly, with recent studies focusing specifically on refugee women. This work sheds light on their employment experiences, factors influencing outcomes, and barriers that make it difficult for them to gain employment [23,33]. In addition to the United States, Canada, and Australia, this cluster also includes seven other countries: Turkey, Austria, France, South Korea, South Africa, Lebanon, and The Netherlands. It indicates that they draw on similar sets of references in their research on refugee women's careers. The second cluster, shown in green, is strongly represented by Germany. Alongside Germany, this cluster includes Belgium, Finland, Denmark, Poland, and China. Germany has emerged as the world's third-largest host of refugees and the leading destination within the EU, currently providing shelter to 2.5 million refugees, including more than one million from Ukraine [1]. The country offers a wide range of integration services, such as vocational training, language courses, and labor market programs. These are supported by robust social networks that assist refugees, including women, in adapting to their new environment. With its active universities and research institutions, Germany stands out as one of the leading countries in research on migration and refugee integration. The third cluster, visualized in blue, consists of six countries, with Sweden as the most prominent. Other countries in this cluster are Spain, Italy, Israel, Switzerland, and Norway. The fourth and smallest cluster, highlighted in yellow, is most strongly represented by England, Scotland, and Wales. The United Kingdom is a major player in the global refugee reception landscape. Its high volume of academic publications is supported by the presence of several leading research institutions that focus on migration policy and refugee integration, including issues specific to women. Notable examples include the Refugee Law Initiative, the Centre on Migration, Policy and Society, the Migration and Refugees Research Network, and the Centre for Refugee Studies.

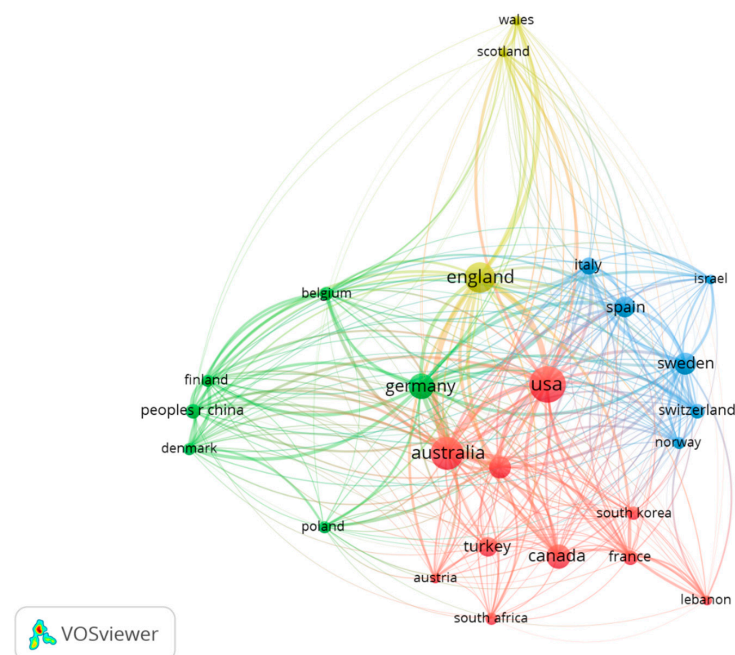


Figure 3. Visualization of the bibliographic coupling network among countries.

4.2. Most Cited Articles

Table 2 presents the most cited articles from 2000 to 2022. The year 2023 was excluded, having in mind the insufficient time passed for objective citation counts. The articles suggest that the challenges faced by migrant and refugee women are quite similar with labor market integration being among central issues. Economic independence contributes to achieving greater overall security; however, this process is often affected by external (e.g., discrimination, cultural norms, support systems in host countries) and internal factors (e.g., self-agency, literacy level, mental health, traumatic experiences, family responsibilities).

Table 2. Most cited articles.

Year	Authors	Article Title	Source Title	Times Cited, WoS Core
2000	Beiser and Hou (2000) [50]	Gender differences in language acquisition and employment consequences among Southeast Asian refugees in Canada	Canadian Public Policy-Analyse De Politiques	45
2001	Bagchi (2001) [51]	Migrant networks and the immigrant professional: An analysis of the role of weak ties	Population Research and Policy Review	24
2002	Andrews et al. (2002) [52]	Negotiating survival: undocumented Mexican immigrant women in the Pacific Northwest	Social Science Journal	12
2003	Franz (2003) [53]	Bosnian refugee women in (re)settlement: gender relations and social mobility	Feminist Review	38
2004	McMichael and Manderson (2004) [54]	Somali women and well-being: Social networks and social capital among immigrant women in Australia	Human Organization	144
2005	Parrado and Flippen (2005) [55]	Migration and gender among Mexican women	American Sociological Review	152
2006	Ho (2006) [56]	Migration as feminisation? Chinese women's experiences of work and family in Australia	Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies	127
2007	Danis (2007) [57]	A faith that binds: Iraqi Christian women on the domestic service ladder of Istanbul	Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies	17
2008	Yakushko et al. (2008) [58]	Career development concerns of recent immigrants and refugees	Journal of Career Development	86
2009	Deacon and Sullivan (2009) [59]	Responding to the Complex and Gendered Needs of Refugee Women	Affilia-Journal of Women and Social Work	54

Table 2. Cont.

Year	Authors	Article Title	Source Title	Times Cited, WoS Core
2010	Meares (2010) [60]	A fine balance: Women, work and skilled migration	Women's Studies International Forum	60
2011	Riaño (2011) [61]	Drawing new boundaries of participation: experiences and strategies of economic citizenship among skilled migrant women in Switzerland	Environment And Planning A: Economy and Space	34
2012	Williams (2012) [62]	Converging variations in migrant care work in Europe	Journal of European Social Policy	160
2013	Sang, Al-Dajani, and Ozbilgin (2013) [63]	Frayed Careers of Migrant Female Professors in British Academia: An Intersectional Perspective	Gender Work and Organization	56
2014	Bonizzoni (2014) [64]	Immigrant working mothers reconciling work and childcare: The experience of Latin American and Eastern European women in Milan	Social politics	40
2015	Koyama (2015) [65]	Constructing Gender: Refugee Women Working in the United States	Journal of Refugee Studies	34
2016	Azmat and Fujimoto (2016) [66]	Family embeddedness and entrepreneurship experience: a study of Indian migrant women entrepreneurs in Australia	Entrepreneurship and Regional Development	49
2017	Ali et al. (2017) [67]	A relational understanding of work-life balance of Muslim migrant women in the west: future research agenda	International Journal of Human Resource Management	46
2018	Knappert, Kornau, and Figengul (2018) [68]	Refugees' exclusion at work and the intersection with gender: Insights from the Turkish-Syrian border	Journal of Vocational Behavior	51
2019	Verwiebe et al. (2019) [69]	Finding your way into employment against all odds? Successful job search of refugees in Austria.	Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies	23
2020	Rydzik and Anitha (2020) [70]	Conceptualising the Agency of Migrant Women Workers: Resilience, Reworking and Resistance	Work Employment and Society	31
2021	Senthanar et al. (2021) [71]	Entrepreneurial experiences of Syrian refugee women in Canada: A feminist grounded qualitative study	Small Business Economics	13

Table 2. Cont.

Year	Authors	Article Title	Source Title	Times Cited, WoS Core
2022	Hwang and Beauregard (2022) [72]	Contextualising intersectionality: A qualitative study of East Asian female migrant workers in the UK	Human Relations	17

A thorough analysis of the most cited articles shows that refugee women's labor market trajectories are strongly shaped by human capital acquired prior to displacement, as well as by gender norms and social structures in their countries of origin, which is reflected in gender-specific challenges. Physical danger of sexual exploitation and harassment starts during their journey [52] and continues in the host country, including forced marriages [68]. Another challenge relates to access to healthcare, including prenatal care [52], reproductive care [59], and mental health services [58,59].

Work–life balance and gender norms are also common topics in the analyzed studies, as women often manage both personal challenges and family responsibilities during displacement. Without institutional support for childcare and elderly care, full participation in the labor market is restricted [59,64,66]. This increases the risk of falling into poverty and leads to even higher levels of stress.

When migrating with their families, women may remain constrained by gender norms originating from their countries of origin. For example, Bosnian refugee women's participation in the labor market does not necessarily lead to emancipation due to persistent patriarchal expectations [53]. Similarly, among Mexican women in the United States, employment often reflects household economic necessity rather than increased autonomy, resulting in a dual burden of paid work and caregiving responsibilities [55]. Most cited articles indicate that women's migration experiences vary depending on their pre-migration socio-economic and institutional contexts. For example, highly skilled women from South Africa often possess substantial human capital but still face downward mobility after migration due to credential devaluation and labor market barriers [60]. In addition, the loss of pre-migration domestic support, such as paid childcare, increases unpaid care responsibilities and may limit labor market participation. Iraqi Christian women in Turkey often assume primary earning roles during displacement, challenging traditional breadwinner norms, yet without leading to sustained empowerment [57]. Similarly, labor market participation among Muslim women in Western countries is shaped by the intersection of gender, religion, and cultural expectations, particularly regarding caregiving roles [67]. Male family members may perceive women's employment as a threat, resulting in emotional and sometimes physical abuse aimed at limiting their autonomy [57], especially when women become primary earners.

When primary barriers such as healthcare, housing, childcare access, or safety concerns are overcome, another challenge of downgrading emerges. In host countries, refugee women are often pushed into lower-skilled and lower-paid jobs [53]. Research shows that no matter the current skill and education levels, females usually face the downward career mobility in the host country [52]. This is driven by unrecognized credentials [60,69,71], language barriers [69,71], lack of local experience [60], legal restrictions [56,61,69], lack of connections [65], and broader social and cultural elements [56,61,68,70] that create boundaries for skilled women in accessing upper segments of the labor market and lead to societal rejection, disrespect, and lower pay.

The most cited articles also consider the measures for coping with the above-mentioned challenges and boundaries. These can be divided into three levels: national, organizational and individual [67,68]. Ensuring access to culturally sensitive physical and mental healthcare is essential [52,58,59,64]. Legal protection, favorable residence conditions, and social care are as well essential for migrant women's integration [52,55,62]. As refugee women frequently struggle to access community resources like banking, childcare, and transportation, there is a necessity of targeted orientation programs [59].

Language acquisition and cultural adaptation courses increase the likelihood of labor market integration [50,54,58,59]. Social networks are vital for navigating displacement and accessing employment opportunities [54,69] as they support cultural adjustment, reduce isolation, and provide job information or referrals [54]. Local volunteers and non-governmental organizations can provide practical help, such as writing resumes or securing housing, and also help in bridging cultural and language gaps. Connections with host and ethnic communities minimize the sense of isolation, strengthen social integration and share current job opportunities or provide referrals [59].

Membership in professional networks with potential employers [51], tailored employment programs [59] and career counseling that is focused on systemic advocacy, recertification processes and skill-building too can bring more opportunities [58]. Some authors offer entrepreneurship and mentorship programs both as a source of financial stability and self-empowerment [66,67,71]. At organizational level, managers should facilitate equality by treating minority groups in ways that acknowledge their distinct challenges rather than applying a one-size-fits-all approach [66].

Research highlights that individual factors are key for successful workforce participation. The authors indicate resilience, resistance and adaptability [63,70], self-efficacy and persuasion [66], and personal agency [67]. It is important for displaced women to exploit their contextual privileges: relative privilege (e.g., feeling more freedom and autonomy in the host country compared to restrictive norms in their home countries), assigned privilege (e.g., language and cultural knowledge that is valued by employers, especially when companies have interests in certain markets), and ambiguous privilege (e.g., positive cultural stereotypes such as being polite and hardworking) [72].

4.3. Map of Keywords

To better understand how different research topics are connected, a keyword co-occurrence analysis was conducted. This method identifies links between concepts by detecting how often two keywords appear together in the same article [73]. When keywords co-occur, it suggests a relationship between the underlying ideas they represent. Author keywords are especially valuable, as they help researchers recognize emerging trends and track the development of specific topics over time [74].

Using VOSviewer software, all the keywords provided in the documents were analyzed (unit of analysis: all keywords). A minimum threshold of five keyword occurrences was set to focus on the most relevant connections. No keywords were removed manually to ensure objectivity. Figure 4 presents a network visualization of the analysis. It shows how 144 frequently occurring keywords (out of 1703 total) were grouped into clusters based on how often they appeared together. The closer and more connected the keywords are in the map, the stronger their conceptual relationship.

In the network visualization shown in Figure 4, each keyword is represented as a circle (node). The size of the circle indicates how frequently that keyword appears across the publications: the larger the node, the more often the keyword occurs. Keywords that are closely related to one another are grouped together in clusters, which are shown in different colors. The distance between clusters reflects how strongly the topics are connected:

clusters positioned closer together share stronger thematic ties, while those farther apart are less related. Overall, the map reveals six main clusters of keywords, distinguished by different colors, each representing a different area of research focus. In the red cluster, the keywords “women” and “refugees” appear most frequently. This cluster contains 44 closely related keywords that often co-occur, such as “health”, “mental health”, “depression”, “unemployment”, “stress”, “education”, “language”, “social support”, “support”, and “discrimination”. Overall, this cluster reflects the theme of health and psychological issues. The green cluster, by contrast, is characterized by socio-economic topics. Its most frequent keywords are “migration”, “employment”, “work”, and “family”. In total, it includes 42 keywords, such as “earnings,” “labor market,” “labor-force participation,” “immigrant women”, “maternal employment” etc. The blue cluster consists of 19 keywords, with the most frequent being “integration”, “labor market integration”, “experiences”, “labor”, “intersectionality”, “policy”, “refugee women”, and “barriers”. This cluster reflects the theme of integration and intersectionality. The yellow cluster includes 17 keywords, with the most common being “immigrants”, “discrimination”, “migrant women”, “strategies”, and “acculturation”. This cluster is centered on the theme of discrimination. The purple cluster contains 15 keywords, the most frequent being “gender” and “migrants”. Other keywords include “entrepreneurship”, “ethnic entrepreneurship”, “opportunities”, and “business”. This cluster highlights the theme of entrepreneurship and business. The final light-blue cluster is the smallest, containing only 7 keywords. These appear less frequently and are relatively distant from one another, including such terms as “vulnerability”, “domestic violence”, and “gender inequality”. This cluster is associated with the theme of vulnerability. Overall, the network illustrates a high degree of interconnectedness among the clusters. Such keywords as “gender”, “women”, “migration”, “migrants”, “refugees”, and “employment” emerge as pivotal links that connect multiple themes, reflecting the multidimensional challenges female refugees face when adapting to new environments. Table 3 provides details on the most frequently occurring keywords and their frequency of appearance.

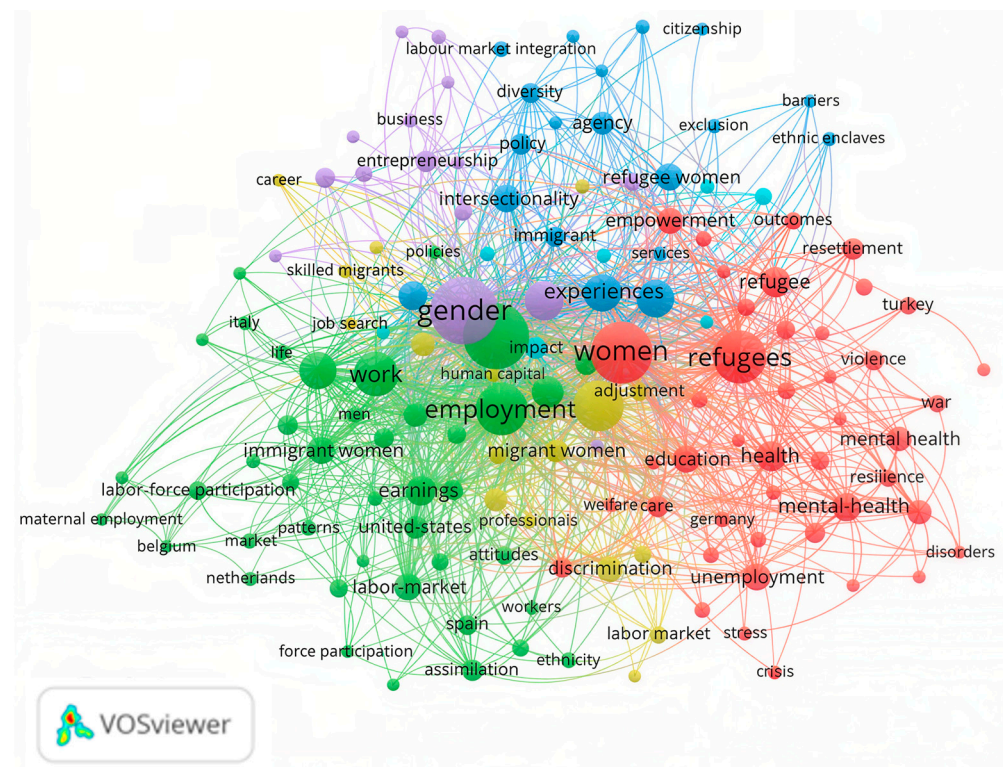


Figure 4. Network visualization of keyword co-occurrence analysis.

Table 3. Keywords with the most occurrences.

No.	Keyword	Occurrences
1	“gender”	127
2	“migration”	119
3	“women”	104
4	“refugees” and “refugee”	102
5	“employment”	73

Upon closer examination, it becomes clear that certain keywords act as central nodes linking multiple clusters, underscoring their broad relevance across research themes. Terms such as “gender”, “women”, “migration”, and “migrant” are highly central and appear in several clusters, suggesting that gender and migration are deeply interwoven and remain critical issues throughout migration studies. These keywords connect research on the specific challenges women face in migration contexts, including labor market integration, social adaptation, and gender-specific vulnerabilities. Similarly, the keywords “employment” and “labor market” serve as bridges between clusters focused on the economic dimensions of migration and integration. Their recurrence across different clusters highlights employment as a unifying theme that shapes the experiences of both migrants and refugees, while also revealing distinct nuances for women. The keywords “refugee” and “immigrants” are likewise central, linking discussions on legal, social, and psychological challenges faced by these groups. In parallel, the prominence of “health” and “mental health” reflects the importance of physical and psychological well-being in migration studies, spanning topics such as integration barriers, trauma from displacement, and access to health services. The overlap of these central keywords across clusters demonstrates that, although migration studies can be categorized into distinct themes (e.g., economic integration, gender-specific challenges), the issues are strongly interconnected. This interconnectedness suggests that the challenges faced by female migrants and refugees are complex and multidimensional, requiring a holistic approach in both research and policy-making to adequately address their diverse needs.

Taken together, the six clusters do not exist in isolation but form an interconnected system that reflects the multidimensional nature of refugee women’s careers. Health and psychological well-being (red cluster) are closely tied to integration outcomes (blue cluster) and vulnerability (light-blue cluster), as trauma and discrimination often constrain access to employment. Employment and work-related challenges (green cluster) are directly linked to integration and to entrepreneurship (purple cluster), where self-employment may emerge as an alternative pathway in contexts of labor market exclusion. Discrimination (yellow cluster) cuts across all clusters, reinforcing the structural barriers that shape refugee women’s opportunities. Viewed through the lens of the sustainable career framework, these inter-cluster connections highlight the importance of adaptability, contextual fit, and well-being as interdependent dimensions of refugee women’s career development. This deeper interpretation underscores that career-related research on refugee women must be understood holistically, recognizing the complex interplay between social, psychological and economic factors.

4.4. Key Themes

For the analysis of key terms, the titles and abstracts of the publications were used as the source fields for extracting terms. A minimum threshold of 15 occurrences was applied, resulting in 144 terms out of total of 94,558 meeting this criterion. Each of these terms was assigned a relevance score, which was then used to identify the most meaningful items.

Following the default procedure, 60% of the most relevant terms were selected, yielding 86 in total. No terms were manually removed from the dataset.

VOSviewer software was used to create a co-occurrence map of these words, as illustrated in Figure 5. All terms were organized into three clusters, which represent three primary research themes. Each cluster is displayed in a different color (red, green and blue). The nodes represent terms or concepts, and the space between them indicates the relationships among these terms [75].

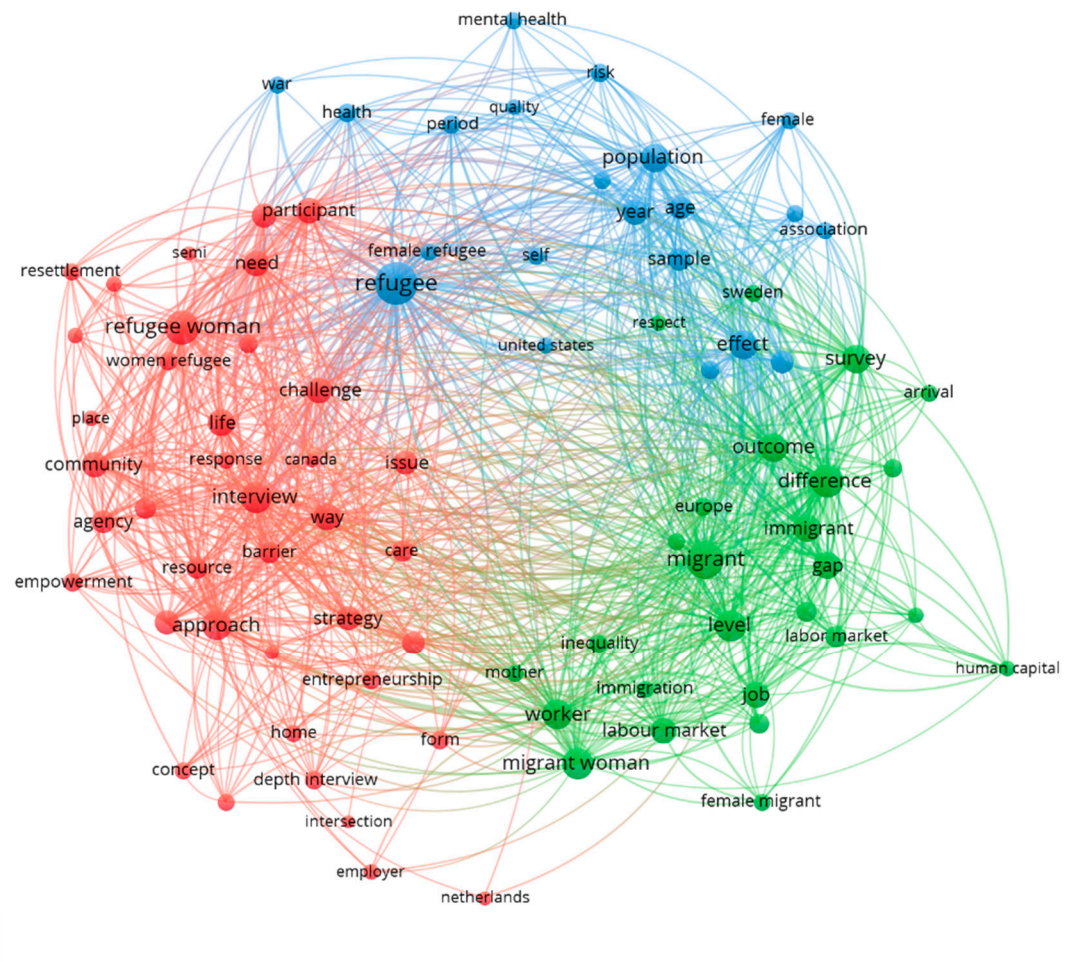


Figure 5. Network visualization map of terms from the title and abstract sections.

The red cluster, together with the most frequently mentioned terms “refugee woman” or “interview”, includes terms relevant to the topic under study, such as “challenge”, “issue”, “community”, “strategy”, “way”, “need”, or “career”. This cluster with 39 items focuses on critical aspects of the career challenges and environments of refugee women, encapsulates research and discussions around the unique difficulties faced by female refugees as they attempt to integrate and establish careers in new environments.

Meanwhile, the green cluster predominantly encompasses studies that examine the voluntary migration experience and the associated challenges in the labor market. It notably features terms like “migrant”, “migrant woman”, and “female migrant”, alongside “arrival”, suggesting a focus on the voluntary aspect of migration contrasted with forced resettlement discussed in the red cluster. In the green cluster, including 26 items, other key terms with the largest circles were “worker”, “labor market” (mentioned twice), “job”, “outcome”, “difference”, “gap”, “inequality”, and “mother”, thus addressing the critical

economic and social dimensions of migrant experiences or challenges such as reconciling work and motherhood.

Regarding the blue cluster, which contains 21 terms, the biggest circles are represented by the term “refugee” (and closely related term “female refugee”), “population”, and “effect”. This suggests the attention towards population studies and the wider issues of social integration for refugee female in relation to the population structure in the host country, with a special emphasis on female refugee health and especially mental health issues. The visualization map of terms shows strong interconnections between terms across all three clusters, reflecting the multi-faceted challenges faced by refugee and migrant women. Central terms such as “refugee”, “refugee woman”, “empowerment”, and “worker” bridge various research topics, indicating interdisciplinary studies that incorporate social, psychological, and economic perspectives.

The specific focus of each cluster highlights different aspects of issues, but the overlapping terms underscore the interconnected nature of these challenges. This kind of analysis helps in understanding how different research areas are interrelated and can guide holistic policymaking and program development aimed at addressing the complex needs of migrant and refugee populations. However, although the clusters discussed above are quite comprehensive, there are several possible topics that could further expand the scope of the topic under analysis.

The red cluster currently shows that research focuses more on strategies, barriers, and challenges; however, the topic of individual enablers (the means or factors that empower refugee women to change their career trajectories) remains untouched. Research on these trajectories could further enrich understanding of the career shocks experienced by female refugees and the pathways leading towards sustainable careers. Furthermore, the role of host country institutions in overcoming challenges and barriers could be introduced as another relevant research theme. The items in the red cluster also indicate that qualitative research dominates, providing deeper insights into phenomena (e.g., life experiences, coping strategies, role of communities). Quantitative research, on the other hand, could measure the frequency of phenomena and identify the relationships between variables.

The green cluster is centered on labor market participation, employment outcomes, and inequality patterns, such as motherhood penalties and gender wage gap. Further research themes could include the role of the employer and digital transformation of the labor market. When examining the employer’s role, attention should be paid to the workplace environment, workplace culture, and competencies required. Considering digitization trends, beyond the fundamental skills highlighted in this study (language proficiency and general literacy), digital skills are becoming increasingly critical for successful integration. These are essential at every stage from the initial arrival in the host country to entering the labor market and performing work-related tasks. It must be emphasized that developing such skills may pose an additional challenge for refugees coming from diverse cultural and educational backgrounds.

The blue cluster currently captures health mainly as an outcome of traumatic experiences resulting from being forced to leave one’s home country. However, the connection between mental health, labor market integration, and career development remains underexplored. Future themes could also include policy-level interventions to ensure equitable and timely access to healthcare as a crucial precondition for well-being.

To summarize, a concentrated look at the connectivity of the term “career” shows that the links are not developed, i.e., in most cases, the term is only linked to terms in the same red cluster (such as “development”, “strategy”, “barrier”) and to the green cluster terms “migrant” and “migrant woman”. Although, as mentioned above, the blue cluster includes terms relevant to the field of sustainable careers, such as “health” or “mental

health”, there are no links between these terms and “career”. This suggests that there is a lack of research on the careers of forcibly displaced (refugee) and migrant women. This fragmentation demonstrates that the career of refugee women is not yet conceptualized holistically, revealing the necessity of greater integration of psychological, sociological, and economic perspectives.

4.5. Thematic Synthesis

Beyond these descriptive bibliometric patterns, a qualitative expert analysis of the reviewed studies allows a more substantive interpretation and highlights several recurring thematic directions related to female refugees’ career development and labor market integration.

A central theme in the literature is the presence of multiple barriers to career development. Female refugees often face trauma-related mental and physical health challenges, language barriers, discrimination, and limited access to stable employment. These barriers are further reinforced by difficulties in credential recognition, restricted access to training opportunities, and insecure labor market positions, often resulting in downward career mobility and long-term exclusion.

Another underexplored theme concerns temporal career disruption. The reviewed literature suggests that forced displacement may interrupt employment trajectories through job loss, prolonged uncertainty, time spent in transit or refugee camps, and delayed labor market entry after resettlement. In some cases, women may also arrive with little or no prior formal work experience, which means that career development may begin only after arrival in the host country. Although these issues are highly relevant from a sustainable career perspective, especially in relation to the time dimension, they remain only fragmentarily addressed in the reviewed body of literature and therefore represent an important gap for future research.

Gendered and intersectional vulnerability is yet another important theme. The reviewed studies show that female refugees experience labor market integration through the combined effects of displacement, gender norms, care responsibilities, and social inequality. Traditional gender roles, childcare burdens, and discrimination significantly shape both employment opportunities and career progression, highlighting the need for an intersectional understanding of refugee women’s careers.

The literature also identifies several enabling factors and support mechanisms that can strengthen career pathways. These include language training, culturally sensitive support services, childcare provision, mentoring, tailored employment programs, and career counseling. In addition, resilience, self-efficacy, agency, and entrepreneurship emerge as important individual and contextual resources that help female refugees navigate labor market barriers.

Overall, the qualitative expert analysis suggests that the literature still treats many dimensions of female refugees’ careers in a fragmented way, indicating the need for a more integrated understanding of well-being, labor market structures, social inclusion, and long-term career development.

5. Discussion

The findings can be further interpreted through the sustainable career framework introduced in the theoretical background. In the case of female refugees, career sustainability is shaped by the interaction of individual resources, contextual conditions, and time-related adjustment processes, while the dimensions of health, happiness, and productivity remain closely interdependent. This perspective helps explain why refugee women’s careers should be understood not only in terms of labor market entry, but also in terms of

long-term well-being, meaningful participation, and sustainable employability. Barriers that hinder the female refugees' ability to secure stable employment start from mental and physical health issues, often stemming from traumatic experiences in their home countries or during their migration journey [33,76]. Therefore, trauma-informed counseling and peer support networks are vital. From the perspective of sustainable careers, these findings are most directly related to the health dimension, since physical and psychological well-being forms a necessary foundation for long-term career continuity and resilience. In this sense, health should be treated not only as a humanitarian concern, but also as a core precondition for sustainable career development among female refugees.

Language proficiency and cultural understanding are other critical enablers of female refugees' participation in the labor market [65,69]. Hence, programs offering language training and culturally sensitive interventions [77] have shown promise in fostering economic and social integration by helping women secure stable jobs. These enablers can also be interpreted through the productivity dimension of a sustainable career, as language skills and cultural understanding strengthen employability, access to decent work, and the ability to create value in the host-country's labor market. Simultaneously, they reflect the importance of contextual fit, showing that sustainable careers depend not only on individual effort but also on the availability of supportive integration environments.

Legal status and credential recognition determine access to formal employment, which in turn influences income stability, mental health, and the capacity to invest in further education. However, due to systemic issues, including restrictive national legal frameworks and prolonged qualification recognition timelines [78], female refugees are often pushed into low paying, informal sectors of the economy, such as domestic work or caregiving, where protection is minimal [79,80]. These systemic issues also limit the access to vocational training and reskilling [41,81]. This finding particularly highlights the context perspective of the sustainable career framework. Institutional arrangements, legal regulations, and recognition systems determine whether female refugees can build careers that are not only immediately accessible, but also stable, meaningful, and sustainable over time.

The findings also show that female refugees cannot be treated as a homogeneous group. Their career trajectories are strongly shaped by diversity in pre-migration human capital profiles, including knowledge, skills, and health. For instance, Ukrainian refugees represent a comparatively highly educated migrant population, with a significant share of women holding tertiary qualifications [81]. As a result, they may follow different pathways compared to other refugee groups, although they still encounter challenges related to, for example, childcare responsibilities or credential recognition [82]. In contrast, female refugees from some parts of the Middle East, South Asia, or Africa may have experienced restricted access to formal education, employment opportunities, and health services in their countries of origin. This further complicates their labor market entry after displacement [67,68,83–85].

Another critical aspect to be discussed is gender norms (also referred to as "gender penalty" or "double marginalization"). Analyzed studies reveal that women from patriarchal societies often face heightened pressures, both from their home cultures and host communities, which can limit their participation in the workforce [86]. Gender norms intersect with structural barriers, strengthening the constraints created by limited or expensive childcare and cultural-religious stigmatization [87].

Yet, many refugee women demonstrate remarkable resilience, using migration as an opportunity to redefine their roles and assert their autonomy [88]. Moreover, entrepreneurship and self-employment show the transformative potential for pathways for empowerment. "Refugee for refugee" type of programs are proved to be very effective in this case (e.g., refugee-led microfinance [85] or refugee-led mentorship [89]). Simultaneously, it is

important to emphasize that the effectiveness of these programs often depends on the interconnection of individual resilience and structural support systems [10]. These aspects relate closely to the individual perspective of a sustainable career, which emphasizes personal agency, adaptability, and the mobilization of resources across changing life conditions. They are also linked to the happiness dimension, as access to supportive networks, meaningful work, and opportunities for self-direction may strengthen not only employment outcomes, but also career satisfaction, dignity, and a sense of purpose.

5.1. Theoretical Implications

This paper contributes to the growing body of research in the field of female refugees' career in several ways. It reveals that though vulnerabilities can be very similar for both migrant and refugee women, the latter experience more challenges, related to trauma and/or physical violence due to the difficult conditions at camps as well as limited access to medical and psychological care to overcome traumatic experiences [18].

Furthermore, the paper expands the theoretical understanding of refugee women's careers via the integration of theoretical concepts from migration studies, gender research, and sustainable career framework. The present study shows that research on refugee women's careers remains fragmented as psychological, sociological and economic dimensions are rarely examined together. The mapped six keyword clusters and three thematic clusters provide a holistic perspective on how career concepts intersect with health, discrimination, and integration processes. Taken together, the identification of career challenges specific to refugee women strengthens the theoretical groundwork for future scholarship and promotes the adoption of intersectional and systemic frameworks in analyzing refugee women's career trajectories.

5.2. Practical Implications

This paper identifies the key barriers affecting female refugees' careers and provides specific examples of tailored intervention programs discussed in the literature. Based on the results of this research, insights are offered that may be relevant for policymakers, social workers, NGOs, and employers.

First, the paper highlights the importance of early support in mental health, trauma-informed services, language acquisition, cross-cultural training, and childcare. These factors appear to play a significant role in shaping long-term labor market participation and may inform the social workers and service providers who are often the first point of contact for refugee women. Second, the results point to the relevance of credential recognition, reskilling programs, and inclusive employment practices in addressing the risks of long-term downward mobility. Third, a range of interventions have been identified, such as mentorship, entrepreneurship training and refugee-led support programs, that have been associated in the literature with positive outcomes related to refugee women's empowerment and resilience. These examples may inform NGOs seeking to design community-based, empowerment-oriented support models. Finally, the mapping of clusters across countries highlights differences in national research and policy contexts, which may support comparative learning and the adaptation of practices across different settings.

5.3. Limitations

This study encountered several limitations. First, the analysis was confined to publications from the Web of Science (WoS) database, which, while reputable, does not guarantee that the data are entirely error-free or comprehensively cover all studies. Future research should consider incorporating additional databases such as Scopus, to capture a wider range of journals and periods. In addition, future reviews might benefit from considering

broader search systems such as Google Scholar, which can help identify relevant grey literature not indexed in WoS. Likewise, discipline-specific databases might provide additional coverage of studies related to migration, gender, employment, and integration. Second, keywords used in the article selection process could be broadened to include a wider range of synonyms such as “empowerment” or different forms of forced migration. Third, the study was restricted to publications in English, which limits its coverage and comprehensiveness, as WoS does not contain many non-English language studies. Fourth, the reviewed studies were not systematically classified by research design or type of empirical data. Although an additional abstract-level review indicates the presence of both qualitative and quantitative approaches with qualitative studies appearing more prominently, future reviews could strengthen the analysis by explicitly coding study designs, data sources, and sample characteristics. Finally, while the study relies on established visualization-based bibliometric techniques, future research could complement these approaches with additional metrics (e.g., network density or link strength) to provide further analytical depth.

5.4. Future Research Directions

Future research could explore the whole system surrounding female refugees, from the beginning of their arrival in a host country to an eventual integration into society. This approach would provide deeper insights into the intersection of individual efforts, public institutions, employers, and the broader community. Important questions for future research could be organized into several clearly defined thematic clusters.

Institutional and policy factors. How is societal preparedness influenced by the cultural similarities between the host country and the female refugees’ country of origin? For example, is it relatively easier for millions of Ukrainians to integrate into Central and Eastern European countries like Lithuania, Latvia, and Poland compared to Germany or the UK? These questions point to the importance of examining public institutions, policy settings, and the broader support environment surrounding refugee women. Overall, to support female refugees effectively, tailored step-by-step programs should be developed. These should initially focus on addressing their basic needs, including mental and physical health, protection, housing, childcare, language training, and acculturation. This would help adjust policy for more specialized support, including mentorship, professional development, community-building skills, entrepreneurship and microfinancing initiatives, and educational opportunities.

Gender and family structures. Comparative studies should examine refugee women alongside non-refugee migrant women, native-born women, and men, in order to isolate gendered displacement effects. Moreover, how do gender norms impact the likelihood of successful labor market integration? Does gender act as a factor for the pay gap also for the refugees in the more-developed countries (i.e., as in the example of Palestine [90])? To what extent does employment act as a pathway to empowerment and emancipation? Are the effects stronger for refugees from countries where women face restrictions and have limited rights? The role of family structure among refugees who flee together should also be further investigated. For instance, how do factors like childcare and elderly care responsibilities affect their career? What is the role of male relatives (e.g., partners, fathers) and does patriarchal oppression influence women’s opportunities?

Labor market integration mechanisms. How could professional and social networks facilitate an upward career? In terms of measurement, future studies should go beyond career status alone and include indicators of employment quality reflected by pay, contract type, career prospects, workplace integration [91], work–life balance, and working conditions [92]. Human capital and skill-related variables could capture language proficiency [69,71], educational level [69], entrepreneurial competencies [83], and social connections [65]. Only a

small part of the qualitative literature on refugee women focuses on selected employment characteristics and barriers. Additionally, it is crucial to differentiate between various types of forced migration (war, natural disasters, political persecution [23]).

Psychosocial resources and career development. The status of health and well-being need to be considered, including physical and mental health [8] capacity to deal with stress, burnout, work engagement, sleep quality [30], job satisfaction, and organizational citizenship behavior [31]. Finally, psychosocial resources such as career adaptability, resilience, self-efficacy [28,32], motivation, and future orientation [93,94] should be incorporated to understand long-term labor market integration trajectories. While health considerations were frequently highlighted in research conducted between 2000 and 2023, the other two essential parts of sustainable career, namely happiness and productivity [8], have received limited attention. Therefore, it is necessary to further explore the sustainable career concept, which has attracted growing interest in recent years [30–32].

These questions might be addressed by employing diverse methodological approaches, for example, longitudinal cohort studies that follow female refugees' post-arrival [23,95]. Notably, mixed-methods designs where surveys are complemented by interviews with female refugees as well as consultations with representatives of public and private institutions ensure the complete view of refugee experiences [33]. Scientists emphasize that participatory and refugee-led designs such as community-based participatory research or photovoice ensure that outcomes are co-defined, enhancing both validity and practical relevance [84,96,97].

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, M.A., R.Č. and R.S.-Ž.; methodology, M.A. and R.Č.; software, R.S.-Ž.; validation, M.A., R.S.-Ž., N.M. and A.S.; formal analysis, M.A., R.Č. and R.S.-Ž.; investigation, A.S., N.M. and G.Š.-S.; resources, R.Č.; data curation, A.S., N.M. and M.A.; writing—original draft preparation, M.A., R.Č., N.M. and R.S.-Ž.; writing—review and editing, M.A., A.S., N.M. and G.Š.-S.; visualization, R.S.-Ž.; supervision, R.Č.; project administration, R.Č.; funding acquisition, R.Č. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research was funded by Research Council of Lithuania (LMTLT), agreement number No. S-VIS-23-5.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: These data were derived from the following resources available in the public domain: <https://clarivate.com> (accessed on 5 January 2026).

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

References

1. UNHCR. *Figures at a Glance*; UN Refugee Agency: Geneva, Switzerland, 2025. Available online: <https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/overview/figures-glance> (accessed on 5 January 2026).
2. Acu, C. A double crisis: The gendered impacts of COVID-19 on Syrian refugee women in Jordan. *Third World Q.* **2023**, *44*, 1101–1118. [CrossRef]
3. Borges, G.M. Journey of Violence: Refugee Women's Experiences Across Three Stages and Places. *J. Int. Migr. Integr.* **2024**, *25*, 673–693. [CrossRef]
4. UN News. *Violence Against Refugee Women Surged in 2020, But Grassroots Solutions Can Help Tackle Scourge*; United Nations: New York, NY, USA, 2021. Available online: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/11/1106592> (accessed on 10 September 2025).
5. UN Women. *Women are Increasingly At-Risk in Conflict, Underrepresented in Peace Processes, According to UN Secretary-General Report*; UN Women: New York, NY, USA, 2023. Available online: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/feature-story/2023/10/women-are-increasingly-at-risk-in-conflict-underrepresented-in-peace-processes-according-to-un-secretary-general-report> (accessed on 10 September 2025).

6. Gericke, D.; Burmeister, A.; Löwe, J.; Deller, J.; Pundt, L. How do refugees use their social capital for successful labor market integration? An exploratory analysis in Germany. *J. Vocat. Behav.* **2018**, *105*, 46–61. [CrossRef]
7. Ginevra, M.C.; Di Maggio, I.; Santilli, S.; Nota, L. The role of career adaptability and future orientation on future goals in refugees. In *Decent Work, Inclusion and Sustainability*; Routledge: Oxfordshire, UK, 2024; pp. 146–160.
8. De Vos, A.; Van der Heijden, B.I.; Akkermans, J. Sustainable careers: Towards a conceptual model. *J. Vocat. Behav.* **2020**, *117*, 103196. [CrossRef]
9. Schweitzer, L.; Lyons, S.; Smith, C.J. Career Sustainability: Framing the Past to Adapt in the Present for a Sustainable Future. *Sustainability* **2023**, *15*, 11800. [CrossRef]
10. Ullmann, J. Labor-Market integration projects targeting refugee women in Germany: How organizations with different inequality regimes negotiate economic integration. *J. Immigr. Refug. Stud.* **2026**, *24*, 76–90. [CrossRef]
11. Hourani, J.; Block, K.; Phillimore, J.; Bradby, H.; Ozcurumez, S.; Goodson, L.; Vaughan, C. Structural and symbolic violence exacerbates the risks and consequences of sexual and gender-based violence for forced migrant women. *Front. Hum. Dyn.* **2021**, *3*, 769611. [CrossRef]
12. Lokot, M.; Hartman, E.; Hashmi, I. Participatory approaches and methods in gender equality and gender-based violence research with refugees and internally displaced populations: A scoping review. *Confl. Health* **2023**, *17*, 58. [CrossRef]
13. Eldridge, A. What's the Difference Between a Migrant and a Refugee? *Encyclopedia Britannica*. 20 September 2022. Available online: <https://www.britannica.com/story/whats-the-difference-between-a-migrant-and-a-refugee> (accessed on 23 September 2025).
14. United Nations. *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*; United Nations: Geneva, Switzerland, 1951. Available online: <https://www.unhcr.org/1951-refugee-convention> (accessed on 3 October 2025).
15. United Nations. *Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*; United Nations: New York, NY, USA, 1967. Available online: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/protocol-relating-status-refugees> (accessed on 3 October 2025).
16. UNHCR. UNHCR Viewpoint: 'Refugee' or 'Migrant'—Which Is Right? United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 2015. Available online: <https://solarev.org/migration/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2015/11/RufugeeMigrantUN.pdf> (accessed on 10 September 2025).
17. Sullivan, C.; Vaughan, C.; Wright, J. *Migrant and Refugee Women's Mental Health in Australia: A Literature Review*; School of Population and Global Health, University of Melbourne: Melbourne, Australia, 2020.
18. Albrecht, C.; Pérez, M.H.; Stitteneder, T. The integration challenges of female refugees and migrants: Where do we stand? *CESifo Forum* **2021**, *22*, 39–46.
19. Galos, E.; Bartolini, L.; Cook, H.; Grant, N. *Migrant Vulnerability to Human Trafficking and Exploitation: Evidence from the Central and Eastern Mediterranean Migration Routes*; International Organization for Migration (IOM): Geneva, Switzerland, 2017.
20. Liebig, T.; Tronstad, K.R. Triple disadvantage? A first overview of the integration of refugee women. In *OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers*; No. 216; OECD Publishing: Paris, France, 2018; pp. 1–37.
21. UNHCR. Global Trends Report. Forced Displacement in 2019. Available online: <https://www.unhcr.org/tr/sites/tr/files/legacy-pdf/Global-Trends-2019.pdf> (accessed on 16 October 2025).
22. UN Women. Women Refugees and Migrants 2024. Available online: <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/news-and-events/in-focus/women-refugees-and-migrants> (accessed on 16 October 2025).
23. Flavel, J.; Due, C.; Howe, J.; Ziersch, A. Refugee women and work: Evidence from an Australian longitudinal study. *Int. Migr.* **2024**, *62*, 234–254. [CrossRef]
24. Burke, R.J. Workaholism components, job satisfaction, and career progress 1. *J. Appl. Soc. Psychol.* **2001**, *31*, 2339–2356. [CrossRef]
25. Lounsbury, J.W.; Park, S.H.; Sundstrom, E.; Williamson, J.M.; Pemberton, A.E. Personality, career satisfaction, and life satisfaction: Test of a directional model. *J. Career Assess.* **2004**, *12*, 395–406. [CrossRef]
26. Van der Heijden, B.; De Vos, A.; Akkermans, J.; Spurk, D.; Semeijn, J.; Van der Velde, M.; Fugate, M. Sustainable careers across the lifespan: Moving the field forward. *J. Vocat. Behav.* **2020**, *117*, 103344. [CrossRef]
27. Newman, K.L. Sustainable careers. *Organ. Dyn.* **2011**, *40*, 136. [CrossRef]
28. Akkermans, J.; Kubasch, S. Trending topics in careers: A review and future research agenda. *Career Dev. Int.* **2017**, *22*, 586–627. [CrossRef]
29. Baruch, Y.; Szűcs, N.; Gunz, H. Career studies in search of theory: The rise and rise of concepts. *Career Dev. Int.* **2015**, *20*, 3–20. [CrossRef]
30. Kilic, E.; Kitapci, H. Contextual and individual determinants of sustainable careers: A serial indirect effect model through career crafting and person-career fit. *Sustainability* **2024**, *16*, 2865. [CrossRef]
31. Curado, C.; Gonçalves, T.; Ribeiro, C. Validating Sustainable Career Indicators: A Case Study in a European Energy Company. *Merits* **2023**, *3*, 230–247. [CrossRef]

32. Zyberaj, J.; Seibel, S.; Schowalter, A.F.; Pötz, L.; Richter-Killenberg, S.; Volmer, J. Developing sustainable careers during a pandemic: The role of psychological capital and career adaptability. *Sustainability* **2022**, *14*, 3105. [CrossRef]
33. Due, C.; Callaghan, P.; Reilly, A.; Flavel, J.; Ziersch, A. Employment for women with refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds in Australia: An overview of workforce participation and available support programmes. *Int. Migr.* **2021**, *63*, e12848. [CrossRef]
34. Jolof, L.; Rocca, P.; Mazaheri, M.; Okenwa Emegwa, L.; Carlsson, T. Experiences of armed conflicts and forced migration among women from countries in the Middle East, Balkans, and Africa: A systematic review of qualitative studies. *Confl. Health* **2022**, *16*, 46. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
35. Hunt, L.; Aleghfeli, Y.K.; McIntyre, J.; Stone, C. Refugees' gendered experiences of education in Europe since 2015: A scoping review. *Rev. Educ.* **2023**, *11*, e3441. [CrossRef]
36. Aleghfeli, Y.K.; McIntyre, J.; Hunt, L.; Stone, C. Safety, belonging and success in education for refugees in Europe: A systematic review. *Eur. J. Educ.* **2025**, *60*, e12852. [CrossRef]
37. Al-Hamad, A.; Hingorani, M.; Yasin, Y.; Metersky, K. Impact of refugee women's entrepreneurship on socioeconomic outcomes and well-being: A scoping review. *Int. Health Trends Perspect.* **2024**, *4*, 129–151. [CrossRef]
38. Sarihasan, I.; Dajnoki, K.; Al-Dalahmeh, M. Immigrant entrepreneurship and gender dimensions: A systematic review. *Intang. Cap.* **2023**, *19*, 110–130. [CrossRef]
39. Al-Hamad, A.; Yasin, Y.M.; Metersky, K. Predictors, barriers, and facilitators to refugee women's employment and economic inclusion: A mixed methods systematic review. *PLoS ONE* **2024**, *19*, e0305463. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
40. Senthanaar, S.; Dali, N.; Khan, T.H. A scoping review of refugees' employment integration experience and outcomes in Canada. *Work* **2023**, *75*, 1165–1178. [CrossRef]
41. Wimalasiri, V. Displacement-plurality (DP) in women refugees, its influence on work engagement and implications for diversity practice: A critical and reflective review. *Pers. Rev.* **2022**, *51*, 2061–2080. [CrossRef]
42. Yazdankhoo, S.; Abkhezr, P.; McAuliffe, D.; McMahon, M. Migrant women navigating the intersection of gender, migration, and career development: A systematic literature review. *J. Vocat. Behav.* **2025**, *157*, 104093. [CrossRef]
43. Block, J.H.; Fisch, C. Eight tips and questions for your bibliographic study in business and management research. *Manag. Rev. Q.* **2020**, *70*, 307–312. [CrossRef]
44. Donthu, N.; Kumar, S.; Mukherjee, D.; Pandey, N.; Lim, W.M. How to conduct a bibliometric analysis: An overview and guidelines. *J. Bus. Res.* **2021**, *133*, 285–296. [CrossRef]
45. Verma, S.; Gustafsson, A. Investigating the emerging COVID-19 research trends in the field of business and management: A bibliometric analysis approach. *J. Bus. Res.* **2020**, *118*, 253–261. [CrossRef]
46. Van Eck, N.J.; Waltman, L. *VOSviewer Manual*; Centre for Science and Technology Studies (CWTS), Leiden University: Leiden, The Netherlands, 2016.
47. Capps, R.; Newland, K.; Fratzke, S.; Groves, S.; Auclair, G.; Fix, M.; McHugh, M. Integrating refugees in the United States: The successes and challenges of resettlement in a global context. *Stat. J. IAOS* **2015**, *31*, 341–367. [CrossRef]
48. Center for American Progress. *What Works: Successful Strategies for Refugee Integration*; Center for American Progress: Washington, DC, USA, 2018. Available online: <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/what-works/> (accessed on 6 February 2025).
49. Australian Human Rights Commission. *Statistics About Refugees and People Seeking Asylum*; Australian Human Rights Commission: Sydney, Australia, 2025. Available online: <https://humanrights.gov.au/human-rights-education/stats-and-facts-about-discrimination/statistics-about-refugees-and-people-seeking-asylum> (accessed on 6 February 2025).
50. Beiser, M.; Hou, F. Gender differences in language acquisition and employment consequences among Southeast Asian refugees in Canada. *Can. Public Policy/Anal. Polit.* **2000**, *26*, 311–330. [CrossRef]
51. Bagchi, A.D. Migrant networks and the immigrant professional: An analysis of the role of weak ties. *Popul. Res. Policy Rev.* **2001**, *20*, 9–31. [CrossRef]
52. Andrews, J.W.; Williams, C.D.; Rodriguez, A. Negotiating survival: Undocumented Mexican immigrant women in the Pacific Northwest. *Soc. Sci. J.* **2002**, *39*, 431–449. [CrossRef]
53. Franz, B. Bosnian refugee women in (re)settlement: Gender relations and social mobility. *Fem. Rev.* **2003**, *73*, 86–103. [CrossRef]
54. McMichael, C.; Manderson, L. Somali women and well-being: Social networks and social capital among immigrant women in Australia. *Hum. Organ.* **2004**, *63*, 88–99. [CrossRef]
55. Parrado, E.A.; Flippen, C.A. Migration and gender among Mexican women. *American Sociol. Rev.* **2005**, *70*, 606–632. [CrossRef]
56. Ho, C. Migration as feminisation? Chinese women's experiences of work and family in Australia. *J. Ethn. Migr. Stud.* **2006**, *32*, 497–514. [CrossRef]
57. Danis, D. A faith that binds: Iraqi Christian women on the domestic service ladder of Istanbul. *J. Ethn. Migr. Stud.* **2007**, *33*, 755–769. [CrossRef]
58. Yakushko, O.; Backhaus, A.; Watson, M.; Ngaruiya, K.; Gonzalez, J. Career development concerns of recent immigrants and refugees. *J. Career Dev.* **2008**, *34*, 362–396. [CrossRef]

59. Deacon, Z.; Sullivan, C. Responding to the complex and gendered needs of refugee women. *J. Women Soc. Work* **2009**, *24*, 272–284. [CrossRef]
60. Mearns, C. A fine balance: Women, work and skilled migration. *Women's Stud. Int. Forum* **2010**, *33*, 473–481. [CrossRef]
61. Riaño, Y. Drawing new boundaries of participation: Experiences and strategies of economic citizenship among skilled migrant women in Switzerland. *Environ. Plan. A Econ. Space* **2011**, *43*, 1530–1546. [CrossRef]
62. Williams, F. Converging variations in migrant care work in Europe. *J. Eur. Soc. Policy* **2012**, *22*, 363–376. [CrossRef]
63. Sang, K.; Al-Dajani, H.; Özbilgin, M. Frayed careers of migrant female professors in British academia: An intersectional perspective. *Gend. Work Organ.* **2013**, *20*, 158–171. [CrossRef]
64. Bonizzoni, P. Immigrant working mothers reconciling work and childcare: The experience of Latin American and Eastern European women in Milan. *Soc. Politics Int. Stud. Gend. State Soc.* **2014**, *21*, 194–217. [CrossRef]
65. Koyama, J. Constructing gender: Refugee women working in the United States. *J. Refug. Stud.* **2015**, *28*, 258–275. [CrossRef]
66. Azmat, F.; Fujimoto, Y. Family embeddedness and entrepreneurship experience: A study of Indian migrant women entrepreneurs in Australia. *Entrep. Reg. Dev.* **2016**, *28*, 630–656. [CrossRef]
67. Ali, F.; Malik, A.; Pereira, V.; Al Ariss, A. A relational understanding of work-life balance of Muslim migrant women in the West: Future research agenda. *Int. J. Hum. Resour. Manag.* **2017**, *28*, 1163–1181. [CrossRef]
68. Knappert, L.; Kornau, A.; Figengül, M. Refugees' exclusion at work and the intersection with gender: Insights from the Turkish-Syrian border. *J. Vocat. Behav.* **2018**, *105*, 62–82. [CrossRef]
69. Verwiebe, R.; Reinprecht, C.; Haindorfer, R. Finding your way into employment against all odds? Successful job search of refugees in Austria. *J. Ethn. Migr. Stud.* **2019**, *45*, 1401–1418. [CrossRef]
70. Rydzik, A.; Anitha, S. Conceptualising the agency of migrant women workers: Resilience, reworking and resistance. *Work Employ. Soc.* **2020**, *34*, 883–899. [CrossRef]
71. Senthanaar, S.; MacEachen, E.; Premji, S.; Bigelow, P. Entrepreneurial experiences of Syrian refugee women in Canada: A feminist grounded qualitative study. *Small Bus. Econ.* **2021**, *57*, 555–568. [CrossRef]
72. Hwang, S.; Beaugard, T.A. Contextualising intersectionality: A qualitative study of East Asian female migrant workers in the UK. *Hum. Relat.* **2022**, *75*, 1041–1068. [CrossRef]
73. Baker, H.K.; Kumar, S.; Pandey, N. A bibliometric analysis of managerial finance: A retrospective. *Manag. Financ.* **2020**, *46*, 1495–1517. [CrossRef]
74. Wen, H.; Huang, Y. Trends and performance of oxidative stress research from 1991 to 2010. *Scientometrics* **2012**, *91*, 51–63. [CrossRef]
75. Sedighi, M. Application of word co-occurrence analysis method in mapping of the scientific fields (case study: The field of Informetrics). *Libr. Rev.* **2016**, *65*, 52–64. [CrossRef]
76. Gower, S.; Jeemi, Z.; Wickramasinghe, N.; Kebble, P.; Forbes, D.; Dantas, J.A. Impact of a pilot peer-mentoring empowerment program on personal well-being for migrant and refugee women in Western Australia. *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health* **2022**, *19*, 3338. [CrossRef]
77. Liamputtong, P.; Koh, L.; Wollersheim, D.; Walker, R. Peer support groups, mobile phones and refugee women in Melbourne. *Health Promot. Int.* **2015**, *31*, 715–724. [CrossRef]
78. Kivilcim, Z. Legal violence against Syrian female refugees in Turkey. *Fem. Leg. Stud.* **2016**, *24*, 193–214. [CrossRef]
79. Farrugia, C. Making sharing work: Migrant community groups and informal/formal work. *Crit. Sociol.* **2020**, *46*, 495–509. [CrossRef]
80. Kim, H.H.S. Doubly disadvantaged? Gender, informal job search, and labor market outcomes among South Korea's immigrant workers. *Migr. Stud.* **2021**, *9*, 783–807. [CrossRef]
81. OECD. *What We Know About the Skills and Early Labour Market Outcomes of Refugees from Ukraine*; OECD Publishing: Paris, France, 2023. Available online: https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/what-we-know-about-the-skills-and-early-labour-market-outcomes-of-refugees-from-ukraine_c7e694aa-en.html (accessed on 28 October 2025).
82. Andrews, J.; Isański, J.; Nowak, M.; Sereda, V.; Vacroux, A.; Vakhitova, H. Feminized forced migration: Ukrainian war refugees. In *Women's Studies International Forum*; Pergamon: Bergama, Turkey, 2023; Volume 99, p. 102756.
83. Dagar, P. Rethinking skills development and entrepreneurship for refugees: The case of five refugee communities in India. *Int. J. Educ. Dev.* **2023**, *101*, 102834. [CrossRef]
84. Baird, M.B.; Domian, E.W.; Mulcahy, E.R.; Mabior, R.; Jemutai-Tanui, G.; Filippi, M.K. Creating a Bridge of Understanding between Two Worlds: Community-Based Collaborative-Action Research with Sudanese Refugee Women. *Public Health Nurs.* **2015**, *32*, 388–396. [CrossRef]
85. Easton-Calabria, E.; Hakiza, R. In the interest of saving: Refugee-led microfinance in Kampala, Uganda. *Dev. Policy Rev.* **2021**, *39*, 22–38. [CrossRef]
86. Jaji, R. Normative, agitated, and rebellious femininities among East and Central African refugee women. *Gend. Place Cult.* **2015**, *22*, 494–509. [CrossRef]

87. Mumtaz, M.; Roscigno, V.J.; Sobering, K. Gendered employment precarity and refugee resettlement in the United States. *Sociol. Q.* **2025**, *66*, 31–51. [[CrossRef](#)]
88. Babatunde-Sowole, O.; Power, T.; Jackson, D.; Davidson, P.M.; DiGiacomo, M. Resilience of African migrants: An integrative review. *Health Care Women Int.* **2016**, *37*, 946–963. [[CrossRef](#)]
89. Street, C.P.; Ng, P.Y.; Al-Dajani, H. Refugee women business mentors: New evidence for women’s empowerment. *Sustainability* **2022**, *14*, 9154. [[CrossRef](#)]
90. Morrar, R.; Rios-Avila, F. Discrimination against refugees in the Palestinian labor market. *Int. J. Manpow.* **2021**, *42*, 1002–1024. [[CrossRef](#)]
91. Ortlieb, R.; Baumgartner, P.; Palinkas, M.; Eggenhofer-Rehart, P.; Ressi, E. Employment outcomes of refugee women and men: Multiple gender gaps and the importance of high-skill jobs. *J. Ethn. Migr. Stud.* **2024**, *50*, 4987–5008. [[CrossRef](#)]
92. Arranz, J.M.; García-Serrano, C.; Hernanz, V. Employment quality: Are there differences by types of contract? *Soc. Indic. Res.* **2018**, *137*, 203–230. [[CrossRef](#)]
93. Koekemoer, E.; Olckers, C.; Schaap, P. The subjective career success of women: The role of personal resources. *Front. Psychol.* **2023**, *14*, 1121989. [[CrossRef](#)]
94. Peeters, E.; Caniëls, M.; Verbruggen, M. Dust yourself off and try again: The positive process of career changes or shocks and career resilience. *Career Dev. Int.* **2022**, *27*, 372–390. [[CrossRef](#)]
95. Correa-Velez, I.; Gifford, S.M.; McMichael, C. The persistence of predictors of wellbeing among refugee youth eight years after resettlement in Melbourne, Australia. *Soc. Sci. Med.* **2015**, *142*, 163–168. [[CrossRef](#)]
96. Haaken, J.K.; O’Neill, M. Moving images: Psychoanalytically informed visual methods in documenting the lives of women migrants and asylum seekers. *J. Health Psychol.* **2014**, *19*, 79–89. [[CrossRef](#)]
97. Shanneik, Y.; Sobieczky, E. Artistic methodologies in forced migration: Using body mapping and augmented reality in Syrian refugees’ narratives. *Arts* **2023**, *12*, 46. [[CrossRef](#)]

Disclaimer/Publisher’s Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.