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Examining Zomi Refugees' Psychological Adaptation with the Psychological Antecedents of Refugee Integration Model

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To

My loving father, Prof. Dato' Dr Tai Shzee Yew, for his unconditional support in pursuing lifelong education. His brilliance in the social sciences improved lives and inspired many.

And

My beloved mother, Datin Yong Ah Peng, was a living inspiration in helping disadvantaged communities with her medical, spiritual, and charitable work.

Acknowledgements

Resumo

O presente estudo examinou os factores psicológicos associados à adaptação dos refugiados, focando-se nos refugiados Zomi na Malásia. Especificamente, com base no modelo dos antecedentes psicológicos da integração de refugiados (PARI) (Echterhoff et al., 2020), este estudo considerou o papel da perda de controlo, percepção de ser forçado a migrar e dos perigos relacionados com a migração para o bem-estar subjectivo dos refugiados Zomi, em comparação com refugiados não-Zomi. Os dados foram recolhidos através de um inquérito online envolvendo refugiados Zomi (N = 258) e refugiados não-Zomi (N = 158). Utilizando modelos de equações estruturais multigrupo, mostramos que o papel das variáveis de interesse foi diferente para os dois grupos. Para os refugiados não-Zomi, a perda de controlo esteve positivamente associada à percepção de se ser forçado a migrar e negativamente ligada ao bem-estar subjectivo. Para os refugiados Zomi, a perda de controlo estave negativamente correlacionada com a percepção de se ser forçado a migrar e não esteve associada ao bem-estar subjectivo. O efeito indirecto da percepção de se ser forçado a migrar e dos perigos relacionados com a migração no bem-estar subjectivo através da percepção de perda de controlo não foi significativo para ambos os grupos. Propomos que os refugiados Zomi têm uma concepção diferente de controlo em relação aos refugiados não-Zomi e sugerimos que factores culturais e contextuais específicos podem influenciar estas diferenças. As limitações, implicações práticas, e investigação futura foram discutidas.

Palavras-chave: Zomi, PARI, adaptação psicológica, bem-estar subjectivo, percepção de ser forçado a migrar, perigos relacionados, perda de controlo, refugiados.

Abstract

The current research examined the psychological factors associated with refugee adaptation, focusing on Zomi refugees in Malaysia. Specifically, building on the psychological antecedents of refugee integration (PARI) model (Echterhoff et al., 2020), this study considered the role of loss of control, perception of forcedness and related perils for refugee's subjective well-being for Zomi refugees as compared with non-Zomi refugees. Data were collected through an online survey involving Zomi refugees ($N = 258$) and non-Zomi refugees ($N = 158$). Using multigroup structural equations modelling, we found that the role of our variables of interest differed in the two groups. For non-Zomi refugees, loss of control was *positively* associated with the perception of forcedness and negatively linked with subjective well-being. For Zomi refugees, loss of control was *negatively* correlated with the perception of forcedness and not associated with subjective well-being. The indirect effect of perception of forcedness and related perils with subjective well-being via loss of control was not significant in either group. We propose that Zomi refugees have a different conception of control compared to non-Zomi refugees, and we suggest that specific cultural and contextual factors influence these differences. The limitations, practical implications, and future research were discussed.

Keywords: Zomi, PARI, psychological adaptation, subjective well-being, perception of forcedness, related perils, loss of control, refugees.

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Introduction

Conflict, human rights violations, persecution, public disorder, and violence have become the reality of over 100 million people, an estimated 1% of humanity or 1 in 78 people ("UNHCR: Ukraine, other conflicts", 2022). For the first time in human history, the number of forcibly displaced persons has exceeded the entire population of Vietnam or the population of Portugal by ten times. The number of conflict-affected countries has doubled in the past decade, with a total of 23 countries hosting a total of 850 million forcibly displaced people (Malpass, 2022).

Based on The Convention Related to the Status of Refugees (United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights [UNHCR], 1951), a refugee is defined as a person who crosses international borders because of a "well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion", and whose country will not or cannot protect or might be the body that is persecuting them. It is widely understood that refugees are those forced to flee their homes, yet the term "refugee" itself is problematic. Not only do refugees flee for different reasons, but the definition of "refugee" status is also inconsistent and complex because such status is often linked to identity politics and ideological agendas (Zetter, 2007). The highly debated definition of refugee status comes from an increasing diversity of individuals included under this status.

Yet, refugees are often viewed as a homogenous group, characterised by their stereotypes of dependency, helplessness, and lack of agency. Such messages are often perpetuated in policies, public discourse, and the media because they effectively elicit empathy and support from the public (Gupte & Mehta, 2007). In reality, refugees are demographically diverse and come from various backgrounds with wide-ranging experiences, knowledge, skills, and needs. This diversity means that different refugee groups' cultural backgrounds and migration experiences can vary widely.

Here, we argue that various ethnic groups may respond differently to forced displacement and new environments. These responses are shaped by various factors such as cultural identity, geographical landscape, political conditions, and historical circumstances. For this study, we focus on a specific ethnic group in Myanmar, the Zomi, who have experienced centuries of migration and tribal warfare, as well as the never-ending internal conflict within Myanmar since its independence in 1948. Hence, the sheer complexity and diversity in

refugees' lives call for a more nuanced understanding of psychological processes to ensure refugees' have a better chance of successfully adapting to the host society.

Thus, the current research examines the psychological factors associated with refugee adaptation, focusing on Zomi refugees in Malaysia. Specifically, building on a recently developed psychological antecedents refugee integration (PARI) model (Echterhoff et al., 2020), we focus on the role of refugees' perceptions of loss of control, forcedness, and related perils for refugees' subjective well-being.

Literature Review

1.1   Psychological Antecedents of Refugee Integration (PARI)

Migration requires tremendous physical, cognitive, and emotional effort, and for a refugee, their unique experiences become an additional burden in their psychological adaptation to a new cultural environment. Considering these factors, Echterhoff et al. (2020) proposed a theoretical framework that focuses on the psychological processes that underpin refugees' integration[1], called the Psychological Antecedents of Refugee Integration or the PARI model.

Figure 1

Psychological Antecedents of Refugee Integration (PARI) Theoretical Framework
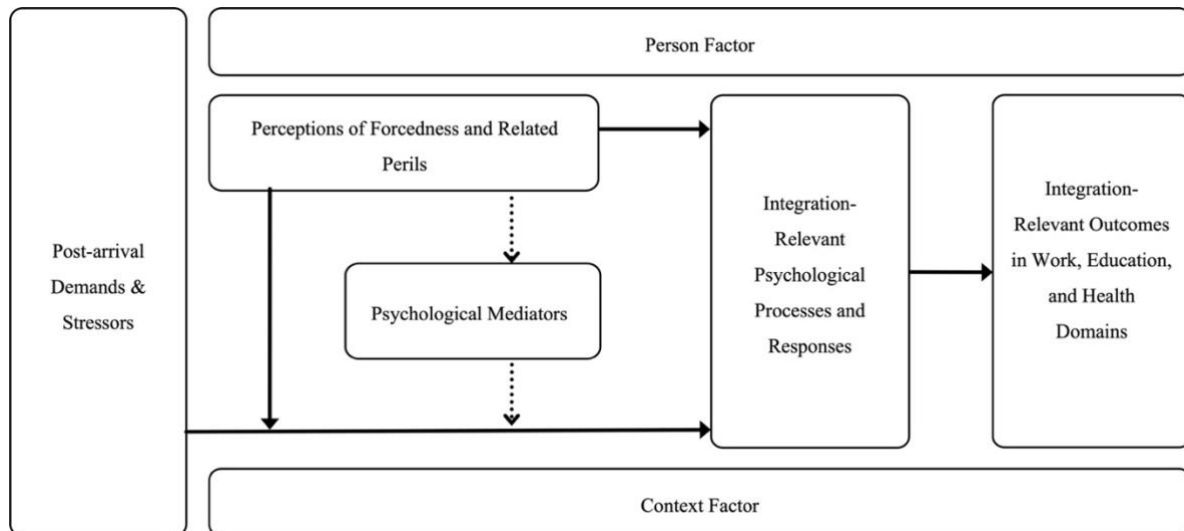
The central theme of this model is the perception of forcedness and related perils, which are the psychological processes experienced by refugees but not by other migrants. Perceptions of forcedness and related perils refer to the subjective experiences of forced displacement and its associated dangers in the country of origin and during migration. Perceptions of forcedness and related perils can affect the psychological processes of

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[1] In the PARI model, integration is understood as structural integration, which is the social and systemic support for the inclusion and participation of refugees in the host society (Ager & Strang, 2008). In this study, integration does not refer to acculturation research, where integration is the migrant's preference in maintaining heritage culture and adopting the hosts' culture (Berry, 1997).

refugees' integration and adaptation, including motivation for cultural learning, coping with stress, goal setting, and evaluating residents' attitudes.

Accordingly, Echterhoff et al. (2020) proposed that the perception of forcedness and related perils trigger specific psychological processes that mediate the effects between post-arrival demands and integration-related processes. The four underlying psychological mechanisms (i.e., mediators) were proposed: loss of control, external attribution, uncertain future perspective, and perceptions and memories of suffering and violence. In this study, we focus specifically on loss of control.

In the model, post-arrival demands and stressors refer to the challenges and pressures related to immigration, such as language barrier, unemployment, loss of social status, loss of social network, unfamiliar legal procedures, discrimination and possibly xenophobia (Yakushko, 2010). Along with post-arrival demands and stressors, the perception of forcedness, related perils, and the mediating psychological mechanisms shape integration-relevant responses, which subsequently have implications in the different integration domains of work, education, and health. Integration-relevant psychological processes and responses can range from motivation for cultural learning, coping with acculturative stress, meeting basic needs, goal setting, and psychological adaption.

Additionally, it is recognised that contextual factors and individual differences play a role in refugee integration. Contextual factors refer to environmental and situational characteristics that may influence refugee integration, such as socioeconomic conditions, political agendas, public discourse, access (or lack thereof) to public services and legal support. Lastly, personal factors pertain to the individual differences of refugees, including factors such as their socioeconomic status, cultural identity, and personality traits.

Furthermore, the PARI model recognised that the burden of refugee integration does not solely rely on the refugee. Instead, refugee integration also required examining and understanding the majority or host society members' psychological processes. While this study will not explore the host society members' perspectives, the PARI framework considers this perspective influential to refugee integration.

Echterhoff et al. (2020) have acknowledged that the theoretical framework is more applicable to refugees residing in wealthier countries because of the sufficient structural-economic resources to support integration in the health, social and education domains. They have not discussed, however, whether this framework applies to refugees residing in transit countries, which are countries along the refugees' migration route, or receiving countries, referring to the refugees' destination countries. Similarly, it remains unclear if the framework

applies to upper-middle or middle income nations with structural-economic resources but may lack the political will to integrate refugees. With our study, we intend to address these two gaps by examining the adaptation processes of Zomi refugees in Malaysia, a middle-upper income and transit nation with sufficient resources but does not recognise the refugee status. Building upon the PARI model, this study examines the psychological adaptation of Zomi refugees in Malaysia, contrasting it with other refugee groups in Malaysia and Portugal.

1.2   Unique Experiences of Refugees: Perception of Forcedness and Related Perils

Compared to other types of migrants, refugees are more vulnerable due to the forced departure and the dangers faced in their home country and migration journeys. Here, forcedness means "a person's behaviour is driven or coerced by external factors" (Echterhoff et al., 2020). Forced displacement means most refugees cannot plan their migration and are willing to place themselves in high-risk situations, and such choices mean they perceive migration as safer than remaining in their countries.

Most refugees are likely to be exposed to traumatic events. Politically motivated violence predicts forced migration, such as civil wars, ethnic rebellion, or genocide (Schmeidl, 1997). Refugees not only face dangers in their home countries, but they may also encounter risky situations in their migration journeys, such as human traffickers (Wilson, 2012), abuse from authorities (Kobia & Cranfield, 2009), and violent pushbacks (Bužinkić & Avon, 2020).

The experiences of forced displacement and its associated dangers form memories and subjective experiences. These potentially distressing memories might be triggered when faced with similar threats in the receiving country. For example, aggressive interrogation may increase anxiety or fear because it reminds them of past experiences of danger, indoctrination, or torture (Silove, 1999). Refugees whose movements are restricted by authorities of the receiving country may be distressed as it reminds them of confinement or captivity on their migration journeys or imprisonment in refugee camps (McKelvey & Webb, 1997).

Perception of forcedness and related perils are the central experiences in refugee migration. These experiences can have a profound emotional and psychological effect as refugees navigate beyond their familiar environments in search of safety and to rebuild their lives in foreign lands. These experiences give rise to psychological processes such as external attribution, uncertain future, memories of suffering and loss of control (Echterhoff et al., 2020). These psychological processes may disrupt refugees' ability to cope with stress

(Yakushko et al., 2008), interrupt cultural learning (Gonsalves, 1992) and their overall ability to adapt to a new society (Jorden et al., 2009).

Essentially, perceptions of forcedness and related perils, along with these psychological processes, may hinder refugees' ability to adapt to their new countries. Building on the recent PARI model (Echterhoff et al., 2020), this study focuses on Zomi refugees' perceptions of forcedness of migration and related perils as antecedents of refugee's adaptation to living in Malaysia, as well as the role of the underlying psychological mechanism, loss of control.

1.3   Loss of Control

The memories and experiences of forced migration and its dangerous journey may trigger a loss of control. Adverse events that seem uncontrollable or inescapable can become a life stressor. These events are perceived as "aversive and inescapable and, thus, not a product of the person's choice or volition (Newcomb & Harlow, 1986, p. 574)". Uncontrollable and distressing life events are characterised by the sense that people have limited personal control and that others are in control of their lives. The more one feels as if they have lost power, the more it is perceived that others have greater control.

When the sense of loss of control is triggered, refugees feel they have little or no power over some or all aspects of one's life. Subsequently, this reduces their sense of personal agency and may hinder their adaptation to the new society. Loss of control is significantly associated with learned helplessness (Seligman, 1972) and low self-efficacy (Bandura, 1982). Attempts to restore control limit cognitive resources and mental stamina (Yakushko et al., 2008).

With the prolonged loss of control, people learn helplessness. Learned helplessness is when a person eventually stops all efforts to improve or overcome the situation because they have been in a poor position for too long. People with learned helplessness believe that nothing will end their pain and suffering and, thus, accept their poor situation and stop seeking help entirely. Researchers have linked learned helplessness to depression, anxiety, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Song & Vilares, 2021).

Loss of control is also associated with a lack of self-efficacy, which is the belief and perception in one's ability to carry out a task (Bandura, 1982) or achieve one's goals (Gecas, 1989). With a lack of self-efficacy, there is an increased dependency on others and decreased motivation to learn (Zimmerman, 2000). Yet, adapting to a new society requires an effort to learn about a new culture or language or ensure effective intercultural communication with

members of the host society (Christmas & Barker, 2014). Thus, according to PARI (Echterhoff et al., 2020), perceptions of forcedness and related perils may trigger a loss of control, hindering refugees' ability to adapt to the host society.

The sense of loss of control is assumed to occur for all refugees and to be equally harmful to all refugee groups. Yet, we argue that due to historical and cultural context, some ethnic groups may have found ways to minimise the detrimental effects of loss of control, which subsequently helped them survive, adapt, thrive, and eventually settle in a new country. Anecdotally, Zomi Christians believe their lives are in God's hands (S.P. Kai, personal communication, September 18, 2022). Combined with the complex history that we discuss below, this belief might have allowed for the psychological reframing of loss of control as something not necessarily as harmful as the PARI model would assume. Therefore, building on the PARI model, this study examines the relationship between perceptions of forcedness and related perils, its impact on refugees' subjective well-being, and explores the mediating role of perceived loss of control among Zomi refugees compared with non-Zomi refugees.

1.4   Psychological Adaptation of Refugees

As with all migrants, refugees will go through reorganising and rebuilding their lives after relocating to a new environment (Ryan et al., 2008). Those who can adapt to their new country become fully participating and contributing members of society (Ager and Strang, 2008).

Yet, adjusting to a new country and culture can be overwhelming. Based on the PARI model, psychological processes and responses, such as psychological and socio-cultural adaptation (Ward, 1996), are the direct antecedents of integration-relevant outcomes of refugees. According to Ward (1996), psychological and sociocultural adaptation is an outcome of acculturation, the inevitable process of cultural and psychological changes that result from contact between cultures. Sociocultural adaptation refers to learning or acquiring culturally-appropriate skills to navigate and negotiate daily life effectively. Likewise, psychological adaptation refers to a person's sense of satisfaction, self-esteem and overall emotional or psychological well-being, where people find ways to cope with stressful events in a new environment. Therefore, subjective well-being is a common indicator of psychological adaptation.

Inevitably, not knowing the language, culture, or its people can be a highly stressful experience in an unfamiliar environment. Stress occurs when overwhelming events evoke a

person's psychological and physical reactions (Franken 2007). Physical reactions to stress can range from increased heart rates to intrusive thoughts and illness. Psychological reactions to stress can include limitations in cognitive resources (Glass & Singer 1972), learned helplessness and even depression (Seligman 1972). Two common forms of stress occur when a person arrives in a new cultural environment: culture shock and acculturative stress. Culture shock refers to the sense of confusion and disorientation in an unfamiliar setting (Presbitero, 2016). Acculturative stress is the psychological distress of adjusting to a new culture (Berry, 2006).

Still, people will find ways to cope, manage and prevent the negative consequences of stress. According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984, p. 141), coping is "the constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person". For all migrants, coping is essential to managing and resolving psychological difficulties of cultural adjustment (Berry, 2006).

With better-coping abilities, refugees can better adapt to their new country. Studies have found that when refugees successfully adapt, their subjective well-being and life satisfaction will generally increase (Hynie, 2017). Yet, refugees who cannot access their coping resources will have difficulties adapting and face additional challenges of prolonged mental health issues and exclusion or isolation (Correa-Velez et al. 2010).

The PARI model assumes that loss of control is a form of stress and should adversely impact refugees' psychological adaptation. Yet, anecdotal evidence suggests that Zomi refugees found ways to cope with the challenges of an unfamiliar culture and eventually adapted to life in Malaysia. While many await resettlement via UNCHR, Zomi refugees found employment, got an education, formed strong social networks, and raised families, even without recognition or support from the local government. (S.P. Kai, personal communication, September 18, 2022).

Here, we examine whether Zomi refugees' differing concept of control influences their psychological adaptation, using subjective well-being as an indicator. Reframing control may instead be a form of coping rather than a source of stress. If this is indeed the case, then reframing control may protect Zomi refugees' subjective well-being from the stresses of losing control. Thus, loss of control does not become a source of stress on Zomi refugees' psychological adaptation. Overall, this study offers a novel and comprehensive perspective of refugees' psychological adaptation, using the PARI model and considering the impact of Zomi cultural and religious values.

1.5   The Zomi Culture

Zomi means the "Zo" people, though the origins of the Zo people were highly debated. Because the Zo language remained a spoken language till the late 19th century, documentation of the Zo people was scarce. Without written language, the Zo people's history was passed orally. Some scholars suggested that based on their physical features, "yellowish or brownish skin, brown eye, black hair, slanted eye, prominent cheekbone, wide nose, and flat face" were related to Indonesian-Malay and Mongoloid people (Vumson, 1990, p. 26). Based on folk legend, the Zo people might be Chinese descendants from the Chin Dynasty. Other folklore suggested that the Zo people were one of the lost tribes of Israel.

Zomi is a trans-border ethnic group, bearing different names in different nations yet practising and sharing similar cultures and traditions. Scholars traced the possible geographical area, pre-colonial era. They suggested that "Zogam", the land of Zo people, stretched along the Indo-Burma highlands and included the states of Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram in India and the Chin state in Myanmar (Vumson, 1990). Other scholars proposed another land area called Zomia. These highlands spanned an area of 2.5 million square kilometres along the borders of Tibet, Southern China, North-Eastern India, and Southeast Asia (Van Schendel, 2002). Later, anthropologist James Scott (2009) controversially claimed that Zomia is the largest remaining region for people who are not fully incorporated into nation-states. The people of Zomia rejected the incorporation into nation-states and objected to oppressive state projects, such as conscription, slavery, and taxes, to preserve their liberty.

The earliest migration of Zo people into Zogam started in the 1400s. Since then, waves of Zo people have flowed into Zogam, creating and establishing different tribes in different villages. Tribal warfare was not uncommon; various wars were waged from 1500 and throughout the British colonisation in the 1800s (Vumson, 1990).

In contemporary times, it is recognised that Zomis reside in the Chin state in Myanmar and Mizoram in India. The Chin State, also known as the Chin Hills District, has an area of 36,000 sq. km, almost the same size as Switzerland (Bekker, 1989). Post-colonial British drew the India-Bangladesh-Burma border that divided Zogam. With the geographical division, colonial administrators and other scholars called the Zomis "Chin" in Myanmar and "Kuki" in Bangladesh, even when Zomis themselves do not identify with these names (Pau & Mung, 2022).

Most Zomis are Christians. In 1893, two missionaries from the Welsh Calvinistic Church went to Zogam to spread Christianity. Missionaries learned the Zo language and introduced writing using the Roman script. Soon after, as more Zomi learned to read and write, mission schools opened, and the Bible was translated into the written Zo language (Vumson, 1990). Since then, Christianity has imbued itself into the Zomi culture, with Zo people practising various denominations, namely, Baptist Church, Assembly of God, and Seventh Day Adventist (Nang, 2010).

Thus, the long and complex history of Zomi's mysterious migration routes from China (or Israel), religious indoctrination, and possible anarchistic streak may have shaped their cultural values and beliefs such that Zomi found ways to cope with stressful, dangerous and conflict situations. These historical and religious influences may have shaped Zomi's concept of control, such that God, rather than themselves, is in control of their lives. In addition to cultural factors, contextual factors may play a role in the Zomi refugees' experiences, such that it may alter the perception of loss of control, perception of forcedness and related perils, which has implications on their psychological adaptation.

1.6   Zomi Refugees of Post-Colonial Myanmar

As with the historical and cultural context of Zomis, the current political situation in Myanmar may impact the Zomis, such as their ability to cope with forced displacement, migration, and adaptation. Myanmar is ethnically diverse, with over 135 ethnic groups and 118 dialects or languages. Each ethnic group is unique in its migration or indigenous history, choice of religion, cultural norms and even language. Zomi is one of the many ethnic groups to flee Myanmar.

Since Myanmar's independence in 1948, there has been internal conflict between the military dictatorship and the major ethnic and religious groups. Over decades, the Myanmar people organised several prominent protests against Myanmar's military dictatorship, such as the 8888 uprising in 1988, the Saffron revolution in 2007 and the 2021 protest against the military coup. The recent 2021 protest started when Tatmadaw, the military dictator, overthrew the democratically elected government led by the National League for Democracy (NLD) (Win et al., 2022). With each major protest, the military violently cracked down on protestors, sending new waves of refugees fleeing the country.

Additionally, the military dictatorship actively and violently persecutes ethnic groups that do not fit into their policy of unity; "one nation, one race and one religion" (Pau, 2015).

According to Alexander (2009, p. 4) from Human Rights Watch, abuses committed by the Tatmadaw and their agents include "extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture and mistreatment, forced labour, severe reprisals against members of the opposition, restrictions on movement, expression, and religious freedom, abusive military conscription policies, and extortion and confiscation of property."

An estimated 2.5 million forcibly displaced people originate from Myanmar, with an estimated 50% being ethnically Rohingya. Myanmar is the top nation in Southeast Asia and the fifth-largest contributor of forcibly displaced worldwide (UNHCR, 2022). An estimated 1 million refugees from Myanmar reside in various countries, either waiting for resettlement or having naturalised in their host countries (UNHCR, 2022).

From 2000 to 2010, the number of Zomi refugees was at its highest, with an estimated 20,000 Zomi in the USA, with another 30,000 in the rest of the world (Pau, 2015). According to the Zomi community leader S.P. Kai (personal communication, September 18, 2022), an estimated 150,000 Zomi refugees and asylum-seekers live in Malaysia.

In addition to the complex history and rich culture of the Zomis, the protracted internal conflict in Myanmar can be another contextual factor that shapes the meaning this group attributes to the loss of control, perception of forcedness and related perils. With long-term exposure to uncertainty and conflict, it seems reasonable to expect that this group has adapted to survive volatile and hostile environments. In the current research, we will specifically explore if this complex history might have allowed Zomi to psychologically reframe loss of control as something not necessarily as harmful as the PARI model would assume. Therefore, this study investigates whether the role of loss of control for the psychological adaptation of Zomi differs from other refugee groups.

1.7   This Study

The adaptation of voluntary migrants has been extensively studied in psychology. Yet, less is known about the other psychological processes that underpin refugees' struggle or success with adaptation in their new country. Also, most refugee studies focus on PTSD, depression, or social issues and do not consider cultural differences in understanding the psychological processes of refugees' adaptation.

Building on the PARI model, this research examines specifically the role of perceptions of forcedness and related perils on the subjective well-being of refugees. Additionally, we explored how the perceptions of forcedness and related perils are associated with refugees'

adaptation via loss of control. Extending previous research, we considered the role of cultural differences, focusing on the adaptation process of Zomi vs non-Zomi refugees.

Cultural values and beliefs can become a protective factor in preventing psychological degradation and perhaps facilitate refugees' adaptation to their new environment. Considering the cultural background, history, and current political situation of refugees, Zomi may cope with the stresses of migration differently than non-Zomi (e.g., related perils, loss of control), which ultimately can have a protective role in their subjective well-being. Thus, the current study offers a unique perspective on refugees' adaptation and generates new knowledge to design better social policies and interventions.

CHAPTER 2

Method

2.1   Participants

Participants represent a vulnerable population, namely adult refugees, of a minimum age of 18 years, from the Zomi ethnic group and other ethnic origins. Participants were recruited through referrals by NGOs and connected individuals.

Convenience sampling was used to recruit respondents, where respondents were obtained through referrals who share the same characteristic (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). This sampling strategy is useful for sensitive research issues related to a "hidden" population (Faugier & Sargeant 1997). The total sample consisted of 980 respondents; 564 incomplete responses were excluded, and 416 responses remained. The criterion for inclusion was having responded to at least one predictor variable and at least one outcome variable.

The total Zomi refugee sample comprised 346 participants; 88 participants were excluded, and the remaining sample comprised 258 Zomi refugees. The participants were referred by three different NGOs working with refugees in Malaysia.

The total sample of non-Zomi respondents consisted of 634 responses; 476 participants were excluded, and the remaining sample comprised 158 non-Zomis. Participants originated from 19 countries, with most from Ukraine (27.8%, n=44), Myanmar (21.5%, n=34), Pakistan (19.6 %, n=31), Afghanistan (8.2%, n=13). The remaining 22.9% (n=36) were from Albania, Angola, Cameron, Congo, Gambia, Guatemala, Guinea, India, Mali, Malaysia, Mauritania, Nigeria, Somalia, Sudan, and Venezuela. The participants were recruited through referrals from four different NGOs working with refugees in Portugal and three different NGOs in Malaysia, as well as snowball sampling. Sociodemographic information is available in Table 1.

Table 1

Sociodemographic Characteristics of Zomi and non-Zomi respondents

	Zomi		Non-Zomi	
	n	%	n	%
Gender				
Female	42	16.4	78	49.7
Male	209	81.6	76	48.4
Prefer not to tell	5	2.0	3	1.9
Age-Range				
18 – 29	136	53.5	43	27.4
30 – 39	99	39.0	62	39.5
40 – 49	17	6.7	37	23.6
50 – 59	1	.4	12	7.6
60 and above	1	.4	3	1.9
Years in Host Country				
Less than 1 year	12	4.7	59	37.6
Between 1 to 5 years	72	28.2	44	28.0
Between 6 to 10 years	103	40.4	47	29.9
Between 10 to 20 years	59	23.1	7	4.5
More than 20 years	9	3.5	0	.0
Practising Religion				
Yes	249	96.9	120	75.9
No	8	3.1	38	24.1
Highest educational level				
Primary	97	38.0	16	10.2
Secondary	102	40.0	48	30.6
College	5	2.0	26	16.6
University	11	4.3	53	33.8
Other	40	15.7	14	8.9
Awareness of Support				
Yes	205	79.8	110	70.1
No	52	20.2	47	29.9

2.2 Procedure

The questionnaire was created and distributed using an online survey tool, Qualtrics. The survey was distributed online via email, social media, group chats and newsletters in collaboration with non-government organisations (NGOs). Trained native speakers from collaborating NGOs helped to gather data in refugee homes, community centres, processing centres and via social media. Native speakers were prepared to answer questions and provided further explanations of the research in a way that minimises priming or bias.

Before taking the survey, participants were informed about the purpose of the study, assured that their responses were voluntary, anonymous, and confidential, and were requested to provide informed consent to participate in the study. Any questions they had were answered by the researcher and/or a trained native speaker before giving informed consent. A copy of the informed consent is available in Appendix A.

After completing the questionnaire, the participants were further debriefed via the debriefing note provided at the end of the survey. Participants did not receive any compensation or reward. Data collection took place on 13th May – 31st July 2022 in Malaysia and 2nd May – 31st August 2022 in Portugal. A copy of the research debrief for refugees based in Malaysia is available in Appendix C, and for refugees based in Portugal in Appendix D.

2.3 Materials

All materials were reviewed and approved by the ethics committee at ISCTE-IUL (43/2022), Portugal, and followed APA recommendations. The original measures were in English. The measures were translated into Burmese, Farsi, Urdu, and Zomi for refugees based in Malaysia via the translation/back-translation method. For refugees based in Portugal, the measures were translated into Farsi, Portuguese, Spanish and Ukrainian via the translation/back-translation method. Languages were selected based on recommendations from collaborating NGOs. A copy of the questionnaire in English is available in Appendix B.

2.4 Measures

2.4.1 Sociodemographic

Participants answered questions regarding their age, nationality, country of origin, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, education level, years in the host country, socioeconomic status, documentation, and awareness of available refugee support.

2.4.2 Loss of Control

The participants' experience with the loss of control was assessed using the 3-item scale by Newcomb and Harlow (1986). The scale used a 5-point Likert scale to indicate agreement, ranging from 1 "Strongly Disagree" to 5 "Strongly Agree". A higher score indicates a heightened sense of lack of control. Sample items include "I feel I am not in control of my life" and "I feel that others are running my life for me."

2.4.3 Perceived Forcedness

Perceived Forcedness was assessed with the 6-item scale proposed by Echterhoff et al. (2020). The items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale, indicating participant's agreement, where 1 is "Strongly Disagree" to 5 is "Strongly Agree". Of the 6-items, four items were reverse-scored. Higher scores indicate a greater sense of forcedness in the participant's migration choices. Sample items are "I was forced to leave my home country." and "I could determine for myself the course of my migration."

2.4.4 Related Perils

Perils encountered by participants were assessed using the 8-item Related Perils Scale (Echterhoff et al., 2020). The original scale consisted of 16 items covering perils experienced in the home country and during migration. To reduce the possibility of survey fatigue, the questionnaire focused only on perils experienced in the home country. The scale used a 5-point Likert scale to indicate the frequency of occurrence, ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always). Some sample items are "I experienced massive dangers to my life in my home country" and "I feared massive restrictions on my liberty in my home country."

2.4.5 Subjective Well-Being

Participants' subjective well-being was assessed using the WHO-5 Well-Being Index (Topp et al., 2015). The scale uses a 5-point Likert measure to indicate the participant's frequency of occurrence, ranging from 1 "At no time" to 5 "All the time". Sample items include "My daily

life has been filled with things that interest me" and "I have felt cheerful and in good spirits." A higher average score indicates higher subjective well-being [2].

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[2] This study was part of a larger research project. Other measures collected were Social Well-Being, Perceived Discrimination, and Opportunity for Contact. Description and analysis of other variables are in Appendix E. Reliability scores for all measures are presented in Table E2.

Results

For this study, we first present tests of measurement invariance between Zomi and non-Zomi, namely the results for configural, metric, scalar, and error invariance. Next, we present the reliability of measures, followed by the means, standard deviations, and correlations. Lastly, we present the results of the multigroup path analysis conducted to determine the direct and indirect effects of the variables of interests on refugee adaptation, along with Wald tests that assessed the significance of path differences between the two groups. Frequencies, reliability analysis, correlations and descriptives were conducted with SPSS 28.0.1.0. The measurement invariance tests and multigroup path analyses were performed using the package lavaan 0.6-12 in R.

While this study focused on the psychological adaptation of Zomi and non-Zomi refugees, additional analyses have been conducted to compare refugees in Malaysia and Portugal. Because these samples were unbalanced in size, the results should be interpreted with caution. The result of these analyses are presented in Appendix E.

3.1   Invariance Testing for Goodness-Of-Fit

To ensure the relevance of our measures among Zomi and non-Zomi, we started our analyses by conducting two-group measurement invariance tests. First, we fitted an overall confirmatory factor analysis model for each variable without distinguishing groups. The subjective well-being model fit was CFI = .998, TLI = .996, RMSEA = .03, SRMR = .013. The overall perception of forcedness model fit was CFI = .989, TLI = .968, RMSEA = .09, SRMR = .017. Also, the overall related perils model fit was CFI = .960, TLI = .880, RMSEA = .218, SRMR = .030.

Although other fit indices indicated excellent or good model fit for all measures, RMSEA only indicated a good fit for subjective well-being, but not for the remaining variables. Perception of forcedness and related perils measurement models showed a RMSEA > 0.08, indicating a mediocre fit (MacCallum, Browne and Sugawara, 1996). However, note that according to Kenny (2020), models with small degrees of freedom (e.g., smaller than 10) tend to have greater sampling error and may have artificially large RMSEA values, especially when the sample size is relatively small. Thus, RMSEA should not be computed for models with low degrees of freedom (Kenny, Kaniskan, and McCoach, 2015), which was the case here with all

dfs < 5 and sample sizes of less than 200. We, therefore, did not consider RMSEA while evaluating model fit and judged this overall model as a satisfactory point of departure for invariance testing.

Next, we fitted the same confirmatory factor analysis models as a two-group model to test configural invariance. Initially, the unconstrained configural model showed a poor fit for the perception of forcedness, loss of control and related perils. Hence, two items in the perception of forcedness were dropped due to low factor loadings: "I was forced to leave my home country" and "It was beyond my control to leave my home country". Since the loss of control remained an essential variable for this study, only one item was retained for further analysis ("I feel that others are running my life for me"), while the other two items were dropped due to low factor loadings. Finally, four items in related perils that refer to massive dangers and loneliness were dropped due to multicollinearity. After dropping items for the perception of forcedness and related perils, the fit was satisfactory, and the configural model improved. For subjective well-being, the fit was satisfactory and indicated configural invariance. Model fit indices for the final models are presented in Table 2.

Next, all three models were constrained for factor loadings to test metric invariance. Table 2 shows that the fit was satisfactory, and the metric invariance was achieved for subjective well-being and related perils. For the perception of forcedness, there was a significant difference between the configural and metric models, indicating variance in factor loadings. That might suggest that the model was only invariant at a configural level but not at a metric level; thus, metric invariance was rejected for this variable.

In addition, the models were constrained for loadings and intercepts to test scalar invariance. The fit was satisfactory, and the scalar equivalence was achieved for subjective well-being and related perils. There was a significant difference between the metric and scalar models for the perception of forcedness, indicating intercept variance.

Finally, the models were tested for error invariance by constraining loadings, intercepts, and residuals. The fit was satisfactory, and the error equivalence was achieved for subjective well-being and related perils. For the perception of forcedness, there was a significant difference between the scalar and error models, indicating residual variance.

In sum, invariance testing indicated configural, metric, scalar, and error invariance between Zomi and non-Zomi groups in the case of subjective well-being and related perils, meaning that covariances and latent means can be meaningfully compared across the two groups. However, only configural invariance was found in the case of perception of forcedness, meaning that neither (unstandardized) covariances nor means including this variable can be compared.

Table 2

Invariance Testing for Subjective Well-Being, Perception of Forcedness and Related Peril

Variable	Model	χ^2	df	TLI	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR	$\Delta\chi^2$	Δdf	$p_{\Delta\chi^2}$
Subjective Well-Being										
	Overall Model	6.709	5	.996	.998	.03	.013			
	Zomi Model	7.460	5	.99	.995	.046	.017			
	non-Zomi Model	9.628	5	.971	.985	.078	.024			
	Configural Invariance	17.088	10	.983	.991	.061	.020			
	Metric Invariance	19.925	14	.99	.993	.047	.032	2.757	4	.599
	Scalar Invariance	23.928	18	.992	.993	.041	.036	3.873	4	.426
	Strict or Error Invariance	26.739	23	.996	.995	.029	.033	2.863	5	.721
Perception of Forcedness (4 items)										
	Overall Model	8.254	2	.968	.989	.09	.017			
	Zomi Model	9.141	2	.943	.981	.122	.055			
	non-Zomi Model	8.342	2	.917	.972	.145	.023			
	Configural Invariance	17.483	4	.933	.978	.132	.03			
	Metric Invariance	27.24	7	.943	.967	.122	.061	9.757	3	.021
	Scalar Invariance	43.33	10	.93	.942	.135	.073	18.090	3	.000
	Strict or Error Invariance	58.836	14	.937	.926	.128	.074	13.506	4	.009
Related Perils (4 items)										
	Overall Model	38.692	2	.880	.960	.218	.030			

Zomi Refugees Model	11.843	2	.925	.975	.145	.025			
non-Zomi Model	35.532	2	.796	.932	.333	.038			
Configural Invariance	47.375	4	.853	.951	.237	.030			
Metric Invariance	50.982	7	.915	.950	.18	.040	3.607	3	.307
Scalar Invariance	52.936	10	.942	.952	.149	.043	1.955	3	.582
Strict or Error Invariance	57.752	14	.958	.951	.127	.045	4.815	4	.307

3.2   Reliability of Measures

Once the final variables were established, we calculated measure reliability, descriptives and correlations. The reliability of measures for Zomi and non-Zomi refugees are presented in Table 3. Means and standard deviations for Zomi and non-Zomi refugees are presented in Table 4. Correlations are shown in Table 5.

Table 3

Reliabilities (Cronbach's α) of Measures between Zomi and Non-Zomi

Model Variables	No. of Items	Zomi	Non-Zomi
		α	**α**
Subjective Well-Being	5	.859	.861
Perceptions of Forcedness	4	.839	.804
Related Perils	4	.849	.924

As per bivariate correlations, the perception of forcedness was negatively related to the subjective well-being of Zomi refugees. Also, loss of control and perception of forcedness were negatively correlated. Counterintuitively, this suggests that the more participants perceived forcedness, the less they perceived losing control. Likewise, the perception of forcedness and related perils had a negative and significant relationship, which suggests that the more Zomi refugees perceived forcedness, the fewer dangers were perceived. Interestingly, related perils and subjective well-being were not associated, suggesting experiences of risk in their home countries were not related to their well-being. Additionally, loss of control and subjective well-being were not associated, which means that loss of control does not seem to affect Zomi refugees' subjective well-being.

For non-Zomi refugees, loss of control, perception of forcedness and related perils were negatively and significantly related to subjective well-being. As anticipated, their subjective well-being decreased when loss of control, perception of forcedness and related perils increased. Loss of control was positively related to the perception of forcedness, meaning when forcedness is perceived to be high, there is a greater sense of losing control. Interestingly, the perception of forcedness and related perils were not associated, which could mean that dangers faced in one's country were not linked to forced displacement. Finally, loss of control and related perils were not associated, meaning dangerous situations in the country of origin does not necessarily lead to losing one's control.

Table 4

Means and Standard Deviations for Zomis and non-Zomi refugees

	Model Variables	Zomi		Non-Zomi	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1	Subjective Well-Being	2.614	0.996	2.561	0.995
2	Perceptions of Forcedness	2.535	1.010	2.712	0.942
3	Related Perils	3.970	1.006	3.476	1.336
4	Loss of Control	2.780	1.287	2.540	1.166

Table 5

Correlations for Zomi and Non-Zomi Refugees

	Model Variables	1	2	3	4
1	Subjective Well-Being	1	-.269**	-.226**	-.343**
2	Perceptions of Forcedness	-.266**	1	.106	.177*
3	Related Perils	-.130	-.149*	1	.139
4	Loss of Control	.124	-.290**	.073	1

Note. Significance level: $^*p < .05.$ $^{**}p < .01.$ Correlations for Zomi are in the lower diagonal, and non-Zomi in the upper diagonal.

3.3 Multigroup Path Analysis

A multigroup path model was fitted to test whether the relationships between variables and indirect and total effects differed between Zomi and non-Zomi refugees. In this model, the predictor variables were perceptions of forcedness and related perils, with the outcome variable as subjective well-being, and the mediator was the loss of control. Results are presented in Table 6. Because this model was fully saturated (i.e., all relations between variables were freely estimated), fit indices were not applicable here. The path model is visualised in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Path model for subjective well-being loss of control, perception of forcedness and related perils
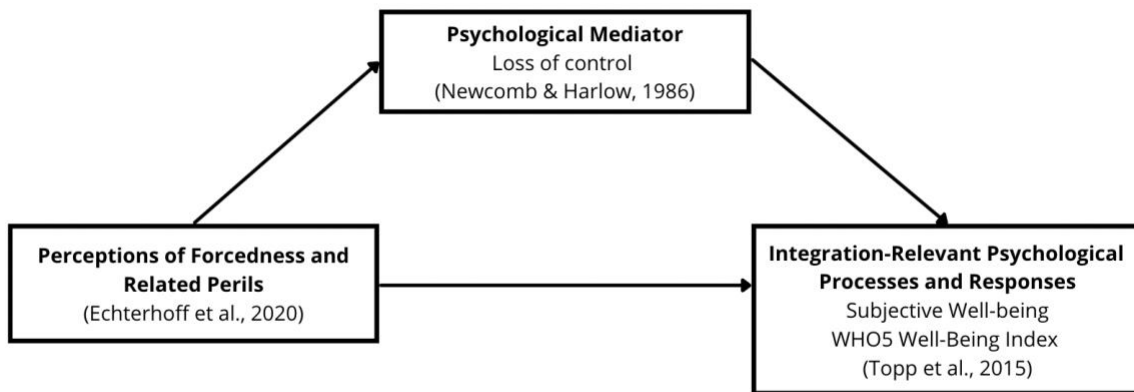
This model assumes parallel mediation with two indirect effects: first, the effect of perception of forcedness on subjective well-being via loss of control; second, the effect of related perils on subjective well-being via loss of control. The indirect effects were tested using bias-corrected and accelerated bootstrap with 5,000 samples and with 95% lower and higher confidence intervals. Note that parametric bootstrapping was additionally applied on all paths of the model to ensure meeting the distributional assumptions of parametric tests.

Among Zomi refugees, the perception of forcedness had a negative and significant direct effect on subjective well-being, whereas the effects of loss of control and related perils were non-significant. Contrary to the assumptions of the PARI model, perception of forcedness had a negative impact on loss of control, indicating that an increase in perceptions of forcedness was related to a decrease in loss of control. The indirect effect for both perceptions of forcedness and related perils on subjective well-being via loss of control was not significant for Zomi refugees.

Among non-Zomi refugees, perception of forcedness, related perils and loss of control had a negative and significant direct effect on subjective well-being. This direct effect indicates that an increase in perception of forcedness, related perils and loss of control was associated with a decrease in subjective well-being in line with the assumptions of the PARI model. The relation between the perception of forcedness and loss of control was significant and positively related, whereas related perils were not significant. The indirect effects of both perceptions of forcedness and related perils on subjective well-being via loss of control were not significant for non-Zomi refugees.

Table 6

Indirect and Total Effects of Perception of Forcedness, Related Perils, and Loss of Control on Subjective Well-Being for both Zomi and non-Zomi

	Zomi				Non-Zomi			
	B	SE	Sig.	*95% Bootstrap CI* [LL; UL]	B	SE	Sig.	*95% Bootstrap CI* [LL; UL]
Indirect effects:								
Perception of Forcedness → Subjective Well-Being via Loss of Control	-0.017	0.021	0.402	[-0.064, 0.017]	-0.059	0.033	0.071	[-0.139, 0.009]
Related Perils → Subjective Well-Being via Loss of Control	0.003	0.007	0.672	[-0.004, 0.028]	-0.025	0.021	0.227	[-0.077, 0.007]
Direct effects:								
Perception of Forcedness → Subjective Well-Being	-0.261	0.069	0.000	[-0.394, -0.124]	-0.192	0.080	0.017	[-0.357, -0.040]
Related Perils → Subjective Well-Being	-0.097	0.068	0.153	[-0.230, -0.039]	-0.127	0.059	0.031	[-0.243, -0.010]
Loss of Control → Subjective Well-Being	0.050	0.056	0.372	[-0.058, 0.160]	-0.243	0.066	0.000	[-0.373, -0.116]
Perception of Forcedness → Loss of Control	-0.344	0.087	0.000	[-0.509, -0.173]	0.243	0.112	0.030	[0.025, 0.461]
Related Perils → Loss of Control	0.058	0.080	0.467	[-0.100, 0.216]	0.103	0.072	0.156	[-0.043, 0.238]

Note. Reported effects refer to the path model for each group. Unstandardized regression coefficients and 95% percentile bootstrap intervals are reported.

3.4 Wald Test to Evaluate Differences Between Zomi and non-Zomi Refugees

Although we did not find significant indirect effects, we were interested in further testing the differences in direct effects between Zomi and non-Zomi refugees. Thus, the Wald test was used to evaluate the significance of the differences in the paths for Zomi and non-Zomi refugees. The Wald test allowed for testing whether constraining specific paths to equality for the two groups significantly influenced the model fit.

The analyses revealed that two paths were significantly different in Zomi refugees compared to non-Zomi refugees: the path from loss of control to subjective well-being ($\chi^2(1) = 11.640$, $p < .001$), which was non-significant for Zomi refugees and negative and significant for non-Zomi refugees. The path from the perception of forcedness to loss of control $\chi^2(1) = 17.008$, $p < .00001$, was significant and negatively related for Zomi refugees but positively related for non-Zomi refugees.

CHAPTER 4

Discussion

The main aim of this study was to examine the psychological adaptation of Zomi (vs non-Zomi) refugees in the host country. Based on the theoretical framework of the Psychological Antecedents of Refugee Integration (Echterhoff et al., 2020), the study examined the role of perceptions of forcedness and related perils on psychological adaptation, as well as the mediating effect of loss of control, comparing Zomi vs non-Zomi refugees. Using the multigroup confirmatory factor analysis and multigroup path models, we were able to detect significant differences between Zomi and non-Zomi refugees. These differences concerned the role of loss of control.

For non-Zomi refugees, results showed that loss of control, perception of forcedness and related perils were negatively associated with subjective well-being. In other words, non-Zomi refugees' subjective well-being decreases with increased loss of control, perception of forcedness and related perils. The effects of variables of interest among non-Zomi refugees operate as anticipated by the PARI model: loss of control, perception of forcedness and related perils are perceived as stressors that hinder non-Zomi refugees' psychological adaptation (Echterhoff et al., 2020).

Indeed, dangers encountered in their home countries and migration journeys are essential stressors. These overwhelming experiences can push people to their physical, emotional, and cognitive limits. Traumatic events, such as torture or abuse, are strongly associated with PTSD and depression (Steel et al., 2009). Hence, it is no surprise that perception of forcedness and related perils were related to lower levels of subjective well-being.

Similarly, lingering memories of uncontrollable and unexpected events can become a stressor. Traumatic events consist of three common characteristics: the external cause, violation, and loss of control (Horowitz (1993). The external causes are uncontrollable factors that impact a person's future unexpectedly, and violation refers to intrusive experiences that compromise a person's security and well-being. Thus, the forceful manner in refugee migration is a traumatic event and inevitably triggers a loss of control or the sense that other forces are dictating one's life.

Finally, losing control becomes a cognitive load that reduces subjective well-being. The sense of losing control implies limited personal agency, reduced self-efficacy, and that other people are in control of their lives instead. When concentration and focus are needed in

restoring and rebuilding lives in a new country, the feeling of losing control restricts cognitive resources and mental stamina (Yakushko et al., 2008). These cognitive resources are required for effortful adaptation activities, such as finding a job, putting children to school, learning a new language, and managing power and social dynamics with members of the host society. Thus, losing control hinders non-Zomi refugees' ability to adapt to the new country.

In sum, the effects of variables of interest on non-Zomi refugees operate as anticipated by the PARI model but seem to work differently for Zomi refugees. For Zomi refugees, loss of control is negatively related to the perception of forcedness and does not affect subjective well-being. Indeed, for Zomi refugees, results showed that only perception of forcedness was negatively associated with subjective well-being, which means that loss of control and related perils may not be perceived as a hindrance to psychological adaptation. For Zomi and non-Zomi refugees, the indirect effect of perception of forcedness and related perils on subjective well-being via loss of control was not significant. In other words, loss of control does not explain the link between subjective well-being and perception of forcedness and related perils for Zomi refugees.

The difference between Zomi and non-Zomi refugees was the role of loss of control. First, we could not achieve invariance for this variable, which in itself may suggest that the meaning of it differs between groups. For non-Zomi refugees, results based on one item only showed that loss of control is positively associated with the perception of forcedness and negatively related to subjective well-being. When non-Zomi refugees have a greater sense of forcedness, they feel a lack of control over their lives, and their well-being suffers.

On the contrary, for Zomi refugees, results showed that loss of control was negatively associated with the perception of forcedness and did not significantly affect subjective well-being. In other words, when Zomi refugees feel a greater perception of forcedness, their sense of personal control increases. Whether Zomi refugees have a high or low sense of control, it does not affect their subjective well-being. Next, we explore the possible reasons for the effects of interested variables on Zomi and non-Zomi refugees.

4.1 Cultural Factor: God-Mediated Control Protects Subjective Well-Being

For Zomi refugees, results showed that loss of control was *not* significantly related to subjective well-being, which suggests the concept of control may differ from non-Zomi refugees. Interestingly, the different conceptions of control seemed to have a protective rather than a destructive characteristic on Zomi refugees' subjective well-being.

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The Zomi refugees in Malaysia are known to be religious, with 96.9% of participants actively practising a Christian denomination, namely the Baptist Church, Assemblies of God Church and Seventh Day Adventist. One common belief among church-going Zomi refugees is that God determines their life direction. As Zomi refugee expert S.P. Kai (personal communication, September 18, 2022) mentioned, "their life is in God's hands." The belief that God had some form of control over one's life is known as God-mediated control, which is the "notion that problems can be overcome, and goals in life can be reached by working together with God (Krause, 2005, pg 137)," In other words, people retain a certain level of control by "collaborating" with God in their social environment. This implies that the feeling of someone else is running one's life, measured by our loss of control item, is not necessarily negative or positive – for believers, such a feeling may simply be the normal state of existence. The lack of association with well-being seemed to suggest that this was the case in our Zomi refugee sample.

Other research, however, indicates that such beliefs may be adaptive. The belief in having control over one's life may be an essential belief about self and society that might affect distress (Ross & Sastry, 1999). People with a strong sense of God-mediated control believe God "works" with them to overcome life's stressors, and thus, they become better at coping with distressing events (Pargament, 2011). Subsequently, people with strong God-mediated control are more persistent and proactive in solving problems and eradicating stressors. According to Krause (2005), people with a strong sense of God-mediated control tend to have greater life satisfaction, a higher sense of optimism, self-worth, lower levels of death anxiety and robust health (Upenieks, 2021).

Furthermore, Krause (2005) suggested that God-mediated control encourages people to recognise positive experiences, including helping others. As the Christian faith's major tenet is to help people in need, the church becomes the central location to provide help in the form of community service. Since Zomi refugees mostly follow the Christian faith, it is no surprise that they offer and receive essential social services and support through their church, thus maintaining or enhancing subjective well-being.

Yet, Zomi refugees are not the only ethnic group with strong religiosity. Other religions espouse the same notion that God determines one's life direction. In this study, 75.9% of non-Zomi participants practice a religion, including other Christian denominations, such as Presbyterian, Jehovah's Witness, Roman Catholic, Evangelical, and Orthodox, several Islamic denominations, such as Ahmadiyya and Ismaili, as well as other religions such as Judaism and Sikhism. Indeed, Krause (2005) suggests that the differential impact of God-mediated control

might be based on ethnicity. Based on his study, Krause (2005) found that older African Americans have stronger feelings of God-mediated power and, therefore, experience a greater sense of well-being compared to older White Americans. One explanation was that due to centuries of discrimination and prejudice, African Americans were confronted with social and structural barriers and were restricted from exercising control over various life domains. To overcome the limitation of control, the church, which was owned and operated by African Americans, provided social services, opportunities and activities that were unavailable to them (DuBois 2000).

Like the older African Americans, Zomi refugees faced decades, if not centuries, of prejudice and discrimination due to protracted and internal conflict. While in Malaysia, Zomi refugees were restricted in their control over various life domains because they were not recognised as asylum seekers or refugees. Instead, they are perceived as "illegal undocumented immigrants", which has negative connotations in the wider Malaysian society. Without recognition as refugees or asylum-seeker, Zomi refugees could not access much-needed services such as healthcare, security, and education. Thus, churches in Malaysia, which were owned and operated by Zomi refugees, became the central place to congregate, socialise, and access social support or services.

Furthermore, Malaysia is not a signatory of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees nor the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees (UNHCR, 1966). Consequently, refugees in Malaysia do not have any legal protection, financial support, or access to essential public services. Malaysia is considered an upper-middle income country, ranked 37 out of 207 countries in the gross domestic product (GDP) according to The World Bank (2022). Thus, Malaysia does have sufficient resources and structure to provide minimal support to refugees. Yet, it is common for public figures to perpetuate discrimination and xenophobia to gain political leverage and divide public opinion about refugees (Nik Anis, 2020). When the wider Malaysian community discriminates against and denies their existence, it makes sense that these churches emanate and espouse God-mediate control for their survival and adaptation.

The belief that God determines life is a form of surrender, which might be the belief that protects the Zomi refugee's well-being and possibly physical health from further deterioration. As such, the possibility of Zomi's orientation towards God-mediated control might explain the unexpected lack of any negative relation of loss of control with subjective well-being. Further research is needed to determine the effect of God-mediated control and psychological adaptation on Zomi refugees or other refugee groups.

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4.2   Contextual Factor: The Normalisation of Fleeing Country of Origin

Interestingly, results showed that the direct effects of the perception of forcedness on the loss of control were significant and *negative* for Zomi refugees, with the opposite effect for non-Zomi refugees. Counterintuitively, this means an increase in perceived forcedness is related to a greater sense of personal agency.

One possible reason for the negative association between the loss of control and the perception of forcedness is that fleeing the country has become normalised. According to Zomi expert S.P. Kai (personal communication, September 18, 2022), it is impossible to leave Myanmar without an "agent". When a Zomi chooses to flee, they approach known "agents" who provide logistical services for a fee. A negotiation takes place, and the asylum seeker has a choice in their destination country, typically other Southeast Asian nations known to "accept" refugees, such as Thailand, Malaysia, and India. "Accept" means nations who have known refugee enclaves but are not necessarily "legal". These governments may or may not support or recognise refugees and asylum-seekers, but they usually do not have the resources to deport refugees *en masse* from their countries.

Sometimes, a destination is selected because they have family members in those countries. Once a destination is selected, these "agents" make logistical arrangements for migration along illegal and potentially dangerous routes. From Myanmar to Malaysia, the migration route typically takes 5 to 10 days by foot or motor vehicle. Usually, refugees hide or sleep in "hidden" areas, such as the jungle (S.P. Kai, personal communication, September 18, 2022). The process to help refugees flee is structured, efficient, and organised, which implies normalisation. Thus, fleeing the country of origin becomes socially and culturally acceptable to members of the Zomi community.

Normalisation is a social process of making non-normal actions and ideas become natural or taken for granted in everyday life. The normalisation process operates through the repetition of ideology, propaganda, and practice. French historian and philosopher Michel Foucault (1974) suggested that the normalisation of behaviours occurs when two conditions are met; members of a group idealise the behaviour or ideology and the existence of a system that "rewards" people who adopt a behaviour or ideology.

In the case of Zomi refugees, fleeing Myanmar with its protracted conflict and unrelenting poverty is "idealised" because other countries are perceived to provide better economic, educational and security outcomes. Also, the existence and availability of "agents"

mean that Zomi refugees have the option to flee at a moment's notice, with the expectation of being "rewarded" with a better life in a different country. Also, the informal migration system used by hundreds of thousands of refugees provides a degree of certainty and a level of control. Thus, fleeing Myanmar has become an expected and accepted part of life, and it is a matter of "when" and not "if".

Yet, the normalisation of fleeing does not mean no forcedness or perils were involved. When Zomi refugees find themselves in a situation where they are forced to flee, they are proactive in taking action, and the action is to find an "agent". Finding an "agent" involves talking to the head of the tribe, calling family members abroad, or reaching out to strangers in search of "agents". While the situation forces them to flee, they are in control of their actions of fleeing. Hence, the more "forced" or urgent the fleeing is, the more Zomi refugees need to be proactive in their fleeing.

Thus, further research is needed to determine if the home country and migration context impact the psychological adaptation of refugees. In addition, future research could investigate Zomi's knowledge, attitudes, and intention concerning the normalisation of fleeing.

4.3   Limitations

There are several limitations to the study that needs to be addressed. Firstly, the sample was not randomly selected. Instead, we used convenience sampling, snowballing and referrals. These types of sampling tend towards selection bias and gatekeeper bias (Bloch, 1999). The strength of referral or snowballing is its ability to access vulnerable and "hidden" populations through an intermediary that has an established and trusting relationship with the respondents. The "hidden" population refers to the vulnerable who learned to stay invisible as a survival skill for fear of strangers and the dangers they may bring. As such, this study relied on the voluntary effort of NGOs to connect researchers with refugees. These NGOs and community members become intermediaries who advocate for the research, which gives respondents the assurance and encouragement needed to participate in the study (Bloch, 1999).

Refugees in Malaysia are fearful and cautious of people who do not have an established relationship with them because they are considered "illegal undocumented immigrants". Hence, it is common for refugees to be abused and detained without trial by Malaysian authorities ("End Abusive Immigration Detention", 2020). Thus, accessing refugees based in Malaysia required a trusted intermediary.

Another limitation is that this study compared Zomi refugees against a mixed group of refugees. Ideally, we would have liked to compare two different refugee ethnic groups, and this comparison would have allowed us to analyse cultural differences in greater detail. However, such comparisons were not possible because access to different refugee ethnic groups was limited.

Also, the non-Zomi refugees lived in two very different countries, Malaysia and Portugal. While Malaysia does not recognise refugees, Portugal is a signatory of the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. And so, the Portugal government and the Portuguese society have the policies, infrastructure and will to accept and support refugees. The difference in context between Malaysia and Portugal will have increased the diversity of refugee experiences and the diversity of the non-Zomi sample.

Additionally, the ethnicity of refugees for both Portugal and Malaysia differ due to their geographic proximity to countries in conflict. Portugal receives refugees mainly from Europe and Africa and, in recent months, from Ukraine ("UNHCR: Ukraine, other conflicts," 2022). In comparison, Malaysia receives refugees mainly from Myanmar and Muslim countries. Hence, the differences in political position and geographic proximity between refugees based in Malaysia and Portugal will have further increased the diversity of the non-Zomi refugee sample.

Initially, we planned to have refugees based in Portugal as a separate group and compare them with refugees based in Malaysia. Yet, this was not possible due to the low sample size in Portugal and, subsequently, limited the power of the study. We tried to address this by running multigroup comparisons between refugees based in Malaysia and Portugal. However, the analyses were inconclusive because of the unbalanced data. Analyses of refugees based in Malaysia and Portugal are in Appendix E.

4.4 Practical Implications & Future Research

As the number of refugees worldwide is more likely to increase, it is imperative to investigate further the factors that facilitate or impede psychological and sociocultural adaptation. Factors related to specific cultural values, beliefs, and norms of ethnic refugee groups are often overlooked. Cultural influence on the refugees' experience in their home country, during migration and in post-arrival environments can significantly affect their adaptation. Cultural values, norms and beliefs of an ethnic group can facilitate or hinder refugees' adaptation. As explored in this study, our findings regarding the different roles of perception of forcedness

and related perils, loss of control, and subjective well-being for Zomi refugees suggest that it is essential to look at cultural practices and contextual factors that can impact refugees' psychological adaptation. Practitioners and researchers can consider incorporating this insight into their integration, or adaptation programs.

Further research could investigate other psychological processes that can facilitate or hinder psychological and sociocultural adaptation, such as external attribution, uncertain future perspectives, perceptions and memories of suffering and violence. Similar research can be conducted to gain a deeper insight into the psychological and socio-cultural adaptation of other major ethnic refugee groups such as Rohingya, Syrian, Afghani, Somalian, or Ukrainian. Alternatively, comparing countries rather than ethnic groups could show further examination of the impacts of contextual factors.

Overall, this study serves as a reminder of the importance of considering the diversity of refugees. Differences in groups' cultural, historical, and contextual conditions might shape the refugee's experiences, which means that different refugee groups cope with stressors differently and may require different needs in their adaptation. This study encourages researchers and practitioners to investigate refugees' psychological and sociocultural resources further and empower them to take advantage of their cultural resources.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

The current study builds upon the limited research focusing on the refugees' psychological adaptation, with a special interest in Zomi refugees. Comparing Zomi and non-Zomi refugees highlights the potentially protective role of cultural values, beliefs, or norms in coping with the stressors of unique refugee experiences and in adapting to the host country. Ultimately, this study supports the importance of considering cultural and contextual factors to understand the psychological processes of refugees' adaptation.

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Footnotes

[1] In the PARI model, integration is understood as structural integration, which is the social and systemic support for the inclusion and participation of refugees (Ager & Strang, 2008). In this study, integration does not refer to acculturation research, where integration is the migrant's preference in maintaining heritage culture and adopting the hosts' culture (Berry, 1997).

[2] This study was part of a larger research project. Other measures collected were Social Well-Being, Perceived Discrimination, and Opportunity for Contact. Description and analysis of other variables are in Appendix E. Reliability scores for all measures are presented in Table E2.

Informed Consent For Refugees In English

Research on the Refugees' Life Experiences

This study is part of a research project taking place at ISCTE – Instituto Universitário de Lisboa, Portugal. The study aims to understand the refugees' daily life experiences.

The study is conducted by Tai Ling Ling, tai_ling_ling@iscte-iul.pt, who you may contact to clear up any doubts or share comments.

Your participation in the study, which is highly valued as it will contribute to the advancement of knowledge in this field of science, consists of a questionnaire that takes about 10 to 15 minutes to complete.

There are no expected significant risks associated with participation in the study, but we will ask some questions that you may find sensitive. Please be aware that if a question makes you feel uncomfortable, you may choose to skip it.

Participation in the study is strictly voluntary: you may choose freely whether to participate or not to participate. If you have decided to participate, you may stop your participation at any time, without having to provide any justification.

In addition to being voluntary, your participation is also anonymous and confidential. The obtained data are merely intended for statistical processing and none of the answers will be analysed or reported individually. At no point of the study will you be asked to identify yourself.

I declare that I have understood the aims of what was proposed to me, as explained by the investigator, that I was given the opportunity to ask any questions about this study and received a clarifying reply to all such questions, and accept participating in the study.
1. Yes
2. No

Questionnaire in English

How old are you?
1. 18 - 29
2. 30 - 39
3. 40 - 49
4. 50 - 59
5. 60 and above

What is your gender?
1. Man
2. Woman
3. I prefer not to tell
4. Other _____

What is your sexual orientation?
1. Heterosexual
2. Lesbian
3. Gay
4. Bisexual
5. Queer
6. Other _____

Ethnicity refers to a group of people with whom you share your language, ancestry, practices, and beliefs. Some example are Punjabis or Chins. What is your ethnicity?_____

What is your country of origin? _____

What is your nationality? _____

Do you practice any religion?
1. Yes
2. No

If yes, what religion do you practice?_____

What is the highest level of education you have completed?
1. Primary
2. Secondary
3. College
4. University
5. Other _____

How long have you lived in Malaysia?
1. Less than 1 year
2. Between 1 to 5 years
3. Between 6 to 10 years
4. Between 10 to 20 years
5. More than 20 years

What type of document do you currently hold?
1. UNHCR Card
2. UNHCR letter
3. Appointment letter
4. Community card
5. Other _____

As a refugee, do you know any organisations where you can get help if needed?
1. Yes
2. No

Please indicate for each of the five statements which is closest to how you have been feeling **over the last two weeks.**

I have felt cheerful and in good spirits.
1. At no time 1
2. Some of the time 2
3. About half of the time 3
4. Most of the time 4
5. All the time 5

I have felt calm and relaxed.
1. At no time 1
2. Some of the time 2
3. About half of the time 3
4. Most of the time 4
5. All the time 5

I have felt active and vigorous.
1. At no time 1
2. Some of the time 2
3. About half of the time 3
4. Most of the time 4
5. All the time 5

I woke up feeling fresh and rested.
1. At no time 1
2. Some of the time 2
3. About half of the time 3
4. Most of the time 4
5. All the time 5

My daily life has been filled with things that interest me.
1. At no time 1
2. Some of the time 2
3. About half of the time 3
4. Most of the time 4
5. All the time 5

Please read the following statements carefully. Indicate your level of agreement.

I don't feel I belong to anything I'd call a community.
1. Strongly disagree 1
2. Disagree 2
3. Neither Agree or Disagree 3
4. Agree 4
5. Strongly Agree 5

I feel close to other people in my community.
1. Strongly disagree 1
2. Disagree 2
3. Neither Agree or Disagree 3
4. Agree 4
5. Strongly Agree 5

My community is a source of comfort.
1. Strongly disagree 1
2. Disagree 2
3. Neither Agree or Disagree 3
4. Agree 4
5. Strongly Agree 5

People who do a favor expect nothing in return.
1. Strongly disagree 1
2. Disagree 2
3. Neither Agree or Disagree 3
4. Agree 4
5. Strongly Agree 5

I believe that people are kind.
1. Strongly disagree 1
2. Disagree 2
3. Neither Agree or Disagree 3
4. Agree 4
5. Strongly Agree 5

People do not care about other people's problems.
1. Strongly disagree 1
2. Disagree 2
3. Neither Agree or Disagree 3
4. Agree 4
5. Strongly Agree 5

I have something valuable to give to the world.
1. Strongly disagree 1
2. Disagree 2
3. Neither Agree or Disagree 3
4. Agree 4
5. Strongly Agree 5

My daily activities do not produce anything worthwhile for my community.
1. Strongly disagree 1
2. Disagree 2
3. Neither Agree or Disagree 3
4. Agree 4
5. Strongly Agree 5

I have nothing important to contribute to society.
1. Strongly disagree 1
2. Disagree 2
3. Neither Agree or Disagree 3
4. Agree 4
5. Strongly Agree 5

Please read the following statements carefully. Indicate your level of agreement.

I feel I am not in control of my life.
1. Strongly disagree 1
2. Disagree 2
3. Neither Agree or Disagree 3
4. Agree 4
5. Strongly Agree 5

I feel that whether or not I am successful is just a matter of luck and chance, rather than my own doing.
1. Strongly disagree 1
2. Disagree 2
3. Neither Agree or Disagree 3
4. Agree 4
5. Strongly Agree 5

I feel that others are running my life for me.
1. Strongly disagree 1
2. Disagree 2
3. Neither Agree or Disagree 3
4. Agree 4
5. Strongly Agree 5

Please read the following statements carefully. Indicate your level of agreement.

I was free to decide whether to leave my home country.
1. Strongly disagree 1
2. Disagree 2
3. Neither Agree or Disagree 3
4. Agree 4
5. Strongly Agree 5

I was forced to leave my home country.
1. Strongly disagree 1
2. Disagree 2
3. Neither Agree or Disagree 3
4. Agree 4
5. Strongly Agree 5

It was beyond my control to leave my home country.
1. Strongly disagree 1
2. Disagree 2
3. Neither Agree or Disagree 3
4. Agree 4
5. Strongly Agree 5

I could decide for myself to which country I want to migrate.
1. Strongly disagree 1
2. Disagree 2
3. Neither Agree or Disagree 3
4. Agree 4
5. Strongly Agree 5

I could determine for myself the course of my migration.
1. Strongly disagree 1
2. Disagree 2
3. Neither Agree or Disagree 3
4. Agree 4
5. Strongly Agree 5

I could plan my migration according to my own ideas.
1. Strongly disagree 1
2. Disagree 2
3. Neither Agree or Disagree 3
4. Agree 4
5. Strongly Agree 5

To what extent have you encountered negative experiences in your everyday life, because of being a refugee in Malaysia?

I was treated without respect by Malaysians.
1. Never 1
2. Seldom 2
3. Sometimes 3
4. Frequently 4
5. Always 5

I was offended by Malaysians.
1. Never 1
2. Seldom 2
3. Sometimes 3
4. Frequently 4
5. Always 5

I was threatened by Malaysians.
1. Never 1
2. Seldom 2
3. Sometimes 3
4. Frequently 4
5. Always 5

I was physically attacked by Malaysians.
1. Never 1
2. Seldom 2
3. Sometimes 3
4. Frequently 4
5. Always 5

To what extent have you encountered the following?

I experienced massive dangers to my life in my home country.
(Examples: War / crime / disregard for human dignity by state institutions / food shortage, poverty, or lack of medical care.)

1. Never 1
2. Seldom 2
3. Sometimes 3
4. Frequently 4
5. Always 5

I feared massive dangers to my life in my home country.
(Examples: War / crime / disregard for human dignity by state institutions / food shortage, poverty, or lack of medical care.)

1. Never 1
2. Seldom 2
3. Sometimes 3
4. Frequently 4
5. Always 5

I experienced massive restrictions on my liberty in my home country.
(Examples: Discrimination of culture, religion, sexual orientation, restriction in speech, movement, choice (e.g., surveillance))

1. Never 1
2. Seldom 2
3. Sometimes 3
4. Frequently 4
5. Always 5

I feared massive restrictions on my liberty in my home country.
(Examples: Discrimination of culture, religion, sexual orientation, restriction in speech, movement, choice (e.g., surveillance))

1. Never 1
2. Seldom 2
3. Sometimes 3
4. Frequently 4
5. Always 5

I experienced massive restrictions on my capacity to act in my home country.
(Examples: Hopelessness, uncertainty regarding career, education and family.)

1. Never 1
2. Seldom 2
3. Sometimes 3
4. Frequently 4
5. Always 5

I feared massive restrictions on my capacity to act in my home country.
(Examples: Hopelessness, uncertainty regarding career, education and family.)
1. Never 1
2. Seldom 2
3. Sometimes 3
4. Frequently 4
5. Always 5

I experienced massive loneliness in my home country.
(Examples: Loss, isolation from beloved ones and friends, difficulties to build trust with others.)
1. Never 1
2. Seldom 2
3. Sometimes 3
4. Frequently 4
5. Always 5

I feared massive loneliness in my home country.
(Examples: Loss, isolation from beloved ones and friends, difficulties to build trust with others.)
1. Never 1
2. Seldom 2
3. Sometimes 3
4. Frequently 4
5. Always 5

What proportion of Malaysians do you usually see:

	None 1	Quite a few 2	About half 3	Most 4	Almost all 5
…in your neighbourhood?	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
…on a typical day?	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.

Think of this ladder as representing where people stand in Malaysia. At the top of the ladder are the people who are the best off, those who have the most money, most education, and best jobs. At the bottom are the people who are the worst off, those who have the least money, least education, and worst jobs or no job. The higher up you are on this ladder, the closer you are to the people at the very top; the lower you are, the closer you are to the people at the very bottom.

Where would you place yourself on this ladder?
Please select the rung where you think you stand at this time in your life relative to other people in the Malaysia.
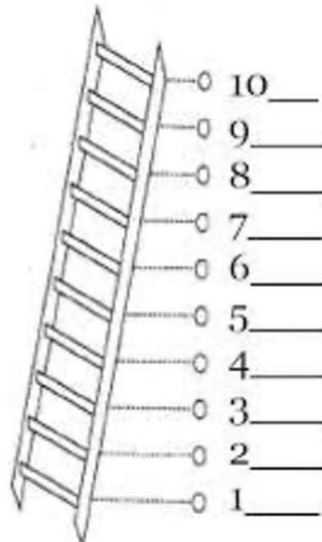
What is your primary reason for leaving your country?
1. Conflict
2. Discrimination
3. Natural Disasters
4. Poverty
5. Others _____

Research Debrief in English For Refugees In Malaysia

Debriefing of Research

Thank you for having participated in this study. As indicated at the onset of your participation, the study looks into the refugee's life experience. It is important to research refugees' life experiences as there are various stresses, which can have psychological and physical effects. One of the psychological effects that have been identified is well-being/mental health.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), "Mental health is a state of wellbeing, in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her community."

There is an increase in mental health and well-being research due to COVID19, yet, this area of research is lacking with the refugee community globally. Hence, this study aims to contribute to the research of refugees' integration, adaptation and well-being by generating new knowledge.

In the context of your participation, if you are experiencing any signs of emotional distress upon completing the questionnaire, you may reach out to the following organisations for support.

1. ACTS Clinic - Arrupe - +60322722585 (Mon–Fri: 9:00am – 1:00pm & 2:00pm–5:00pm. Sun: 9:00am–1:00pm)
2. Befrienders KL - hotline 603-76272929 or email sam@befrienders.org.my
3. HumanKind [Jalan Universiti]
- Buddy Bear Helpline (Psychological first aid): 1800-18-BEAR (2327) (Mon-Sun: 12pm–12am)
- Text Helpline: Buddy Bear Facebook (Mon-Sun: 6pm-12am)
4. Klinik Mewah 6 [Butterworth] - +601116500454 (Mental Health Hotline: Mon-Sun, 9am-10pm)
5. UNCHR List of NGO Clinics and Services
- https://refugeemalaysia.org/support/health-services/ngo-clinics-and-services
- https://refugeemalaysia.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/ngo-clinics-and-services.pdf

We remind you that the following contact details can be used for any questions that you may have, comments that you wish to share, or to indicate your interest in receiving information about the main outcomes and conclusions of the study: Tai Ling Ling, tai_ling_ling@iscte-iul.pt

If you wish to access further information about the study topic, the following sources can also be consulted:
- Refugee and Mental Health https://www.who.int/health-topics/refugee-and-migrant-health
- Psychological Aspects of Refugee Integration https://www.uni-muenster.de/PsyIFP/AEBack/research/topics/psychological_aspects_refugee_integration_pari.html
- Refugee Integration and Well Being https://www.psychologicalscience.org/news/releases/refugee-integration-and-health.html

Once again, thank you for your participation.

Research Debrief In English For Refugees In Portugal

Debriefing of Research

Thank you for having participated in this study. As indicated at the onset of your participation, the study looks into the refugee's life experience. It is important to research refugees' life experiences as there are various stresses, which can have psychological and physical effects. One of the psychological effects that have been identified is well-being/mental health.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), "Mental health is a state of wellbeing, in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her community."

There is an increase in mental health and well-being research due to COVID19, yet, this area of research is lacking with the refugee community globally. Hence, this study aims to contribute to the research of refugees' integration, adaptation and well-being by generating new knowledge.

In the context of your participation, if you are experiencing any signs of emotional distress upon completing the questionnaire, you may reach out to the following organisations for support.

- High Commision for Migration (ACM) - Migrant Support Line 808 257 257 (landline), 218 106 191 (mobile)
- Portuguese Refugee Council https://cpr.pt/contactos/
- Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) https://jrs.net/en/country/portugal/
- Crescer https://crescer.org/en/contacts/
- Lisbon Project https://lisbonproject.org/contact/

We remind you that the following contact details can be used for any questions that you may have, comments that you wish to share, or to indicate your interest in receiving information about the main outcomes and conclusions of the study: Tai Ling Ling, tai_ling_ling@iscte-iul.pt

If you wish to access further information about the study topic, the following sources can also be consulted:

- Refugee and Mental Health https://www.who.int/health-topics/refugee-and-migrant-health

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- Refugee Integration and Well Being https://www.psychologicalscience.org/news/releases/refugee-integration-and-health.html

Once again, thank you for your participation.

Appendix E

Analyses Comparing Refugees Based In Malaysia And Portugal

	Malaysia		Portugal	
	n	%	n	%
Gender				
Female	72	21.8	48	58.5
Male	251	75.8	34	41.5
Prefer not to tell	8	2.4	0	0
Age-Range				
18 – 29	166	50.6	13	15.7
30 – 39	122	37.2	39	47.0
40 – 49	33	10.1	21	25.3
50 – 59	6	1.8	7	8.4
60 and above	1	.3	3	3.6
Years in Host Country				
Less than 1 year	14	4.3	57	68.7
Between 1 to 5 years	97	29.5	19	91.6
Between 6 to 10 years	143	43.5	7	8.4
Between 10 to 20 years	66	20.1	0	0
More than 20 years	9	2.7	0	0
Practicing Religion				
Yes	321	96.7	48	57.8
No	11	3.3	35	42.2
Highest educational level				
Primary	110	33.4	3	3.6
Secondary	134	40.7	16	19.3
College	20	6.1	11	13.3
University	16	4.9	48	57.8
Other	49	14.9	5	6.0
Awareness of Support				
Yes	251	75. 8	64	77.1
No	80	24.2	19	22.9

Table E1. *Sociodemographic Characteristics of Participants in Malaysia and Portugal*

Model Variables	No. of Items	Malaysia	Portugal
		α	α
WHO5 Well-Being	5	.854	.870
Social Well-Being	9	.503	.716
Perceived Discrimination	4	.749	.669
Perceptions of Forcedness	6	.450	.802
Related Perils	8	.909	.907
Loss of Control	3	.538	.679
Opportunity for Contact*	2	.911	.890

Table E2. Reliabilities (Cronbach's α) of Measures between Malaysia and Portugal.

*Reliability was calculated with Guttman Split-Half Coefficient.

Model Variables	Malaysia		Portugal	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Subjective Well-Being (WHO5 Well-Being Index)	2.515	1.000	2.905	.916
Perceptions of Forcedness	2.869	.643	3.062	.816
Related Perils	4.018	.916	2.806	1.071
Loss of Control	3.152	.899	2.420	.806
Social Well-Being	3.316	.547	3.510	.497
Perceived Discrimination	2.624	.978	1.401	.539
Opportunity for Contact*	3.197	1.108	4.019	1.119

Table E3. Means and Standard Deviations for refugees in Malaysia and Portugal Significance level: $^*p < .05$. $^{**}p < .01$.

Model Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Subjective Well-Being (WHO5 Well-Being Index)	1	-.273**	-.079	.115*	.327**	-.097	.026
2 Perceptions of Forcedness	-.380**	1	.077	-.190**	-.101	.024	.107
3 Related Perils	.037	.326**	1	.134*	.054	.326**	.137*
4 Loss of Control	-.485**	.301**	.134*	1	.037	.088	.033
5 Social Well-Being	.285*	-.003	.213	-.060	1	-.121*	.148**
6 Perceived Discrimination	-.016	.269*	.036	.118	.151	1	.107
7 Opportunity for Contact	.234*	-.356**	-.288*	-.248*	.073	.073	1

Table E4. Correlations for refugees in Portugal are in the lower diagonal, and refugees in Malaysia in the upper diagonal. Significance level: $^*p < .05.$ $^{**}p < .01.$

Invariance Tests	χ^2	df	TLI	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR	$\Delta\chi^2$	Δdf	$p > \chi^2$
Subjective Well-Being									
Overall Model	6.709	5	.996	.998	.03	.013			
Refugees in Malaysia	5.594	5	.998	.999	.020	.014			
Refugees in Portugal	11.191	5	.932	.966	.125	.034			
Configural Invariance	16.784	10	.983	.992	.059	.018			
Metric Invariance	21.312	14	.987	.991	.052	.031	4.298	4	.367
Scalar Invariance	32.936	18	.979	.981	.065	.040	11.171	4	.025
Strict or Error Invariance	39.389	23	.9982	.980	.061	.040	5.877	5	.318
Perception of Forcedness (6-item scale)									
Overall Model	104.408	9	.773	.864	0.166	0.085			
Refugees in Malaysia	107.113	9	.735	.841	0.188	0.088			
Refugees in Portugal	45.432	9	.704	.822	0.228	0.121			
Configural Invariance	152.545	18	.727	.836	0.197	0.094			
Metric Invariance	206.873	23	.708	.776	0.204	0.154	6.911	3	.075
Scalar Invariance	268.582	28	.687	.708	0.211	0.167	246.442	21	.000
Strict or Error Invariance	303.054	34	.711	.673	0.203	0.165	34.472	6	.000
Related Perils (8-item scale)									
Overall Model	306.155	20	.815	.868	0.194	0.056			
Refugees in Malaysia	196.343	20	.832	.88	0.17	0.058			
Refugees in Portugal	121.838	20	.686	.776	0.262	0.097			

Configural Invariance	318.181	40	.798	.856	0.191	0.066			
Metric Invariance	344.527	47	.816	.846	0.183	0.085	26.346	7	.000
Scalar Invariance	417.307	54	.804	.811	0.188	0.105	72.7801	7	.000
Strict or Error Invariance	504.507	62	.792	.77	0.194	0.109	87.200	8	.000

Table E5. Invariance Testing for Subjective Well-Being, Perception of Forcedness and Related Perils between refugees based in Malaysia and Portugal

	Malaysia				Portugal			
	B	SE	Sig.	*95% CI* [LL;UL]	B	SE	Sig.	*95% CI* [LL;UL]
Indirect effects:								
Perception of Forcedness → Subjective Well-Being via Loss of Control	-0.019	0.021	0.368	[-0.074, 0.013]	-0.175	0.067	0.009	[-0.335, 0.064]
Related Perils → Subjective Well-Being via Loss of Control	0.011	0.012	0.365	[-0.007, 0.042]	-0.070	0.035	0.045	[-0.153, 0.013]
Direct effects:								
Perception of Forcedness → Subjective Well-Being	-0.387	0.080	0.000	[-0.540, 0.230]	-0.328	0.123	0.008	[-0.579, 0.090]
Related Perils → Subjective Well-Being	-0.099	0.068	0.145	[-0.237, 0.030]	0.112	0.095	0.236	[-0.078, 0.301]
Loss of Control → Subjective Well-Being	0.072	0.071	0.313	[-0.072, 0.207]	-0.463	0.126	0.000	[-0.721, 0.217
Perception of Forcedness → Loss of Control	-0.265	0.084	0.002	[-0.430, 0.104]	0.378	0.120	0.002	[0.148, 0.610]
Related Perils → Loss of Control	0.151	0.061	0.013	[0.029, 0.272]	-0.104	0.100	0.295	[-0.301, 0.089]

Table E6. Indirect and Total Effects of Perception of Forcedness, Related Perils, Loss of Control and Subjective Well-Being between refugees based in Malaysia and Portugal. Unstandardised regression coefficients and 95% percentile bootstrap intervals are reported.