



SYSTEMIC VILIFICATION AND RACISM ARE AFFECTING ON THE SOUTH SUDANESE COMMUNITY IN AUSTRALIA

Social Science

Dr. William Abur PhD, Victoria University, College of Arts and Education

ABSTRACT

This paper presents qualitative research findings in relation to the systemic racism and racial vilification issues facing people from the South Sudanese community in Melbourne, Australia. The paper is drawn from a PhD study at Victoria University in which 20 participants were interviewed about settlement issues facing their community. Racism and discrimination is one of the themes that emerged as a problem facing people from the South Sudanese community, including in the employment sector and in schools, because of negative media reporting on this community. This racism and racial vilification has been identified in research context as unfair in which some of these research argues for how members of the South Sudanese and recent African communities have become part of a broader system of racism and racialisation in Australia (Ang & Stratton 2001; Baak 2016; Due 2008; Majavu 2017; Walton et al. 2016). The impact of racial vilification has been largely felt by African community groups in public places such as schools, shopping centres, and bus and train stations. The comments made by politicians such as Peter Dutton have promoted hatred and encouraged a great deal of racism toward the South Sudanese community and other African groups, such as the Somali community. There is no doubt that Australia is a fair-go country, but it has an interesting record about racism and discrimination toward minor groups such as African communities and the Aboriginal community. Racial vilification can be a damaging issue for young people and for minority community groups if there are no policies in place to protect them from such vilification (Baak, 2018).

KEYWORDS

INTRODUCTION.

The most dangerous thing that politicians can do is to divide society by singling out a particular community and directing hostility towards that community (Baak, 2018 Due 2008; Majavu 2017). There are policies such as the Racial Discrimination Act but this doesn't protect people from experiences of every day racism. In 2017 and 2018, the South Sudanese community in Victoria was faced with serious attacks by media and some politicians, such as Peter Dutton, who made the outraged comment that "Victorians are "scared to go out to restaurants" because of "African gang violence" (Karp, 2018, p 1) His outraged statement was later backed up by the Prime Minister by warning the Australian of "the threats posed by supposed criminal gangs of African descent in Melbourne" (Farid, 2018, p 1). This was viewed as a racist remark within African community. Also, members of the South Sudanese and other African communities were victims on streets and in shopping centres, facing abusive language from some members of the public who disliked African people. Young people from the South Sudanese community had been in media spotlights due to some poor choices they had made that led to crimes. These youth choose their own ways of integrating into mainstream society, without considering advice from their own families and other community members.

Settlement has been generally difficult for the families from the South Sudanese community or other African community groups in Australia. For example, one of the challenging issues facing African families in Australia is how to find ways to engage young people (Abur, 2018, Abur, 2017). It is true that young African people are like other young people with migrant backgrounds in Australia who have faced common settlement challenges. In many instances, young people with migrant backgrounds are misunderstood and, as a result, their potential for creativity and innovation in resolving their settlement problems are not recognised. Like all refugees, young refugees bring with them useful skills and experiences that they can employ to negotiate the settlement process.

For minority community groups such as the South Sudanese or other Africans, racism is a serious matter as it affects their ability and confidence to integrate into the mainstream community. It is a problem within minority groups that have limited ways of voicing their concerns due to a number of barriers such as language and the confidence to speak up. Speaking up about racism and discrimination in the workforce and in schools appears to be a greater offence than practising racism and discrimination (Abur, 2018). The current trend of racial vilification in Melbourne, Australia, targeting the African community as "African gangs" has generated interesting discourses within both the African community and mainstream community groups, including the media (Farid, 2018; Karp, 2018). The negative news reported by media outlets is disturbing and damaging to society.

It is important for media outlets to understand that the poor behaviours displayed by some young African people or by Sudanese people in Melbourne are not a part of Sudanese or African heritage or culture. It is an entirely home-grown culture within Melbourne and in Australia. Many African parents are dismayed and fear for their young children. History tells us that Australian immigration has a bad record of practising racist policy, known as the "White Australia Policy", under the *Restriction Act 1901* (Abur, 2018, Abur, 2017). This immigration policy was designed to allow particular races and exclude others. After Federation, the new Australian nation continued to allow refugees to settle as unassisted migrants, as long as they met the restrictions imposed by the White Australia Policy. Later, small numbers of German, Russian, Greek, Bulgarian, Armenian and Assyrian refugees—including Jewish refugees—were permitted to settle after demonstrating that they met Australia's immigration criteria (Refugee Council of Australia, 2010). Between 1933 and 1939, for example, more than 7,000 Jews fleeing Nazi Germany were settled (Neuman, 2006). In 1937, the Australian Jewish Welfare Society pioneered the first refugee settlement support services, with financial assistance from the Australian Government. This settlement program was cut short by the outbreak of World War II (see Refugee Council of Australia, 2012).

Although multiculturalism is celebrated and used to strengthen citizenship and nation-building programs, it is difficult for refugees to access employment and build their earnings. In fact, evidence shows that refugees tend to experience a higher rate of unemployment and lower earnings than other migrants (Abdelkerim & Grace, 2012; Abur & Spaaij, 2016). In some workplaces, an equal employment policy needs to be adopted as recognition of social inclusion (Abur & Spaaij, 2016; Siddiquee & Faruqi, 2010). This proposal is a measure to address discrimination and inequality in workplaces. In both academic and professional circles, it is strongly felt that a dynamic and effective administrative system cannot be created unless it is based on the principle of merit, where people get a "fair go". Discrimination occurs when an individual is adversely excluded from employment opportunities on the basis of race, colour, sex, religion, age, nationality, ethnicity, political opinion or other factors; these acts are not lawful in many countries, including Australia (Abur & Spaaij, 2016; Siddiquee & Faruqi, 2010). Globally, many governments have legislated to seek to end discrimination and promote fairness in employment. Therefore, equal opportunity is a concept that seeks to ensure that all individuals have equal opportunity for employment, regardless of characteristics such as race, colour, or religion (Abur & Spaaij, 2016).

The settlement of refugees in a new country is a complex and ongoing process that requires support from the host community, government, and non-government agencies to address different challenges. The questions of what represents successful settlement and what this means for refugees are still debatable. However, there are various

understandings of what it means to be “well settled” in a new country (Atem 2011; Abur & Spaaij, 2016). These include feeling safe from racism and discrimination, obtaining secure and well-paid employment, buying a home, children feeling well supported at school and in the community, and playing sport within the host community, all without experiencing aggressive or abusive language (Abur & Spaaij, 2016). Sometimes, settlement can be a two-way process of mutual understanding of cultural expectations, with the host community working in partnership with refugees (Abur, 2018, Abur, 2017).

Settlement experiences can be challenging and difficult for refugee communities and individuals. People often experience feelings of homesickness, isolation, exposure to unfamiliar systems, culture shock and many other feelings, which compound their inability to start a new life in a new country. Newly-arrived refugee communities from non-English speaking countries in Africa have to face these issues regularly (Abur & Spaaij, 2016). Their settlement situation can be miserable, particularly for those who have no networks or support services from relatives and friends. Australia has a history of resettling refugees and people in humanitarian need. It is a signatory to the United Nations 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and to the subsequent 1967 Protocol (Abur & Spaaij, 2016, Atem, 2011, Humphrey & Steven, 1984). Since 1947, more than 800,000 refugees from a broad range of nationalities have been resettled and have rebuilt their lives in Australia (Atem, 2011; Humphrey & Steven, 1984, Refugee Council of Australia, 2010).

Australia's Humanitarian Resettlement Program began in 1947, with the resettlement of people displaced by World War II (Abur & Spaaij, 2016, Atem, 2011, Refugee Council of Australia, 2010). However, the first asylum seeker groups landed in Australia during the 1890s, comprising Lutherans, a Christian group escaping restrictions on their right to worship within Prussia. They settled in South Australia, and their contribution to that State's subsequent progress was significant (Hugo, G. (2014, Refugee Council of Australia, 2010). Australian resettlement efforts were most pronounced in the late 1940s and early 1950s, when hundreds of thousands of European Displaced Persons were brought to and accommodated in Australia under the auspices of the International Refugee Organization (IRO), the immediate precursor of the UNHCR. In 1949 alone, Australia resettled 75,486 Displaced Persons sponsored by the IRO (Humphrey & Steven, 1984).

METHOD.

This paper is drawn from a qualitative study of people from the South Sudanese community in Melbourne, undertaken as part of a PhD study at Victoria University. In-depth interviews were conducted with a total of 20 South Sudanese Australians living in Melbourne. Eleven males and nine females were interviewed, of ages ranging from 18 to 64. All participants had lived in Australia for between 2 and 14 years at the time of the interview. Interviewees were invited to share their experiences and views in relation to settlement and, specifically, employment. The researcher met with prospective participants, to provide relevant information on the research and to highlight the voluntary nature of their participation and their right to withdraw consent. Interviewees were then asked to sign a consent form. All interviews were conducted in private rooms in public libraries and community centres, at a time that was convenient to participants. The average length of interviews was one hour. Pseudonyms were assigned to the participants and used when presenting findings to avoid identification of individuals.

The interview questions were designed to capture the participants' lived experiences of settlement and specific issues such as employment and the impact of negative reporting from media groups. Some questions were related directly to specific issues (e.g. “What are your experiences of employment and settlement in Australia?”; “What are the impacts of negative reporting from the media in your family and community at large?”), and others were framed in a more general way (e.g. “How would you describe your settlement experiences in Australia?”). Most interviews were conducted in English as most of the participants were able and comfortable to share their stories in English. The researcher's ability to speak Sudanese Arabic, Dinka and Kiswahili aided in translating paraphrased content or words in those languages. The background of the wider South Sudanese community was cautiously considered when conducting the interviews, because of their experiences in South Sudan of forced displacement, political persecution and the trauma of civil war. The research team adopted an ethnographic approach, based on the principles of respecting people's

cultures, integrity and ethics (Madden, 2010). Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. The interview data were coded and analysed using thematic and narrative analysis techniques. In the next section, we discuss the key themes and findings arising from the research.

FINDINGS.

Table 1 presents the characteristics of the 20 participants in the in-depth interviews.

Table 1: Characteristics of South Sudanese interview participants

Participation in employment	Male	Female	Total
Employed	5	5	10
Unemployed	5	5	10
Age (years)	18–24	25–39	40–64
	8	11	1
Length of residency (years)	2–5	6–10	11 +

There were five female participants who were involved in the workforce and had children at school. There were also five females who were not in the workforce, and three of these had children at school. Similarly, some male participants had children at school and some were unemployed and looking for work.

DISCRIMINATION AND RACISM IN SCHOOL.

Many interviewees believed that subtle forms of discrimination and racism have affected them and their family members, regardless of anti-discrimination legislation. Some reported that they had experienced firsthand what they considered to be unfair treatment in the workplace, schools or community shopping centres. Those participants who had encountered discrimination did not hesitate to relate their experiences and opinions, hinting at the effects of a “visible difference” on employment outcomes (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2007a). Participants narrated the level of racism and discrimination that some of them had encountered in public places, for example:

Racism and discrimination is high now in public places such as employment sector, schools and shopping centres, you do not know who could attack you because of being looks different among the majority of people. Also, people from the African community or with dark skins are more likely to be discriminated in employment. For example, you can be told straight when you are looking for work that you have no local experience. How would someone get local experience when you are not given a chance to voluntarily work with the company? (28-year-old female, 11 years in Australia)

The expectations in public places like schools can make it challenging for some students to maintain respect and positive behaviours when they are not being treated well by other people.

There is always pressure and expectations at schools that you have to do well and be respectful to other people even though they are not respectful to you. Some people can try to put you down but you can only try your best to be polite and remain disciplined and positive. But it is clearly unfair to treat people in a cruel manner because of their backgrounds or colour of skin. (28-year-old female, 10 years in Australia)

Some participants reported that students from South Sudanese or Sudanese communities are often viewed in schools as though they are associated with the “Apex gang” or involved in other crimes committed by African youth. This has created some tension between parents and some schools: parents are not trusting the school because teachers are not trusting their students.

In school, some racist teachers make inappropriate remarks sometimes toward our students. They also failed to investigate some racial vilifications directed to African students by the white students. Teachers are so quick in defending white students when bullying issues between students are reported. (26 year old male, 12 years in Australia)

Participants reported that some schools asked African students not to gather in groups during recess and lunch times, claiming that they intimidate other students when they are in groups of five or six students.

Sometimes teachers don't want to see our students playing with other

students; they say they are intimidating. A lot of stereotyping—the media is playing a significant part in how we're being treated here. For instance, whenever they congregate together, they are called names such as gangs, but when it is white students, nobody tells them to split up or calls them gangs. They are being treated differently. The media has done significant damage. (40 year old male, 15 years in Australia)

All participants believed that the negative reporting by media outlets about African people and the Apex gang in Melbourne has brought negative repercussions in the community and has affected African students in schools. The misrepresentation of news in the media often brings negative debates in society. This has been confirmed in both local and international research, showing that a negative media representation results in some people being portrayed as “bad”; these people often internalise it and that affects their health, wellbeing and self-esteem, and limits their education, employment and economic opportunities (Marjoribanks & Muller, 2014).

Because of bad reporting in media, we are always seen like criminals, even our children are often suspected at schools while they are supposed to be treated like other students from mainstream community groups. Teachers show poor attitudes to innocent children as criminals. It is really bad to hear when students come home and report of incidents in school. (28 year old female, 14 years in Australia)

Some participants reported that schools have serious issues to answer when it comes to institutional racism and discrimination. Students with African heritage are sometimes treated differently because of their backgrounds. When a student shows negative behaviour, some teachers do not consider it as just the normal poor behaviour of a student and it is often taken to a different level.

There is often high level of accountabilities expected on students from African backgrounds in schools, instead of treating them as normal students similarly to other white students, they are expected to show a high level of respect in class and to other students as well as teachers. If they don't show high level of respect, they are told what the hell you are or you are doing? You are brought here and expected in school, but you are not appreciating the opportunity and support provided to you. (34 year old female, 12 years in Australia)

DISCRIMINATION AND RACISM IN EMPLOYMENT.

When participants were asked about their experiences in the workplace, most of them reported encountering negative experiences. They narrated that discrimination in the workplace or in the process of seeking work was still an issue for them and their community members. They believed that it is a difficult problem for them and their community members to break through, as it is one of the common issues facing settlement in a new country.

People are concerned about racism and discrimination in the workplace and schools. It is a major issue affecting young people from the South Sudanese or African communities. It is like many young people who face bullying at school: South Sudanese young people all face bullying and racism in Australia. It is part of community life now. People with black skins are easily victimised by racists. (30-year-old female, 14 years in Australia)

Some participants felt that their inability to gain employment was attributable in part to how employers judged their physical appearance or skin colour. For example, a 25-year-old female, who has been in Australia with her family for 12 years, recounted her experience when she was invited for an interview:

I know this through my own experiences in looking for the jobs in Australia. I have been left out several times because of small things that should not hold me back, but because of my background as an African person, I was not able to get the job. Your physical appearance is a problem sometimes, especially when you are looking for work. People can deny you because of your physical appearance. One time, I applied for a job and was invited for an interview. I went and waited at the reception for the interview. A lady who was doing the interview calls my name out and I responded. When she saw me, she said, “Oh!” and paused. I was, like, what was that pause about? It is because of my physical appearance of being black. I noticed the change in her face, felt uncomfortable and she felt uncomfortable with me. I straightaway knew that I was not going to get this job and it was true; I have not got it. (25-year-old female, 12 years in Australia)

One of the participants gave two specific examples of his experience of

discrimination in the workplace:

There is racism and discrimination in the workplace; this is still an issue in Australia. I have faced this in different ways. I remember at my work, I was told by one guy, “Hi mate, you should not wear black clothes because you are black.” This is an example of how racist people behave. When I reported him, he claimed that he was talking about a safety issue and he refused to attend a meeting with me. He claimed that migrants and refugee people “should learn our ways”. (25-year-old male, 13 years in Australia)

I was abused by a drunken customer in public who said, “Go back to where you come from. You are not needed here. This is my country. My grandfather fought for it to keep black people away from this country.” I ignored her because she was drunk but one of my colleagues did not like the way this particular customer was behaving. There was general discomfort from people who were listening to what she saying. She was later asked to leave. (25-year-old male, 13 years in Australia)

Participants reported that some simple conversations make them a bit uneasy, for example when they meet with ignorant people who assume that you are not educated or do not speak or write English.

Racism comes when people ask you during an interview or even when you are just socialising with people. They ask, “Where did you come from?”, and if you say you come from South Sudan/Sudan, the next question is, “Where did you learn English?” These kinds of questions are annoying because people just prejudice that you have no image and you are not supposed to be here meeting me. I think the image of the South Sudanese community has been badly portrayed by the media because of young people. However, young people are young people everywhere; it doesn't matter whether you are a young person from America, Africa or Australia. They still have issues of young people. It is not fair when the whole community has been judged and labelled as bad because of a few people who are struggling with social issues. I feel that is racism and discrimination because I would like to be judged as individual and not as the community I come from. (28 year old female, 14 years in Australia)

Supporting people from refugee backgrounds to understand their rights in the workplace and when they experience discrimination is critical. The importance of empowerment was discussed by several participants, and the following comment by one participant, who described how his colleague mistreated him but, through standing up for his rights, the problem was quickly resolved, is indicative of that:

One of my colleagues used to undermine my work and treated me badly. She always brought her personal issues from home and behaved aggressively towards me. I tried putting up with her behaviour, ignoring her aggression and discrimination, until I stood up for myself. She realised I was going to report the issue to the manager. She became friendly to me and worked with me in a respectful way. This came after I confronted her and told her she didn't need to talk to me like this and she needed to respect me as I respected her as a colleague. I said that should she continue in the same way, I would resign and there would be an investigation. (25-year-old male, 10 years in Australia)

Lack of strong policies and disciplinary actions allow ignorant people to abuse their power and privileges by treating other employees poorly. Employees of colour or minority community groups are most likely to be subjected to a high level of abuse by their counterparts. Participants highlighted the need for organisational support and procedures to address workplace discrimination.

Sometimes racism and discrimination in the workplace is not the organisation, it is a personal interest of those who have racist behaviours or attitudes learnt from other groups. I think the organisation needed to tighten up its policy to ensure that those who hold senior positions should not bring their racist behaviour into the workplace. Organisations should integrate a positive culture and cultural understanding to ensure that people from different cultures are given the opportunity to work in the organisation. (25-year-old female, 12 years in Australia)

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POLICE AND YOUTH OF AFRICAN BACKGROUNDS.

The relationship between African young people and police is often perceived in community as being difficult. Some youth do complain to

their families about the way the police had interacted with them. Participants explained how some people, especially young people, had suffered negative interactions with police, which had instilled in them a more generalised fear of discrimination that also extended to the labour market. The negative interactions between young people from South Sudanese backgrounds and police in Melbourne were believed to have created distrust in the community, including a perception that South Sudanese Australians and other African Australians were being racially targeted by law enforcement. This caused anxiety in the community, as the following comments suggest:

I am concerned with the ways police interact with young people from the African community while they expect you to integrate successfully in Australia. Police are punitive on young people, they treat them badly even when the young people have done nothing wrong and were just socialising as a group. Police can interview them as if they committed a crime. Such attitudes make it hard for young people to trust and believe that police are there to protect people including them. Many young people from South Sudanese and other community groups believe that police treat them as a gang while they are not, but once they are treated as a gang by the authorities, they turn against the authority and do not trust them anymore. Now many of young people are in prison and this shows the system does not support newly-arrived refugees and migrants to settle better. They can be fuelled by small issues and if they react negatively they will end up facing jail. (30-year-old female, 14 years in Australia)

The specific issues surrounding youth are linked to parenting responsibilities and the lack of role models for young family members. Parenting is one of the challenging issues for South Sudanese families. For many parents, the task of single parenting is not easy. In South Sudan, war has resulted in there being many single parents, because many men lost their lives in conflict and some fathers were forced to separate from their families due to the conflict. Another cause of the increase in the number of single parents is cultural change or culture shock in Australia. These issues have torn many relationships apart and left the responsibility of caring for children with one parent, usually the mother. During interviews, single parenting emerged as one of the difficult issues in discussions about family matters. It is very clear that single parents in the South Sudanese community were struggling with their teenage children, who were taking different directions from their parenting.

Many young people are lacking parenting discipline; many families or young people are being parented by single parents—particularly by mothers. Many of my friends and cousins are lacking male parenting or male role models because their fathers are not here in Australia. Some lost their fathers during the war in South Sudan/Sudan. (32-year-old male, 12 years in Australia)

TAKING RESPONSIBILITY

Participants believe that there is a great need for people within their community to participate in advocacy with the police and other service providers, to assist the community with issues such as discrimination and racism.

I was involved in an advocacy group because I did not like the police targeting refugee young people; particularly black young people from Africa who are often treated or targeted by police as criminal. Look at me; I am a South Sudanese and I have never fought in my life but guess what? The police or some people think that all the South Sudanese young people are bad because they fight lots on the streets. This is not true to generalise and treat the whole community as bad people. (22-year-old female, 11 years in Australia)

People suggested that “prevention is better than cure”, with some participants offering advice to their community members to help those in need before it was too late. They wanted South Sudanese community members to come together and help each other with settlement issues. They also wanted to see their community leaving tribal issues behind and making positive contributions for each other in Australia.

I think it is important that people get help in times of need: help from your community, agencies and friends in particular during their settlement time. The community needs to work hard and support each other, to leave their tribal conflicts [behind] when they arrive in Australia and work as one South Sudanese community. If we support each other, we can overcome settlement difficulties. We can also

contribute well to society. It is not good for those young people on the streets if community leaders do not engage with them, to think positively instead of having problems with the system all the time. (25-year-old female, 14 years in Australia)

The community is not happy with people—particularly young people—who are burning bridges by causing some problems for the community. These young people are being blamed in the community and in their families.

There are people within the community who avoid assimilating into society by choosing to engage in negative things or behaviours that do not help them to integrate better. These people refuse to learn English and refuse to look for work. (30-year-old female, 12 years in Australia)

All participants believe that racism and discrimination in schools is problematic. They want parents and family members to advocate to school principals on issues affecting children or students at school.

Parents and family members must take responsibility to speak up on current issues of racism and discrimination with the school community. Principals of schools should know these issues are reported by students at home the only way to address these matters, is to get involved and speak up with schools. (32-year-old male, 12 years in Australia)

Interviewees considered that getting advice from the right people was a useful way to assist families and individuals. Participants believed that people who are struggling with settlement issues need to seek support and advice from others. Indeed, talking with people who have experience and a positive mind-set can help some people realise what they must do to address some of their own settlement challenges.

Those who are confused to work out their problems, do need to seek help and advice in order to assist themselves with their families' difficult issues. (24-year-old male, 8 years in Australia)

There is some understanding of multicultural policies and social inclusiveness within the South Sudanese community. However, participants believe that, despite this multicultural policy and social inclusion spirit, some members in their community are still encountering difficulties and challenges in the workforce, by being side-lined and treated unfairly. As such, participants in this study have called for government to support their community by creating jobs and awareness among employers and agencies to accommodate those from their community in the workforce. They believe that this may reduce some challenges and could provide them and their community with opportunities, which may lead to better settlement outcomes for families and individuals.

We believe that Australia is a fair nation as we sing the words of the national anthem. We should be treated equally in the workplace and given the opportunity to work. The government should pressure those agencies who have denied jobs to refugees and people from non-English backgrounds. Jobs should not be given because you are white or black. I think people should be given jobs according to their willingness and capabilities to work. (39-year-old male, 10 years in Australia)

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION.

There is nothing that a society can gain by subjecting minority community groups to a high level of discrimination and racial vilification. We know that children from minority groups suffer badly from bullying and other forms of abuse in schools, families can be scared to seek assistance or complain about what happen to their children at schools, and workers from minority communities suffer psychological harm due to abuse and racial vilification and can lose their jobs easily. Australia's Race Discrimination Commissioner, Dr Tim Southphommassane, has argued that “the panic about African youth crime has undoubtedly done significant damage to racial harmony in Melbourne and Australian society more generally” (Baak, 2018, Millar, 2018).

Racism and discrimination form just one element of the settlement issues faced by the South Sudanese people in Australia. Both international and local reports have indicated that negative settlement experiences are likely to cause more trauma for refugees if there is not strong support from governments and local community groups (Abur,

2012; Correa-Velez, Spaaij, & Upham, 2013). Australia's Humanitarian Programme is reportedly experiencing pressing issues with the integration of new refugees (Abur & Spaaij, 2016; Refugee Council of Australia, 2012). There are many settlement initiatives, but it seems that many recently arrived refugees are often failed by these, especially in the area of employment (Correa-Velez et al., 2013). Also, students in secondary schools are struggling with serious issues, including bullying and discrimination, because of their social and cultural backgrounds (Abur, 2016, Abur, 2018).

The findings of this study indicate that the settlement experiences of South Sudanese Australians have been extremely difficult during the last few years, due to negative reporting by different media groups. The impact of this negative reporting has led to high levels of unemployment and youth dropping out from schools because of bullying and discrimination. Furthermore, the negative experiences of unemployment and other settlement issues has led to many families experiencing family conflict and separations. Studies suggest that South Sudanese community members are experiencing a greater sense of exclusion from mainstream Australian society as their children are experiencing higher levels of discrimination and racism. They are also experiencing high levels of unemployment, and many who are employed are experiencing underemployment. All these have affected their level of social and economic participation. For example, the level of participation of young people in sporting clubs is affected.

The findings of this study have policy implications in the areas of resettlement and employment assistance for all people from refugee backgrounds, and particularly for South Sudanese Australians. One of the most important implications of this study is the need to tackle barriers to employment and discrimination to promote better settlement outcomes for refugees. The findings suggest that a more targeted approach may be required to facilitate refugees' access to the labour market; this will require going beyond building the capacity of South Sudanese Australians to also critically reflecting on and transforming organisational and professional practices (Abur, 2012; Marlowe, 2014). The narratives of participants in this study reinforced the findings of Colic-Peisker and Tilbury (2007, p. 2), who argued that "discrimination on the basis of race, religion and ethnic origin plays a role in creating unsatisfactory employment outcomes", in particular through discrimination on the part of employers on the basis of "soft skills" such as Australian cultural knowledge. Discrimination in the workforce cannot be seen in isolation from discrimination in other societal domains: systematic discrimination appears to have also been meted out against refugees in other areas, such as the housing sector, with negative effects on settlement outcomes (Dandya & Pe-Puab, 2015).

There is a great need to formulate strategies to address racism in schools and discrimination in the workforce. The strategies could include vocational education and training programs linked with English language learning, streamlining the qualification recognition process, introducing specialised job networks, challenging stereotypes and discrimination, promoting diversity awareness among employers, providing greater opportunities for refugees to gain work experience, introducing incentives to undertake volunteer work, and mentoring programs (e.g. Abdelkerim & Grace, 2012; Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2007b; Correa-Velez et al., 2013; Refugee Council of Australia, 2010). Some existing strategies, such as the provision of tangible work experience opportunities through traineeships and apprenticeships (e.g. Brotherhood of St Laurence, 2016), have had proven success in addressing employment barriers for refugees. Another potentially effective yet currently under-utilised strategy in assisting people from refugee backgrounds to access employment is the provision of professional connection and mentoring programs for job seekers.

In conclusion, there is a clear need for continuing pressure in both the workforce and schools to address discrimination issues affecting people from refugee backgrounds and their children. This could involve educating employers about workplace diversity and supporting them in developing relevant workplace programs and practices, while also challenging stereotypes and bias (which is often unconscious) and holding employers accountable for discriminatory practices. Recognition of the benefits of diversity in the workforce, and promoting the view that many South Sudanese Australians are hardworking and want to work, are important elements of this approach. In conjunction, these strategies could contribute to a labour market that better enables people from refugee backgrounds, and

South Sudanese Australians in particular, to realise their full potential as productive citizens.

This study's findings suggest that the benefits of employment include financial, social and mental wellbeing. Some of these benefits for people from refugee backgrounds are well documented (Abur, 2016). Unemployment and discrimination in any form brings psychological suffering and despair in the community. The identified barriers resonate strongly with previous research undertaken with people from refugee backgrounds (Abur, 2012; Abur & Spaaij, 2016; Correa-Velez & Onsando, 2009; Correa-Velez et al., 2013; Dandya & Pe-Puab, 2015) and newly emerging African communities in Australia (Abdelkerim & Grace, 2012).

REFERENCES.

1. Abdelkerim, A., & Grace, M. (2012). Challenges to employment in newly emerging African communities in Australia: A review of the literature. *Australian Social Work*, 65(1), 104–119. doi: 10.1080/0312407X.2011.616958.
2. Abur, W. & Spaaij, R. (2016). Settlement and employment experiences of South Sudanese people from refugee background in Melbourne, Australia. *Australasian Review of African Studies*, 37(2), 107–128.
3. (Abur, w. (2016) Benefits of participation in sport for people from refugee backgrounds: A study of the South Sudanese community in Melbourne, Australia, Vol.1, no (2) <http://dx.doi.org/10.15739/ISR.16.002>
4. Abur, w. (2018) Settlement Strategies for the South Sudanese Community in Melbourne: An Analysis of Employment and Sport Participation, published PhD's thesis. Melbourne: Victoria University <vuir.vu.edu.au/36189/>.
5. Abur, w. (2017) Challenges of Unemployment and Benefits of Employment for South Sudanese People from Refugee Backgrounds in Melbourne, Australia, *International Journal of Contemporary Applied Sciences*, Vol. 4, No. 4, pp 1-36. ijas.net/pdf
6. Abur, W. (2012). A study of the South Sudanese refugees' perspectives of settlement in the western suburbs of Melbourne (Masters thesis, Victoria University, Australia). Retrieved from <http://vuir.vu.edu.au/22013/>
7. Ang, I & Stratton, J 2001, 'Multiculturalism in Crisis: The New Politics of Race and National Identity in Australia', in I Ang (ed), *On Not Speaking Chinese: Living Between Asia and the West*, Routledge, London, pp. 95-111.
8. Atem, P. (2011). Housing affordability and refugee settlement: a critical analysis of the housing experience of Sudanese refugees and their settlement in South Australia (Unpublished doctoral thesis), University of South Australia, Australia.
9. Baak, M 2016, *Negotiating Belongings: stories of forced migration of Dinka women from South Sudan*, Sense Publishers, Rotterdam.
10. Baak, M 2018, 'Racism and Othering for South Sudanese heritage students in Australian schools: is inclusion possible?', *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, pp. 1-17.
11. Bennett, S., & Adriel, C. (2014). Resettled young Sudanese and Somali refugees have high vocational and educational ambitions despite experiences of school disruption and language difficulties. *Australian Occupational Therapy Journal*, 61(1), 35–36.
12. Brotherhood of St Laurence. (2016). Given the chance. Retrieved from: <https://www.bsl.org.au/services/work-and-learning/given-the-chance/>
13. Colic-Peisker, V., & Tilbury, F. (2006). Employment niches for recent refugees: Segmented labour market in twenty-first century Australia. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 19(2), 203–229. doi: 10.1093/jrs/fej016
14. Colic-Peisker, V., & Tilbury, F. (2007a). Integration into the Australian labour market: The experience of three "visibly different" groups of recently arrived refugees. *International Migration*, 45(1), 59–85. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-2435.2007.00396.x
15. Colic-Peisker, V., & Tilbury, F. (2007b). Refugees and employment: The effect of visible difference on discrimination. Perth, Australia: Centre for Social and Community Research, Murdoch University.
16. Correa-Velez, I, & Onsando, G. (2009) African men from refugee backgrounds living in urban and regional Southeast Queensland. *Australasian Review of African Studies*, 30(2), 114–127.
17. Correa-Velez, I, Spaaij, R., & Upham, S. (2013). 'We are not here to claim better services than any other': Social exclusion among men from refugee backgrounds in urban and regional Australia. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 26(2), 163–186. doi: 10.1093/jrs/fes003
18. Dandya, J & Pe-Pua, R. (2015) The Refugee Experience of Social Cohesion in Australia: Exploring the Roles of Racism, Intercultural Contact, and the Media, *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*, 13:4, 339-357, DOI: 10.1080/15562948.2014.974794
19. Due, C 2008, "Who Are Strangers?": 'Absorbing' Sudanese Refugees into a White Australia', *ACRAWSA E-Journal*, vol. 4, no. 1, viewed 20 April, 2010, <<http://www.acrawsa.org.au/ejournalFiles/Volume%204,%20Number%201,%202008/ClemeDue.pdf>>.
20. Dunn, KM, Lean, GL, Watkins, M & Noble, G 2014, 'The visibility of racism: perceptions of cultural diversity and multicultural education in state schools', *International Journal of Organizational Diversity*, vol. 15, no. 1, pp. 17-29.
21. Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria. (2008). Real jobs: Employment for migrants and refugees in Australia. Policy Discussion Paper No. 3. Melbourne, Australia.
22. Farid, F (2018) African Australians say they've been racially vilified and are pushing back, *Quartz Africa*, retrieved from: <https://qz.com/1176308/australians-african-gangs-from-south-sudan-push-back-at-racist-stereotypes-in-melbourne/>.
23. Forrest, J, Lean, G & Dunn, K 2016, 'Challenging racism through schools: teacher attitudes to cultural diversity and multicultural education in Sydney, Australia', *Race Ethnicity and Education*, vol. 19, no. 3, 2016/05/03, pp. 618-638.
24. Hugo, G. (2014). The economic contribution of humanitarian settlers in Australia. *International Migration*, 52(2), 31–52. doi: 10.1111/imig.12092.
25. Humphrey, M., & Steven, H. (1984). Family, work and unemployment: A study of Lebanese settlement in Sydney. Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, Australia.
26. Karp, P (2018) Peter Dutton says Victorians scared to go out because of African gang violence, *the guardian*, retrieved from: <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/jan/03/peter-dutton-says-victorians-scared-to-go-out-because-of-african-gang-violence>.
27. Madden, R. (2017). *Being ethnographic: A guide to the theory and practice of ethnography*, Sage.
28. Majavu, M 2017, *Uncommodified Blackness : The African Male Experience in Australia and New Zealand*, Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.
29. Mansouri, F, Jenkins, L, Morgan, L & Taouk, M 2009, *The Impact of Racism upon the Health and Wellbeing of Young Australians*, The Foundation for Young Australians. <https://www.fya.org.au/app/theme/default/design/assets/publications/Impact_of_Rac

- ism_FYA_report.pdf>.
30. Marjoribanks, T., & Muller, D. (2014). The AuSud Media Project, University of Melbourne, retrieved from < https://arts.unimelb.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/1760163/Report_AuSud_Media_Project2014.pdf>.
 31. Marlowe, J. (2014). Refugee settlement: Considerations of health and wellbeing. In L. Beddoe & J. Maidment (Eds), *Social Work Practice for Promoting Health and Wellbeing: Critical Issues* (pp. 194–205). London, UK: Routledge.
 32. Millar, B. (2018, April 22). Race panic drags Australia to new low: discrimination commissioner. *The Age*. Retrieved from: <https://www.theage.com.au>
 33. Olliff, L., & Couch, J. (2005). Pathways and pitfalls: The journey of refugee young people in and around the education system in Greater Dandenong, Victoria. *Youth Studies Australia*, 24(3), 1–42.
 34. Paul, K. I., & Moser, K. (2009). Unemployment impairs mental health: Meta-analyses. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 74(3), 264–282. doi: 10.1016/j.jvb.2009.01.001
 35. Refugee Council of Australia. (2010). *Economic, civic and social contributions of refugees and humanitarian entrants: A literature review*. Sydney, Australia.
 36. Refugee Council of Australia. (2012). *Australia's refugee and humanitarian program 2012-2013: Community views on post-arrival settlement support*. Sydney, Australia.
 37. Refugee Resettlement Working Group. (1994). *Refugee resettlement: Let's get it right in Australia! A blueprint for refugee resettlement services in Australia*. Camperdown, NSW, Australia.
 38. Taylor, J. (2004). Refugees and social exclusion: What the literature says, *Migration Action*, vol. XXVI, no.2, 2004, pp.16–31.
 39. Walton, J, Priest, N, Kowal, E, White, F, Fox, B & Paradies, Y 2016, 'Whiteness and national identity: teacher discourses in Australian primary schools', *Race Ethnicity and Education*, pp. 1-16.