Migrant Muslim Women's Experiences of Coping and Building Resilience in Australia: Implications for Social Work

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Abstract

This research used an intersectional feminist approach to explore migrant Muslim women's experiences of coping and resilience-building in settling in Australia. Using qualitative exploratory methodology, focus groups and semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 migrant Muslim women in Adelaide, Australia. The findings revealed complexities emanating from being Muslim and migrant impacting profoundly in the early phases of settlement, and support and assistance received from the formal and informal systems in their settlement journey helping them to cope and become resilient. Findings offer insights to social work and health professionals and researchers into the intersectionalities of race, religion, gender, and migrant status in shaping Muslim women's experiences in post-migration settlement and strategies to build their resilience.

Keywords: *Coping and resilience; Migrants; Muslim women; Feminist; Intersectionality*

Introduction

Muslim women experience multiple forms of oppression such as Islamophobia, sexism and racism when settled as a minority in another country and, simultaneously, male domination within their community (Aslan, 2009; Moffic et al., 2019; Paz & Kook, 2021), resulting in their marginalization. Despite this, migrant Muslim women have developed resilience to adapt and successfully settle in a new country to counter their experiences of complex social, emotional and cultural environments (Shabbar, 2012). By acknowledging the strength, self-determination, and resilience of migrant Muslim women, the perception of these women as victims is contested (Paz & Kook, 2021; Shabbar, 2012). Being resilient means the processes of coping, adjusting, and utilising strengths and supports when facing significant adversity; and by gaining a nuanced understanding and documenting the resiliency processes, it is possible to give credibility to disadvantaged groups such as migrant Muslim women (Ungar, 2012). This research aimed to explore how both the challenges faced and the support utilised contributed to the resilience-building of migrant Muslim women settling in Adelaide, Australia. By using an intersectional feminist approach, this research investigated the impact of the participants' identities such as gender, religion, race, and migrant status, on the settlement issues they faced and how they navigated these challenges and became resilient (Collins & Bilge, 2016).

Theoretical framework

To understand both the positions of exclusion and agency that migrant Muslim women occupy, an intersectional feminist approach was used (Palmary, 2010). The feminist theory acknowledges women's subjugated position in the wider societal context and values their lived experiences and attributes that can empower and transform their lives (Gannon & Davies, 2012). Aslan (2009) takes the position that some Australian feminists denounced that the veil that Muslim women wear was a symbol of patriarchal oppression and ignored how such assertions could lead to discrimination against Muslim women's right to religious freedom to express their Muslim identity. Aslan (2009) further argued that Muslim women's views and settlement needs are often ignored as Muslim men often dominate ethnic and religious community organisations and put forward their views and needs when they articulate the needs of the community. Thus, Muslim women's voices are silent, and their voices need to be heard. Furthermore, Mnguni (2011) emphasised the need to meaningfully represent the diversity of Muslim women's experiences. Feminist researchers have argued that it is the location of the oppressed and disadvantaged group within the society that provides them a unique position to reveal their subjective reality to develop insights into the society (Harding, 2012). In this research, Muslim women occupy a gender role within their community, are migrants, and belong to different social classes, ethnic and faith groups. The voices of their unique experiences need to be heard and known. Thus, research based on the intersectional feminist approach is required; this describes how the diverse forms of inequality such as gender, migrant status, ethnicity, faith/religion, and age habitually overlap and interrelate with each other to form a variety of inequalities (Collins & Bilge, 2016) – and how such inequalities influence the meanings attributed to resilience.

Literature review

Experiences of Muslim migrants

Migrants are of diverse cultural backgrounds, age, gender, and visa category, and experience complex social, emotional, and cultural consequences in settlement (Shabbar, 2012). Migrants experience mental health issues such as depression, stress, and anxiety due to distance from family, unemployment, and employment issues (Miller et al., 2010) as well as a loss of support networks, feelings of loneliness, discrimination, limited job opportunities and financial issues (Goel & Penman, 2015; Jibeen, 2011; Miller et al., 2010). Moreover, they deal with a potentially prejudicial host environment leading to "acculturative stress" (Kim & Kim, 2013, p. 21).

Islamophobia is present-day cultural racism where Muslims are marginalised and excluded based on their cultural and religious difference (Aslan, 2009). In recent years, Australian media and community discourses have constructed Islam as perilous and aberrant; this has increased discrimination and disparagement of Muslims (Poynting & Briskman, 2018).

Furthermore, Muslim women are discriminated against due to their wearing of the hijab. This observance of Islamic dress is a clear signpost of their Muslim identity (Casimiro et al., 2007; Hargreaves, 2016). Muslim women are paradoxically represented both as a danger to western modernity and the culture of freedom and as victims due to the oppressive patriarchal religion and practices in their culture (Aslan, 2009; Paz & Kook, 2021). The marginalisation of Muslim women in many aspects of public life such as employment and education (Australian Human Rights Commission [AHRC], 2011); and the media representation of Muslims in Australia leads to a double predicament for Muslim women, who fear that expressing their discontent will be politicised, leading to further problems (Mnguni, 2011; Paz & Kook, 2021). Thus, Muslim women's voices are silent and there is a need for their diverse voices to be heard and the variety of their experiences to be meaningfully represented (Mnguni, 2011).

Coping and resilience

Coping in adverse situations is related to resilience-building. It is defined as the continually altering cognitive and behavioural attempts to handle explicit external and/or internal demands that are assessed as taxing or beyond the individual's resources (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, as cited in Maisha et al., 2021). Thus, as migrants face psychological distress due to the extensive changes in their lifestyle, social, physical, and economic environment in settling in a new country, they would require an appraisal of, resistance to, and ability to cope with, stress (Penman & Goel, 2017). Moreover, for individuals to cope and thrive in adverse circumstances, both risk and strength factors within individuals and their environment play an essential role (Maisha et al., 2021).

In the process of surviving adverse situations, individuals' hope and optimism for a future life assist them to develop resilience (Pulla & Salagame, 2018). Te Riele (2010) asserted that *hope* as a concept refers to a basic disposition of hopefulness with which to face the future. In her study about marginalised youth, Te Riele (2010) conceptualised hope as robust and attainable. Thus, a hopeful person recognises obstacles and struggles, assumes that these can be overcome,

and comes up with an alternative vision. Another relevant concept in building resilience is the social cognitive function of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy belief can be defined as an individual's perceptions of her capacities/ competencies to achieve specific behaviours and outcomes (Bandura, 1997). Migrants' belief in their capacities relative to expected outcomes assist them to persist and engage with active coping in challenging environments (Bandura, 1997; Penman & Goel, 2017).

International research on resilience has attributed protective factors such as individual characteristics, for instance, curiosity and open-mindedness, optimism, persistence, and self-reliance (Chouhan & Gupta, 2015) as well as external factors such as social support networks (Hargreaves, 2016) as contributors to better mental health outcomes (Chouhan & Gupta, 2015). Moreover, Jibeen (2011) stressed that personal and social resources such as families and ethnic communities are vital for migrants to cope; the utilisation of problem-focused coping strategies such as seeking support, finding comfort in religion, and venting emotions to one's support network are effective ways of dealing with stressors and promoting psychological well-being. Furthermore, to gain a better understanding of resilience among migrant families, Maisha et al. (2021) asserted that it is vital to consider how suitably migrants are supported with both psychosocial and material resources as well as how effective they are in balancing different demands to attain well-being.

The research by Every and Perry (2014) where 49 Muslim participants answered questionnaires, showed a correlation between perceived discrimination and anxiety and depression for Muslims living in Australia. On the other hand, observation of Muslim migrants in the United States has shown the use of family and the larger Muslim community for social support and increased religious practices to be useful when coping with discrimination (Ghaffari & Çiftçi, 2010).

There has been limited international research on the resilience of Muslim women. Some research available has centred on British Muslim communities (Hargreaves, 2016) and refugee Muslim women in Berlin (Paz & Kook, 2021). Similarly, there is a paucity of research on the resilience of migrant Muslim women in Australia. The limited research available has focused on Iranian immigrants (Hosseini et al., 2017), temporary spouse visa status (Shabbar, 2012) of Iraqi women participants, and rural immigrants (Penman & Goel, 2017). Thus, this research aimed to explore and understand the factors which affect the resilience of migrant Muslim women in Adelaide using an intersectional feminist perspective to better support this community by identifying any gaps in services or areas where increased support can be provided.

Methodology

Research design

The research adopted an exploratory qualitative approach to gain insight into the lived experiences of migrant Muslim women settling in a new country. This method was suitable to explore the meaning given to experiences and their interpretation by the research participants (Fortune et al., 2013).

Self-reflexivity

The researcher is a Muslim woman who migrated to Australia about 10 years ago and has insider knowledge of the phenomenon studied. Banks (as cited in Liamputtong, 2010, p. 110) asserted that an "insider" researcher has unique knowledge, values, perspectives, behaviours, and ease of access to the community and culture that is being researched. Thus, the researcher is a genuine affiliate of the community with an aptitude to project a more honest and authentic understanding of the culture under study and will work towards promoting the well-being of the community (Voloder & Kirpitchenko, 2013). However, the researcher also has a responsibility to be unbiased and to distance herself from the phenomenon under study (Eppley, 2006). The researcher used self-reflexivity at all stages of the research by journaling her thoughts and feelings while being conscious of the inherent power relations and similarities and differences with the participants (Voloder & Kirpitchenko, 2013).

Research sample and method

This research was approved by the University of South Australia Human Research Ethics Committee, reference number 202192. A purposive sampling method was used to gather the information (Padgett, 2009) by recruiting Muslim women aged above 18, born overseas, conversant in English, settled for at least five years in Australia, and current residents of Adelaide. Participant recruitment was facilitated through collaborating with the Muslim Women's Association (MWA) and mosques in Adelaide. Muslim women who frequented the MWA and Wandana Mosque agreed to participate. A focus group of about two hours with seven participants and semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with three participants that averaged 45 minutes were held at the MWA, the participant's home, and the Wandana Mosque respectively. Interviews were made available to women who were interested and unable to join the focus group. The focus group was chosen as it encourages co-construction and collective understanding of experiences (Fortune et al., 2013) and provides an opportunity for topics to be raised that had not occurred to the researcher (Padgett, 2009). An information sheet was provided to the participants with explicit details of the purpose of the study, disclosing that interviews and focus group sessions would be audiotaped, confidentiality in a focus group had limits, participation was voluntary, and participants could opt out without repercussions. Informed consent was obtained before the focus group session and interviews.

This study used open-ended questions. There were three main questions: experiences in migrating and living in Australia; difficulties they were able to overcome; and the opportunities they have experienced in Australia. By using open-ended questions, the researcher was able to provide choice and power to the participants to decide on how much information they wanted to share and how they wanted to interpret the questions (Anderson-Nathe et al., 2013).

Data analysis, research strength and limitations

The study used an inductive approach and used the six steps recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006) for thematic analysis of the data: firstly, familiarising with the data by reading the transcripts multiple times; next, generating initial codes based on the main topics emerging in the data; and, thirdly, collating potential themes having a focus of the study; next reviewing

themes to create a thematic map of analysis; fifthly defining and naming final major themes; and lastly, producing a report using a vivid selection of compelling examples with a relevant analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The data were further examined by the independent researcher (second author) to maintain rigour and validity in the analysis. The researcher used thick, rich, and deep descriptions and participants' own words to depict emerging themes to reduce selectivity and subjectivity (Olive, 2014). To help establish internal credibility, the accuracy of the representation and the trustworthiness of the findings, the principal researcher debriefed with the independent researcher consistently (Tobin & Begley, 2004). A strength of this research is the diversity of the participants' characteristics. Participants were from various cultural backgrounds, ages, and marital statuses and thus provided in-depth experiences relating to intersectionality. Nevertheless, the recruitment of participants through MWA and Mosque is a research limitation as the experiences of migrant Muslim women who are not involved in the MWA or Mosque may differ from the participants in this study.

Findings

Participant characteristics

The 10 participants were from different ethnicities including Malay, Pakistani, Kurdish, Liberian, Ethiopian, Arab, Indian, and Bangladeshi. Eight were married, two were single and seven had children. Five were homemakers, two were students, and three had professional jobs. Two participants were aged 18 to 25; one was in the range of 26 to 35; one was between 36 to 45; two were 46 to 55 and four were over 56. Three participants had lived in Australia for less than seven years and seven participants had lived in Australia for more than 10 years. Four arrived as permanent residents, three as skilled migrants, and one each as a refugee, business visa migrant and temporary visa residency.

The data analysis highlighted two main aspects. Firstly, the participants shared the complexities experienced in the early phases of settlement, and secondly, the assistance and social support received at each step of their settlement and strategies used to cope with adversity. To ensure participants' anonymity, pseudonyms have been used.

Early phase of settlement challenges

Myriad challenges experienced during settlement included communication difficulties, isolation, struggles with employment, and discrimination.

Communication difficulties

Two of the participants who were homemakers stated that they had difficulty communicating in English as it was not their first language. The following quotes depicted their experiences: "The problem was the language first. Even though we know how to speak in English, we didn't know it fluently" (Junaida). "I had difficulty with the fluency of English" (Yati). However, participants used strategies such as conversations with their landlady and listening to readily available English programs on the radio and television to overcome their communication difficulties by improving their English. For example: "So, every day she [the landlady] is talking with me... I thought 'good' and learned the language" (Yati). On the other hand, Fatima, a professional, stated: "I have a strong spoken English language and am able to overcome communication barriers which other migrant women might be facing."

Isolation

Five of the participants felt isolated and lonely in the beginning due to being in a new country. These were women who stayed home with young children, without jobs and without close family members. Three participants' husbands were on Skilled Migrant Visas, they expressed: "I was pretty lonely when I first came here because everything was new to me. The language and the people" (Nisha). "When I came here there was no family, no job" (Ariffa). "When we came here...we didn't know anyone, and we didn't find anywhere Halal food" (Yati).

Another participant (Fatima) faced many challenges in settling due to being on a temporary visa. Fatima mentioned:

> Being pregnant and as a new mother we had to pay out of our pocket for antenatal visits and delivery, tackle financial burdens, trying to make ends meet with me not being able to work and cope with a newborn son while not having the tight community [that we have] back home.

Furthermore, she felt distressed by being alone and looking after a young baby without the support of family members who would have helped her back home. This is expressed in the following excerpt:

> There were days when I will go nuts because my husband was struggling with his new job, trying to prove himself, staying at work, ...come back at 7 [pm], I was alone with a crying baby, and I was crying as well. (Fatima)

Having felt lonely, Ariffa, a professional, used the strategy of getting involved with the Muslim community to counter her feelings of isolation. She stated: "When I arrived here, I felt so lonely, so to be connected with the Muslim community, I started to wear hijab when I go for community work" (Ariffa).

However, Shaila who arrived as a refugee, was unwilling to wear a hijab at a young age due to her concern that being visibly identified as Muslim would hinder her ability to connect to the wider community. She stated: "In high school, I really wanted to fit in, so I chose not to wear the hijab." Shaila further stated: "I later realised that because of my colour I wasn't going to fit in by not putting on the hijab", thus revealing how the intersection of both her Muslim identity and skin colour impacted feelings of acceptance and non-acceptance in the host society.

Employment challenges

Professional migrants had high expectations of attaining jobs related to their field of expertise but were confronted with the reality of needing networks of favourable referrals. The following quotation illustrates their challenge: "You will not get a job if you are not referred by someone here" (Ariffa). Likewise, Yasmeena explained that she got her current job due to a recommendation from someone she knew.

Additionally, they conveyed that their qualifications were not being recognised, resulting in a need for further study and accepting low-paid jobs. For example: "My degree is somehow not very well regarded here, so to get a good job I have to study again" (Ariffa). Thus, Ariffa, who had a Master's qualification from her country of origin volunteered for more than four years while undertaking a Master's degree in Australia and after many years managed to be employed as a professional. Similarly, Yasmeena, who was a skilled migrant, felt that:

> We come here as skilled migrants but then what we do is not related to our qualifications. Some of the migrants I know wash dishes, become a cleaner, but they are Ph.D. or masters in their own countries...our skill is not being used and there is no job in that skill, so we do other jobs...have to do additional studies like aged care just to get [low-paying] employment.

> Besides this, other participants faced additional difficulty in finding a job by being recognised as Muslims due to racist and Islamophobic attitudes. For example:

> I remember once applying for a job over the phone where I was talking, they didn't ask about my ethnicity or religion, and they seemed to like me. But when I went in, they were like, you are not suitable for this job. (Habiba)

This participant is Liberian, wears a hijab, has an excellent command of English, and speaks with an Australian accent as she had arrived in Australia when she was a child and had studied English in school.

Discrimination

Identifying oneself as a Muslim had other disadvantages as well. The following excerpts from different participants depict the incidents of Islamophobia experienced: "In high school, I did get the comments of 'you're a terrorist'" (Mariam). "They call me names, they sometimes spit on me or tell me to go back home" (Nisha). "I remember once being called a towel head.... A guy would stop the car, swear at me and then drive away" (Habiba). "My neighbour says abusive things" (Shaila).

Moreover, participants also revealed the impact of being a black Muslim woman: "Being a black Muslim woman, I guess is tough because of racism and Islamophobia altogether. Things became very hard" (Habiba). "Sometimes we get racism and stuff, I'm not sure if it's because I'm a black woman or a Muslim, I'm like which one do you hate?" (Shaila).

Similarly, Yasmeena mentioned that her husband did not notice the impact of Islamophobia; "...he doesn't experience it, because we are the one who wear the hijab".

Resources and strategies in coping and building resilience

Participants commonly reported that social support from their family and ethnic communities assisted them to cope. Furthermore, mainstream resources, favourable living conditions, religion and faith, and personal attributes were other factors that contributed to coping and resilience-building.

Support from family and ethnic community

Five participants described family members as providing emotional support, guidance, and advice. For example, one of the participants said: "My mum let me and my sister come home and vent…, and it helped a lot…as a family, we grew in a very strong way through whatever we faced" (Shaila). This participant and two others who had each arrived as a child with their family related how their parents were their supports and role models. "My mum, seeing how strong she is has kept me going" (Habiba).

On the other hand, three participants who are parents shared that their hope for their children fuelled their resilience. For example: "My son, seeing him grow in a safe and healthy environment keeps me going" (Fatima). Moreover, Mariam expressed, "I want to be the best role model for my daughter and inculcate respect and caring for family."

Six participants shared about the support they received from their ethnic community in terms of information and networking. For example: "It only took us one month to get a temporary visa… [because] the Bangladeshi community…showed us the way and assisted us" (Fatima). Zaitun used volunteering to connect with her community, "Wherever I go, I always join an organisation [and volunteer]; From the community, we can build and grow, and we can learn from each other".

Mainstream resources

Many participants spoke about the numerous resources available in the community that supported their settlement process. Fatima expressed her satisfaction with the support she had received: "A community nurse directed me to the library, where they have the playgroups and I met more new mums." Similarly, Yasmeena appreciated receiving Centrelink support when she and her husband were unemployed. The availability of such resources reinforced parents' hope for their children's future. For example: "My children keep me going, I want them to have a good education here and immerse in the life here that they cannot get in Singapore such as the richness of different cultures and the work-life balance" (Yasmeena).

Favourable living conditions

Despite experiencing discrimination, many participants maintained a positive attitude towards Australia as a land of opportunity. Yasmeena appreciated moving to Australia for the increased sense of well-being: "[I can] get a work–life balance here. I get to spend a lot of my time with my children…better quality of life… able to involve in volunteering here" (Yasmeena). Junaida highlighted that she felt that government services treated everyone equally: "Centrelink doesn't look for whether you're Muslim, non-Muslim, black or white, everyone is equal."

What stood out to each participant as favourable about living in Australia was in comparison to their country of origin. For example, Zaitun appreciated "having the freedom of speech" as "in our country [Malaysia] we have to be careful of what we talk", while Nisha, from Syria, appreciated that "There is no corruption in here" and "it is a peaceful country."

Faith and religion

All the participants expressed strong opinions on how their Muslim identity provided them strength and impacted their settlement experiences. For example:

> I think being a Muslim is more of a driving force in what I want to do in life because being a Muslim, Islam teaches us to be grateful for what we have even though we've been through much. (Mariam)

Many participants reported that they used their belief in Allah as emotional support. Fatima said: "What makes me keep going? Firstly, my faith, the fact that no matter what, I have my God, Allah, He is just there, there is complete trust." Ariffa spoke about the hope and support she gets through her faith: "Allah somehow gave us hope."

For all the participants, Islam provided strength as they practised their religion, and got hope, contentment, and direction for life. For example, Yasmeena related: "Actually, I'm more [involved in] Islam here than in Singapore." Similarly, Yati explained the need for Muslim schools for her children and how she and her husband were instrumental in building the first one: "When we arrived here in 1994…there was no Muslim school for our kids….so we started the Islamic college."

Personal attributes

Many participants expressed that their positive attitude in managing extremely unfavourable personal circumstances was a factor that promoted their coping. Some participants expressed that they became stronger as they dealt with each of the trials that they encountered. For example: "I didn't let go, I kept calling Mums who had older kids to ask about how they raised them…I'm always venturing out…I'm very perseverant…" (Fatima). "I have to be resourceful… I adapt very well socially…persevere…work towards goals…continue to work hard" (Yasmeena). "…be patient, give it a go" (Ariffa).

Discussion

This study explored Muslim women's experiences of the challenges and the supports utilised in settling in Adelaide, Australia and how they contributed to resilience-building. The findings revealed challenges experienced in learning conversational English language and strategies that were being used. Communication difficulties are a severe challenge faced by many culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) migrants (Kim & Kim, 2013), Despite English being an international language that is spoken in numerous countries, due to variations in accent and slang, migrants who can speak English may still encounter communication barriers.

Strategies like having conversational partners and listening to readily available English media such as television and radio allowed the research participants to increase their language fluency. These strategies demonstrated their self-determination and self-efficacy to improve in English conversation. However, the social context of migrants of refugee backgrounds was different from other migrants. They found compulsory and free English language classes provided them easy access to learn the language. Additionally, migrants who arrived in Australia as young children benefit from having compulsory schooling that enabled them to converse fluently in English with an Australian accent.

Furthermore, approximately half of the participants reported being abused racially. This finding corroborates Muslim women's experiences of hate speech in the study by Every and Perry (2014), as targets of racial abuse (Casimiro et al., 2007) and experiences of victimisation and discrimination (Hargreaves, 2016). The intersectionality of gender, race and being a migrant extenuated their lived experiences of discrimination and exclusion; this was more pronounced in women from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Moffic et al., 2019). Similarly, in our study, we found that participants from lower socioeconomic backgrounds traveled using public transport and lived in areas where the neighbours were more prone to exhibit racist behaviour.

Additionally, migrants face discrimination and limited job opportunities (Jibeen, 2011). Besides this, institutionalised discrimination such as non-recognition of overseas qualifications results in an increased income gap between migrants and the wider Australian population (Nohl et al., 2006). The findings of this study echoed revelations from the above-mentioned studies as some participants had to take up Australian qualifications due to non-recognition of their overseas qualifications and additionally highlighted that some participants needed to take up expensive bridging courses at international student prices while others had to take up a trade or certificate courses allowing them to be employed in low-paying jobs such as aged-care work, cleaning and so on, unlike the high-paying professional jobs they had back home. Thus, there is a need to look at policies and practices that may discriminate against a vulnerable group such as migrant Muslim women.

Unemployment causes depression, anxiety, isolation, and a sense of hopelessness (Yoon et al., 2019). Thus, due to the weighty employment barriers faced by migrant Muslim women, such as discrimination and lack of recognition of overseas qualifications, it is essential to develop and harness hope to support them in finding employment. Some strategies used by participants include volunteering, joining religious and ethnic communities, and using networks to gather information, find jobs and get referrals which, in turn, gave them hope for a better future and helped to build their resilience. There is an expectation that migrants become resilient in adverse circumstances; however, little is being said about the role of formal services in building hope amongst migrants. This research points out a very important role human services played in building hope and developing resilient communities. Participants in this study benefitted from public services such as libraries which provided playgroups, information, resources, and opportunities to volunteer. Similarly, the impartiality of Centrelink in providing employment benefits, and the provision of good health care through visiting nurse programs to provide child care information and support helped to build young mothers' hope and resilience.

Moreover, Bernardo (2010) proposed that the external locus-of-hope is comprised of significant others such as family, peers, and supernatural/spiritual beings or forces. This is especially true in more collectivistic cultures such as migrants of the Muslim faith as they are more likely to encourage and support collectivistic tendencies in individuals (Bernardo, 2010). Participants in this study acknowledged many varied supports they received from families, such as advice and encouragement; friends and ethnic communities, such as information and referral for jobs, as well as faith and belief in Allah, as a source of hope and solace.

Additionally, Maisha et al. (2021) asserted that, by moving from focusing on the past to looking forward, and by seeking and finding satisfying meaning in their experiences of adversity, individuals can build resilience. Participants attributed their ability to continue trying in the face of failure to their self-efficacy and their faith and hope. Yoon et al. (2019) stressed that self-efficacy of an individual influences her career planning and reemployment quality. Participants in this study showed self-efficacy by continuing to persevere, be resourceful, and adapting, and working towards their goals to educate themselves and find employment. Furthermore, Maisha et al. (2021) emphasised that both hope and spirituality have a strong influence in promoting resilience. Participants felt that their faith and hope allowed them to thrive and overcome difficult situations. For example, one participant worked towards her goal of building an Islamic college to ensure that her children would have an Islamic education. Her faith and her hope for her children helped her to persevere while working with her community to achieve this goal.

One participant was initially reluctant to broadcast her identity as a Muslim. Identity is a fluid process that is shaped according to circumstances and opportunities and can be both individual and group-oriented (Kabir, 2013). Simply put, "identity is about who we are, and who and what we identify with as well as who we want to be, and how we wish to be seen by others" (Kabir, 2013, p.23). This participant did not initially want to put on the hijab as she felt that being identified as a Muslim would prevent her from being accepted by the host society. However, later she put on her hijab to be identified as a Muslim as she realised that her identity as a person of colour was also hindering her from being accepted by the host society and so she decided that by putting on the hijab she would at least have the association of other Muslims as her support. This finding corroborates other studies such as that of Yasmeen and Markovic (2014), who asserted that putting on a hijab is a constant reminder of one's Muslim identity and thus enables women to be easily recognised as Muslims and seek friendship and support from other Muslim women. Additionally, Paz and Kook (2021) stressed that Muslim identity can be used as an expression of agency, resistance against Islamophobia and control over their lives and bodies.

Using an intersectional feminist approach, this study has shown that migrant Muslim women's experiences of challenges and resilience building are varied, based on the numerous social determinants such as ethnicity, migrant status, time of arrival in Australia, and socioeconomic status. For example, participants who arrived in the 1980s and 1990s have had to set up Islamic schools for their children and have lacked access to Halal food.

As such, their experiences of isolation could have been more pronounced as they would not have had the benefit of established ethnic or Muslim communities. Moreover, the benefits received from ethnic/national communities will be varied as different ethnicities have different focuses and resources. For example, migrants from Singapore and Bangladesh in this study were generally professionals who were likely to have networks and resources that would help other professionals. On the other hand, Liberian and Ethiopian migrants in this study were from refugee backgrounds and shared information on the availability of various benefits and resources.

Likewise, Paz and Kook (2021) stated that characteristics such as gender, race/ethnicity, or class/migrant status are not solely responsible for a person's place in society and the ensuing experiences, barriers, and choices. Instead, these characteristics habitually overlap, interrelate with, and exacerbate each other to result in their living conditions. For example, the participant who arrived on a temporary visa had to pay out of her pocket for medical expenses, was not eligible for Centrelink payments, and had to pay higher rates for her education. In contrast, participants who arrived as refugees were provided with numerous benefits such as Centrelink payments and free English lessons. Additionally, Collins and Bilge (2016) stated that structural intersectionality refers to the convergence of identity statuses, such as legal status or social status that marginalises them. As such, an intersectional position may disadvantage one group but may benefit another group. For example, participants in this study who arrived as permanent residents received benefits such as Centrelink payments and Medicare as well as paying similar payments as other Australians for general medical or educational expenses instead of the exorbitant payments that are demanded from Temporary Visa holders.

Conclusion

This study set out to explore the lived experiences of migrant Muslim women in building resilience when faced with adverse situations while settling in a new country. An important contribution of the present study is that it extends the findings of other studies on the obstacles faced by migrants and their resilience-building by using a feminist lens to explore how women make sense of their experiences and voice their concerns by providing rich and deep descriptions in participants' own words. The use of intersectionality as a theoretical standpoint was a significant aspect of this research that provided new insights by presenting the participants' experiences as fluid, multiple, and intersecting with social locations including faith, race, gender, visa conditions, and class to show the nuanced challenges faced by each participant based on their intersectional characteristics. The findings demonstrated that participants from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and those having younger children faced additional difficulties due to these factors. Furthermore, this study highlighted the impact of structural intersectionality on the participants based on visa conditions by illustrating the greater challenges faced by those on temporary visas compared to permanent residency visas.

By giving migrant Muslim women a voice, this study found existing discriminatory practices, especially in non-recognition of overseas qualifications, and subtle racism and discrimination

in the employment sector resulting in financial insecurity of women who face added marginalisation due to gender and race. Further research exploring the employment of migrant Muslim women could enhance policy and practice to support women from marginalised communities.

Another significant finding of this study is that, despite facing formidable obstacles such as communication difficulties, isolation, employment challenges, and discrimination in their settlement in Australia, the participants were able to bounce back due to personal attributes such as having a sense of hope, self-efficacy and faith in religion and using opportunities and resources available in both formal and informal systems including family, social networks, community resources and favourable living conditions. This research identified that the availability and use of personal and public resources helped participants to acknowledge their gains from living in Australia and reinforced their hope for their future. Thus, this research can be used as feedback for service providers to enhance and develop services that instil hope and promote resilience of migrant Muslim women. Furthermore, social workers have a key role to play in promoting social networks and hope-building of ethnic communities by linking them to culturally appropriate services and challenging institutional racism by advocating on behalf of the marginalised. Further research is needed to find out how programs and services that promote hope and social support can be widely used to increase resilience-building amongst other marginalised communities.

Another insight we developed in this study was that adversity builds faith and strengthens ties with religion and religious practices. The women in this study found a strong connection to the Islamic faith after migration, which strengthened their resilience in the face of hardship. This highlights a need for more research on religiosity, faith, and cultural practices of diverse ethnic groups as a protective factor in building resilience amongst migrant communities.

In conclusion, resilience is used as a primary concept in this study to illustrate the self-determination and strength of migrant Muslim women and help avert the innate victimisation of them in academic literature.

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