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Masters Degree in Clinical and Health Psychology

Resilience Factors in Unaccompanied Minor Refugees with Asylum Seeking Status



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List of Abbreviations

PTSD - Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

UASC - Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking-Children

UMR - Unaccompanied Minor Refugee

UNHCR - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

URM - Unaccompanied Refugee Minor

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Introduction

There has been an abundance of research in relation to resilience but only a small amount of research has been done with unaccompanied asylum seeking-children (UASCs).

Specifically, studies focusing on their resilience and protective factors are just a few and Maegusuku-Hewett et al. (2007) stressed that there is little consensus as to what exact processes promote or result in resilience and successful coping in this population. At the same time, “increasing attention has been paid to their capacity for resilience, (whilst) little research has been done on the exact manner in which they cope”. (Raghallaigh & Gilligan, 2010, p.226).

The XXI century has been marked by a big inflow of refugees in European countries, with unprecedented numbers of children being displaced (Motti-Stefanidi et al. 2021). According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), by the end of 2020, 74.4 million people were forcibly displaced due to war, conflicts, persecution or human rights violations. This included 26.4 million refugees of which about 40% are minors and 141.000 asylum seekers under the age of 18 of which nearly 10% (13.600) were unaccompanied minors (Calveras et al. 2022).

The United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees has defined a refugee as “someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion” (UNHCR, 1951, p.3). Additionally, according to the European Union (EU) asylum acquis, an unaccompanied minor refugee (UMR) is

a non-EU national or stateless person under the age of 18, who arrives on the territory of the EU States unaccompanied by an adult responsible for him/her, and for as long as s/he is not effectively taken into the care of such a person” (Hohne et al., 2020, p.1177).

The URM’s journey is shaped by three important phases: the pre-migration, the migration and the pos-migration, which can all include potentially traumatic experiences. The pre-migration phase is often marked by threats of safety, war, violence and chaos; the migration phase represents a great uncertainty about the future with the displacement from home and the loved ones; and the post-migration phase focuses on the settling in the host

country and the mourning process of what was left behind - friends, family, material possessions, homeland (Shaheen & Miles, 2017).

The literature showed that the factors associated with the prevalence of mental and physical health problems amongst unaccompanied asylum seeking-children (UASC) is divided into the three mentioned phases before, which are influenced by the community, the individual, the family and the protective factors and societal risks.

Also, the prevalence of mental and physical health problems amongst refugee children and adolescents is significantly higher than in the general population and that the prevalence of mental health problems UASC is higher than in children seeking asylum with their families, or children who are not from refugee or asylum-seeking backgrounds. Additionally, the prevalence of mental and physical health problems of UASC is higher than in unaccompanied children who are greeted by family on arrival to the new country, which underlines the vulnerability of this population (Rodriguez & Dobler, 2021).

According to Rodriguez and Dobler (2021), the concept of resilience presents an evolution from first being seen as an

ability to do well despite adversity or risk, and this ability was thought to be a more or less static feature inherent to a particular individual, to a more dynamic definition that contributes to several resilience factors, to seeing resilience as a positive development despite experiences of significant adversity or trauma. (p.461)

Even so, Rodriguez and Dobler (2021, p.561) affirmed that “the positive adaptation may not necessarily affect all functional domains, but may apply to one or more specific parts of life and it can co-exist with mental health difficulties”.

Also, the mental health difficulties can be part of the process of adaptation to abnormal circumstances. In addition, resilience is thought to be culturally shaped and it may, therefore, be understood as “cumulative intra-individual traits and/or contextual factors that promote physical or mental well-being in the presence of adversity” (Rodriguez & Dobler, 2021, p.562).

The fact that UMR’s have successfully fled and travelled long and often dangerous routes and engaged in the resettlement and acculturation processes without the support of their closed ones, is in itself, already, a demonstration of resilience (Keles et. al., 2016).

Moreover, it has been argued that resilience develops through experience of adversity, therefore the transition experienced by this youth may actually result in increased coping capacity and resilience (Dogget, 2012).

Having in mind the increasing numbers of URM's arriving, the phases that they go through and the lack of studies in this field, it has become of utter importance to understand which factors allow these minors to adapt in a resilient way, despite the adversities that they might have been through.

These are the motives that have contributed to the motivation to explore more about this field. Thus, the structure of the the present study is organized in two scientific articles: the first one is a systematic review of the literature which had the goal of analyzing what the current literature, in terms of empiric studies, provides to the theme of the thesis; and a second article, where an empiric study is presented, with the goal of understanding which are the psychosocial factors associated with resilience in unaccompanied refugee minors seeking asylum. At the end, a general conclusion of both articles will be presented.

Article 1: Psychosocial factors associated with resilience in unaccompanied refugee minors seeking asylum: A systematic review

Abstract

The study about resilience factors in UASC is a topic that has been gaining a bit more relevance during the past years but still, there aren't many studies developed in this field. Because of this, a systematic review of the literature was conducted in order to understand what research has been done so far regarding this theme.

Thus, the goals of this review are to synthesize the current knowledge about the identified psychosocial resilience factors and to understand their impact in the URM lives.

As a research method, B-On database was used with the following Boolean phrase: ("unaccompanied asylum seeking children or unaccompanied minors or unaccompanied children or separated children seeking asylum" [TI]) and ("protective factors or resilience or adaptation or promotive factors or strengths or resiliency or coping" [TI]) and ("mental health" [optional]).

After selecting the options: full text, analyzed by pairs, scientific journals and time period 01/2010-current, there were in total 21 results from which, after the application of the inclusion and exclusion criteria, 7 were selected.

The main conclusions showed that: the literature in this field is scarce, most of the articles are systematic reviews of the literature or qualitative studies where semi-structured interviews were used to collect data.

The resilience factors are mainly divided into individual, relationships and context/environment. The main identified factors that seem to play an important role are: religion, meaningful and trustworthy relationships, focus on education, safety and acculturation process.

It was observed that most studies were conducted outside of a shelter's environment and when the minors were already adults which shows the difficulty and complexity of the process of conducting this type of studies.

Keywords: unaccompanied minors, asylum seekers, resilience, mental health

Introduction

There is an increasing number of UMRs arriving in Europe and applying for asylum, which leads to a need to investigate which factors promote psychological resilience and improve their mental health.

According to UNHCR, UNICEF and IOM (2021):

In 2021, 19,995 unaccompanied children lodged asylum applications in the EU, 47% more than in 2020 (13,625). Again, Afghanistan stood as the leading country of origin of asylum-seeking children (54%), followed by the Syrian Arab Republic (19%), Somalia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Egypt (5% each). (p.5)

If we look back for a period of approximately ten years, at an European level, it is possible to see that:

The share of unaccompanied minors in the total number of first-time asylum applicants aged less than 18 was on average 16.0 % over the period from 2012 to 2022, with a maximum value of 25.5 % recorded in 2015 and a minimum value of 7.3 % in 2019. Once again, the highest value was recorded during the “migration crisis”, but the weight of unaccompanied minors dropped quickly just after before increasing up to 19.0 % in 2022 (Eurostat, 2023, p.8)

Furthermore, it is important to focus on the fact that this percentage has been rising again since 2020 (11%), followed by 2021(16%) and 2022 (19%), which contributes to acknowledging the importance of better understanding this population. (Eurostat, 2023).

Another important fact is that UMRs are considered as the most vulnerable within the asylum-seeker communities (UNHCR, 2015). They represent a high-risk group due to different factors: the separation/loss of parents and/or other family members; loss of home, belongings and friends; exposure to pre-flight traumatic events; possible exposure to war, violence and life-threatening events; possible torture, physical and sexual abuse or imprisonment (Erikson & Rundgren, 2018; Huemer et. al., 2012; Natalucci et. al., 2022; Longobardi et. al., 2017).

These factors put them at risk for mental health problems, like depression or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and contribute for PTSD to be one of the most studied and frequently-occurring diseases in URM (Longobardi, et. al. 2017).

Additionally, studies investigating the mental health of unaccompanied minors (UMs) have found that they are at greater risk of developing mental health problems than their accompanied peers and that they have high levels of behavioral and emotional disorders, post-traumatic anxiety and altered prosocial capacities. (Longobardi et al. 2017).

Despite these vulnerabilities, minors can defend themselves by using personal resources and develop successful strategies to deal with the existing vulnerabilities. Even though they face a range of stressful circumstances that constitute a risk to well-being, not all of them necessarily experience adverse outcomes.

Research showed that most of them are able to cope with these multiple stressors and there has been an increase in the attention that is being paid to the different ways in which URM respond to the challenges, and to the fact that many emerge as “active survivors” rather than as “passive victims” (Raghallaigh & Gilligan, 2010).

The varied research findings also suggested that creating a dichotomy where URM are seen as either ‘vulnerable’ or ‘resilient’ is over-simplistic and, instead, both vulnerability and resilience may be evident as symptoms of stress and coping strategies inevitably exist side by side (Raghallaigh & Gilligan, 2010).

Furthermore, the literature showed that all youth, including refugee youth, face normative developmental challenges. A key for judging the quality of their adaptation, towards these challenges, is through their success in age-salient developmental tasks, like having close friends and being liked by their peers, doing well in school, knowing or obeying the laws of society, civic engagement, developing of self-control and establishment of a integrated, cohesive and multifaceted sense of identity (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2020).

URM face the acculturative challenges that come from living and growing in a context where different cultures are present. Thus, they need to learn to understand, respect, and live with people from other cultures and this requires the development of intercultural competence which can be considered an index of positive adaptation.

Intercultural competence is defined as “the ability to mobilize and deploy relevant values, attitudes, skills, knowledge, and/or understanding in order to respond appropriately and effectively to the demands, challenges, and opportunities that are presented in intercultural situations” (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2020, p.22).

They also need to acquire cultural competence which is an acculturative task that involves the acquisition of the knowledge and skills of both ethnic and national cultures, which is also a judging criterion for successful adaptation.

Having all these factors in mind, the purpose and goal of the scientific literature review was to understand and organize the content that has been produced in this field and to recognize which psychosocial resilience factors have been identified so far and how they are being incorporated by the URMs.

Thus, the question that the study intends to answer is what are the resilience factors in unaccompanied minor refugees with asylum seeking status.

Method

The inclusion and exclusion criteria were defined in order to guide the search and the selection of primary studies and to increase the precision of the results, according to objectives of the search.

The inclusion criteria were: full-text publications between the period January 2010 - May 2023 in English; empiric studies that analyzed at least two of the variables defined, “resilience” and one more associated to it; and studies that had as participants both masculine and feminine unaccompanied minors.

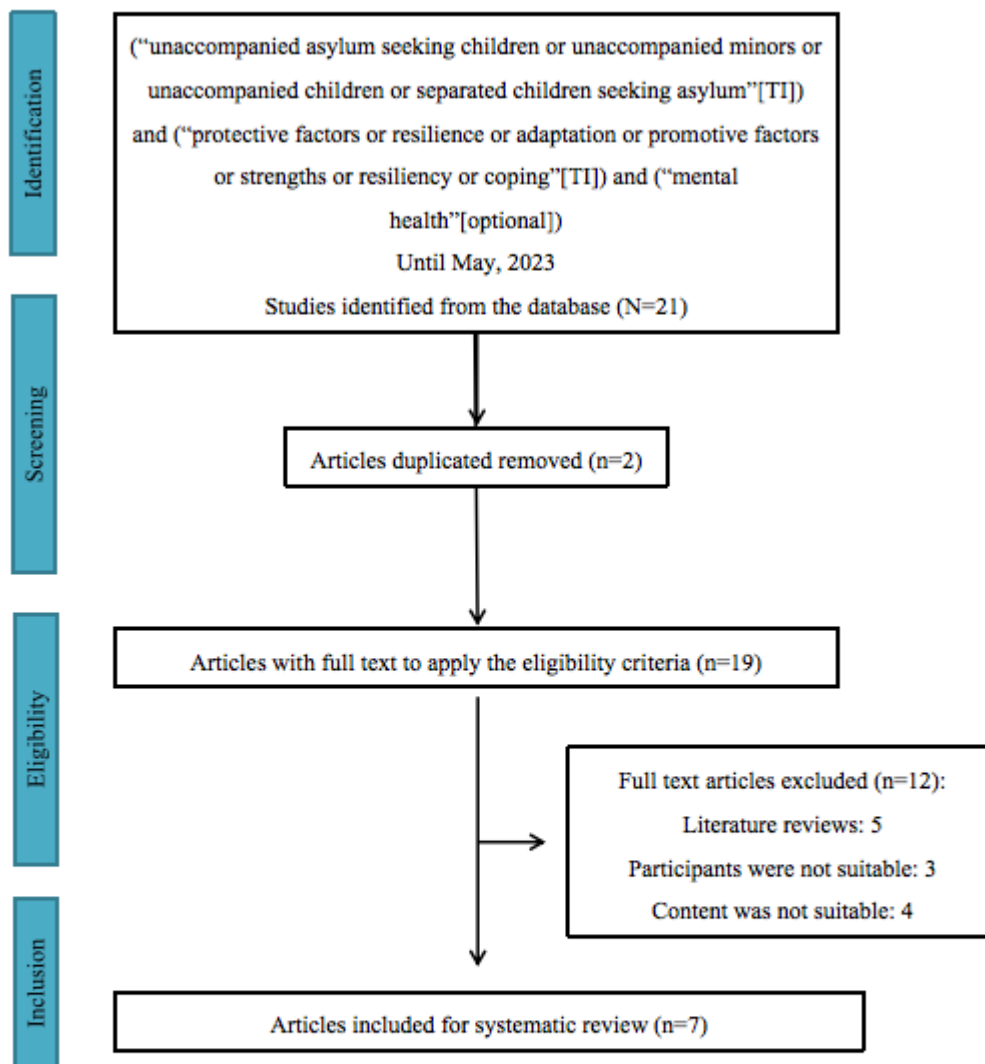
Studies that did not meet these criteria were excluded.

For the research it was selected the advance search on B-On database and it was used with the following Boolean phrase: (“unaccompanied asylum seeking children or unaccompanied minors or unaccompanied children or separated children seeking asylum”[TI]) and (“protective factors or resilience or adaptation or promotive factors or strengths or resiliency or coping”[TI]) and (“mental health”[optional]). After selecting the options: “full text”, “analyzed by pairs”, “scientific magazines” and time period 01/2010-05/2023, there were in total 21 results from which 7 were selected for a more profound analysis.

The main reasons for exclusion were for: to be a literature review; to include participants that have no interest for the study (e.g., immigrant children or the Swedish Police Services); content that has no interest for the study (e.g., referring unaccompanied minors to psychiatric residential treatment; focus on the needs of URMs; focus on behavioral and emotional difficulties).

The following chart describes the process of the studies selection (Figure 1):

Figure 1. Flow chart with the phases of studies selection



Results

In this section, a summary of the articles analyzed is presented. Table 1, presents the information regarding the articles identified by authors, year, title and origin; their type and aim of the study; their participants; their measures/instruments used and their main results.

Table 1. Summary of the Articles Analyzed

Authors, year, title and origin	Type and aim of the study	Participants	Instruments	Main results
<p>Keles, S., Friborg, O., Idsoe, T., Sirin, S., Oppedal, B. (2018). Resilience and acculturation among unaccompanied refugee minors. <i>International Journal of Behavioral Development</i>, 42(1), 52–63.</p> <p>Norway</p>	<p>Quantitative, longitudinal study. Designed to understand differences between unaccompanied refugees who retained or achieved good mental health (healthy or resilient) and those who maintained or developed poor mental health (clinical and vulnerable). Using person-based analyses, the role of pre-migration traumatic exposure and acculturation-related factors in long-term trajectories of psychological adjustment among unaccompanied refugees was explored.</p>	<p>864 youth who had arrived in Norway as unaccompanied minor asylum seekers, who were over 13 years of age at arrival, and who had been granted asylum and a permanent residence permit during the years 2000 to 2010</p>	<p>Depressive Symptoms were measured by the 20-item Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale for adolescents (CES-D; Radloff, 1977)</p> <p>Acculturation Hassles were assessed using four dimensions of the YCC Hassles Battery, which was created for the present research program.</p> <p>Host/Norwegian Culture Competence and Heritage Culture Competence were assessed by a measure developed by Oppedal (2003), with separate dimensions for the two competencies. They were measured with nine parallel items assessing both language knowledge and skills along with understanding of culturally embedded patterns of behavior and interaction</p>	<p>The participants were assigned to clusters manually according to how their depression scores changed over three waves. A CES-D score above 23 was used as a cut-off score to define a clinically high or low degree of depression to create the four clusters: resilient, vulnerable, clinical, or healthy</p> <p>Results showed that about 60% of unaccompanied refugee youth could be defined as healthy or resilient.</p>

Authors, year, title and origin	Type and aim of the study	Participants	Instruments	Main results
<p>Badri, A., Eltayeb, S., Mohamed, M., Verdeli, H. (2020). Mental health and resilience status of Eritrean unaccompanied refugee minors in Sudan. <i>Children and Youth Services Review</i>, 116, 1-7.</p> <p>Sudan</p>	<p>Cross-sectional, mixed-methods, study.</p> <p>The purpose of the study is to investigate the prevalence of depression, anxiety, and resilience in Eritrean unaccompanied refugee minors living with foster parents in Sudan</p>	<p>45 Eritrean URM, 28 boys and 17 girls, living in 5 different neighborhoods in Khartoum.</p>	<p>For the resilience it was used the Children and Youth Resilience Measure-28 (CYRM-28 and Hopkins Symptom Checklist-25 (HSCL) to screen for anxiety and depression</p>	<p>Eritrean URM displayed high prevalence rates of anxiety and depression, as well as resilience. 88.9% scored above the cutoff value for depression and anxiety, and 71.1% had high levels of resilience. Duration of adoption had a significant effect on anxiety. URM who were related to their foster parents had higher levels of resilience. High levels of resilience did not buffer from perceived daily stressors or reported mental health symptoms.</p>
<p>Longobardi, C., Veronesi, T., Prino, L. (2017). Abuses, resilience, behavioural problems and post-traumatic stress symptoms among unaccompanied migrant minors: an Italian cross-sectional exploratory study. <i>Psychiatr Psychol Klin</i>, 17 (2), 87–92.</p> <p>Italy</p>	<p>Cross-sectional, mixed-methods study based on the data obtained from interviews in UMs' rehabilitation centres in four different cities of Northern Italy</p> <p>The aim of the present study was to investigate the type and prevalence of pre-migratory and peri-migratory (physical, psychological and sexual) abuses, perform a global psychopathological screening highlighting the emotional</p>	<p>19 UMs (18 males and one female) aged 16–17 years, who arrived in Italy between 2013 and 2015 from seven different countries: Egypt ($n = 5$, 26.3%)</p> <p>Albania ($n = 5$, 26.3%),</p> <p>Senegal ($n = 3$, 15.8%),</p> <p>Bangladesh ($n = 2$, 10.5%),</p> <p>Gambia ($n = 2$, 10.5%),</p> <p>Morocco ($n = 1$, 5.3%),</p>	<p>Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ; Goodman, 1997; Tobia <i>et al.</i>, 2011); Trauma Symptom Checklist for Children (TSCC; Briere, 1996); ISPCAN Child Abuse Screening Tool Child Institution Version (ICAST-CI; Zolotor <i>et al.</i>, 2009); The Child and Youth Resilience Measure (CYRM; Liebenberg <i>et al.</i>, 2012)</p>	<p>The most positive results concern the levels of resilience in our samples, despite their pre-migratory and peri-migratory experiences of abuse.</p> <p>The UMs presented adequate levels of resilience. and the only exception was the mean score of the cluster Context: Spiritual (religion as a point of strength) which is higher for the UMs</p>

Authors, year, title and origin	Type and aim of the study	Participants	Instruments	Main results
	<p>symptoms, behavioural problems, peer problems, anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress, anger, sexual concerns and the specific strength and personal resilience among UMs.</p>	<p>Mali ($n = 1, 5.3\%$)</p>		
<p>Raghallaigh, M. & Gilligan, R. (2010). Active survival in the lives of unaccompanied minors: Coping strategies, resilience, and the relevance of religion. <i>Child & Family Social Work</i>, 15, 226-237.</p> <p>Ireland</p>	<p>Cross-sectional, qualitative study.</p> <p>The study intends to understand the coping strategies of unaccompanied asylum seeking minors</p>	<p>32 unaccompanied minors (18 females and 14 males) with ages between 14 and 19 years old, from 13 different countries, who have been in Ireland for varying lengths of time and at different stages on their asylum process</p>	<p>Interviews and observation</p>	<p>Six different coping strategies were identified, namely: (1) Maintaining continuity in a changed context, (2) Adjusting by learning and changing, (3) Adopting a positive outlook, (4) Suppressing emotions and seeking distraction, (5) Acting independently, and (6) Distrusting.</p>

Authors, year, title and origin	Type and aim of the study	Participants	Instruments	Main results
<p>Huemer, J., Voßl-Kernstock, S., Karnik, N., Denny, K., Granditsch, E., Mitterer, M., Humphreys, K., Plattner, B., Friedrich, M., Shaw, R., Steiner, H. (2013). Personality and Psychopathology in African Unaccompanied Refugee Minors: Repression, Resilience and Vulnerability. <i>Child Psychiatry Human Development</i>. 44, 39-50.</p> <p>Austria</p>	<p>Longitudinal, quantitative study.</p> <p>The aim of the study was to examine personality and psychopathological symptoms among unaccompanied refugee minors (URMs), by measuring intra-individual dimensions (repression and correlates thereof) usually associated with resilience.</p>	<p>41 African minors, 35 males and 6 females, ages 15-18 years, residing in Austria in URMs residential accommodations</p>	<p>Weinberger Adjustment Inventory (WAI) and Youth Self-Report (YSR)</p>	<p>URMs endorsed high levels of Repressive Defensiveness, Denial of Distress, and Restraint; unexpectedly, URMs reported high Distress and reduced Happiness</p> <p>URMs exposed to non-normative stressors reported non-symptomatic outcomes, and high levels of personality dimensions correlating with resilience. However, URMs also endorsed high Distress and low Happiness, calling their resilience into question.</p>

Authors, year, title and origin	Type and aim of the study	Participants	Instruments	Main results
<p>Eriksson, R. & Rundgren, A. (2019). Coping with life in a new country – affect regulation based on unaccompanied refugee minors’ needs. <i>European Journal of Social Work</i>, 22(6), 1012-1024.</p> <p>Sweden</p>	<p>Qualitative, cross sectional study.</p> <p>The aim of the study was to examine what challenges unaccompanied minors experience in creating a supportive environment, and how they describe their strategies for coping with challenges.</p>	<p>10 unaccompanied refugee boys, ages 14-16 when arrived, who stayed between 1-4 years in residential care in Sweden. When the interviews were conducted the boys were 17-20 years old.</p>	<p>Semi-structured interviews</p>	<p>The study shows that in residential care, the emphasis was placed on creating safety, trusting relationships and assistance in emotion regulation adapted to each young person’s needs. Based on the study’s results, it was concluded that the unaccompanied minors use different strategies to regulate emotions and that they received help from staff. The situation of unaccompanied minors can therefore be understood through an approach which includes safety, connections and coping.</p>

Authors, year, title and origin	Type and aim of the study	Participants	Instruments	Main results
Luster, T., Qin, D., Bates, L., Rana, M., Lee, J. (2010). Successful adaptation among Sudanese unaccompanied minors: Perspectives of youth and foster parents. <i>Childhood</i> , 17(2), 197-211. USA	Qualitative study. The goal of this study was to identify factors related to individual differences in adaptation among Sudanese unaccompanied minors from the perspectives of the youths and the foster parents	19 Sudanese youths, 17 male and 2 female, ages 18 - 26 at the time of the interview; and 20 parents	In depth semi structured interviews 7 years after resettlement	The youths emphasized personal agency and staying focused on getting an education. Foster parents emphasized the contribution of youths' developmental histories to individual differences in personal attributes that, with contextual supports, influenced their trajectories after resettlement. Parents and youths differed in their views on the role that mental health and cultural obligations to family members in Africa played in successful adaptation.

By analyzing Table 1, it is observed that the publication date of the articles varies between 2010 and 2020, inclusive. Most of the studies included in this review were conducted in Europe (n=5), more specifically in Austria (n=1), Italy (n=1), Ireland (n=1), Norway (n=1) and Sweden (n=1). The rest were developed in the USA (n=1) and Sudan (n=1).

Regarding the type of study, there were found 2 quantitative studies, 3 qualitative studies and 2 mixed studies. There is also a mix in terms of the design of the studies as Keles et al. (2018), Huemer et al. (2013) and Luster et al. (2010) presented longitudinal studies and Badri et al. (2020), Longobardi et al. (2017), Raghallaigh and Gilligan (2010) and Eriksson and Rundgren (2019) presented cross-sectional studies.

In terms of the sample, some studies conducted their research when the once unaccompanied minors were already adults, like Luster et al. (2010), and Eriksson and Rundgren (2019). In this case, the sample age variation was between 17 and 26 years old. For the rest of the studies of Huemer et al. (2013), Raghallaigh and Gilligan (2010), Longobardi et al. (2017), Badri et al (2020) and Keles et al. (2018), the age range is between 13-18 years old.

When it comes to the size of the sample, the study by Eriksson and Rundgren (2019) has the smallest sample with 10 boys and the study by Keles et al. (2018) has the biggest sample with 864 youths.

Concerning the main objectives of the studies, they were all directed in understanding the levels of resilience in UMR's, but in different ways, adopting different approaches and studying different variables.

Keles et al. (2018) focused on understanding the differences between UR who retained or achieved good mental health (healthy or resilient) and those who maintained or developed poor mental health (clinical and vulnerable); Badri et al. (2020) focused on understanding the prevalence of depression, anxiety, and resilience in Eritrean unaccompanied refugee minors living with their foster parents; Longobardi et. al. (2017) intended to investigate the type and prevalence of pre-migratory and peri-migratory (physical, psychological and sexual) abuses, perform a global psychopathological screening highlighting the emotional symptoms, behavioral problems, peer problems, anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress, anger, sexual concerns and the specific strength and personal resilience among UMs; Raghallaigh & Gilliant (2010) focused on understanding the coping strategies of UASM's; Huemer et al. (2013) focused on examining personality and psychopathological symptoms among URMs, by measuring intra-individual dimensions (repression and correlates thereof) usually associated with resilience; Eriksson & Rundgren (2019) purpose was to examine what challenges unaccompanied minors experience in creating a supportive environment, and how they describe their strategies for coping with challenges; and Luster et al. (2010) focused on identifying factors related to individual differences in adaptation among Sudanese unaccompanied minors from the perspectives of the youths and the foster parents.

Having this in mind, the most mentioned variables can be divided into 4 major groups: religion (n=2); culture (n=3); individuality (n=3); and relationships (n=3).

Religion

The importance of religion as a coping/resilience strategy used by the UMRs can be observed by the study of Longobardi et al. (2017), which showed that regarding the descriptive analysis of resilience, the children's mean scores obtained on the three subscales (Individual, Caregivers, Context) were on average lower than the mean scores of the normative sample, but that the mean values on all the scales deviate from the normative scores less than one standard deviation, suggesting that the UMs presented adequate levels of resilience.

The only exception was found in the mean score of the cluster "context: spiritual", where religion is considered as a point of strength, which is higher for the UMs, indicating presumably that the fact of trusting in God is a protective factor for them.

Since their resilience was similar to normative data as regards the other clusters related to the three subscales, it is possible that URM's relied on God to help them as protection in everyday problems.

Also the study of Raghallaigh and Gilliant (2010) gave particular attention to the role of religion, showing that religious faith is the one clear common element between all the coping strategies found:

1. maintaining continuity in a changed context - continuity refers here to the sense of sameness in order to keep living the same life/routine like in the origin country by doing the same things (e.g., going to church); it also refers to religious faith as it was something that reminded unchanged despite all of the other many changes, and there is a sense of empowerment to the self in being able to carry the faith and associated rituals or habits like going to church every Sunday. So, by holding to their culture and faith, the minors felt less threatened by the changes and their sense of loss was also lessened.
2. adopting a positive outlook - this refers to focusing on the positive aspects of the URM's situations, expressing gratitude and appreciation in order to create a better future for themselves, one that involves studying, prayer and lifestyle choices. Also, the sense of hope and belief through faith in God served as a powerful source of positivity.
3. suppressing emotions and seeking distraction - for the minors, silence and suppression represented a useful way of dealing with their current circumstances and distraction was a way of achieving this suppression. The role of religious faith plays an important role as going to church was something that the minors mentioned helps the suppression of unwanted thoughts.

4. acting independently - the minors perceived themselves as individuals who act independently and are self-reliant, characteristics that helped them to better cope with their circumstances and to feel a sense of control over them. This strategy of not depending on others and taking care of their own problems is also connected with the belief in God and a tendency to turn to Him for support and guidance, instead of asking for those from people around them.
5. distrusting - not trusting those around them, was a tendency related to the sense of independence mentioned before. Nevertheless, the trust in God was reported as particularly important to the minors, as they relied on Him for support and guidance. In this way, distrust helped the minors protect themselves by minimizing the risk of being hurt and by increasing their sense of self-reliance

Culture

Keles et al. (2018) found that the trajectories of the minors (resilient, vulnerable, clinical or healthy), were distinguished by the extent of post migration acculturation difficulties and culture competences.

The study focused particularly on the role of risk factors and resources associated with the acculturation process and high importance was given to acculturation hassles and heritage culture. Acculturation refers

to the growing up in bio or multicultural contexts, involving the psychological adjustment both within the culture of origin and that of the new country. It also refers to the development of resources such as culture competence and exposure to immigrant related risk factors like acculturation hassles (Keles et al., 2018, p.52).

These hassles are mostly related to culture conflicts regarding the amount and quantity of contact with two types of groups: members of mainstream society (out-group hassles) or members of the same cultural heritage (in-group hassles). The study showed that “acculturation hassles and host and heritage cultural competence are both theoretically and empirically relevant predictors of the mental health trajectories of the unaccompanied refugees after they have resettled in their destination country” (Keles et al., 2018, p.53).

Acculturation hassles both at the initial and the follow-up observations significantly distinguished the resilient refugees from the healthy and vulnerable refugees. This is because as Bronfenbrenner (1986) observed, being resilient depended on the number of environmental

threats present so, some URM's emerged as more resilient as the day-to-day stressors or acculturation hassles or threats, involved in their daily life, were reduced (Keles et al., 2018).

Heritage culture competence at the initial observation also distinguished the healthy group from the clinical group and the study revealed that "maintenance and further development of one's heritage cultural competence may bridge the gap between the present and past, providing a certain amount of continuity in their self-perception and identity" (Keles et al., 2018, p. 59).

Initial presence of high levels of heritage culture competence can assist URM's to establish supportive relationships with other members of their ethnic group, which can provide more psychological safety (Keles et al. 2018).

The study of Raghallaigh and Gilliant (2010) also showed the importance of ethnicity and culture as these allowed the sense of continuity to the minors. Having contact with people from their culture/same ethnic background was an opportunity to speak their language, watch movies, eat food and socialize in general, like they were in their origin countries, providing them with the opportunity to maintain a certain continuity in their daily lives, despite the change of context.

Raghallaigh and Gilliant (2010) also mentioned adjusting by learning and changing as closely related to culture. Although wishing to maintain aspects of their cultures, the minors also showed interest in adapting to their new environment.

So, it is argued that the youngsters selectively embraced aspects of both cultures rather than rejecting one in favor of the other and it is suggested that they were adopting an "integration acculturation strategy" and a "bicultural identity" (Raghallaigh & Gilliant, 2010, p. 5).

The importance of culture is also mentioned in the study by Luster et al. (2010), where the interviewed boys, which were once minors, recognized the importance of being able to combine the best of Sudanese and American culture and to balance these according to the situations/needs, by not spending time exclusively among the Sudanese community but also by not getting caught up in the American lifestyle as in "using the income unwisely or working at dead end jobs" (Luster et al., 2010, p.204)

Individuality

The study by Huemer et al. (2013) measured the intra-individual dimensions - repressive defensiveness, denial of distress and restraint - which are usually associated with resilience. The URM's of the sample reported significantly higher levels of repressive

defensiveness, denial of distress and restraint when compared with other population of the same age based on normative data.

In addition, the URM's reported low levels of symptoms of psychopathology on a self-report symptom inventory suggesting that they had qualities of resilience and preservation of function despite having experienced extraordinary hardships. This supports the notion that probably these URM's were able to adapt resiliently even after the exposure to severe stressors.

The study by Eriksson and Rundgren (2018) showed the importance of individual traits by describing the importance of the internal strategies related to the individual coping/adaptive strategies. The successful strategies identified by the study were to maintain calmness; reflecting, analyzing and being open to new approaches; feeling acceptance and not to discuss.

Eriksson and Rundgren (2019) described additionally external coping strategies. These are divided into active listening, verbal strategies, adaptive mental strategies and providing help to each other. The study also showed that active listening has helped the URM's to learn to identify and name emotions and to find words for emotional states. (Eriksson & Rundgren, 2018)

The study by Luster et al. (2010) underlined that in terms of personal attributes, the youths interviewed demonstrated a common view that they should stay focused on why they went to the US: to get educated and help those back home. They recognized this as a chance that is not available to most Sudanese so they think they should get the best of it. They feel a sense of responsibility to make a better life for themselves and for those left behind by making good choices, working hard, being persistent and having a generally positive outlook.

The foster parents also gave their perspective on the personal attributes of the youths. They described them as "being remarkably resourceful, adaptable and determined people" (Luster et al., 2010, p.205) and said that these attributes have played an important role both in their survival in Africa, as in their adaptation in the US. Other individual characteristics described were "a strong work ethic and determination, good decision-making skills, commitment to education and a desire to help those left behind" (Luster et al., 2010, p.206) which go along with the ones mentioned by the youths.

Relationships

The study by Badri et al. (2020) showed that URM's who were living and were related to their foster parents had higher levels of resilience. Furthermore, that study postulates that

URM's high prevalence rates are related to the perceived social support, being presumed that an underlying social support exists within foster families in particular those related to the URMs. The interactions between URMs and their foster care parents and wider social system creates a network of proximate social resources that the adolescent may benefit from (Badri et al., 2020).

Social support means that "individual and familial needs are met, in any variety of situations, by the availability of formal and informal networks of social resources" (Badri et al. 2020, p.116). These are highly connected with building resilience as they enhance a person's wellbeing, and increase their individual strengths such as sense of competence and self-esteem (Badri et al., 2020).

This is particularly true for URMs in this study who were related to their foster care parent(s) as their scores on the Individual Strength subscale of the CYRM-28 were statistically significantly higher than those who were not related to their foster care parents.

The study by Eriksson and Rundgren (2019) showed the importance of relationships in different ways: the minors expressed the importance of the relationships and connections created with the staff members and how that provided emotional and social support for them; they also referred the relationship with one's family regardless of where they might be as fundamental; and the importance of the help of care providers and government officials and the relationships established with them.

"Results of the study suggest that emotional connections and trusting relationships promote resilience by paying attention to the need for belonging and participation" (Eriksson & Rundgren, 2019, p.1021).

It is also given importance to "feeling at home" (Eriksson & Rundgren, 2019, p.1021), a concept that is based on reciprocity where the habits of the past are recreated in the new environment. The results showed how important it is for the staff to create a feeling of home to the unaccompanied minors.

In their study, Luster et al. (2010) demonstrated the importance of the role of the foster parents. They were described as people who "offered critical advice, promoted values such as education and provided instrumental and emotional support" (Luster et al, 2010, p.203).

Foster siblings and American peers were also described as a help to adapt by the interviewed youths. On their hand, the foster parents attributed the adaptation of the youth to different factors related to relationships, such as:

supportive relationships with foster parents and other family members; associating with Sudanese peers who stayed focused on education; the community support such as schools, churches and the foster care agency; and a special program created for the youths that focused on acculturation, recreation and keeping the Sudanese youths connected to each other (Luster et al., 2010, p.207)

Relationship between variables

By analyzing the reviewed studies, it was possible to understand that there are associations between some of the different variables.

For example, Badri et al. (2020) showed the connection between relationships and individual strengths by revealing, through the importance of the relationship of the minors with their foster parents,

that their scores of individual strength on the CYRM-28 were significantly higher when comparing to the minors who were not related to their foster parents, lending support for the resilient-fostering nature of social resources and support that increase an individual's sense of mastery and competence" (Badri et al, 2020, p.6).

A relationship between culture, relationships and individual characteristics can be observed from the study by Eriksson and Rundgren (2018) in which it's noted how staff plays a decisive role "in terms of physical security; emotional safety in terms of acceptance, empathy, compassion; social/relational safety with peers and adults; and cultural safety where cultural belonging is affirmed" (p.1021)

A connection between individual attributes and religion can be observed by the study presented by Luster et al. (2010) as the youths referred that they felt a sense of responsibility to make a better life for themselves and for those left behind and that this sense of responsibility was shown through the importance of religion for some of them.

Keles et al. (2018) showed the relationship between culture and relationships by affirming that acculturation hassles are mostly related to culture conflicts regarding the amount and quantity of contact with two types of groups: members of mainstream society (out-group hassles) or members of the same cultural heritage (in-group hassles). Also, when it comes to heritage culture, the study supported the idea that initial high levels of heritage culture competence may help the refugee youth establish supportive relationships with other

members of their ethnic group, which in turn may provide more psychological safety (Dalhaug et al., 2011)

The study by Raghallaigh and Gilliant (2010) connected the variables culture, religion and relationships, as it is mentioned:

Culture and ethnicity appeared to be important aspects of the young people's identities. When the participants held on to elements of their culture – including religious faith – their sense of threat posed by change seemed to be lessened, as was their sense of loss. People from their own cultures were particularly important in terms of facilitating this. Contact with them provided opportunities for continuity of culture and conversation (p.4).

Discussion

In order to synthesize the current knowledge on psychosocial factors that contribute to resilience in UMRs, it was conducted a systematic review on the coping/adaptive strategies that these youths use in order to cope with adversities.

Having this in mind, it was possible to verify that most of the research in this area has focused on the prevalence of poor outcomes, such as mental health difficulties, rather than resiliency.

Also, the literature showed that there have been identified different types of resilience strategies which are common between most of the studies and that are separated in three major categories: individual factors; communication/family factors and community/environment factors. Moreover, the articles vary in terms of the sample size, the study design and the variables assessed.

Some of the studies, like the ones by Luster et al. (2010), and Eriksson and Rundgren (2019), perform their interviews when the once UMRs are already adults which gives another perspective and understanding about their resilience factors. Some studies include the role of the foster parents and their contribution in identifying resilience factors and being one themselves, like the ones by Luster et al. (2010) and Badri et al. (2020). Even so, it was also observed that the main identified variables were present in more than one of the articles and that relationships between the variables were found.

Religion was identified by Raghallaigh and Gilligan (2010) as a facilitator to a variety of coping strategies, as seen before, but religion was also used as a coping strategy itself. Faith provided UMRs companionship, comfort, sense of meaning and understanding, and increased sense of control, and God was mostly described as a caring and loving presence in these youths' lives (Raghallaigh, 2011).

The huge impact of religion can also be observed by the fact that the UMRs felt “know” by God which was a comforting idea, having in mind the absence of their parents, extended family and close friends and also because they often felt that the people around them didn't know or understand them.

So, God had the role of a friend, a confidant and an advisor and someone who provided for them and protected them. As a result of this positive view of God, religious coping became a “relatively compelling” option for these minors (Raghallaigh, 2011). Connected to religion, prayer also became a “relatively compelling” and “relatively

available” coping mechanism which allowed the URM’s to make active attempts to change their situation.

This allowed them to have an increased sense of control over their destiny, rather than just passively accepting their difficulties, they were doing something about them by believing in an external locus of control (God).

Thus, it can be understood that by:

placing their difficulties in God’s hands might seem to suggest that they lacked agency or showed passivity or a sense of dependency on God. However, the fact that they believed fully in God’s capacity to help them, meant that in giving up control to God, they simultaneously and paradoxically gained a sense of control of their situations (Raghallaigh, 2011, p. 551).

The studies also showed that the young people engaged in a strategy of “religious reappraisal of hardships” (Raghallaigh, 2011, p.551), which meant that religious interpretations were used to see difficulties through a positive perspective.

Raghallaigh gave an example of a girl whose application for asylum had been rejected at the appeal stage of the process but she continued to have a positive attitude and full believe in God, engaging in a “benevolent type of religious reappraisal” where “the stressful situation was redefined through religion as benevolent and potentially beneficial” (Raghallaigh, 2011, p. 551).

The importance of God is also underlined in the study by Luster et al. (2010), where the minors connected their personal attribute of responsibility of helping the ones back in their country as a religious responsibility, “noting that God had delivered them from Sudan much as He had delivered the Israelites from Egypt in the Old Testament” (Luster et al. 2010, p.203). Furthermore, the minors doubted that God had taken them to the US so that they could live a good life while others are suffering, underlining again their sense of responsibility to give back to their people and country.

Also, the foster parents of the study noted the importance that the youths gave to God mentioning that “they are very driven. I think education comes right behind God” (Luster et al. 2010, p.206).

Culture is seen as another imperative aspect in this population’s lives.

In their study, Keles et al. (2018), defined resilience as a positive developmental trajectory which involves at the start, high levels of depressive symptoms, followed by a

reduction over the years. They used trauma and acculturation to understand the role of predictors that could differentiate between the trajectories of depression and how the healthy trajectories could be distinguished from the vulnerable ones.

Their results showed that about 60% of unaccompanied refugee youth could be defined as healthy or resilient, which is comparable to what others have reported (Bonanno, 2004; Werner, 1989). Furthermore, the results also indicated that “the level of acculturation hassles in the resilient cluster was significantly different across observations, with lower levels of acculturation hassles at later observations” (Keles et al., 2018, p.59).

Furthermore, there was a significant differentiation between the healthy and vulnerable URMs as the acculturation hassles, at the initial and the follow-up observations, were significantly different. The importance of the acculturation hassles could also be understood by the fact that some of the youths appeared more resilient as the day-to-day stressors or acculturation hassles involved in their life were reduced.

Additionally, Keles et al. (2018) observed the importance of heritage culture competence, which at the initial observation also distinguished the healthy group from the clinical group. They argued that “the maintenance and further development of one’s heritage cultural competence may bridge the gap between the present and past, providing a certain amount of continuity in their self-perception and identity” (Keles et al., 2018, p.59)

It can be understood that host culture and heritage culture have both important roles and functions in these youths' lives and are considered as important factors for the adaptation and well-being of the minors.

Keles et al. (2018) point to the fact that maintaining and further developing one’s heritage culture competence may serve as a bridge for the gap between present and past, providing thus, an amount of continuity in the minors’ identity and self-perception and fostering feelings of belongingness that might contribute to their psychological safety. On the other hand, the host culture competence is associated with the integration into the country networks and being successful at work or school.

It is also underlined that there is a culture competence, that involves the skills and knowledge about verbal and non-verbal communication, values and patterns of social interaction, which the minors should be aware of. Moreover, besides being skilled and knowledgeable within their own culture, the minors need to also be so about the culture of the receiving country, because this is going to help them in the formation of close relationships, to have a sense of belonging and to succeed in both cultural contexts (Keles et al. 2018).

The importance of both heritage and host country culture is also underlined by Luster et al. (2010) who emphasized a bicultural approach. It is argued that for a successful adaptation of the youths, it was needed the combination of the home and host country's culture and that being adaptable, flexible, and knowing how to select the best of each culture, would make their adaptation successful (Luster et al. 2010).

The importance of culture is also expressed in a cultural safety that is about "feeling accepted, that your cultural and linguistic resources are utilized, that you feel proud of your culture and your language/languages" (Erikson & Rundgren, 2018, p.1017).

Erikson and Rundgren (2018) showed that the minors give importance to being accepted as they are, with their identity and belonging and that in order to feel safe in a different cultural context, it is imperative to be allowed to affirm your different identities.

Badri et al. (2020) also underlined the importance of cultural rituals as a strengthener of resilience in the lives of URM's.

Also, the study by Badri et al. (2020) referred to the cultural importance in terms of adaptation as event though it does not examine all the aspects of the acculturation model, during the interviews, there were indications of difficulties related to the complex process of adapting to new culture, behaviors and values, by the minors.

Furthermore, the study attributed the fact that URMs who have been in foster care for 2 years or less had higher levels of anxiety, due to a possible acculturation gap, as these youths are faced with a new language and environment. Additionally, "this was clearly indicated with the interviewed URM feeling unwelcomed by the host community, as they are perceived as an additional burden to a country with limited resources." (Badri et al., 2020, p.6).

Raghallaigh and Gilligan (2010), in their study, showed that adjusting by learning and changing is another important cultural coping strategy found by the URMs. It is thus argued that most of the youths wished to keep elements of their own cultures but also to take elements present in the culture of their host country.

The minors saw it as important to learn about aspects of the Western culture so their adaptation included things like: having romantic partners; what soccer teams to support; changing their way of dressing; learning/improving English; learning practical things of daily life like how to get from one place to the other; new musical tastes; learning new behaviors.

In terms of individuality, Eriksson and Rundgren (2018) have shown its importance through individual internal and external coping strategies. The authors argue that regarding

internal strategies, maintaining calmness, reflecting, feeling acceptance and not to discuss the subject is what allowed the minors to cope with adversity and difficult situations.

Maintaining calmness can be achieved by finding other ways of expressing emotion, thoughts and feelings and to focus the thoughts on something else rather than to accumulate anger and worry. Reflecting is associated with analyzing and being open to new approaches and it's about "having a questioning attitude by thinking and reflecting on their own actions and behaviour, wondering about what they did and how, what the consequences were, and taking a step back to achieve perspective" (Eriksson & Rundgren, 2018, p.1020), while at the same time being aware and acknowledging the experience.

Feeling acceptance is related to accepting one's own situation and feeling accepted by others and the environment. Not to discuss is another strategy that the minors use because they might not be able to verbally express themselves or because they don't want to share their feelings and emotions and also because they might want to get rid of them (Eriksson & Rundgren, 2018)

About the external strategies, Eriksson and Rundgren (2018) mentioned the importance and influence that the staff had in these. Active listening, verbal strategies, adaptive mental strategies and providing help to each other are the identified ones.

Active listening referred to being treated with respect, compassion and sensitivity which can be both stimulating and liberating, and also to treat others in the same way. Verbal strategies were utilized when the minors felt sadness, anger or fear and they would share it with the professionals, staff and peers who would help them put words to actions, feelings and thoughts: "*I do not get angry, now I know what to do*" (Autonomy) (Eriksson & Rundgren, 2018, p.1022).

The adaptive mental strategies referred to the new ways that the minors have learned to deal with adversity and crisis situations, and again a big importance is given to staff in the minors interviews: "*we must learn how to be in life, I learned things, what I should and should not do*" (Mastery) (Eriksson & Rundgren, 2018, p.1022).

Lastly, providing help to each other is intimately connected to the sense of belonging and identification with others and to the sense of creating a group identity with adults and other youngsters: "*I help the others and they help me, a person should think of all the others*" (Generosity) (Eriksson & Rundgren, 2018, p.1022). Helping each other here referred to "sharing experiences and knowledge and using each other as a resource for dealing with life" (Eriksson & Rundgren, 2018, p.1019).

The importance of individual factors was also underlined by the study by Huemer et al. (2012) where intra-individual dimensions, usually associated with resilience, like repression, denial of distress and restraint, were measured. These dimensions were measured with the Weinberger Adjustment Inventory (WAI), for assessing the personality, and the Youth Self- Report (YSR), for describing current symptoms. Although all URMs in this study had experienced high levels of traumatic stress, including interpersonal violence, family loss, and life-threatening incidents, which occurred most of the time on their flight from their war countries, the rates of PTSD ranged only from 17 to 20 %.

It is argued that this low rates of trauma-related psychopathology, may be explained by some intra-individual factors such as repression, which has been associated with resilient outcomes in the face of adversity. (Huemer et al. 2012).

High levels of Repressive Defensiveness, Denial of Distress and Restraint were found, which supports the idea that maybe these youths managed to adapt resiliently following exposure to severe stressors. However, unexpectedly, it was also found elevated levels of Distress (Anxiety and Depression levels) and reduced Happiness and Confidence when the time frame of the assessment was expanded to capture psychological symptoms in the year leading up to the present, putting into question if these minors are truly resilient. (Huemer et al. 2012).

Furthermore, the study by Huemer et al. (2012) found significant positive associations between attention problems, self-destructive behavior and aggressive behavior on the YSR and WAI distress (of which Anxiety and Depression are components), making it unclear what are the effects that persistent stressors over time might have in URMs, who face continuous problems as a result of their placement in institutional settings.

This information led to different interpretations by the authors. One of which is that there is a possibility that the pattern of these associations between WAI Distress and YSR problematic behavior suggest the presence of persistent trigger points which may be activated at times of excessive stress.

Another viable interpretation is that the URMs were in what has been termed a “recovery pattern” (Huemer et al., 2012, p.46). “Individuals in a recovery pattern struggle with moderate levels of symptoms and experience difficulties carrying out their normal tasks, but are able to adapt and function with a slow return to their pre-trauma level of functioning.” (Huemer et al., 2012, p.46).

In any of the cases, it was affirmed that these youths displayed a complex mixture of indicators of effortful and automatic self-control and problematic behavior, referring to the

need of a sophisticated clinical assessment where there is interviewing and questioning procedures that include several aspects of the individual's functioning and long-term follow-up (Huemer et al. 2012).

The study by Luster et al. (2010) focused on understanding individual factors that contribute to successful adaptation by interviewing both youths and foster parents. In order to do so, the authors asked them to identify factors that differentiated the successful youths from the unsuccessful ones.

As the study showed, three major themes came up: the first one was connected to the fact that the youths found it extremely important to be educated, to make money to help the people back in their country and to help in the rebuilding of their country as shown by one of the interviews "every single one of us has to go to college because we need to go back and help." (Luster et al., 2010. p.203).

Making good choices, hard work and persistence were other personal attributes mentioned. Regarding this, one of the boys said "I have a strong will (laughing) which is good sometimes because I don't give up that easily, and no matter where you go, there will be ups and downs. And you have to stick there and figure out what to do to bring you up and just try your best. Don't give up easily." (Luster et al., 2010. p.203).

Connected to this, a general optimistic outlook was another personal characteristic underlined which helped the minors persevere after setbacks.

On their hand, the foster parents identified as individual attributes of the youths: being resourceful, adaptable and determined. They underlined that the youths already came with these characteristics not taking credit for adding them into their lives.

Moreover, the foster parents identified the minors as being charismatic, having a strong work ethic, good decision-making skills, commitment seen by their desire to study and compassion and generosity for their will to help their people (Luster et al. 2010).

The power of individual characteristics is strongly manifested in this study as the foster parents were struck by the role that the Sudanese youths' interpersonal skills played in garnering the support they needed. Foster parents observed that many of the youths had characteristics that evoked positive responses from others, and therefore they were able to elicit the support that they needed to succeed (Luster et al., 2010. p.206).

Raghallaigh and Gilligan (2010), in their study, connected the strategy of “maintaining continuity in a changed context” to the aspect of identity, arguing that “having some sense of sameness between the past and the present facilitates the formation of a continuous sense of self” (Raghallaigh & Gilligan., 2010, p.3).

It was also identified “adopting a positive outlook” as an important strategy to coping with adversity and they argued that many youths tend to cope by focusing on the positive aspects of their situations. Showing hope for the future and appreciation for the good things that they have in their lives, was also something observed by making “meaning out of their current difficulties by placing them in the context of past problems and future opportunities” (Raghallaigh & Gilligan, 2010, p.5).

Another strategy involved the youths in “suppressing emotions and seeking distraction”, as it was described in the study by Raghallaigh and Gilligan (2010). The minors often preferred to choose silence rather than speaking about their past and current situations and at the same time they wished to suppress the thoughts and emotions that were difficult for them.

As described in the study, this was done with the purpose of avoiding upsetting experiences and “it was evident from the interviews with the young people that, for them, suppression represented a concrete and useful way of dealing with their current circumstances” (Raghallaigh & Gilligan, 2010, p.5).

Additionally, distraction served as a way to suppress the unwanted thoughts as it left less time for the youths to feel lonely or anxious. Another way described of suppressing their emotions was to try to be busy with other activities or to be in the company of other people. (Raghallaigh & Gilligan, 2010).

Associated with the URMs tendency to keep silent and to engage in suppression and distraction, conversations with the youth showed, in a continuous way, that they were individuals who acted independently and perceived themselves to be quite self reliant.

Adopting an independent self-perception served as an empowerment and allowed an increased sense of control to the minors, which permitted a more adequate coping with their circumstances. (Raghallaigh & Gilligan, 2010).

The authors also showed that connected to the tendency to see oneself as independent, was the likelihood of the participants not to trust those around them, suggesting “distrust” as another significant coping strategy (Raghallaigh & Gilligan, 2010).

Despite some exceptions, the URMs talked many times about only trusting certain people or about only trusting people to a certain extent. Their distrust was mostly attributed to

past experiences, being distrusted by others, not knowing people well, being accustomed to distrust and feeling unable to tell the truth. “It seemed that their past experiences interacted with their current difficulties and future uncertainties and created a situation where trusting others became a challenge” (Raghallaigh & Gilligan, 2010, p.7).

The importance of relationships is outlined by Badri et al. (2020) as he found in his study that the URMs who live with related foster parents had higher levels of resilience, showing the protective nature of family support. The study underlined the fact that the social support existent within the foster families allowed the minors to have prevalently higher rates of resilience, working thus as a booster.

Eriksson and Rundgren (2018) also expressed the importance of connections and relationships. In their study, they mentioned the importance given to the staff members as they were providers of support, in many different levels, to the URMs. Also, the relationship with family, even if this is not currently present in the youths lives and the importance of the relationships formed with other care providers and professionals.

The results of the study suggested that “emotional connections and trusting relationships promote resilience by paying attention to the need for belonging and participation” (Eriksson & Rundgren, 2018, p.1021).

The importance of relationships can also be observed and it is intimately connected to the concept of social safety in this study, as the minors mentioned that “social safety means fellowship and socializing with other young people, and trusting, close relationships with the staff” (Eriksson & Rundgren, 2018, p.1017).

Creating trusting relationships is something seen as essential in this study, as it is defended that building such relationships promotes resilience, as the needs of belonging and generosity of the minors are met. Furthermore, trusting and healing relationships are seen as essential for the recovery from trauma and stress as they are related primarily to the need of care and the structure of everyday life of the youths (Eriksson & Rundgren, 2018).

Other factors and variables that seem to be positively related to resilience could be encountered in the articles reviewed:

Social support: referring to the participation of youth in the community through sports and recreation activities. “This allowed them to feel a sense of purpose and belonging to a group as well as supporting them through acculturation and development of their ethnic identity” (Shaheen & Miles, 2017, p. 256).

Schools are also mentioned as a strong source of social support by providing a secure and supportive environment. “Children identified the advantages of going to school as

creating strong friendship bonds, fulfilling aspirations of achieving success and contributing to a better future” (Shaheen & Miles, 2017, p. 256).

Environment/institution of placement: It is argued the possibility that the low self-report of symptoms on the YSR is indeed a correct reflection of the youths' underlying distress, and that the recovery is supported by their placement in a safe, protective and less stressful environment following immigration.

This hypothesis is supported by statements of the URMs, where they mentioned that “they felt grateful towards their residential institutions and appreciated the absence of danger” (Huemer et al., 2012, p.46).

The study by Luster et al. (2010) mentioned the provided resources and opportunities to the URMs, as contributors to their resilience and success. Having this in mind, the youths elected “the agency administering the refugee foster care program as their most important source of support in terms of adjusting to a new culture” (p.204).

The reason behind this was the fact that there was a variety of services of big importance that were being received from the agency like money for daily expenses, a foster home, living skills classes and grants for college tuition, tutoring, caseworkers to answer any possible questions about the life in the US and mental health services.

The lived traumatic experiences can also play an important role in the capacity of building resilience by the URMs. The study by Longobardi et al. (2017) demonstrated that all participants were abused in different ways: physically and psychologically, at least once during the pre-migratory and peri-migratory periods, and almost half of them also sexually abused.

Despite this, the minors proved to have good sources of resilience as their scores in the resilience scale were generally according to the normative data. Nevertheless, Longobardi et al. (2017) argued that even though adequate levels of resilience were found, it was likely that the prevalence of these traumatic experiences influenced the levels of the clinical problems found such as anxiety, depression, dissociation and PTSD, making evident the impact of the traumatic experiences.

The study by Keles et al. (2018) also analyzed the importance of the amount of pre-migration trauma and the authors found out that this did not distinguish the resilient UR from the other groups, however, trauma distinguished the healthy and clinical groups. They argued that the finding suggests that “the number of pre-migration traumatic events may determine how they start and continue the process” (Luster et al., 2016, p. 59).

Furthermore, the study suggested that after their arrival at the initial observation, the URM's mental health may be affected in a negative way by their experiences of pre-migration traumas, "as reflected by the high number of traumas before arrival and consistently high levels of depression in the clinical cluster" (Luster et al., 2016, p. 59).

Long lasting impacts of pre-migration traumatic stressors can also be found in the study, as the results indicated that "the hazardous outcomes of trauma over time affected about one in four of the unaccompanied refugees" (Luster et al., 2016, p. 59).

Given the low number of identified articles, it can be concluded that the resilience factors in unaccompanied refugee minors still require further exploration.

In the past years, the interest and number of studies has grown but the focus is still mostly on young refugees and not specifically on unaccompanied ones. Also, most studies tend to center their attention into the weaknesses and psychological symptoms rather than on the strengths and resilience factors. The major focus is on the risks and problems that emerge from the experiences that this population goes through, and the most common studied area is post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), but little importance has been given to exploring the resilience factors that lead to a positive adaptation, which allows to affirm that "the literature on resilience in UASC is thin" (Rodriguez & Dobler, 2021, p.563).

Furthermore, the articles were not only low in numbers but also presented different approaches to measure resilience, with URM's from different countries and with some being already adults when the studies were conducted.

It was possible to observe that there are mostly two approaches: one part of the studies focused on understanding the resilience/coping factors by focusing directly into analyzing them, and other studies focused on the levels of risk factors such as depression or PTSD symptoms to understand the resilience levels/variables.

Despite the lack of homogeneity, four different variables were identified as primary ones in the contribution to resilience - religion; culture; individuality; and relationships - and other variables that were considered important were: social support; environment/institution of placement; provided resources and opportunities and lived traumatic experiences.

From this literature review, it was possible to conclude that this population, even if considered one of the most vulnerable ones due to the higher prevalence of mental health problems, showed the capacity to build resilience and make remarkable recoveries, despite the many adversities experienced.

However, it was also noted that the quality of this adaptation can vary according to the mentioned variables and characteristics.

It is also important to refer that these variables and characteristics showed correlation between them and most of the articles mention that further studies need to be done in order to deepen and better understand the existing correlations and factors that contribute to resilience in the lives of these youths, as well as why some youths adapt better than others.

This review presented several limitations such as: scarce literature; most articles were systematic reviews of the literature; some articles use only one instrument to measure resilience; the participants were in different phases of their lives (some already adults while other living in shelters or with foster parents); there was no study which included only male participants; some studies presented very small sample size; encountered cultural and religious differences which might make it harder to generalize the results.

Lastly, it seems urgent to continue to deepen knowledge in this area, as the number of unaccompanied minor refugees keeps growing. By understanding which factors contribute to their resilience, it will be easier to create the necessary environment and tools in order to promote resilience, promote mental health and prevent psychological conditions.

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Article 2: Psychosocial factors associated with resilience in unaccompanied refugee minors seeking asylum: An empiric study

Abstract

As there is a need to further investigate which factors contribute to the promotion of resilience in UMRs, an empiric study was designed with the objective of analyzing which are the psychosocial factors associated to resilience, in unaccompanied refugee minors, who are in a refugee shelter and waiting for their asylum-seeking status. The main goal of the study was to understand which psychosocial factors contribute to the promotion of resilience in unaccompanied minors, from the experience and knowledge of the professionals who work with them.

The sample consisted of X professionals who work in the Hope for Children CRC Policy center shelter in Nicosia, with different backgrounds and roles, to whom a semi structured interview was conducted. The main domains that the questions intended to evaluate were: challenges faced by the minors, coping strategies, personal skills and characteristics, support and role model figures, motivation, mental health and adjustment in society.

The results of the study showed that relationships, individual characteristics and skills, culture and care arrangements play a major role as factors that contribute to the resilience of URM.

Key Words: unaccompanied minors, asylum seekers, resilience, mental health

Introduction

The present study focused on finding the resilience factors associated with URM's who live in the Hope for Children shelter in Nicosia, Cyprus. The initial idea was to conduct the interviews with the minors, in order to get their personal and direct experience and opinion on which these factors might be, but that turned out to be far more complicated than initially thought, as it will be explained in the procedure of the study.

The need for shelters for URM's has been rising on an European level, as the number of minors arriving has been also rising. The European Union Agency for Asylum (2023) showed how the different EU members are dedicated to creating new accommodation for this population and how, at the same time, their efforts seem not to be enough to answer the existing demand.

The reception centers are saturated, which creates multiple issues for the accommodation and support of the minors. Furthermore, this seems to be a major issue as unaccompanied children can end up spending months in large federal reception facilities which are not appropriate for them, even though many new dedicated places have been opened.

The overload of the European countries' systems can further be understood by the fact that, according to data from Eurostat from April 2023, there were registered record-high numbers of URM's arriving in Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, France and The Netherlands, in 2022. Furthermore, there were more applications than case closures which resulted in a large caseload of applications from UM, when a comparison is made between 2021 and 2022.

The shelter that was used for conducting this study, is part of the "Homes for Hope" program of the "Hope for Children" CRC Policy Center, which is an international, humanitarian and independent organization founded on the principle of promoting and protecting the rights of children.

In order to do that, the organization provides support, protection and opportunities for children facing challenging situations through various programs and initiatives.

One of these programs is the "Homes for Hope", where the establishment and operation of children's shelters has been undertaken by the organization, in order to provide support and accommodation to unaccompanied minors in cooperation with the Social Welfare Services.

The main goal of the setup of these shelters is to provide multidisciplinary and holistic services to the children, in order to cover all the daily needs, with a special focus on

psycho-social support and legal guidance. In specific, the shelters aim is to achieve effective protection and safety of the children; to provide specialized services - psychological, social and legal; help in the smooth transition, adjustment and integration into the host country or reintegration into the country of origin or a third country; establishing mechanisms of durable solutions for family tracing, assessment and reunification.

Thus, the services received by the minors are grouped under three main pillars:

- Rehabilitation services: intake of social history and creation of a personal care plan; legal and social counseling; psychological support and therapy
- Integration services: language classes (greek, english, german, etc); educational activities (art, drama, dance, etc); educational seminars (sexual education, human rights, hygiene, etc); supporting and assisting access to the public or private education systems; psychological activities/workshops (emotion management, communication, self-esteem, conflict-management, team work, goal setting, motivation, time management, etc).
- Durable solution services: family tracing and assessment; possibility of family reunification with relatives in EU country members and/or voluntary return to country of origin; exploration of possibility of placement in foster care

Due to all the challenges that an accommodation for unaccompanied refugee minors can present, it seems fundamental to understand how or to which extent, it can promote the resilience for this population. This is why, the following study, will focus on acknowledging which are the psychosocial factors associated with resilience in URM living in such a setting.

Method

Participants

Participants were selected according to their will and motivation in joining the study. The participants were professionals who have different roles at the shelter of Hope for Children in Nicosia, Cyprus.

The inclusion criteria for participating in the study were: (a) to be 18 years old or older; (b) to be working at Hope for Children’s shelter for at least 6 months and c) to accept in participating giving their consent. The exclusion criteria were: (a) being younger than 18 years old and (b) working at Hope for Children for less than 6 months and/or not being employed by the institution in the moment which the interviews were conducted.

Table 2. Sociodemographic characteristics of the participants

Participant s	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Method of participati on	Intervie w	Intervie w	Intervie w	Intervie w	Written	Written	Intervie w	Intervie w	Intervie w	Intervie w
Age	29	47	25	35	37	26	25	35	40	23
Nationalit y	Italian	Greek	Cypriot	Greek	Cypriot	Cypriot	Albania n/Greek	Cypriot	Cypriot	Lebanes e
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Male	Male
Religion	Christian Catholic	Christia n Orthodox	Christia n Orthodox	No religion	Christia n Orthod ox	Christia n Orthod ox	Christia n Orthodo x	Christia n Orthodo x	Agnosti c	Christia n
Education al Background	BA Political Sciences & MA Internati onal Relations	BA Sociolo gy; BA Crimina l Justice; MA Crime, Devianc	BA Law	BA Law & currentl y MA on Refugee Protecti on and Forced	BA Psychol ogy MA School Psychol ogy	BA Psychol ogy MA School Psychol ogy	BA Sociolog y; MA Public Health	BA Psychol ogy MA School Psychol ogy	BA Psychol ogy, MA Counsel ing Psychol ogy	BA Physics

Participant s	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
		e and Control		Migrati on						
Time working at the shelter	3 years	1 year	6 months	5 years and 11 months	3 years and 6 months	1 year and 2 months	9 months	4 years and 10 months	3 years and 2 months	11 months
Current and or/past roles in the shelter	Support officer	Shelter's Coordin ator	Child Protecti on Officer	Support officer and Coordin ator of the Child Protecti on Depart ment	Psychol ogist	Support officer and psychol ogist	Support officer	Support officer, psychol ogist and coordin ator of the psychol ogy departm ent	Counsel lor	Support officer
Previous experience working with similar population group	Yes. 2 months	Yes	Yes. 1 year	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

As it is possible to verify, the total sample of participants is composed of eight female figures and two male figures. Regarding the female, they have different nationalities ($n= 4$ Cypriot), ($n= 1$ Italian), ($n= 3$ Greek), ($n= 1$ double nationality Greek and Albanian) and the vast majority is Christian Orthodox, excluding only one who is agnostic. Regarding the male, ($n=1$) Cypriot and ($n=1$) Lebanese, one agnostic and one Christian.

The ages of the participants vary between 23 (the youngest) and 47 years old (the oldest) and they all have an educational background related to University studies.

The amount of time working at the shelter varies between 6 months (the minimum) and 5 years and 11 months (the maximum) and all participants but one have previous working experience with a similar population group, which includes either children or asylum seekers.

Measures

Semi - Structured Interview

It was administered an individual, semi-structured interview which was audio-recorded and then transcribed. In some cases, the individuals preferred to answer the questions in written due to time and/or language restrictions.

The first part of the interview consisted in the intake of sociodemographic information about the participants. As such, it was collected data about the age, nationality, gender, religion, educational background, amount of time that they have been working in the shelter and previous experience working with a similar population group.

The second part focused on understanding which factors contribute to the resilience of the minors and the following questions were asked:

1. “What are the biggest challenges that the minors face in the shelter and how do they deal with them?”
2. What individual characteristics one should have or develop in order to adapt well in the shelter?
3. Who or what you believe is the biggest support for the boys and why?
4. Who do they see as a role model and why?
5. What keeps them motivated?
6. What difficulties do they face?
7. What factors contribute to their mental health?
8. What factors contribute to their adjustment in society?
9. In your opinion, what other factors or variables promote their resilience as individuals?

Procedure

The process for conducting such study requires an authorization from the social welfare, from the legal guardians of the minors and from the organization's management. Unfortunately, after months of waiting and several different attempts, the only authorization obtained was from the organization, which led to a brainstorming for new ideas on how to implement the study.

It was then decided that the professionals working at the shelter would be contacted in order to express and share their perspectives on the matter.

In order to carry out this investigation, firstly, the authorization of the ethical commission of Universidade Fernando Pessoa was requested. On a second note, it was requested the authorization of the responsible people for the shelter - Deputy Director, Operations Manager, Coordinator of the shelter and Coordinator of the Psychology Department.

Once this approval was given, a contact was made with the Legal Guardians who advised that an approval would be necessary from the Social Welfare. The responsible person from the Social Welfare was contacted via phone and e-mail with a resume of the project and the approval from the ethical commission of Universidade Fernando Pessoa was sent, as per request.

After time without response from the Social Welfare, the same person was contacted via phone and e-mail on a number of occasions without success. An attempt to visit the office of the responsible person was also not successful. Afterwards, another person from the Social Welfare was contacted via phone and e-mail and there was still no progress and a lot of time was wasted, which was leading to the impossibility to finalize the master thesis project.

It was finally decided that the study would focus on the contribution of the professionals working at Hope for Children shelter. The people were contacted presently and were selected according to their will and availability to participate in the project. They were also selected according to their roles, backgrounds and experiences at the shelter as these were considered important factors.

It was explained to each individual the purpose of the study and the consent form was given to them and signed by them.

After the completion of the interviews, the participants were thanked for their collaboration. The data was collected during October of 2023.

With the study, it was possible to observe that for some questions there were very similar/same answers and for others, there was a bigger variety of answers.

Thus, in relation to the responses given to the questions, the Grounded Analysis was used, based on the similarities between the answers, they were grouped into larger clusters.

This analysis resulted in the identification of 4 categories: a) relationships; b) individual characteristics; c) culture; and d) care arrangements, and of different sub-categories as can be seen from the below table.

Table 3. Categories and sub-categories identified from the participants answers

Categories	Sub-categories
Relationships	Family, peers, staff, community, teachers, figures of reference
Individuality	Individual characteristics and individual skills
Culture	Cultural awareness, language, food, education, rules and regulations, activities and lessons at the shelter, integration and adaptation
Care arrangements	Safety and security

Results

A vast number of difficulties and challenges that the URM's face were identified according to the participants of the study and also multiple coping mechanisms that the minors use to overcome them.

The category relationships was a highly mentioned one in different answers, thus it was divided into three sub-categories: family, peers and staff.

In terms of relationships, it was identified that having *“any support system that has a positive impact on the person”* can serve as a catalyst of resilience and this can be the family members, the peers, the staff or someone from outside.

The sub-category family was largely used and in different answers.

When related to the challenges that the minors face, the distance and separation from the family was mentioned. Family was referred to as a way to deal with the challenges being affirming that *“there is no simple answer to say on how they are dealing with their challenges as each individual is unique as their experiences also. However, keeping family values is observed to be effective ways to deal with the above and being connected somehow with their roots.”*

Family was also largely mentioned as the biggest support and coping strategy for the boys. It was referred specifically that the family is seen as a big support for the Syrian boys, *“the family that is in Cyprus, because they also help them financially.”*

The family in Cyprus was indicated as support but it was affirmed that the big support comes from the family left behind, which makes the family a knife with two sides. From one side the boys feel the obligation to adjust and to continue their lives in the destination country and *“what are they going to do, are they going to find a job and send back money, they are going to have status so in the end can invite also the family to the country?”*, which leads to the second side of the knife which represents the pressure. Nonetheless, the family remains as a big support system and coping strategy for the URM's, according to the participants.

This can also be observed by another participant who affirmed that *“their family is a source of support but they are far away however we see that in many of them, the communication from distance provides hope for them, anxiety also in some cases, but hope also, they remain as a source of support”*. In the same line, *“having regular communication with their family members can be a great amount of support for them.”*

The family members with whom they want to do their reunification were also identified as a major support for the minors as *“I am seeing the boys when they are speaking*

with their relatives in another countries, they are very enthusiastic about this so.. it's a double thing because maybe they don't like Cyprus and they want to go to their relatives that might have the same habits as them".

For the boys who do not have a family or do not have a close relationship with their families, it was argued that they will find support in the building of good relationships with the staff, with the people at the shelter with whom they feel the trust to share, and even though this is not a strong support system it remains a support system for them.

Family was also suggested to be a role model for the minors. Due to the culture present, mostly male figures are seen as role models in general, according to the participants, as the minors relate them with somebody that can take care of the family, which actually they are already doing by themselves when leaving their countries, and on the other side they relate the female figures with caring and emotional aspects, something that they mostly don't aspire to be when they grow up.

It was stated that *"If I have to think about the boys that we had before, which the relationship was totally different because we would speak much more, they would mention their family and they would say like "my father did a lot for me or my mother" I remember having this conversation with some Somali and some mentioned their parents and older siblings so I would say family(...)"*. Other participant also shared that *"it depends on the individual but in general major roles play their family figures"*.

Role models can also be the relatives that are in Cyprus or other countries because they have things in common. They are on the same page as the boys as they left their countries, and the boys *"want to achieve this goal that their relatives achieved, to have work and to have money and a normal life as they see it in having a family, wife and children."*

Family was again mentioned as a motivational factor for the boys. From one side, family was alleged to be an external factor that keeps them motivated, being commented that *"it's a warped sense of motivation but it's motivation to them, so for example, the idea for going to their asylum interview and potentially being accepted or the idea of having their family reunification case approved or waiting for their ticket to go for their destination country, so it's things that are outside their control but they cling on to them and it's what keeps them motivated to just keep on going."* So, it can be understood that not only the family but also all matters which are family related are part of the motivational process for the UMRs.

It was also noted, as a motivational factor, their thoughts and the hope that their lives and their family lives can be better. The connection between these two can be better

understood by a statement where it is affirmed that *“at times many minors feel responsible for their family left behind, so they need to support them financially or make them feel proud about them which understandably seems like a very big part of their life and daily motivation.”*

Thus, it can be understood that family plays a main role and serves as a big generator of motivation for the minors, and participants even determined family as *“the only thing that keeps them motivated”* linked to the fact that they have the need to support their family back home, being affirmed that *“sending money back to their parents or bringing them here, keeps them going”*.

It was also pointed out that this is not a personal motivation and that in fact *“the truth is that they don’t have personal motivation or if they have, most of the times they feel guilty to have this motivation because it’s like they betray the cause of traveling to a new country which causes other issues and problems”*, which indicates the importance of family as main character in their lives.

In terms of factors that contribute to their mental health, the family was also considered important. It was remarked that *“communication with their family I think it’s a big one. From what I’ve seen most of the boys communicate with their family and extended family daily. I think keeping in touch with them and still feeling the connection of what is like talking to your family every single day, that keeps them sane.”* Furthermore, it was contributed in the same line with a claim that the minors are able to keep their mental health *“when they have strong family relationships.”*

Also, very important, the situation in their country and the news that they hear about their country, through communication with the family or through social media, is a major mental health factor for them, as it concerns how their family is doing.

In addition, when they come to the shelter, it can be observed that they have symptoms of depression and/or PTSD. They need to adjust as they don’t know where they have arrived and if they don’t have families to support them either in Cyprus or back home, it’s even more difficult.

When it comes to the sub-category peers, specifically in terms of the support for the minors, the peers were largely mentioned. A differentiation was made between the different groups of minors and affirmed that *“for the Somalis I would say that they are a very bonded group so they can find support inside the group and inside the shelter within the Somalis”*.

One of the participants affirmed that *“the biggest support controversially maybe, I think it’s each other.”* referring to the boys among themselves. And it was continued,

“because they are all in this together and they all come from the same background and they are all here without their parents, and they hate the food, and they hate us sometimes and you know, there are things for them to bond over; and it’s such a unique experience to have that I think if they didn’t have each other to rely on and knowing what the other person is going through, I don’t think they would be able to get through it.”

Another participant continued in the same line and identified the friends/roommates in the shelter as the biggest support of the boys *“because they spend most of their time together; they are living together; they feel more comfortable to communicate their thoughts and feelings to their peers.”*

Moreover, it was commented on the fact that the support of the peers is built gradually around them as they live together, and despite the fact that they lean on adult figures for their safety and stability, the feeling of connection and acceptance by their peers is important as well.

The peers were also strongly identified as the main role models of the minors at the shelter. They were considered to be the people who have one of the biggest impacts on the minors. A differentiation between positive and negative role models was also made being affirmed that *“some kids may have positive role models so they go close to people who are well behaved and some other get carried away by negative influences and it’s about who is going to approach them and how they are going to embrace them and with whom they are going to feel more compatible with”*.

A differentiation among the different existent groups at the shelter was also made when it comes to the role model viewing. The Syrians were identified as seeing more of each other as role models. Here it was argued that *“you can really see that between them, they look up to each other and they look to each other when it comes to how to react, how to feel about certain people, we can see that that causes even a division amongst the Syrians when it comes to how they want to view and treat people.”*

Another aspect mentioned was that the more delinquent boys are seen often as role models by their peers and actually by the boys who do not belong in such groups usually. This was explained by the fact that when a minor, who does not belong in such a group feels down, he starts to see as a model a boy or boys who have more delinquent behaviors. This was further articulated with the fact that when there is no stability and everything is blowing *“it is tempting to follow a more aggressive pattern, a more aggressive, a more breaking the rules, I mean. When you actually see that rules do not work, the rules you try to follow and*

when you keep your feelings regulated but it does not work anymore so probably you need to explore other solutions”.

The peers were also described as factors that contribute to the good mental health of the boys. It was affirmed that having peers of the same age and cultural group is working positively on the URMs lives and that they try to find the balance between the negative and positive aspects contributing to the mental health, through trying to be together and sticking to one another. Ways that they do that were given as examples, such as playing football together, sharing things between themselves, and trusting each other.

It was remarked that the minors keep their mental health balance *“through their association with their peers mainly”* and that *“company it’s the first thing you need. A company, peers who accept you, actually”*. It was also underlined the need to differentiate between the forced coexistence in the shelter and the company/friendships that have been created between the boys, when it comes to their mental health.

Regarding the sub-category staff, they have been identified as helping the minors deal with difficulties and challenges and specifically *“in moments of clarity let’s say, they are assisted a lot by their relationships with particular people here. There are boys who actually appreciate a lot their personal officers or their psychologists, or even the coordinator of the shelter. I think the daily communication and the contact with the officers has a big role to play”*.

Nonetheless, the high turnover, the understaffed situations and the fact that sometimes the staff cannot be around the boys as much as they wanted, due to other commitments, have been also indicated as gaps that are perceived by the minors.

Staff were considered a major support for the minors. One of the participants considered that the Africans are *“the ones that they are most likely to make themselves supported by the staff and to accept more easily”*. When asked why, the reason for this might be that maybe they have more in common with us culturally due to the fact that they were colonized by European countries so they easily respect, listen, believe and take advice from female figures, *“they are more open to receive something and this is a bridge for the communication”*, as opposed to the Syrians, for example. It was added that Africans *“have more of an European mindset that is more similar to us so it’s easier to have same values somehow.”*

The staff was also underlined as a great support for the minors by another participant who sustained that *“the biggest support is us because the operation of the shelter addresses the daily needs, the basic needs, it accounts for any issues that may impact their*

psychological or emotional world, or rehabilitation from the social work department when they try to prepare them for the life outside of the shelter, and also the legal department that deals with any legal related matters". The efforts made by the staff were compared as *"almost feeling in for what a parent should be responsible for towards their dependents"*.

In the same line, the staff and more specifically the support officers were identified as being role models because the minors *"are surrounded most of the times in a place that there are people that sometimes have the behavior as their parents so spending time with people who are 24 hours with us, can affect us in our behavior and can be a role model for us."*

Even so, it was also pointed out by the participants of the study, that the minors do not recognize and acknowledge this support, in most cases, immediately, even so, *"whether they see it or not, i'd like to think that the majority of the time they do but it's, I think difficult to comprehend at their age sometimes, but I think deep down they feel it"*.

Moreover, the evidence that the staff and the shelter are a great support can be better understood by the fact that there have been *"ex residents who have come back to us and told us and recognized that the shelter was their biggest support"*.

Another way to observe the view about how the boys are supported is defined by one of the participants, who believes that the *"officers here and the family away, the cooperation between these two is what can support the boys"*. Furthermore, it was also considered that the staff can be a generator of motivation for the boys as spending time with them and doing activities seems to have a positive effect and to serve as a booster, being affirmed that *"this of spending time with the boys, I think they listen, they keep everything"*.

The staff also serve as role models for the minors as they try to pass essential values of, for example, how to behave in life, being honest and giving accurate information, so that the minors realize that *"okay this is a good thing and it works so I am going to use it as well and I am going to take it as example"*, with the aim of them having the understanding that perhaps honesty is better than dishonesty. This process of passing knowledge and tools that they can use for their lives, needs to be done in a consistent manner on an everyday basis with the behavior shown by all professionals.

Moreover, it was underlined that the officers can be role models as it has been observed, both in the past and in the present, that the minors take positive and negative behaviors from them and they want to be like them.

The importance of being a role model was expressly given by one of the participants who affirmed that *"the biggest foundation is leading by example"* and that everything else will stem from that. *"If you are trying to give good examples, something is going to stick at*

some point or is going to register; it might be put in the subconscious but at some point it will come useful or it will find its way of being useful somehow. And I think again, promoting that inclusiveness or respect to other points of view, or other cultures, being non-discriminatory in our approaches and behavior in the day-to-day stuff is what we should pass to the minors". This serves as a very big example of how trying to be a role model can have a tremendous impact in the building of resilience of the boys and in their lives in general.

Furthermore, the support and safety that the staff provides helps with keeping the minors mental health, as it was indicated that *"the safety net that the shelter provides them, even if they cannot recognize it or put a label of okay here it's safe or this is a safe space for me, which I think most of them do because when you have a conversation with them they are able to describe it as such or use the word safety"*.

Additionally, the support that the minors get from all the professionals it's very important and has a positive impact on their mental health. The social workers with the rehabilitation plan which helps them to prepare for the real world before they leave the shelter, the psychologists with the personalized help and activities, the legal department with all the matters related to their legal processes, *"all the professionals are working for the cases, but again it depends on the person if he wants to work or not, it's a personal thing about the mental health but it's something that the professionals here are trying with alternative ways also"*.

The staff plays also a great role in helping the boys adjust in society through communication and the relationships formed so, *"it's about again providing information, explaining that information, making sure that it's understood and then providing support in all the steps that are required in order to reach the goal of let's say moving out of the shelter and going either to the semi-independent program or moving on to live alone"*.

The professionals working at the shelter and the support given by them through rehabilitation trainings and the importance of teaching the minors the basic processes of a normal daily life, which includes the area they live in and all institutions and services like banks, migration, asylum, hospital, labor office, allows an easier adjustment of the minors to society.

It was also argued that the interaction with the staff promotes the resilience of the boys as individuals *"because we are here 24 hours, and they spend a lot of time with us, because we are in the same setting, so whether they are physically spending time with us or not, what we do and how we do it creates a climate let's say and from that they have a lot to take whether consciously or subconsciously, the impact is there."* Furthermore, a big

importance is given to the behavior and actions of the staff as working as “a catalyst and quite a significant variable in the impact that is going to the minors”.

Apart from the family, staff and peers, the community outside of the shelter for each nationality can represent and provide a big support for the minors, when it comes to their adjustment in society and as facilitator for their resilience. At times these networks and connections created with the community can be vital as they have shown to be helpful in situations where the minors are reaching adulthood and have nowhere to stay or have provided them with help in finding a job. Plus *“seeing others from their nationality succeeding in the community”* is something that gives hope to the boys and shows them that it’s possible to also succeed and to integrate into society.

Also, the communication of the minors with figures of reference, like ex residents of the shelter or other asylum seekers who succeeded with their goals, can be a good support for the minors and serve as a factor that contribute to their resilience, as it was affirmed *“having more figures of reference that are in the middle of their culture and country and in this case Cyprus”* is something that is essential.

Lastly, it was mentioned the importance of the relationship with teachers at school or at the shelter, as a supporting system and role models for the boys, who also play a role in the teaching of rules and society norms, apart from the specific contents of the classes, which can allow a faster and smoother adaptation into society.

Individuality was another formed category. In terms of individual characteristics or skills that the minors should have or develop in order to adjust well in the shelter, many different ones were selected by the participants but “patience” was the most commonly mentioned and referred to as a big one. For one of the participants, patience *“it’s the first thing that we say. Since you know what you want, I mean legally speaking, you should also know that you will wait a lot for that”* as the legal process can be a very long one.

To be “open minded” is the second most mentioned characteristic. It was said that being open minded is going to help them to adjust, adapt, have motivation and goals, so the minors should be more open to new things and experiences *“because what they were used to, they will not find it here. The only way is to be open minded to see other realities”.*

Another view of being open minded was presented in which the main point is to be able to see the long term goal and the bigger picture of things. It was referred that *“a lot of the boys in the shelter seem to have this idea of like, you know, this is where I am stuck right now and all I want is to be there, and they go from seeing shortsightedly to extreme longsightedly, so there is nothing in between, so they don’t see the big picture.”*

The minors should also be more open to listen to what other tell them and to learn the roles of people and the rules of society and to have a more proactive attitude as, a good example was given: *“nobody will come and tell me “ah because you come from another country we have to open all the doors for you”, I have to knock on the doors to get the things so they need to be more proactive”*.

“Trust” was another characteristic mentioned, in the sense that the minors should have the ability to trust that *“the shelter in it’s eternity is operating with them in mind whether this has to do with their legal matters, their social matters or their day to day life in the shelter, and also the psychological issues”*. Furthermore, trust in themselves which is gained through the relationships created with the staff. Trust or the lack of it was also indicated as a survival mode as *“their suspiciousness and their not trusting it’s a survival mode”* which makes it clear that is crucial to achieve a sense of trust for the adjustment and adaptation of the minors, in order to get out of the survival mode.

“Positive attitude or optimism”, was also indicated as being important for the boys in the sense that they should try to take the good out of any situation. If a minor has a positive attitude then he will be able to *“see that people come everyday to work with you and to give you something and that we are trying, because most of the times we don’t succeed at what we do but we try, so I think what will make the difference for them would be to see how people are trying and how at the same time they should try”*.

Being positive was identified as a personal characteristic that can improve their resilience as individuals, and in order to do this, they should not think that *“because I am Syrian they will be racist on me”*, for example, as it was argued that *“I have worked with people from Syria and Somalia and the people respect them a lot so they need to focus on their self and not in the country ID that they have.”*

“Hope” is a characteristic that was specified as a promoter of the minor's individual resilience. Hope that they will reach the goal and that they will have a positive outcome of their legal process so that they can start living their lives, because they were described as *“living a life only in preparation of another”*, that’s why hope is the one thing that keeps them going.

“Tolerance” is also considered one of the big ones as the shelter, being an institution, *“brings tension and feelings of fatigue of one another”*, so more tolerance is needed towards everyone.

“Resilience” is another fundamental characteristic mentioned as needed in the first place. One of the participants affirmed that *“it’s my belief that they have resilience from the*

time they choose to travel. The travel is not easy and the environment and the situation until they come to the destination is difficult, they might get bullied, robbed, physically abused or verbally abused, so resilience is very important”

Other mentioned characteristics were: to be realistic; to be more sensitive towards other people; to show more solidarity towards each other and the staff; to be more understanding which would help them also to *“see things more clearly and it would potentially lead to a bit more appreciation”*.

Characteristics like self-confidence, self-sufficiency and self-responsibility were also mentioned as important in terms of the capability of the minors to adapt to society. They should have these characteristics in order to see the options that might be given to them and for job seeking purposes, for example.

Different skills were also mentioned as being fundamental in the development of resilience by the minors. The process of *“being able to see outside of yourself”*, so not feeling self pity, knowing that you are not where you come from, knowing that no matter who you are, you can have the same opportunities even if you have to fight for them a little bit stronger. This is connected with believing in oneself and it’s something that needs to be worked on, it’s a process that also includes *“being able to advocate your yourself”*, which goes along with feeling *“valuable and accepted as human and also having good self-esteem”*.

Furthermore, developing social and communication skills were found to be valuable as *“to be able to relate to adults and people their age”*. It was also outlined that the boys need to become quite flexible and to gain a maturity and toughness that is not usually found in their age, especially the ones who do not have these skills, *“because otherwise they will get bullied or excluded. On the same line “they need to become assertive and maybe to some extent aggressive to survive.”*

Related to that, it was also affirmed to be important to develop social skills, emotional resilience and capacity and to be more extroverted as *“I can see that for a person that comes here, having extrovert qualities is very helpful.”*

Being more humble, showing perseverance and understanding and being more empathic were other characteristics recognized.

Culture was identified as a main category as well, and the main challenges and difficulties that the minors face in terms of adjustment and adaptation in the shelter and in society, according to the participants, are related to cultural aspects.

Culture includes many aspects so *“from the culture it becomes to be the food, the clothes, the language, the religion, the routine, what they did, their education, their health hygiene”*, a whole cluster of different sub-categories.

One of the participants made this very clear by affirming that *“I think the biggest challenge is the clash from the environment, the culture, the rules, that they come and what they find, so the biggest challenge is to accept the different environment and then adapt because I think if you don't accept you cannot adapt.”*

So, *“trying to be adjusted in a new host country with different language, culture, rules”* seems to be one of the major challenges that the minors face and that can interfere in their resilience. Furthermore, the culture and the specificities that come with it were pointed out as a challenge both for the minors and the staff because both sides need to educate themselves and learn more about the culture of each other, in order to avoid coming into conflict with beliefs.

In general, the participants presented the culture as a shock for the minors, especially in the beginning, when the boys arrive because they are trying to deal with many things at the same time and *“they are trying to engage in society, norms and culture, so they are getting anxious and stressed”*.

A differentiation between the different groups of minors (Syrian, Somali, Africans) present in the shelter was also made in terms of culture. An example was given where it's explained that *“we see it from the Congolese boys, they very rarely make problems they always keep it to themselves, and I think if maybe you speak to the Congolese boys, they will have extremely strong ideas and they will have their opinions but they will not necessarily share them so they could think the worst thing about you but they will keep it to themselves just for the sake of, you know, what's the point in getting in this argument. Whereas you will see the Syrian boys, it's quite obvious to see what they think about you. I think it's a cultural thing, definitely a cultural thing. We can see from our younger boys, it's easier for them to fall into the cultural dynamic of things and it's easier for them to form groups and be influenced by each other.”*

Furthermore, specifically for the Arab community, the fact that in the shelter there is mainly a female presence in terms of professionals, can be a clash for the boys and *“it triggers them because they are not used to women being superior than them”*. They have a different view about the position of women in society, and about how they think about their roles and their family roles, adding the fact that they are used to starting working at this age.

This makes it understandable that getting into an *“european community it’s very difficult because they are not raised in this way”* which becomes a cultural shock.

In terms of motivation, some of the minors that have a foundation of values and morals that they bring from their familiar culture and environment, have been considered as being more *“aware of what they need to do and how they need to do it in order to conquer their goals. They are characterized by a level of maturity so their perceptions and thinking processes are already developed to some degree which helps them and acts as a protective factor for them”*.

Being more culturally aware and sensitive were characteristics that were mentioned in terms of providing help in the adjustment into society by the minors. It was argued that despite being discriminated against, these minors should work on that perspective and reactions and on how they can provide solutions for themselves in different settings and situations, which could help them move forward.

The language was also observed by the participants as being a main factor of difficulty as *“the language barrier it’s a very big issue for the communication because communication is very important”*.

It was also mentioned by a participant that the difficulty of the language is not something that can be seen as long as they are in the shelter, but it is something that becomes harder when they have to go outside and they need to live by themselves and *“interact with the greek speaking community”*. So, on the other hand, knowing the language was identified as a way to adjust into society.

Other participants have expressly identified the language issue as something quite visible in the shelter and also in their lives outside the shelter as part of their interactions and communication.

Another challenge that is culturally related is the food being considered *“one of the biggest problems that they face in the shelter because it’s not the same as in their countries so it’s a problem for them.”*

A good example is also given here: *“the rules and the food, which I think are the most important issues, they cannot understand that this problem they would face it anywhere so they think the issue is being in Cyprus, but when I was teenager I didn’t like the food and the rules of my family but since I kept being in the same environment, I couldn’t blame the environment so I was just blaming my parents.”*

Furthermore, it was also claimed that the food *“is a reason for war”* and that many conflicts between the boys and the staff start because of a meal that they don’t like which

according to the participants is understandable because *“all the cultures are based on food so it’s quite important what they eat”*. Nonetheless, it was also pointed out that behind the food there are other motives, of more emotional grounds, but this *“is the first complaint that most of them bring on the table”*. They have lost many things so they hold on to food as one important thing that they feel that they should have, at least to spend their lunch or dinner with pleasure, which in case happens might help to attenuate other needs that cannot be fulfilled.

The food was considered as a factor that contributes to the mental health of the minors as having food, as part of their basic needs being covered, creates a positive impact.

The rules were also a factor commonly mentioned and a reference was made to the importance and impact of rules and regulations, being suggested that *“the biggest challenge is to climatize in a new country in a setting where it is government by rules and regulations”*.

They were identified as a negative contributor to the minors’ mental health as the minors come from countries where there are no rules, or a few rules and even in these cases, different ones, so it’s difficult for the boys to understand and follow the rules of the Cypriot community and the shelter.

The rules also seem to contribute for a negative view of the minors of the shelter and were again identified as a negative contributor for their mental health, due to the fact that they end up thinking that there are *“inequalities between them, that there are not the same opportunities for all of them, and what I mean with this for example, if a boy that is 16 goes to work and another who is 14 wants to go but is not allowed, they see this as inequality even if we have explained that these are the rules”*. This example clearly shows that the rules represent a big challenge which creates other difficulties and that in order to avoid that it’s important to understand and accept the rules in order to get involved and adjust in the shelter and in society.

Furthermore, this can be better understood by the affirmation of one of the participants who stated that *“first of all they need to accept that they are in another place and there are other rules and they need to see how other people are doing and do the same. But this requires that they accept that they are in another place and they cannot behave like they are in their home countries.”*

Another aspect that was observed regarding the rules was that there are boys who try to follow them but for one reason or another, *“when you actually see that rules do not work, the rules you try to follow and when you keep your feelings regulated but it does not work*

anymore” it’s when a more aggressive approach starts being used by the boys as a result of their frustration.

On another note, the rules were considered from a positive point of view as “*same rules for everyone, everyone gets treated the same way*” model applies, which can represent order and consistency for the boys. Also, the fact that the boys are being taught basic daily rules of European living, will help them to better adjust and adapt when they need to live by themselves and mingle with society, being more prepared to deal with all kinds of situations and environments.

Also, “*to be touted the rules of society and the community*” was expressed as something that can be a promoter of resilience and contribute to a smoother adaptation and integration of the boys.

Education and school more precisely, go along with rules and regulations, and were other important cultural factors mentioned throughout the study, with different perspectives.

In Cyprus, minors who are 15 years old or less are obligated by law to be registered and go to school but schools “*are not prepared to have a decent and appropriate type of education to give to this population and this is something very difficult because we see minors who stop going to school back in their countries and they have some education and they want to continue here but it’s difficult for them because of the system. And from a psychological perspective, it makes them feel more.. they lose their motivation and their goals if they see that it’s not so helpful*”.

It can be understood by this example how education affects other parts of the minors' lives and how they find it challenging to adjust in a new school system which is entirely in Greek language. This is something that provokes a lot of different reactions by the minors because most of the times they have a certain expectation about school and after end up being disappointed because they cannot cope with how much of a difficulty it ends up being for them, so most of them just give up, even the boys who considered education as something very important for their lives when they first came.

On another note, some of the boys have never been to school or other have been for a few years only so “*now that we are trying to engage them in this part, they are not accepting because they didn’t learn*” or because it is normal in their countries to go to school until a certain age and then just live a life as a grown-up adult, which makes it difficult for them to comprehend the importance of school for their lives.

Even if seeming controversial, education was also identified as a factor that keeps and promotes their motivation as some “*want to finish school or they have motivation to*

receive knowledge because they want to become architects or doctors and we have strong examples about this and it's very important”.

School in specific was remarked as a contributor for the adjustment in society of the boys, due to the relationships that they can establish with teachers or peers from different nationalities and for the fact that they are in an environment which allows and promotes the engagement with rules, roles and regulations that serve as example for them to apply in other settings. In the same line, it was denoted that *“we have seen that boys who attended school managed to cope with the transition to adulthood and a smooth adjustment to society”.*

Moreover, school was claimed as a factor that contributes to their resilience as individuals because as it was defended, *“education is important not just in terms of having a certain profession and having a job and your life moving forward in that way, I think education allows them to be aware of the state of the world, be more aware of their place in the world, and knowing exactly what's wrong, whether it can be fixed and how to approach it and I think education is the main thing”.*

The activities and lessons provided at the shelter were specified as factors that contribute to the positive answers given by the minors to the challenges that they face. This is achieved with the help of all the staff as the minors create a close relationship with a staff member, they can start to work on a routine and/or program that helps the minor to engage in different educational events and activities at the shelter or outside, which afterwards end up boosting their motivation to do these things on their own.

Furthermore, *“the activities that they participate have a positive impact because they are receiving something that they might never had or they had, they lost it and now they have it again”*, plus teaching them things that are not necessarily stereotypically academic like *“to teach them stuff that helps them deal with where they are now, through workshops or group activities”* and making them feel that they have more control over their lives, were described as factors that can work on the motivational side of the minors.

Integration and adjustment are other factors culturally shaped that were indicated. They can also present a big difficulty for the minors as *“to adjust to the new environment, it's very difficult when they come here because it's something new so we also see a difficulty in integration it's slowly, it is not that it's not happening, it's happening but some of them might also not integrate, we see people that cannot follow”.*

“Trying to be adjusted in a shelter with other minors from different countries” and adjusting to a new country seem as difficulties that the boys need to face as *“it would be quite a difficult thing for me to be a minor and find myself in a different country and be able to*

come to terms with that pretty quickly". Surpassing this is a must in order to get out from the survival mode in which many of them still live even when they are in the shelter/country for some time and one of the ways of doing so is to *"not lose their focus on what was the first thing why they came"*

Religion was indicated as a factor that slows or does not allow the integration/adjustment of the minors to happen, especially for the ones that have a different religion than the one practiced in Cyprus (Christian Orthodox).

The high turnover of the staff makes the adjustment of the minors more difficult. This is noted by a comment of one of the participants where it's affirmed that *"one could say that the turnover is something that mostly has an impact on the professional team but it's not, I mean, it's the first problematic aspect of this life, shelter life, that comes to my mind, after 6 years, I am fed up with staff coming and leaving, and I am pretty sure that equally the boys feel the same"*. This implies that the boys need to go through a constant adjustment of new people coming and also in adjusting to not having the people who they used to have with them every day.

The shelter, on the other hand, was identified as a promoter of their adjustment into society because *"is working as a system and as a society, micrograph so it is a main factor that contributes to their adjustment in society."*

Also, suggested as contributing positively were school and work as *"is what we hear from many sociologists as indicators of a stable life and adjustment and it is in practice, we see that"*

Care arrangements was another main category identified. This category refers to how the shelter or other care arrangements are capable or incapable, in the eyes of the participants, to provide the necessary feeling of safety, security, stability and care to the minors and how that impacts their resilience.

The answers to this question seem to vary with some participants defending a positive impact of the shelter, others with a negative one or a mixed role.

As per the negative aspects, the shelter contributes to the boys losing the stability that they built and was described as *"an unstable environment, even though we try so much to keep stability so that they feel safe and protected but the environment is not stable. This is the problem. Hm.. practically speaking, if you lose your officer 6 months after you create the relationship, stability does not exist anymore."*

Furthermore, other participants said that *"If I should give one sign, one mark for the shelter, I cannot really give a positive sign. It remains, for me, whatever we say, an*

institution. It's forty something boys in a place with hmm, few officers, running here and there, and not being able to provide family like relationships and care to them. Because at the end of the day, everyone is lost at his or her duties so I am not sure if we could even say that we try to create a family environment here".

The organized set of the shelter was identified as a challenge for the minors, which includes the rules and regulations and undoubtedly the culture and habits behind them, so they not only need to adapt and adjust to these, but also to other minors from different countries who bring their cultures.

On another perspective, the shelter was identified as having potentially both, positive and negative effects in terms of safety, security and care *"depending on their expectations, and I think definitely depending on their own personal trauma, personalities"* ending up being a very personal vision, how each minor feels about the shelter and how he perceives all the things that he is being given and provided.

On the same line, it was affirmed that *"even if the shelter is contributing positively by giving opportunities to them, it becomes negative because they are not attending and they are spending most of the time doing nothing"* which underlines the fact that even when something positive is provided, it's very personal to how each individual will interpret that and what he will decide to take from it.

The double view of the shelter was further exploited by the participants by saying that *"If you want you can get the best of the shelter but it's not a place that will take the best of you"*. This is because it was considered that their life in the shelter is imposed so most of them are not motivated and what keeps the light at the end of the tunnel is just to wait to leave the shelter. Examples were also given where boys who were considered smart and skilled were spending their days in bed and when they left the shelter they were totally different and involved in life, and when they were answered what happened to them, they just answered that they left the shelter. This was explained by the participants with the fact that they are in survival mode when in the shelter and it can also be understood again by the individual perceptions and development that each one has at a certain point. So, what is actually important and has a real impact is the way that the boys perceive the things offered by the shelter, and not what the shelter is offering itself.

The positive side of the shelter was identified through the rewards system that is implemented and that helps in the creation of immediate results for the minors, something that was said to be a big factor for their motivation.

The shelter can also be seen positively as a care arrangement for the fact that it covers all the basic needs of the minors in terms of food, medicine, hygienic products, material necessities like basic bedroom items, also appropriate spaces for their needs such as living room, kitchen, room, bathroom, yard, room for meetings and activities, for example, and staff that reacts and covers their needs inside and out the shelter, like going to the hospital, cultural events or any other type of appointments. All these factors together contribute to the safety and stability of the minors.

Another motivational factor for them, that is provided by the shelter, is their Dublin procedure, which is the legal procedure for reunification with relatives within EU member states, which can be again a knife with two sides. It was described as both one of their biggest challenges and one of their biggest motivation and coping methods, and it is the most important thing for the boys who have this procedure or wish to start it. One of the participants even said *“I see Dublins everywhere, when they eat, when they sleep, when they are in the yard, I mean...”* which shows the power that this has in their daily lives.

Some of the frustration or happiness that the boys might feel regarding this, can be better understood also by an affirmation of another participant that said *“oh my God, I mean Dublin is a funny case and a nightmare at the same time. It’s coming from hell, Dublin.. I mean you can help them to wake up every day with this Dublin, and you can also push them to a cliff when it doesn't move, when it stays stuck, when there is no news”*.

So, this reunification process, mentioned by several participants as a big motivator, seems to also play a role of key protective factor for the minors as *“they are also aware that if they get into trouble or if they are not collaborating, that might have a negative impact on their progress”* which can from one side, make them think twice about creating problems or following negative coping strategies to deal with their frustrations (like drugs and alcohol abuse or anger outbursts, which were mentioned by some participants) and from the other, trying to focus on the positive ways of coping like education, job, activities and relationships.

Ultimately, *“the idea for going to their asylum interview and potentially being accepted or the idea of having their family reunification case approved or waiting for their ticket to go for their destination country”* is what keeps them going and it’s something that would not be possible for them to have if they were not under the care of a shelter.

On another note, leaving the shelter was named as a major motivator for the boys. And this can mean, not only leaving for the reunification with family as already seen, but for moving into the semi-independent program or to just live outside the shelter.

For a better understanding of the results, a table with the main answers given by the participants was created:

Table 4: Answers provided by the participants

Answers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Biggest challenges	Clash from the environment, culture and rules; to accept the environment and adapt; inclusion	Climate to the rules and regulations of the new country; communication barriers; age; perception	Being away from family, integration, shelter,	Dublin and high turnover	Separation from family, adjustment in a new country, trying to understand and their present and future	Distance from their family, coexistence with other people of different nationalities, different age groups, the organized set of the shelter	Language, religion, culture, education, health hygiene	Adjust to a new environment, integration, language, culture	Being without their family, being in a culturally different context, institutionalization, language, uncertainty, insufficient educational opportunities, lack of proper care and support	Miscommunication, language, separation from family, different mindset and background, female figures having superior roles, war and trauma
How do they deal with them?	Rejection and disappointment. They don't deal with it, they are in survival mode	Disruption		Drugs and communication and relationship with staff	Keeping family values and connection to the roots, religion, hope		To engage in society, stress, anxiety, anger outbursts	Aggressiveness, isolation, relationship with staff	Formation of bonds with peers and staff, maintaining connection with family, focus on the present	Communication with the staff and aggressiveness
Individual characteristics	Positive attitude, gratitude	Patience and trust	Patience, being realistic	Patience and	Flexibility, open to	Cooperation, empathy	Respect, personal hygiene,	Resilience, trust,	Flexibility, self-sufficiency	Patience, understanding,

Answers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
stics that they should have or develop?	e, open minded		, sensitivity, solidarity, open mindedness	tolerance	new experiences, curiosity, optimism, social and self awareness, problem solving skills	, obedience	focus on education and life-goals	open minded	iciency, socialization skills, assertiveness and toughness	humility, communication skills, perseverance
Who is their biggest support?	Syrians: family Somali: peers at the shelter African s: staff	Staff	Peers and staff	Family and staff	Family, staff, peers	Friends/ roommate	Family	Family	Sense of stability and safety, peers, staff, family	Family and staff
Who do they see as role model?	Family	Peers	Peers and established people	Peers	Family figures and religion	Staff	Staff and videogames	Family and staff	Peers, staff, family	Rebels and spokes people of the country that are against the government, family, staff
What keeps them motivated ?	To leave the shelter, spend time with	2 groups: ones motivated by internal factors	External factors vs internal factors	Dublin, work, immediate effects	Hope for a better life for them and their	Family, to think that they have opportunities, peers/fri	Better future, education and reunification	Family and reunification, school, semi-ind	Necessity , relating to others, reunification with family, keeping	Leaving, sending money to their families and/or bringing

Answers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	staff, activities,	and other by external			families	ends, the staff	with family	dependent program	the families and religious aspirations and traditions, to fit in	them here, education
What difficulties do they face and how do they deal with them?	Rejection, food, rules, environment, not having point of reference	Inability to manage negative emotions, being in a different country, not being with familiar faces	Proving themselves, becoming easily influenced by each other, acceptance	Food, nostalgia, language	Outbursts or praying	Outburst of feelings	Language, racism, culture, food, trust, abandonment			
What factors contribute to their mental health?	Negative way: shelter, drugs, alcohol Positive way: peers of same age and group; doing activities and speaking with the peers	Peers and shelter/staff	Communication with family and being themselves	Peers	Sense of stability and security, strong family relationships, individual characteristics like resilience	Having a safe place to live, well-defined environment, support provided by the staff	Peers with same nationality, hope, shelter	Negative: the journey and rules Positive: security, food, staff	Precarious situation, safety and stability, family, support systems, culture, boundaries, routine, society,	Situation at their country, communication with family and staff, peers and shelter
What factors contribute to their	Accept that they are in a	Staff/shelter	Becoming culturally	School, work, commu	Self-confidence and self-eff	Shelter	Education, language,	Staff and peers	Social skills, intelligence,	Community and social circle, job

Answers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
adjustment in society?	different country with different rules		sensitive, knowing their rights, speak up for themselves	community support	efficiency, having good support network from relatives, peers and teachers		knowing rules, respect		education	
What other factors can contribute to their resilience?	Having more figures of reference	Relationship with staff and communication	Being able to see outside of yourself/believing in yourself, education	Hope and the process	Feeling valuable and accepted as human, good self-esteem, positive peer and adult support network, problem solving skills	Process	Patience, respect roles and rules, socializing, proactive, positive	Positive support system, the process	Establishing support systems, to withstand challenges and fail and be able to try again, tolerate rejection and be able to be okay with that, process loss and the way loss is processed, developing skills and interests	Knowing the rules and regulations of the country, repulsion to help or positive interference

Note: For some participants there are no answers added for the question “What difficulties do they face and how do they deal with them?” because they have given an answer to that on other asked questions.

Discussion

The aim of the study was to identify and understand which are the psychosocial factors that contribute to the resilience of URM.

The difficult procedure in this field, as previously described, contributes to the understanding of why there is such a small amount of studies that are actually conducted with URMs who reside in shelters and are under the care of a country's government.

The results showed that the minors are in general resilient but that they are a vulnerable group who use different strategies to build their resilience further and cope with difficulties.

The minors were described by the participants as *“doing quite well”* despite the challenges and considering all situations and factors, and as *“coming positively”* and *“coming with resilience”*. This resilience then needs to be worked on according to the demands and challenges that they continue facing on a daily basis at the shelter, which per se, was also identified by the participants as resilience: the process itself of constantly adjusting and adapting according to different circumstances, people and places.

Resilience was also understood from an internal perspective, being affirmed that it is *“a lifelong process and it’s always related to the environment and it’s about sort of developing the capacity to withstand challenges and fail and be able to try again, tolerate rejection and be able to be okay with that, process loss and the way loss is processed which can become a way of coping and strengthening the person.”*

It was further affirmed that this internal resilience always goes hand in hand with establishing a support system which can help the minors to reach their goals. Having networks to whom you can rely on and developing different skills and interests was considered a major thing, because *“a person who has skills that might be needed outside in the labor market already it’s more resilient”*. These factors combined are playing a reassuring role and are giving the minors a sense of personal strength and security.

The strategies and coping mechanisms used by the URMs are many. Some find their way through creating/maintaining close relationships with their family, peers or staff at the shelter; some through individual skills and characteristics that they bring with them or develop; some through cultural adjustment which includes their behaviors and ways of thinking and perceiving the information given by the environment, food, language, education, rules and regulations; some through a focus in safety, security and care arrangements which

includes all the daily basic needs that they have covered; and others by mixing and using these methods together.

These outcomes are consistent with what was found in the literature, and even if different words or expressions were used, the logic and main stream of thinking behind them are the same.

In terms of resilience many studies seem to conclude on the same idea that the participants of this study agree, that despite the many difficulties and challenges that this population has faced, they seem to be resilient to adversity and to do well (Bronstein & Montgomery, 2011; Keles et al., 2016; Badri et al., 2020; Lekkai, 2020; Osima, 2019)

In terms of relationships, the study identified family, peers and staff as main sources, and additionally teacher/tutors, community and figures of residence as main support for the minors.

This same distribution can be found in the literature as, for example, Layne et al. (2009) referred to it as “nuclear family and extended family members, friends at the same age (peers), and adult friends/mentors” (p.149).

As a great importance was given to relationships by the participants in the present study, equally it can be understood by the literature that a central role is played by “factors that promote positive relationships in fostering resilience” (Rodriguez & Dobler, 2021, p.562).

Fritz et al. (2018) identified it as interpersonal factors and included the quality of past and present relationships such as secure attachments to family members, peers and society and the sense of connectedness between them.

On this line, Sierau et al. (2019) argued that the family is perceived as the strongest and most important source of social support for the URMs. Interestingly, the study by Sierau et al. (2019) showed that “the lack of family contact was accompanied by less perceived social support in peers and mentors” (p.775), which is not in accordance with the findings of the present study and also with the findings of Layne et al. (2009) and Oppedal and Idsoe (2015) where it was argued that, in the absence of family, a support system might be found and/or compensated by other sources. In this study, it was also defended that family is the biggest support system for the minors but that other positive support systems can be found even if they don't have the same impact.

The literature follows the same line of importance about relationships as per the study, as Rodriguez and Dobler (2021) identified “secure attachment”, “positive family and peer relationships”, “importance of maintaining ties with families and/or extended families

post-migration” and “forming and maintaining new peer relationships has emerged as a further source of resilience amongst UASC” (p.563) as sources that help in the building of resilience.

In addition, many participants of the study identified the staff as a great support for the minors, serving also as role models and teaching them to differentiate right from wrong, as well as other important values and lessons for their lives. This can also be observed in the literature as the “staff gave concrete advice when something unpleasant occurred so that he would know what he should do and not to do.” (Eriksson & Rundgren, 2018, p.1019).

Eriksson and Rundgren (2018) further explained that the staff and the peers contribute for the creation of a sense of “group identity” which according to them helps the minors as they help each other by “sharing experiences and knowledge and using each other as a resource for dealing with life” (p.1019), which goes along with the finding of the present study. On this note, Motti-Stefanidi et al. (2020) called for the “need to be liked and accepted by their peers”.

Regarding the importance of peers, Sleijpen et al. (2016) affirmed that “peers often distract from problems and give advice” which goes along with the findings of this study as peers were identified as role models and figures of trust for the minors.

Luster et al. (2010) described it as “relationships with significant others”, the “strength of peer relationships” was specifically mentioned by Faziol et al. (2012) and Eriksson and Rundgren (2018) have described it as “fellowship and socializing with other young people, and trusting, close relationships with the staff” (p.1017).

Furthermore, in accordance with what the participants mentioned, relationships with teachers and/or mentors can be also very important for the minors and Motti-Stefanidi et al. (2020) described it as reassuring that “caring relationships with teachers have been shown to be particularly important” (p.27) and Dogget (2012) reported it as support networks including friends, professionals and teachers at school.

In terms of individual characteristics and skills, answers such as “problem solving skills”, characteristics like “self-confidence, self-esteem, self-sufficiency and self-responsibility”, being “open minded” and “seeing outside of yourself” were obtained.

On the same line, Rodriguez and Dobler (2021) referred to “problem-solving skills”, “stable self-concept”, and “cognitive flexibility”. Additionally, “positive self-perceptions” was underlined by Mohamed and Thomas (2017) and “self-efficacy” and “self-reliance” by Lekkai (2020).

As a continuation, Fritz et al. (2018) identified individual characteristics and skills as “stable self-concept and ability to self-regulate”, “cognitive flexibility” , “the ability to re-appraise and low rumination” and “low impulsivity and low aggression” as intrapersonal resilience factors.

Other personal characteristics that the study identified were “patience”, “hope” and “optimism” which can also be observed in other studies where “optimism, patience, confidence and hope” are pointed out as coping strategies like the one by Maegusuku-Hewett et al. (2007) and the one by Raghallaigh and Gilligan (2010) which recognized “adopting a positive outlook” as a resilience strategy that helps the minors surpass current difficulties, which goes along with what was mentioned in this study as “hope” and optimism”.

Berman (2001) named it as a belief that their actions will lead to positive outcomes, Mohamed and Thomas (2017) defined it as “optimism, self-esteem and self-efficacy”, additionally Dogget (2012) referred to it as “appreciating the positive in their current circumstances” (p.214) and Lekkai (2020) identified as “looking forward in anticipation of a positive future and focusing on the positive aspects of their present situation” (p.45).

Gratitude was another mentioned characteristic in this study which was also used in literature by Mohamed and Thomas (2017) and Osima (2019).

Furthermore, other skill that the participants mentioned was to be goal-oriented which can also be seen expressed by Lakkai (2020) and Luster et al. (2010), as “staying focused on why they came”.

The study by Osima, 2019 identified “autonomy” as an important characteristic that the URMs have on a higher level compared to other youths, due to their life experiences, which allowed them to be more mature.

On another note “faith or religious orientation”, “religion” and “spirituality and faith” were mentioned by several authors (Rehn-Mendoza, 2020; Raghallaigh & Gilligan, 2010; Mohamed & Thomas, 2017) like an individual characteristics that promote resilience but were not indicated by the participants of the study.

Also, Huemer et al. (2012) found that repressive defensiveness, denial of distress and restraint are characteristics that are shown to be present on a high level on URMs as producers of resilience. These characteristics were not mentioned by any of the participants of the study.

Regarding culture, the study identified the following sub-categories: cultural awareness, language, food, education, rules and regulations, activities and lessons at the shelter, integration and adaptation as main factors playing an important role in the minors’

lives.

In literature, similar characteristics are associated with culture as “people look different, wear a different wardrobe, speak a different language, eat different food, live by different religions, values, moral codes, or differ in their general way of thinking” (El-Awad et al., 2017, p. 2). It can be seen that the way of dressing and wardrobe are an additional factor that was not mentioned by this study but that all the other factors are in accordance.

According to Oppedal and Idsoe (2012), the competence of culture involves both understanding of “verbal and non-verbal communication and interpersonal behavior patterns and the values underlying these” (p. 685), which in the present study is referred by the participants as the process and need of adjustment into society, which is assisted by the staff at the shelter.

It is also argued in literature that the minors should maintain a close relationship with both heritage and host and culture as a promoter of their good mental health (Oppedal & Idsoe, 2012). The present study also keeps the same line of thought as it was referred that the peers and the outside network of people from the same country provide big support in times of need, representing their heritage culture, and at the same time, all the staff and people coming to the shelter as mentors or teachers, play an important role for providing the minors with the values, rules and perceptions of the host culture.

The literature showed that culture is an important factor for the minors and that language contributes to the minors adaptation (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2020; Osima, 2019; Mohamed & Thomas, 2017).

As per the present study, which identified education as a way of adjusting in society, the literature also showed that education is a form of social inclusion (Osima, 2019). The combination of the importance of school with language was also underlined, being affirmed that “schools were crucial to children learning the language” (Mohamed & Thomas, 2017, p.256).

Mohamed and Thomas (2017) also defined successful acculturation as having friends from a similar background, good mental health, high self-esteem and good grades at school, which combines education with individual and relationship factors. On the same line, it was affirmed that URMs find “support in stakeholders, mainstream and ethnic friends, through whom they acquired competence in the majority culture and ethnic culture” (Osima, 2019, p.25). Furthermore, culture and relationships are strongly linked as it is asserted that the URMs became friends with their classmates (Osima, 2019).

The school is further described by Motti-Stefanidi et al. (2020) as a key factor of

acculturation, referring to the quality of the relationships created there, the climate and the program presented.

The importance of school, as part of cultural resilience, is further underlined in literature as in this study, being affirmed that in many occasions, schools are the setting in which URMs first begin the process of acculturation (Mohamed & Thomas, 2017).

On another note, activities at school and/or outside of school such as workshops or sports were referred as methods of promotion of intercultural contact (Osima, 2019), which relates to the activities that the minors of this study attend at the shelter and outside the shelter, and that promote their integration and adjustment into society, as well as the relationship with staff and peers.

The study underlined the importance of intelligence and education and this can be observed by *“how fast they can learn the language, how fast they can understand and navigate into a strange social context to them, and that goes for inside and outside of the shelter”*. Furthermore, it was identified that *“children who are more ready to learn the language and go out and socialize and make friends outside”* integrate in a faster way.

The connection between education and socialization can also be observed in the literature when it's affirmed that *“all the participants linked education with an ability to socialize and form a social support network”* (Fuller & Hayes, 2022, pp. 416). On the same line, the social groups they formed at school also facilitated the learning of English (Fuller & Hayes, 2022), which links the power of school and learning a language, as described in this study.

The literature also mentioned faith, religion and God as ways of expression and connection with the culture (Raghallaigh, 2011) and in this study, religion was indicated as an impediment for the boys acculturation and adjustment in society due to the fact that mostly a different religion is practiced in Cyprus. Religion was mentioned on a second occasion as a motivation factor and something that keeps the boys going, being affirmed that they find motivation in *“following the aspirations of their culture and religion.”* No further, comments were given to religion by the participants, as a contributor to the minors' resilience.

The food, that in this study was related to cultural aspects, was in the literature related to security. Eriksson and Rundgren (2018) referred to *“cultural safety”* as a feeling of acceptance towards one's *“cultural and linguistic resources”* and towards one identity, one image of himself and how others perceive him, which reflects the individual characteristics of self-esteem, self-confidence and trust in one's self, found in this study.

In the same line, Motti-Stefanidi et al. (2020) also focused on the sense of identity referring that a well-adapted UMR will have a “strong and secure ethnic and national identities” in which the ethnic/home culture refers to the family, ethnic peers and ethnic group and the national/host culture refers to school and native peers. In the present study, the description does not come from the word “identity” as in the literature, but it can be understood that the thinking behind it goes along with what is described as per the literature. Meaning that, school, peers, community and family play a major role as coping strategies and mechanisms for being well adapted.

Even though rules were more specifically culturally related in the study, they were described as in the safety and security domain by Erikson and Rundgren (2018). The authors argued that it’s important to create boundaries in the form of “reasonable and helpful rules in residential care” (p.1021). Furthermore, it was affirmed that “when setting limits does not work, it is because the professionals lack emotional relationships with young people” (Erikson & Rundgren, 2018, p.1021), meaning that rules are working and being followed because relationships of trust between the staff and the unaccompanied minors have been created.

As a fourth category, the current study focused on the care arrangements provided by the shelter and the semi-independent program. Most specifically, the role that the shelter has in terms of providing safety and security for the boys and the importance of the semi-independent program as an important motivational factor.

It was observed that the participants of this study had mixed opinions and feelings about the shelter, being considered both its positive and negative influence. Regarding the semi-independent program, it was presented in a more positive way as it allows the minors to be more independent and not to struggle with all the challenges found in the shelter. Plus it was considered a way to get out of the institutionalization that happens in the shelter.

In the literature, as there are not many studies completed in a shelter setting, it was not possible to find the same representation of the importance of a shelter, only a similar approach that had a different presentation of the content but with the same thoughts behind it.

The care arrangements in literature are referred to as something that can play an important role in the mental health of URM (Hohne et al., 2020), just as has been also underlined by the present study.

In the literature shelters and foster parents are identified as care arrangement structures (Erikson & Rundgren, 2018; Luster et al., 2010; Badri et al., 2020). In both studies that addressed foster parenting as care arrangements, it was underlined the important role that

the foster parents play in the promotion of integration into the new culture and the creation of resilience of the minors, thus providing them with a sense of safety and security (Luster et al., 2010; Badri et al., 2020).

Per comparison, foster parents or the foster parenting system were not mentioned in this study but the semi-independent living program was referred, which is a living arrangement provided by Hope for Children to the minors who, after reaching 16 years of age, show that they can take care of themselves and that are ready to live in a more independent and autonomous way. This program allocates four to five boys together into a house/apartment where they do their lives independently, with the support of a responsible support officer, when necessary.

It was affirmed by the participants that for the boys, knowing that they can leave from the shelter and move into such a facility, is something that motivates them and gives them strength to carry on during their days, something in which they find hope for continuing forward.

When it comes to the structure and functioning of a shelter, Erikson and Rundgren (2018) specifically address safety and security in their study by discussing that “safety means different things to different people in different life periods. What is perceived as a safe living environment depends on the experience and confidence the unaccompanied minors feel in relation to the people in their environment” (p.1017), which shows how safety is correlated with formed relationships.

On another note, “security is about basic needs such as food, a private room, practical help, and about being in an environment that offers security and peace in a community with other young people” (Erikson & Rundgren, 2018, p. 1017). This goes along with the mentioned by the participants of the study as the shelter tries exactly to provide safety through all the services and relationships formed and security by providing the basic living conditions and fixed rules. One of the participants sustained this by affirming that “*an initial quite important support is the sense of safety and to an extent stability of being here, knowing that probably until they are 18 they can be here and their needs are met, they are relatively safe so I think that is quite substantial for them*”.

On the same line, Erikson and Rundgren (2018), considered different types of safety like: emotional (being oneself), social (fellowship and socialization), cultural (feeling accepted) and forms of security like the reunification with family and fixed rules. This is exactly in line with what the participants of the study have mentioned as crucial factors that the shelter provides or tries to provide, as after it’s an individual choice to decide, whether

they are able to take and/or understand these benefits. Example for being oneself can be seen as it was affirmed that *“within the bubble of this shelter they really can be themselves, they really can be whoever that kid is with whatever his background is”*. An example for feeling accepted can be the fact that a *“good thing about the shelter is that this is actually maybe one of the few places where we don't have labels that they would encounter outside of the shelter”* and as continuation, the same rules apply to everyone, *“everyone gets treated the same way”*, which means that everybody is accepted as who they are. As for the fellowship and socialization, the staff and the peers were considered the biggest support for the minors, so they cover the social safety with a major importance.

In general, the answers of the participants of the study followed the same line as the ones found in literature, thus it was possible to keep three of the main four categories initially constructed: relationships, culture and individuality.

The answers only differed a lot when it came to religion/spirituality as in the literature there is big evidence that this is a coping strategy used by URMs, and that is a way for building and maintaining their resilience, but it was not identified as such in the present study.

From this study, it was possible to conclude that all factors - relationships, culture, individuality and care arrangements - are interconnected and essential for the building of resilience of the URMs. It was, furthermore, possible to confirm that these boys have an immense capacity for adjusting and adapting to many different situations, environments and people and that they use different strategies to do so. Despite being vulnerable and exposed to vulnerable situations, they are capable young men who have been through many difficulties and who still continue to face many challenges but who continue finding ways to deal with these.

Looking into both literature and the answers provided by the participants of this study, several reflections can be undertaken regarding the resilience of these young boys.

Each one of them finds different strategies to cope with the challenges. For some boys, fortunately or unfortunately, the resilience that they are capable to create and have created is exactly due to focusing on internal factors, by entering into a state in which they are incapable or unwilling to trust, to care, to share, to love, and they *“become close minded and not accepted of advice”* in order to protect themselves. Or in other words, they have found that being self-centered is the only way to survive in their world which is full of instability and uncertainty and their minds are so occupied in doing so that they tend to forget or are not capable of using other methods.

Their sense of response and sensibility just drops with every event and situation that disappoints them, and they use carelessness and repulsion as a way not to be overwhelmed by the accumulation of negative emotions that emerge.

Something that was also affirmed was that *“they enter into a space in which they focus on the day, because everything it’s unknown and uncertain, they forget about what goals they want to achieve, where they want to go, who they want to be and they focus more on day to day”*.

On one hand, they might also use anger outbursts as a way to externalize their frustration and as a coping way, to deal with their emotions or, on the other hand, isolation.

Other boys find their way through focusing on external factors like their Dublin procedure; the possibility to go to the semi-independent program outside the shelter; the comforting relationships that they build/maintain with family, peers or staff; focusing on their goals; getting education or a job.

But, above all, and the longer they stay in the shelter, most of them share this attitude of indifference, inconsideration and even disrespect towards anything that is not directly serving their purpose or intention. And, with time, even for that.

So, actually the constant battles that they fight and the constant unwanted outcomes that they receive are what is making them resilient. The process itself is what is making them resilient, as it was mentioned, their resilience comes from the *“hope that they will have a positive outcome of this process”*, of waiting for reunification or waiting for asylum acceptance but, in case they are not able to do that, *“somehow they balance a new hope of a new beginning again and that keeps them resilient but it’s all in the process”*.

Nevertheless, it can be understood that these aspects also have a very big cultural meaning that is different from our European understanding of the definition of these words and/or actions, as it was mentioned by a participant, the boys *“come from an arab background where it’s a totally different mindset”*. In order to understand this mentality and mindset in more depth, it would make sense to conduct a study like this with minors living in shelters.

Thus, it can be outlined that the study also presented some limitations like the fact that it takes only into consideration the perceptions and opinions of what the professionals working at the shelter believe that contribute to the resilience of the boys, and not their own testimony; the fact that a small sample was used; the presence of mostly female participants and only two males; and a lack of diversity in the religious background, factors that can possibly influence and impact the answers obtained.

From a point of view of the positive sides of the study, it was a study completed in a very needed topic and at the same time in a very difficult environment to have access to. Another positive aspect is the fact that the study was able to include participants with a big variety of ages, people who have different roles in the shelter and who have had more than one role in the shelter, which allowed richness in the responses. Also, most of the participants gave the same/similar answers to most of the questions which showed the unanimity of the professionals working at the shelter, regarding which factors promote the resilience of the boys.

For future reference it would be interesting to have more studies directly conducted with URMs to compare and understand if the same factors would be maintained as promoters of resilience. It would also make sense to understand the point of view of ex residents. It would also be interesting to include more professionals from the male gender and a bigger number of participants.

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Conclusion

This dissertation comprised firstly a systematic review of the literature about the psychosocial factors that contribute to the promotion of resilience in URMs.

It was possible to observe that, in general, there is an increase in studies that focus on the asylum seeking and refugee population but that still, a small amount of studies focus specifically on unaccompanied minors.

When it comes to resilience, most studies tend to focus on the vulnerabilities and negative outcomes related to URMs, rather than on the ways that these youths use to cope with challenges, which makes this study fundamental to contribute to this understanding.

Furthermore, most studies in this area were found to be systematic reviews of the literature and not empiric studies which made the inclusion of articles to be of a small amount.

For the studies focused on resilience, the main results obtained were that even though this is considered to be one of the most vulnerable populations, they show a great capacity for resilience. This resilience is mostly obtained through three big categories: individual, relationships and context/environment and the main identified factors were religion, meaningful and trustworthy relationships, focus on education, safety and acculturation process. Having in mind the selected articles, the most mentioned variables were divided into four major groups: religion; culture; individuality; and relationships.

The second part of the study consisted in an empiric study. It was found that mostly the same categorization can be done in terms of categories that promote the resilience of URMs as the answers of the participants were in, its majority, in accordance with literature.

The categories culture, individuality and relationships were maintained and the category religion was substituted by care arrangements, as the participants did not give the power to religion as found in the systematic review.

For each category, sub-categories were created accordingly. For the category relationships, the study included as sub-categories family, peers, staff, community, teachers and figures of reference; for individuality, individual characteristics and skills; for culture, cultural awareness, language, food, education, rules and regulations, activities and lessons at the shelter, integration and adaptation; and for care arrangements, safety and security related to the shelter and semi-independent program.

It can be concluded that both the systematic review and the empiric study found the same findings especially when it comes to the categories of relationships and individuality.

For culture, the study included some aspects that are more specific to the shelter like the food, activities and lessons provided and the rules and regulations which cannot be found in other studies, or at least not in the same context.

The same happened with the category care arrangements, to which the present study gave big importance in terms of the safety and security that the shelter provides and represents for the minors, which was only found in one more study. This can be understood by the lack of studies in which interviews are conducted with professionals working in a shelter and also in a shelter with a multidisciplinary setting like this one.

Having this in mind, it is important to affirm that there is a need for further studies that intend to comprehend the resilience factors that URM use to cope with difficulties and challenges, in shelter settings, in general.

Finally, it can be concluded that URM can be very strong individuals who can make conscious and emotionally resilient decisions for themselves, when appropriate and consistent support networks are created around them.

These minors are constantly evolving their resilience levels through the daily challenges that they continue facing in the shelter life, which shows their active role in the process of creating resilience. Their activeness, linked with the individual characteristics that they bring and develop, the relationships that they maintain and create, the acculturation process through which they undergo and the shelter as care arrangement provided to them, is what makes them creators of their own destinies.

Appendices

Appendix A: Interview 1

Age: 29

Nationality: Italian

Gender: Female

Religion: Christian catholic

Educational background: Bachelor's degree in political science and masters degree in international relations

Amount of time working at the shelter: 3 years

Current role and/or previous roles in the shelter: Support officer

Previous experience working with a similar population group: Yes. Volunteering program in Turkey for 2 months working with Syrian and Turkish accompanied minors with disadvantaged backgrounds, in the format of non formal education.

1. What are the biggest challenges that the minors face in the shelter?

1: "I think the biggest challenge is the clash from the environment, the culture, the rules, that they come and what they find, so the biggest challenge is to accept the different environment and then adapt because I think if you don't accept you cannot adapt." They deal with it first of all with rejection. I think at the beginning there is this happiness because they are in Europe, but as soon as they arrive at the shelter they realize that is nothing like they expected so they have this down face which is like disappointment and rejection for what they see, I believe.

Me: So how do they deal with this rejection and disappointment?

1: "I don't think they really do it, especially inside the shelter, their life is imposed so they don't really use any coping mechanism most of the time, so they survive."

Me: So they are in survival mode?

1: “I think so because I see and I saw boys with many skills and that are smart, spending all their day in bed, without being willing to do anything. They are very good with the staff but they just don’t want to get bothered. And then I saw some of them going outside of the shelter and being totally different, being involved, finding a job, being with their friends and having an active social life and when I asked them what happened to you, they answered “I just left the shelter”.

Me: So you think the shelter contributes in a negative way and instead of promoting their adaptation is working the other way around?

1: “I think for most of the boys, yes, I think it’s very individual. If you want you can get the best of the shelter but it’s not a place that will take the best of you. I think this is for very little number of boys that are willing to do so, but when you are a teenager you don’t know how to take the best that you can from one situation. For me it’s like when you have a bad experience, you know how to take the best of it but because you seek this, but if you are a teenager you are just staying and following the flow so you don’t think of getting the best out of it.

Me: Apart from adaptation, do you think there are any other challenges that they face?

1: “I think the inclusion, in terms of society and mean as structure which I think is the biggest issue. I think of how much they can have a good life in Cyprus because what I saw is that they will always be amongst them, they will not be with the cypriots and I realized now when I was in Italy, in the north, which is very inclusive, I saw like Arab people, black people, Pakistani people going out for drinks with italians and I was like wow, and I couldn’t believe it they go out normally.

Me: So you think this is not happening here?

1: “No way. It’s difficult for us so imagine for them”.

2. What individual characteristics one should have or develop in order to adapt well in the shelter?

1: Positive attitude, to take the good out of whatever situation you are in and gratitude because it's an environment that for the way it's built it does not give you many things, if you see it in a certain way, many boys define it as a prison, so if you don't have this positive attitude to concentrate on the good things that you have rather on what you don't have, you will never be able to get anything out of it. But if you see that you have this positive attitude, and you see that people come everyday to work with you and to give you something and that we are trying, because most of the times we don't succeed at what we do but we try, so I think what will make the difference for them would be to see how people are trying and how at the same time they should try because they are very close minded, it's either this either this, they don't want to explore, to try, because they are like no.

Me: So they also need to be more open minded?

1: "Yes, definitely, because what they were used to they will not find it here. The only way is to be open minded to see other realities".

3. Who or what is the biggest support for the boys and why?

1: "Okay this I think is different for the different groups that we have in the shelter. For the Syrian I think it's their family, especially if it's in Cyprus because first of all they are the ones to give them money so for them this is a way they realize they support them. For the Somalis I would say that they are a very bonded group so they can find support inside the group and inside the shelter within the Somalis. For the Africans I don't know...I don't know, but I think they are the ones that they are most likely to be make themselves supported by the staff and to accept more easily. And why you think is that? "Look, this is a question that I asked myself for many years, I think first of all, the african culture is matriartical culture so they are used to see women around to tell them what to do and the way they respect us I never found it anywhere else, so already this put us in the position to tell them what to do and for them to listen and to believe that what we are saying is for their best. So they are not like stiff, thinking like "D is a women and she is telling me something and she does not have the right to do so" so they are like more open to receive something and this is

a bridge for the communication. And I don't know if by being colonized by belgians and french, like they have more of an european mindset that is more similar to us so it's easier to have same values somehow.

Me: So for the Syrians, they find the support in the money given by their family members in Cyprus?

1: "No, in the family, in the relatives that they have here"

Me: For the Somali, is mainly the relationships that they build amongst them?

1: "Yes"

Me: And for the Africans the staff plays a big role?

1: "I think they are the most independent ones so I wouldn't be able to find the support but I think if they need it, they will come for us for support. They are the least distrustful.

Me: So you think it's easier to earn their trust?

1: "Yes, for me personally and I think I have a good relationship with them".

4. Who do they see as a role model and why?

1: "I have no clue, like role model you mean as someone they would like to be?"

Me: Someone that they see as an example, someone that they admire. It can be a group also.

1: I have no idea really

Me: For example for the Syrians, in terms of support you mentioned the family, so do you think that maybe they are the people that they admire the most?

1: I don't think so because, from my experience they don't speak good about their family member, they might go there but they don't speak good about them.

Me: Yes, but what about the family that is back in Syria?

Me: Especially for the boys that we have now is not something that we speak about. I mean If I have to think about the boys that we had before, which the relationship was totally different because we would speak much more, they would mention their family and they would say like “my father did a lot for me or my mother” I remember having this conversation with some Somali and some mentioned their parents and older siblings so I would say family but for the boys that we have now I would not be able to give you an answer.

Me: What do you think it's the difference, why now you don't see that, what changed?

1: first of all, the boys are different

Me: in what way?

1: I think the Somalis are the most distrustful with me at least, so we don't have any conversation at all. before we would sit for hours and hours talking and when you talk for hours things come out, now with this group of Somalis nothing, nothing. If you ask me why, I think it's because they are disrespectful so I cannot cope. Maybe this is also my limit so.

Me: Everyone has their limits so...

1: Yes, for me I put the strongest boundaries when someone is disrespectful because I will never be able to go and joke with them or to make question, I will do my job in the way I am supposed to but I will not try an inch more because I will be disappointed after and I cannot afford to be disappointed after 3 years, which is a pity actually because I enjoy talking to them but okay. For the Syrians it's because the ones that we have now they are very small so we spend the time just telling them what not to do so... I mean.. we cannot have this higher level of conversation. I can have it with M, and yes he has told me about his uncle, his cousin, so again the family as a role model.

5. What keeps them motivated?

1: First of all I don't think they are motivated, or at least most of them and I think this is connected to what I said before related to the fact that their life in the shelter is imposed so most of them, they are not motivated and what keep the light at the end of the tunnel is just to wait to leave the shelter. So is not a real motivation, but they are just waiting for somehow leave the shelter to start their real life.

Me: But when you say that their life in the shelter is imposed so you mean that they don't have the freedom to make choices or what do you exactly mean by that?

1: No, I mean that they do not live, they just survive. they are like plants, they eat, they sleep, they do the basic to keep alive but they don't do any effort more in getting anything out of it. And I had this conversation with many boys telling them "look you have here in the shelter staff coming from all over the world, so you could learn literally anything" apart from the languages, the things that we know because it's different places in the world, we also have expertise from our educational background, so they could learn something more, nowadays you can even learn quantum physics from youtube, they don't do it.

Me: Okay, but what do you think that you as a professional can do to change that, to maybe motivate them?

1: What I can do now as things are or what I could do if things were different? because the answer are totally different

Me: you can give me both

1: Okay, so you also have to consider my specific position, being there for 3 years so what I can do now, for me it's very limited, because my mental resources are not finished but very limited because I tried many things in the past and they didn't work for many reasons so this does not let me try again.

Me: Would you like to share some of the things you tried?

1: Yes, we tried many activities with the boys, like many different things, for example, we tried arranging cooking days with the boys, which I think it's amazing because it's

something that they like and helps them to stay together and create social skills, you learn something, and it's helpful for when you leave the shelter but it didn't go as we wanted to. And then the time was not enough and we didn't have the time to spend time with the boys because we were just 8 officers so yes, now..

Me: So you tried to make activities with them, you tried to spend time with them but you couldn't do that because you were understaffed. why you think there were no changes, no outcomes of what you were trying to do?

1: No, there were changed, I saw many boys that after left, coming back and saying things like "do you remember that time when we were in the yard and you told me this thing and I told you aa this is malakias.. and I kept it on my mind but after it was useful because I realized 1,2,3..

Me: So it means that even if you didn't realize it back then, it was successful what you were doing so why you are saying that it didn't work?

1: Yes, it worked but I mean it's..

Me: Maybe you didn't see the result immediately but one day when they leave the shelter as you said before, maybe then they realize the things.

1: Yes, yes and again is with the 2 boys that they want to make the best out of it. Eee, and also I don't see what I told you happening now, this is the difference. I mean, this of spending time with the boys, I think they listen, they keep everything. What I see now, mostly because I don't have the will and energy to spend time with them, I don't see this happening now.

Me: And what is the answer if things were different?

1: If things were different, we could talk in a way to have an impact on the boys.

Me: Okay, so what do you need to be different in order to be able to do that?

I need to have the energy, the time, the willingness that I don't have most of the time because I don't see most of the boys willing to, so if I don't see them willing to, I don't go. I don't have, at this moment, this thing, I don't know what to call it, to try something for which I don't know the outcome. You know, I don't have this to try something which I don't know if it will succeed because like I said before I cannot afford to...

Me: But I guess in the shelter you never know the outcome, you never know how things will..

1: No, but in a way, before when I speak to some boys, I know that it will have an impact on them. But now if I go and have an hour talk with them and at the end what I receive is a "sharmuta", I cannot, really, I cannot. So, if I have the smallest doubt that this can be the outcome, I will not do it. I don't know if it's right or wrong but I cannot afford it.

Me: There is no right or wrong here. What I personally believe is that and what I always try to do is to give the best of myself and somehow believe that one way or the other, it will have an impact and I do that for everything in my life. you can control how much you give and how they take that is on them.

1: Yes, but the amount of best of you that you can give is different according to each moment.

Me: Of course.

6. What difficulties do they face and how do they overcome them?

1: They break everything and my nerves. Most of them, as culture and as age, the first reaction to difficulties is rejection, so they cannot accept that something goes wrong with their lives, which I believe is normal to have this like uh.. healthy reflection and process of questioning yourself, what can I do to solve it and to avoid it in the future.

Me: So you think this is related to their age and culture?

1: Yes, because also, the difficulties that they are experiencing now are the normal ones that a teenager experiences but since they are experiencing their teenage here, they link their difficulties to the fact that they are in Cyprus, let's say the rules and the food, which I think are the most important issues, they cannot understand that this problem they would face it anywhere so they think the issue is being in Cyprus, but when I was teenager I didn't like the food and the rules of my family but since I kept being in the same environment, I couldn't blame the environment so I was just blaming my parents. But since they experience this for the first time in another environment, they blame it on Cyprus, which I think is something very hard for them to understand.

So, rejection is the first and also the last. They will never do this click that there is something more, or like that they can get something or this can be a lesson for the future, eh... some others, not present at the moment in the shelter, I believe they could have this brainstorming after something happened and think that for example the problem itself is not the food and anyway I will face issues when I am outside of the shelter, so better to know how to deal with this situation now.

Me: So for what you said, the biggest difficulties are mostly related to the food and being in a different environment which is also related to the adaptation that you mentioned in the challenges. What other difficulties would you consider that they go through?

1: Difficulties to find themselves in the environment and also not having a proper point of reference, eh.. like.. some boys said in a way that they don't have social skills or they don't know how to behave socially or if you think about all the sexual things, they don't have a clue and there is no one to help them with this because they receive workshop but there are some things that you need someone that you trust to tell you.

Me: Maybe this is related to the role model question, maybe they don't have a role model in their lives because the role model can also be someone that you trust and can guide you and who you follow.

1: Yes, yes, yes...

7. What factors contribute to their mental health?

1: I think the shelter itself is not a good place for the mental health of the kids, honestly. And I think we as being from the other side, we could never understand how much the environment is not okay for them because I see the boys very negatively impacted by it, and I think I will never understand why, but they are so much that even if I don't understand why the impact is very obvious

Me: Okay, and what can have a positive impact on their mental health?

1: I think the fact that they have other people of their age and their group is good so they have peers with them and ehh..

Me: what do you think that they as individuals do in order to be able to find this balance in terms of mental health?

1: But do you think they are mentally well?

Me: I am asking you, maybe they are not, but maybe they are trying to be so in what what are they trying if you believe that they are trying?

1: I think they acknowledge they know that they are not well, somehow they feel this bruuuhh inside but i think they cannot phase it as we would ehh.. yes.. I think they are trying to help themselves, some are trying in the wrong ways.. many boys are using drugs and alcohol. I think if you find refuge in this things and they do because they alienate, it's somehow a way to acknowledge that they are not okay so they alienate themselves to escape from this situation.

Me: So this is a negative way to deal with this, one possible way. In what other ways are they trying to find their balance?

1: I think they are trying to be together, to stick to one another, the fact that they arrange football together. So I think this is a healthy way to keep yourself busy and use the time in a good way. Also i think they speak and share what they feel between

themselves so the fact that they speak about these things it means that they trust each other. They share secrets ahah.

8. What factors contribute to their adjustment in society?

1: So outside of the shelter?

Me: Do you think they are able to adjust in society first of all?

1: No. I think they do but as a group so they are outside physically but they don't mingle. Even when we go around to the hospital or shops, many times I was ashamed because they shout, they take the things randomly and they don't put them back.

Me: So it's like they don't have an understanding of the functionality of daily life here?

1: Yes, and again when I was trying to explain to them I would see rejection, they would not try to listen to what I say. Me, when I am in another environment, I want to behave as the environment requires, for example, in the shelter I never dress with naked parts. I would never like to be not okay with the environment.

Me: This is also to respect...

1: Yes, but they don't have this, I was really ashamed to be with them outside...

Me: So how can they adjust in society then?

1: First of all they need to accept that they are in another place and there are other rules and they need like to.. go down.. and see how other people are doing and do the same. But this requires that they accept that they are in another place and they cannot behave like they are in their home countries.

Me: But why do you think they don't accept?

1: Because they don't come here voluntarily, most of the times they were forced not by someone but the situation, so most of them left without really wanting it. And you see it because at the first difficulty that they have they will say "Ah, in my country is

not like this” and it’s clear that whatever happens they just think that here is worst than their country and they ask themselves why I came here..

Me: This is like a defense mechanism basically.

1: Yes, and they have this attachment and this golden image, despite the issues that they had in their countries, the fact that they were forced to leave, makes the things difficult for them to focus on the present and to start so they just think everything was perfect back home, I don’t understand why I am here why I should accept this rules, I want to go back.

Me: So you think society is ready to accept them but they don’t allow themselves to be accepted because they don’t accept the situation in the first place?

1: I think especially Cypriot society is not so ready to accept them but I don’t think they also make it easy for the Cypriot society to accept them. Because the environment is already hostile due to cultural and historical reasons, so already the situation is not easy, but for example you go outside and you are required to wear a mask and you don’t do it or you swear around or you spit in the street. If someone is already hostile to you and they see these things, it makes it worse.

9. In your opinion, what other factors promote their resilience as individuals?

1: Long pause. Other factors I don’t know.

Me: What do you think is necessary for them to be resilient? They come with these difficult life stories but how can they adapt well and have a normal development in their lives, despite that?

1: Maybe having more figures of reference that are in the middle of their culture and country and in this case Cyprus.

Me: So again connected to the role model..

1: Yes, yes.

Appendix B: Interview 2

Age: 47

Nationality: Greek

Gender: Female

Religion: Christian

Educational background: Bachelor's degree in Sociology, Master's degree in Crime, Deviance and Control; Bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice and Probation Studies

Amount of time working at the shelter: 1 year

Current role and/or previous roles in the shelter: Shelter's Coordinator

Previous experience working with a similar population group: Yes. Not with asylum seekers but with people who had gained status and they were being processed in the criminal justice system of the UK

1. What are the biggest challenges that the minors face in the shelter?

2: I would say the biggest challenge is to climatize in a new country in a setting where it is government by rules and regulations that is potentially that they have not had to that extent and degree in their previous location or whilst growing up in their country of residence. They deal with the challenges through disruption because they tend to think that if I don't cause any trouble then nobody is going to pay attention to me and I am not going to get what I want.

Me: Despite the climatization, are there any other challenges?

2: The communication barriers, either if they are due to the language, you know, most of the time we need to use translators sometimes that kind of takes the value of fully understanding where they are coming from.

Also, the fact that they are quite young in age and sometimes they can even be cognitively younger than their actual age, again because of their experiences or because of the way they have made sense of those experiences which may have not been necessarily positive and in the majority is actually negative. So, that undoubtedly have impacted to some degree maybe their developmental progress and that also may interfere in their perceptions of what is good for them or what needs to happen in that moment and what actually is good for them or they might not be able to appreciate the multitude of steps or services that needs to be followed in order for something to be fulfilled. So their perception of for example “I need this, and it should take X time”, stops them from seeing the full picture or the bigger picture of how much effort or what a long process needs to be done for this.

Me: So this comes to the lack of understanding and knowledge of how things work and the rules that you mentioned as a challenge.

2: Yes

2. What individual characteristics one should have or develop in order to adapt well in the shelter?

2: Hmm.. I would say probably patience (laughs) or the ability to trust let's say, that the shelter in it's eternity is operating with them in mind whether this has to do with their legal matters, their social matters or their day to day life in the shelter, and also the psychological issues.

3. Who or what is the biggest support for the boys and why?

E: In the shelter or generally?

Me: If you think in the shelter is different than outside so consider both.

2: Well, for the residents who are here right now, I would say the biggest support is us because the operation of the shelter addresses the daily needs, the basic needs, it accounts for any issues that may impact their psychological or emotional world, or rehabilitation from the social work department when they try to prepare them for the

life outside of the shelter, and also the legal department that deals with any legal related matters, so I would say that in a much more planned or organized way, we are almost feeling in for what a parent should be responsible for towards their dependants.

Me: But do you think they acknowledge the shelter and the people working there as their biggest support?

2: Immediately no, but again, we have evidence from ex residents who have come back to us and told us and recognized that the shelter was their biggest support. So, this might not be something that registered in the minors head whilst they are in the shelter, but once they move on and they have to experience life on their own, then, there is a tendency to acknowledge and appreciate the extent of support that they have received whilst at the shelter.

4. Who do they see as a role model and why?

2: Practically, you know, or immediately if you like, the role model whilst they are in the shelter, tends to be another resident. Some kids may have positive role models so they go close to people who are well behaved and some other get carried away by negative influences and it's about who is going to approach them and how they are going to embrace them and with whom they are going to feel more compatible with. I don't think they see us predominantly as role models and the only opportunity that we have to become role models is if we are able to capture them in the first days, in the first 3 days let's say, upon arrival at the shelter. If they connect with us at that point, then it takes much longer or much bigger effort for negative influences to have an impact on them. So if we capture them from the beginning and we build a beginning of a trusting relationship so it becomes more difficult to get carried away by negative influences. But from their point of view I don't think they view us as a role model.

Me: So the peers are the main role models?

2: Yes, they have a more direct and powerful impact on them.

5. What keeps them motivated?

2: The ones that tend to remain motivated, I would say we can separate them in 2 categories: ones that let's say have some form of foundations from their familiar environment before they came, they have values and awareness of what they need to do and how they need to do it in order to conquer their goals. They are characterized by a level of maturity so their perceptions and thinking processes are already developed to some degree which helps them and acts as a protective factor for them; the second group, their motivation stems from their future plans, for example if someone has a reunification process open, it does act as a motivation factor because they are also aware that if they get into trouble or if they are not collaborating, that might have a negative impact on their progress of that particular issue.

6. What difficulties do they face and how do they overcome them?

2: So, in my opinion, the biggest difficulty that they face is their inability to manage negative emotions and that impact their thought process, which then is also negative in nature and then they feel that they might enter into a state of hopelessness and helplessness and that moves them towards a thinking of "It does not matter how I behave because I have nothing good to anticipate for" which creates disruptions and miscommunication because their perception is closed by their negative thoughts and then they tend to potentially interpret any effort that is being made by the services as not important enough, not significant enough or not helpful enough, which adds to their frustration and that tends to externalize through anger and violence.

Me: It sounds as a vicious circle

2: Yes (pause and laughs)

Me: How can we break it?

2: So, the only way we can break this is through intensive and consistent interventions.. hmm.. so let's say whatever support a minor needs, needs to happen consistently and persistently. And that, with the aim and hope that consistency and persistency will help in increasing the awareness of the minor to start looking at things from different perspectives, help them deal with their negative emotions or

thoughts in a constructive way, channel those negative emotions again in a way that will have a positive outcome instead of making the problem bigger and.. that can only happen with consistency. Because again, with the age group that we are dealing with, we have an expected level of immaturity, an awareness that again.. their thoughts process may not be developed to that level so it needs help to encourage the minor to kind of consider that there are more ways of thinking about something, and that there is a choice and how we are going to deal or face something in order to get to the desired outcome. And that is not something we can expect the minor to know beforehand, it's something that we need to work with the minor in order to get them to that stage, and it's a process and a time consuming process.

Me: Okay, other than the negative emotions and the vicious circle that is created as mentioned, can you name any other major difficulties that they experience?

2: I would say, you know, trying to put myself in their shoes, It would be quite a difficult thing for me to be a minor and find myself in a different country and be able to come to terms with that pretty quickly. I mean, considering that they are doing very well, but you know, it's not a very easy thing to come to terms with and that again creates all sorts of emotions upheaval that may externalize in many different ways. You know.. not being around familiar faces or not knowing perhaps where your parents are, are they alive or are they not alive, I think this is quite a lot for a young mind to be to deal with.

7. What factors contribute to their mental health?

2: Regardless of all the challenges and all the elements in their lives, let's say, hmm, I think considering all this situation and factors, they are doing quite well. But, help is needed or support is necessary and as I said is necessary in a consistent and systematic way, otherwise I don't think it has a big impact or the chance of having a positive and big impact on them to the extent of them accepting it or interpreting it as support so then making the most of it or becoming more willing to reach further and go deeper.

Me: Yes, but practically how do you think they are managing to keep their mental health?

2: I think is through their association with their peers mainly and then, you know, (pause), even thought not recognizing, the safety net that the shelter provides them, even if they cannot recognize it or put a label of okay here it's safe or this is a safe space for me. Which I think most of them do because when you have a conversation with them they are able to describe it as such or use the word safety but it might not always be in the frontford of their heads because other things become more important for them in specific moment.

8. What factors contribute to their adjustment in society?

2: I think they are able to adjust in society and again, the way they behave when they are in the shelter, no matter how good or how bad, because collectively we have to recognize that the bad behavior is not extreme type of thing, we can find lots of examples, of extremity outside the shelter, comparatively they are not doing that bad even with their bad behavior. So I think they are capable and quite able to adjust, is just obviously how well they will adjust is also dependent on how well the society will receive them, how inclusive the society is towards them.

Me: Yes, but from their side, do you think that there are any attempts to actually adjust?

2: Yes, I think they do (pause). Within the shelter the fact that most of them will come and ask for something and they will not just take it anymore, it's a learning process it's all about learned behavior. If I learn that I need something and I am taking it, because it might be a question of survival, then obviously it's a process of understanding that okay, here I don't need to be in survival mode and I don't have to take, I can ask.

Me: So do you think they are in survival mode?

2: I think they are to a level, all of them, in a survival mode and it's not something that they can get out of, you know instantly, it's also a process and it's a process where they need to be convinced that they no longer need to be in survival mode, so it's about how we prove to them that they don't need to be in survival mode because there is no need, their basic needs are being taken care of, they can focus on other things that can contribute to their further progress and development. But, as a minor and even as an adult, it would be a difficult thing to bring yourself to that stage or that point of feeling safe enough or certain enough that okay, I can let go of survival now and move on to something else now, let alone someone who is completely alone in a foreign country and still uncertain about their future.

Me: But when you spoke about what contributes to their adjustment in society, the way I understood it is that they try to adjust through the staff that work at the shelter?

2: Yes, that is the bigger chunk in that stage, however through day to day life here and once you reach the age of 16 and you are eligible to let's say move on, hmm.. you think differently, however mature you are at 16 years old or not, you will still be different from when you were 13, 14 or 12, so even a natural sort of growth or development happens, not matter how limited it might be because of whatever reasons, a development happens, and then it's about again providing information, explaining that information, making sure that it's understood and then providing support in all the steps that are required in order to reach the goal of let's say moving out of the shelter and going either to the semi independent program or moving on to live alone.

9. In your opinion, what other factors promote their resilience as individuals?

2: Again I think it's the interaction with us let's say, because we are here 24 hours, and they spend a lot of time with us, because we are in the same setting, so whether they are physically spending time with us or not, what we do and how we do it created a climate let's say and from that they have a lot to take whether consciously or subconsciously, the impact is there. Some are more receptive, some are less receptive but nevertheless, as been aware of our impact or the impact of our action and the

impact of our behavior, having that awareness and being responsible about it is quite a catalyst and quite a significant variable in the impact that is going to the the minors, how they are going to process it and what they are going to do with it. Wherever is, you know, how not to behave in life, or okay this is a good thing and it works so I am going to use it as well and I am going to take it as example, and also, always being honest with them and providing accurate information also would potentially promote a more (pause) it would promote perhaps them understanding that honesty is better than dishonesty because then I know what to expect, I don't get wrong messages or mixed messages so I am let on my own to make sense of things, it's clarity information when you are better able to map what you are going to do next.

Me: Okay, what you are saying is about the relationships of the professionals with the minors

2: Yes

Me: Anything else?

2: I don't know.. for me this is the most important and anything and everything else I think would stem from that. For me the biggest foundation is leading by example, so if you are trying to give good examples, something is going to stick at some point or is going to register, it might be put in the subconscious but at some point it will come useful or it will find it's way fo being useful somehow. And I think again, promoting that inclusiveness or respect to other points of view, or other cultures, being non discriminatory in our approaches and behavior in the day to day stuff, it also creates a bigger opportunity for less complicated life I think.

Me: And I think that is also related to the question about who's their support and who they see as a role model so basically I think it's connected because what you are saying is basically to pass them the values that their family is not here to pass so it's connected to what you said before.

2: Yes, absolutely.

Appendix C: Interview 3

Age: 25

Nationality: Cypriot

Gender: Female

Religion: Christian (not practicing)

Educational background: 1 year of English Literature, BA Law and Bar Training

Amount of time working at the shelter: 6 months

Current role and/or previous roles in the shelter: Child Protection Officer

Previous experience working with a similar population group: Yes. 1 year working at a different organization that works with asylum seeker and refugees but it was an adult population

1. What are the biggest challenges that the minors face in the shelter?

3: Biggest challenges.. hmm.. I would say first of all being away from their families, hmm.. can't be easy being here alone. Hmm, I think integration, I think they probably go through a bit of a culture shock when they get here. And I think for our boys specifically, the shelter climate can be a massive difficulty for them depending on what group they belong to.

Me: So would you consider the shelter as something that helps the process or something that works against it?

3: I think it can be both, I think it definitely can be both.

Me: Depending on what?

3: On perception, on how much the boys are willing to accept help, depending on their expectations, and I think definitely depending on their own personal trauma, personalities.. I think it's very personal to each minor how they feel about the shelter.

2. What individual characteristics one should have or develop in order to adapt well in the shelter?

3: Patience, patience is a big one. Hmm, being realistic. Hm, definitely being realistic. Hmm, probably a bit more sensitivity towards other people. Hmm.. and a sense of solidarity towards not just each other but the people that work here. I think solidarity is big in order for them to understand why it's difficult for the shelter to be the way they want it to be so if they had a little bit more solidarity, a little bit more patience and a little bit more understanding, I think they would see things more clearly and I think it would potentially lead to a bit more appreciation. Seeing the big picture, I don't know how much that is a characteristic, but I think not being short sighted..

Me: So being open-minded?

3: Open minded yes, but it's like.. being able to see the long term goal. So a lot of the boys in the shelter seem to have this idea of like, you know, this is where I am stuck right now and all I want is to be there, and they go from seeing short sightedly to extreme long sightedly, so there is nothing in between, so they don't see the big picture.

Me: Well, that is also something difficult for their ages.

3: Definitely, depending on the age obviously. We have different ages here, I don't expect the smallest to be the same as the oldest.

Me: You can also make a differentiation from the different groups?!

3: Definitely, I mean we see it from the Congolese boys, they very rarely make problems they always keep it to themselves, and i think if maybe you speak to the Congolese boys, they will have extremely strong ideas and they will have their opinions but they will not necessarily share them so they could think the worst thing

about you but they will keep it to themselves just for the sake of, you know, what's the point in getting in this argument. Whereas you will see the Syrian boys, it's quite obvious to see what they think about you.

Me: So you think that is related to what?

3: I think it's a cultural thing, definitely a cultural thing. We can see from our younger boys, it's easier for them to fall into the cultural dynamic of things and it's easier for them to form groups and be influenced by each other.

3. Who or what is the biggest support for the boys and why?

3: The biggest support... controversially maybe, I think it's each other. Hmm.. definitely up there, I think it's the first thing and the biggest support for them.

Me: Why?

3: Because they are all in this together and they all come from the same background and they are all here without their parents, and they hate the food, and they hate us sometimes and you know, there are things for them to bond over, and it's such a unique experience to have that I think if they didn't have each other to rely on and knowing what the other person is going through, I don't think they would be able to get through it. And second biggest support I think it's definitely us, whether they see it or not, i'd like to think that the majority of the time they do but it's, I think difficult to comprehend at their age sometimes, but I think deep down they feel it.

4. Who do they see as a role model and why?

3: Depends on the different groups I would say again. Hmm.. With the Syrian boys they definitely have each other as role models. You can really see that between them, they look up to each other and they look to each other when it comes to how to react, how to feel about certain people, we can see that that causes even a divide amongst the Syrians when it comes to how they want to view and treat people. Hmm..and I would say that with certain boys, are a bit more academically oriented, let's say, their role models are extremely different. I don't know if that is because they have a vision,

of where they want to be that extend beyond where they live, if that's a way you can say makes sense, but for the boys who have goals for themselves and not just where they are and where they feel safe, I would say their role models are much different and they can relate to where they see themselves in the future professionally.

Me: So who are their role models?

3: I would say, not being specific, I would just say people that are established, whereas I think, being able to see someone that is established and is doing something in their professional lives as a role model is extremely different than you know, younger boys who see each other as role models. It's a very different dynamic and it's not necessarily looking up to someone is more like looking next to someone to tell you what to do so I think the role model as a confusing aspect for all of them.

Me: Do you think that they also see the people working at the shelter as role models?

3: Hmm (pause). I think subconsciously, I don't think consciously. I think subconsciously they do because you will notice that boys will, the majority of the time, treat you the way you treat them, and obviously it takes time to establish relationships with the boys but as soon as you do establish the relationships they do subconsciously see you as a role model with how to behave towards you and other people. So in that sense, they definitely see us as role models, but I think it's more of a hmm (pause), an emotional impact and how to just be good to other people. And I think the boys, in the same sense of seeing us as role models on how to behave towards each other, can also use that against us sometimes, so they know how to take that away, they know how to take away the niceness and the being respectful towards you, and you will see that whenever a boy gets really angry, he will throw out the word "respect" and he will say "you don't respect me" whereas all the other time when you have been treating them nicely and giving them all that they want, they will view that as respect. So it's very confusing.

5. What keeps them motivated?

3: Hmm (pause). That's a difficult one, it's a very difficult one. It definitely varies from boy to boy. So we have boys that keep motivated thought feeling their days with stuff to do like activities, we have boys who keep motivated by going to the lessons, by going to the gym, by just doing stuff that makes them feel that they are actively doing something in their lives. We have other boys who just rely on external factors to keep the motivated like stuff that is out of their control, it's a warped sense of motivation but it's motivation to them, so for example, the idea for going to their asylum interview and potentially being accepted or the idea of having their family reunification case approved or waiting for their ticket to go for their destination country, so it's things that are outside their control but they cling on to them and it's what keeps them motivated to just keep on going.

Me: What do you think the people working at the shelter can do to promote this motivational side, because as you said this is something difficult?

3: Hmm, I don't think it's a one fix, I don't think it's something that has A solution but hmm.. in my opinion i think first of all, creating a more fun environment. I think it's easy for them to feel like everything is bleak and it's easy to slip into the mindset that everything is against me and of "you don't want what is best for me" and "you will not give me what I want", and hmm, i think we don't take advantage of their fund sides, because all of them can be really fun and really funny and they do have incredible senses of humor, let's say and I don't think we take advantage of that enough, and i think if we all made this potentially a happier place to be, I think that could motivate them to do more stuff for themselves i think it's entirely internal. But another thing i think that could potentially be helpful is teaching them stuff that is not necessarily stereotypically academic, so you know, through workshops or group activities, to teach them stuff that helps them deal with where they are now, and knowing that yes, I am going to get to that country, I am going to get that acceptance but what after. So making them feel that they have more control over their lives and their participants in their lives, and they are not just waiting for those external factors, I think that could potentially bring more motivation.

6. What difficulties do they face and how do they overcome them?

3: Hmm.. Right from the beginning of entering the shelter, I want to start there, from what I have seen, it's the feeling of having to prove yourself. I don't know what it is to be a teenage boy, but despite their backgrounds, the fact that they are asylum seekers, if we take all that aside for a second and just see them as teenage boys who all lived together in the same place, I think walking in here must be daunting, because you automatically feel like an outsider, automatically there is going to be all eyes on you and you have to pick a group and you have to prove yourself to be cool or calm or to be a troublemaker to be accepted, it depends on what group sets their eye on you or what group you set your eye on I guess, hmm, so I think acceptance definitely and belonging are the biggest things that they face in the beginning. And I think as time goes on in the shelter, hmm.. becoming easily influenced by each other. I think I've witnessed a lot of boys going along with things even if they don't believe in them or it's not their opinion, and even though that definitely stems from a feeling of wanting to belong and being accepted, I think it also stems from feeling that they are away from home, so they don't want to disappoint their new family. They don't want that acceptance to be taken away so it's like a sense of insecurity I would say. Hmm.. and I would say not acceptance within the group but acceptance of circumstances is something that they struggle with so accepting the fact that this is my circumstance right now and being able to see that time will pass, things will come, I am not stuck, so I think negative thinking and feeding themselves these negative ideas and allowing them to manifest in anger or even you know, other mental health issues let's say, is something that they struggle with.

Me: So how do you think they deal with this, what's their way of getting out of this?

3: For the majority I don't necessarily see hmm.. (pause).

Me: Or you think they stay with the difficulties and they keep them?

3: I don't think they stay with the difficulties, I think it fluctuates. I don't think it's something constant, I think it's, you know, before we were talking about the daily life

in the shelter and what keeps them motivated, you know, and the boys seem to do quite well with that, you know, the majority of the time, they go, they play football, they chill together, the ones who go to the lessons go to the lessons, but i think that it's hard for them to effectively manage their emotions as soon as they start to feel those negative thoughts creeping in, so I think it's more about management of their mood and knowing how to get out of that dark space.

Me: So you think they are not able to do that? Or how are they able to do that?

3: I think they are able to get out of that dark space, even if it's until the next outburst let's say, I think it's a lot of factors. I think it's the friend group that help, the support officers, the psychologists, I think it's just a massive team effort, I don't think it's something that it's oad to one person, you know, if you see the structure of this shelter, if there is massive anger outburst, it's a hands on deck it's whoever can manage to calm down the situation, and everyone is there and everyone is trying to work together to make this happen and I think at that time there is no ego, the main goal is to get that kid to calm down and to see what the main problem is and see how we can help them, so we are all in crisis intervention mode at that time. Hmm, and if you see the way the shelter works, it's like a chain, so it's like, you go from one step to the other, even if we are not here, there is the support officer and the boys, and people who needs to be reported are reported and after that it's the meetings that need to happen and after that is seeing what further action can be taken, realizing whether this is a problem that is a one time thing or is something that has been building up.

Me: Yes, but what you are saying now is more of what the professionals here do, right?

3: I think the boys acknowledge that as well, tho. You know, the boys are very aware of how the shelter works.

Me: So you think that process and all this help that you mentioned, this is helping them to deal with the difficulties that they are having?

3: Definitely, it's a very structure environment and I think without the structure of this environment and without the step by step, you know, they know to who to go to, they know what each person does here and i think they know where to go for support, they know that after the anger outburst or after me not feeling well or me being upset, they know that there is going to be a person who will need to deal with this, not just because they have to.

7. What factors contribute to their mental health?

3: Communication with their family I think it's a big one. For what I've seen most of the boys communicate with their family and extended family daily. I think keeping in touch with them and still feeling the connection of what is like talking to your family every single day, that keeps them sane. I think it also helps them see, you know, that long term perspective that we were talking about before and they have a huge impact on them even if they are far away obviously. Hmm (pause), I would say, the moments when they feel they are just normal teenage boys. So like when they are playing football, or they are playing games with each other, or they are joining around with the support officers, I think the daily mundane things, whether they see it or not, I see it. So I would see the boys lighten up and their mood changes, when they just left the conversation with anyone that was funny or when they play games and I think it's just those small things that add up together and make them feel like, you know, life it's all right.

Me: So it's allowing them to be themselves basically?!

3: Exactly! I think the good thing about the shelter is that this is actually maybe one of the few places where we don't have labels that they would encounter outside of the shelter. So within the bubble of this shelter they really can be themselves, they really can be whoever that kid is with whatever his background is, it's just a kid here, same rules as everyone, everyone gets treated the same way.

8. What factors contribute to their adjustment in society?

3: I don't want to be too bleak about this, but integration as a theory is great, we love it, we even have our own rehabilitation program 6 months before they leave the shelter, this is what happens (with sarcastic tone of voice), they find a job, they go through the steps of becoming an adult in order to be ready to leave the shelter but hmm, a lot of the lines of what I was saying before, in the outside world, labels exist, they will be the label that they were given in the outside world and I think it takes a lot to be able to not to carry that around with you and have it be a burden. And I think for the way things are right now hmm, it's difficult and it's going to be difficult for them to adjust in the real world in terms of jobs, in terms of opportunities, in terms of people's opinions. I think it's going to wave on them heavily no matter who they are.

Me: Hmm, but you are putting it a lot like in an external perspective when you mention the labels. What about what they as individuals can do in order to help themselves to adjust?

3: Yeah, hmm.. I would say (pause), become a little bit more culturally sensitive. So, obviously they are the ones that feel like that are being discriminated against a lot of the time but I think that by working on that perspective and working on their reactions and working on how they can provide solutions for themselves in certain situations, that could help them move forward. So if they met with someone treating them as those labels and not giving them the correct opportunities, I think being able to articulate to themselves "why this person cannot understand", "why this person is close minded", I think knowing their rights, being able to speak up for themselves in a way that is kind and being responsible for themselves, I think these are the main ways that they can deal with the outside world after they leave from the shelter.

9. In your opinion, what other factors promote their resilience as individuals?

3: Being (pause) I mean it's a skill that needs to be worked on, I don't think it's a skill that any person inherently has unless they are very lucky and extremely emotionally intelligent and not a teenage boy (in a funny way), but I think practicing the skill of being able to see outside of yourself, so not feeling self pity, knowing that you are not

where you come from, knowing that no matter who you are, you can have the same opportunities even if you have to fight for them a little bit stronger.

Me: So it's about believing in yourself?!

3: Definitely. Obviously, like I said before it's something that needs to be worked on..

Me: It's a process...

3: But definitely believing in yourself and being able to advocate for yourself i think, and I genuinely think that education is a big part for that. Education is important not just in terms of having a certain profession and having a job and your life moving forward in that way, i think education allows them to be aware of the state of the world, be more aware of their place in the world, and knowing exactly what's wrong, weather it can be fixed and how to approach it and I think education is the main thing.

Appendix D: Interview 4

Age: 35

Nationality: Greek

Gender: Female

Religion: No religion

Educational background: BA Law and currently MA on Refugee Protection and Forced Migration

Amount of time working at the shelter: 5 years and 11 months

Current role and/or previous roles in the shelter: Support officer for 2 years and then Coordinator of the Child Protection Department up to now

Previous experience working with a similar population group: Yes. Legal intern at the Greek Council for Refugees; Legal Advisor at a shelter for unaccompanied minors in Greece; Case Worker at the Greek Asylum Services in a detention camp

1. What are the biggest challenges that the minors face in the shelter?

4: I cannot but start with the main tasks of our department which is their Dublins. I see Dublins everywhere, when they eat, when they sleep, when they are in the yard, I mean...

Me: Do you want to explain briefly what is the Dublin?

4: Yes, so what we call Dublins are cases that most of them have, they are based in the Dublin regulation, a European regulation, that briefly gives the opportunity to unaccompanied minors to move to another European country where a family member leaves lawfully. So, they have the chance to move there, it's more than 50% of them who have applied for that opportunity, unfortunately it takes very long, and they need to cope with this limbo which is quite detrimental because in cases we are talking about 2 years waiting, not even knowing if you are provided with an acceptance at

least, 2 years and you can even get a rejection. So, this is the first... that comes also I guess with the feeling of “what am I doing in the shelter?”, “I want to go somewhere else”, so even your daily life is like..

Me: There is uncertainty basically...

4: Uncertainty and I mean you can even have existential thoughts like “where is my life?”, “what am I doing at this shelter?”, “I don’t want to be here actually”, and all this combined, could bring crisis which we see, we often see (laughs). Apart from that, hmm.. the high turnover is a big issue. I am trying to think on behalf of the boys..

Me: And your opinion as a professional working here for almost 6 years...

4: Yeah, I mean.. one could say that the turnover is something that mostly has an impact on the professional team but it’s not, I mean, it’s the first problematic aspect of this life, shelter life, that comes to my mind, after 6 years, I am fed up with the high turnover, I am fed up with staff coming and leaving, and I am pretty sure that equally the boys feel the same. Hmm.. they have been cases that we were badly, we were in the blue after some goodbyes with particular people, so imagine the boys, I guess it’s more usual for them to be in that mood after goodbyes.. and in some moments it’s what we say laughing.. we have a good morning and goodbye, good morning good bye, hello goodbye.. it became that much at one point.

Me: What ways do you think they find to deal with these challenges?

4: I am not sure if I want to avoid saying about drugs because it’s one of the ways, although we don’t have highly addicted boys, we know that they do use hmm.. carefully, we could say (in an interrogative way) but we know that they use substances to cope with all that we have said before. In moments of clarity let’s say, they are assisted a lot by their relationships with particular people here. There are boys who actually appreciate a lot their personal officers or their psychologists, or even the coordinator of the shelter, in some cases I think, she helped boys come back from the dark side. Hmm.. what else.. I think the daily communication and the contact

with the officers has a big role to play but that means that officers are there, so again it needs to be combined with the understaffed situation.

2. What individual characteristics one should have or develop in order to adapt well in the shelter?

4: Patience. It's the first thing that we say. Since you know what you want, I mean legally speaking, hmm, you should also know that you will wait a lot for that, so let's work on that. Hm, tolerance, because as we said the shelter, yes, it is a more beautiful place than other places that I have seen but it remains an institution, this is clear to me. So, an institution brings tension, brings bad feelings, hmm, feelings of fatigue, fatigue of each other so what they need is also to have this tolerance towards people. You need to live here for a certain period so you need to be at least this two: patient and tolerant.

3. Who or what is the biggest support for the boys and why?

4: Ahm, the professionals. Ehh, they are the biggest support or at least they should be.

Me: These are two different things..

4: Mmm, okay, it overlaps. It should be, we keep reminding that it should be because they have no one else here hmm.. and we see that there are moments that they are. I mean, the shelter is an unstable environment, we try so much to keep stability so that they feel safe and protected but the environment is not stable. This is the problem. Hm.. practically speaking, if you lose your officer 6 months after you create the relationship, stability does not exist anymore.

Me: So this is connected to what you were saying before with the high turnover...

4: Yeah, yeah, yeah.. hmm.. Okay, their family is a source of support but they are far away however we see that in many of them, the communication from distance provides hope for them, anxiety also in some cases, but hope also, they remain as a source of support. So, combining these two actors, the officers here and the family

away, the cooperation between these two is what can support the boys. Of course, that means that they will be both positive to cooperate with each other.

4. Who do they see as a role model and why?

4: They can see a peer as a role model, and in blue moments hmm, more delinquent peers seem like having a leading role for them.

Me: So then depends on the groups you mean.. the boys who belong to groups that are more delinquent they see more as role model each other?

4: Or actually boys that do not belong in such groups but when they are down it seems that another peer from another group or actually an individual, who acts in a more delinquent way, it seems like a role model suddenly for them.

Me: Why?

4: I guess, actually...hmm.. actually I think of myself in previous moments when there was no stability in my life and everything was blowing, I think it was tempting to follow a more aggressive pattern, a more aggressive, a more breaking the rules, I mean, such people in that moment are more easily...

Me: It's because you are so tired of everything not working, you are not able to deal with the emotions by yourself, so this is the way you find...

4: Yeah, the easiest way, let's say, yes. And actually that is a good point, good comment. When you actually see that rules do not work, the rules you try to follow and when you keep your feelings regulated but it does not work anymore so probably..

Me: You need to explore other solutions. (laughing)

4: Yeah, you need to explore other solutions actually, yeah. (laughing)

5. What keeps them motivated?

4: Their Dublin (both laughing), oh my god, I mean Dublin is a funny case and a nightmare at the same time. It's coming from hell, Dublin.. I mean you can help them

to wake up every day with this Dublin, and you can also push them to a cliff when it doesn't move, when it stays stuck, when there is no news.. But when there is something and you ask the boy to cooperate with you and bring information so that we create together something to provide to this country, to this person who asks for you ehh.. it's like you give them a homework and they like it and it goes well..

Me: Because that only maybe the only thing that they want for their lives or that they dream about so it's like only this matters..

4: Yes, actually since it's so important to them, ehh.. it has enough power inside to keep them going, hmm.. it's a case by case exploration. Other boys are really happy with finding a job, this is what they need, this is what gives them stability because they can provide financial support to their family back so they also feel better and they have again a motivation to wake up, to go work and see the outcome. This is very important, especially for this target group, it's very difficult to keep them doing something for the future.. they want to see an outcome now and this is why in most cases we see rejections for internships for example, they say "if I work, I want the money", it doesn't work the western type but you are creating your future through that, they cannot see that. So, immediate effects help them, something that we try to do in the shelter with the reward system. Like, if you help me I give you something, a dinner that you like or a day out.

6. What difficulties do they face and how do they overcome them?

4: The food. It is a reason for war. Yeah actually many conflicts also with the staff, between the boys and the staff start with the occasion of a meal that they didn't like and actually okay.. it's food.. I mean the whole planet and all cultures on earth are based on food so it's quite important what they eat. Hmm.. And I think that if we forget that behind the food it could be other things, it's the first complaint that most of them bring on the table "I don't like what I eat, I want to like it. At least my food, I mean this is how I perceive it, I've lost 1,2 ,3 ,4, 5.. at least I could spend my lunch or my dinner with pleasure (laughs), liking what I eat". Apart from that, the difficulties I would say again the waiting hood, emotionally speaking the hardest difficulty hmm..

nostalgia, I guess.. although it's not expressed much and very often. Hmm, I believe it is part of their emotional difficult moments. There are boys that they have confessed that they didn't want to leave their family, some adult family member decided for them to leave and in such moments I've heard minors say "I miss my mom, I didn't want to leave her actually, I don't know what am I doing here". So... another difficulty. Hmm, the language it is a difficulty for sure but it's not, we cannot see that difficulty as long as they are in the shelter, it becomes harder from the moment they are outside and they need to serve themselves and interact with the Greek speaking community.

7. What factors contribute to their mental health?

4: Company. Company it's the first thing you need. A company, peers who accept you, actually. So, we need to differentiate the forced coexistence in this place, just because many different boys were transferred here by the social welfare services decision, and the company, the friendships between them that have been created

Me: Would you say the shelter works in a positive or negative way?

4: Hmm.. (pause) I cannot give a positive mark... (hesitating) If I should give one sign, one mark for the shelter, I cannot really give a positive sign. It remains, for me, whatever we say, an institution. It's forty something boys in a place with hmm, few officers, running here and there, and not being able to provide family like relationships and care to them. Because at the end of the day, everyone is lost at his or her duties so I am not sure if we could even say that we try to create a family environment here. So, if this is not the case hmm.. it lacks a lot then from a child protection vision.

8. What factors contribute to their adjustment in society?

4: Okay.. we have seen that boys who attended school.. managed to cope with the transition, to adulthood and a smooth adjustment to society. Also boys who started working and we also saw boys being promoted very soon to other job positions and being happy with that so again.. so actually school and work is what we hear from

many sociologists indicators of a stable like and adjustment and it is in practice we see that. Ah, plus of course, we should mention the community support. They have communities outside and in many cases they have been provided as helpful situations when they had nowhere to stay or they needed more time, so yes, the social networks created between the members of these communities are very crucial for them.

9. In your opinion, what other factors promote their resilience as individuals?

4: (Pause) In my eyes it's only the hope that they will reach the goal. I mean...

(pause) You know, immigrants, migrants, refugees.. we can call them whatever.. They live in the gray area, it's a very sensitive group and I conclude completely to a quote from an academic who had been studying a lot the refugee areas of refugee settlement in Lebanon and I remember she said: "These people are living a life only in preparation of another". So, actually it was so touching, it was actually reflecting what I feel for them. I cannot feel these people resilient today, here, now, because the whole life that they spent here is felt like a short term life, like in expectation of the other that will come in Belgium or in Finland, or the other that will come in Cyprus but with the correct papers. This is what they say the most to me: "I need papers, papers, where are papers?" and what they ask for is something that no western people hmm, I mean, a full profile of western people as though, they ask for papers, an identity, a passport, this is what they need to live a life in Cyprus. Even when they are in Cyprus now, as asylum seekers, they are like ghosts here. They cannot have the full protection of the conventions and even theoretically if they could have, practically they will never have it. So, in my eyes, even this being resilient it's like hmm, something that I cannot even accept. I would say, do not be resilient, an asylum seeker should not be resilient because this is what they ask from you while they do not provide you the tools. It's like you have a system saying: "what do you want?", you are here, you are safe, but you are nothing. You are here until someone decides if you can stay, actually.

Me: So the way I am understanding it is that the process itself is what makes them resilient?

4: Yeah, and the hope that they will have a positive outcome of this process.. if not, hmm.. they will find resilience again on a plan B, a next plan for a long term life, which could be either relocation illegally, or return back home.. you will see that there are many people returning lately, many, it's a substantial number of people returning home and they found it as a better plan from the moment that they are rejecting, balancing what they are taking, they are taking money and monitoring period for a year back in their country.. support.. monitor plus support, the reintegration back to their society, this is what the project for returns does, so somehow they balance a new hope of a new beginning again and that keeps them resilient but it's all in the process. Even, I was thinking that (pause), when I was in Greece, my great colleague and I decided to make a photo diary with photos of the shelter and the kids but we said no typical photos of desperate and wet eyes refugees, no more of that. We decided to photo the teenage part which remains similar with the teenagers that we know and it was beautiful. They were funny, they were becoming artists in front of the camera, performers, they were super nice photos and there was nothing of this desperate and miserable mass pictures that most depictions in media present.

Me: So they were given the opportunity to show themselves and be themselves..

4: Yeah, yeah... so they have also this kind of things like a teenage love that keeps you going. I am just afraid and quite concerned that their mind is not free of worries, so even those little things in their daily life are not felt like another teenager.

Me: Would you say that they are still in survival mode?

4: Yeah, actually yes. With glitter of a beautiful moments.. but survival mode for a kid. And I cannot find it like.. positive.

Appendix E: Written Answers 5

Age: 37

Nationality: Cypriot

Gender: Female

Religion: Christian Orthodox

Educational background: BA Psychology and MA School Psychology

Amount of time working at the shelter: 3 years and 6 months

Current role and/or previous roles in the shelter: Psychologist

Previous experience working with a similar population group: Yes, with teenagers and kids with conduct disorders.

1. What are the biggest challenges that the minors face in the shelter?

Their biggest challenges are: separation from their family members; trying to be adjusted in new host country with different language, culture, rules; trying to be adjusted in a shelter with other minors from different countries; trying to figure out their present and future; trying to figure out their choices, what happened to them and to their families e.g. traumatic events.

There is no simple answer to say on how they are dealing with their challenges as each individual is unique as their experiences also. However, keeping family values and turning to religion is observed to be effective ways to deal with the above. Being connected somehow with their roots and having hope/faith that they can make it.

2. What individual characteristics one should have or develop in order to adapt well in the shelter?

Some characteristics are flexibility, open to new experiences, curiosity, and optimism. Skills that could be further developed in minors in order to feel more adapted are problem solving skills, social support and self-awareness.

3. Who or what is the biggest support for the boys and why?

In the beginning of their adjustment, having regular communication with their family members can be a great amount of support for them. However, there are some minors who unfortunately do not have relatives or they have lost them. In such a case I would say that the major role is the staff working with them. Another support that is gradually built around them are their peers who live in the shelter as well.

Developmentally speaking, due to the fact that most of them are adolescents they tend to lean for safety and stability from adult figures but also feel connected and accepted by their peers.

4. Who do they see as a role model and why?

It depends on the individual. But in general major roles play their family figures or their religion. I believe because again it has to do with the feeling of stability and control they need to feel in their life.

5. What keeps them motivated?

A thought (hope) that their life can be better for them but also in many cases for their families as well. At times many minors feel responsible for their family left behind (so they need to support them financially or make them feel proud about them).

6. What difficulties do they face and how do they overcome them?

It depends on the individual. You can see minors who react out (outburst), others might choose to pray. As a population they are very vulnerable so they need to be supported a lot from the staff personnel, especially when they are facing difficulties.

7. What factors contribute to their mental health?

The sense of stability and security (safety). Also when they have strong family relationships. Individual characteristics like resilience.

8. What factors contribute to their adjustment in society?

I believe one of the factors is self-confidence and self-sufficiency in order to see their options that might give to them in the society they live in. For example, job seeking, the sense of self responsibility. Having also good support network from relatives, peers and teachers (if they are going to school)

9. In your opinion, what other factors promote their resilience as individuals?

When they are feeling valuable and accepted as human. Also having good self-esteem. Positive peer and adult support network. Problem solving skills.

Appendix F: Written Answers 6

Age: 26

Nationality: Cypriot

Gender: Female

Religion: Christian Orthodox

Educational background: BA in Psychology and MA in School Psychology

Amount of time working at the shelter: 1 year as support officer and 2 months as psychologist

Current role and/or previous roles in the shelter: Support officer before and now psychologist

Previous experience working with a similar population group: No

1. What are the biggest challenges that the minors face in the shelter?

The biggest challenges that the minors face in the shelter are the distance from their family, the coexistence with other people of different nationalities, different age groups, and the organized set of the shelter (to cooperate with the structure of the shelter in a European way of life).

2. What individual characteristics one should have or develop in order to adapt well in the shelter?

Cooperation, empathy and obedience.

3. Who or what is the biggest support for the boys and why?

Their friends/roommates in the shelter, because they spend most of their time together, they are living together, they feel more comfortable to communicate their thoughts and feelings to their peers.

4. Who do they see as a role model and why?

Support officers, because are the adults who are closer to them every day.

5. What keeps them motivated?

Their family if they have, to think that they have opportunities, their peers/friends and the staff here in the shelter.

6. What difficulties do they face and how do they overcome them?

Outburst of feelings, some of them are expressed through aggressiveness/through behavior, some of them are expressed verbally.

7. What factors contribute to their mental health?

They have a safe space to live, well defined environment, we provide to them any kind of support that they need.

8. What factors contribute to their adjustment in society?

The shelter is working as a system and as a society, micrograph so it is a main factor that contributes to their adjustment in society.

9. In your opinion, what other factors promote their resilience as individuals?

They learned to cope with serious difficulties in the past and they achieve to be they managed to reach a safe environment

Appendix G: Interview 7

Age: 25

Nationality: Albanian/Greek

Gender: Female

Religion: Christian Orthodox

Educational background: BA Sociology and MA Public Health

Amount of time working at the shelter: 9 months

Current role and/or previous roles in the shelter: Support officer

Previous experience working with a similar population group: Yes, with kids who represented minorities

1. What are the biggest challenges that the minors face in the shelter?

7: Language, religion, culture, from the culture it becomes to be the food, the clothes, their routine, what they did, their education, their health hygiene

Me: How are they dealing with them?

7: I think it's a shock the first time when they are having to deal with this and they are trying to engage in our society, norms and culture, they are getting anxious and stressed which can turn and lead to anger outbursts..

Me: Do you think that there are also some positive and constructive ways that they use to deal with the challenges?

7: It depends on the boys, they understand that they are not in their country so they are trying to understand how a European country works, so they are following and they do not lose their focus on what was the first things why they came. Some of them are more focusing on "okay I am here so I can get as much as I can from the people that

are surrounding me because they are not my family” and this thing that they are far away from their family, I think that it costs a lot to the boys.

2. What individual characteristics one should have or develop in order to adapt well in the shelter?

7: Respect, personal hygiene, focus on education and goals for their life.

3. Who or what is the biggest support for the boys and why?

7: It's a good question.. support for them.. maybe their family that is abroad from another country and they want the reunification with them.

Me: So not the family that is in their country but in the country that they want to go.

7: Yes..

Me: Why?

7: Because I am seeing the boys when they are speaking with their relatives in another countries they are very enthusiastic about this so.. it's a double thing because maybe they don't like Cyprus and they want to go to their relatives that might have the same habits as them.. but yes, first I was thinking this. The second yes, it's the family that they left.

4. Who do they see as a role model and why?

7: The officers for sure. Because they are surrounded most of the times in a place that there are people that sometimes have the behavior as their parents so spending time with people who are 24 hours with us, can affect us in our behavior and can be a role model for us.

Me: But do you actually think that they acknowledge that?

7: I think that some of them acknowledge that. Some of them will recognize it when they leave from the shelter but at this point the majority does not recognize that it is the officers.

Me: So for these ones who do they see as a role model?

7: Hmm (pause) good question again. Their relatives that are in Cyprus or other countries that are in the same page as them as they left their countries, the same as them, hmm.. and they want to achieve this goal that their relatives achieved, to have work and to have money and a normal life as they see it in having a family, wife and children. Hmm.. also I would say that, for example, the video games that they are playing might affect the way that they are thinking and what they can be in the future. It's a role model if they are playing with drug dealers or killing people for example, because we are speaking about violent behavior towards somebody, this might affect them the way that they think that they have power. They come from a violent background, a violent environment, so they are thinking that "my role, what I can be, is to become like them" so the videogames are enforcing their role of what they have thought from a little age and the seeking of power which they see through violence.

5. What keeps them motivated?

7: A better future, a reunification with their relatives and some of them their education. We have examples like this..

6. What difficulties do they face and how do they overcome them?

7: Language barrier, racism, different culture, one of the biggest problems that they face in the shelter is the food because it's not the same as in their countries so it's a problem for them. Trust.. abandonment, this..

7. What factors contribute to their mental health?

7: What I have noticed is that (pause) they are coming with good potentials but hmm (pause) they are coming positively most of them, even if their past is very traumatic because they are coming with a hope of "I left my country so I will have something better than being in a traumatic place" but I think they are becoming more stressed, more angry when they come..

Me: Okay, but what is contributing to this, how is this happening?

7: (Requested some minutes to think) A surrounding that contributes positively to their mental health it's a surrounding that has people from the same nationality as them..(culture)

Me: Do you think the shelter contributes positively or negatively?

7: I think it's negatively hmm.. it depends again because for some of them it might work positively but as I am seeing, it becomes negative. The reason is they are not getting too much attention from the staff, they think that there are inequalities between them, that there are not the same opportunities for all of them, and what I mean with this for example, if a boy that is 16 goes to work and another who is 14 wants to go but is not allowed, they see this as inequality even if we have explained that there are the rules. Or the education, you can take it from this part, because some of them didn't have the opportunity to go to school, now that we are trying to engage them in this part, because for some is mandatory by law, they are not accepting because they didn't learn. So again, even if the shelter is contributing positively by giving opportunities to them, it becomes negative because they are not attending and they are spending most of the time doing nothing.

8. What factors contribute to their adjustment in society?

7: Knowing the language.. they didn't have the same rules or laws that we have in the european countries so it's very difficult for them to get involved in this things, education again, respect, having a good behavior in general and what I mean is speaking good to someone, to be on time, religion for sure.

Me: How is religion contributing to the adjustment?

7: They cannot be adjusted in the society because it makes it more difficult to them

9. In your opinion, what other factors promote their resilience as individuals?

7: Patience, be open in what the others are saying to them. In this country, for example, respect the roles and the rules which will be useful wherever they go. Try to

socialize again with Cypriot.. and I am bringing this to myself also because nobody will come and tell me “ah because you come from another country we have to open all the doors for you”, I have to knock on the doors to get the things so they need to be more proactive and to be positive that not to think that for example “ah because I am Syrian they will be racist on me” and I have seen examples of this, I have worked with people from Syria and Somalia and the people respect them a lot so they need to be more proactive on this and they need to focus on their self and not in the hole society or the country id that they have.

Appendix H: Interview 8

Age: 35

Nationality: Cypriot

Gender: Female

Religion: Christian Orthodox

Educational background: BA Psychology and MA School Psychology

Amount of time working at the shelter: 4 years and 10 months

Current role and/or previous roles in the shelter: Support officer for 1 year, psychologist for 2 years and current on the second year as coordinator of the psychology department

Previous experience working with a similar population group: Yes, with children and adolescent yes but with different background.

1. What are the biggest challenges that the minors face in the shelter?

8: to adjust to the new environment, it's very difficult when they come here because it's something new so we also see a difficulty in integration it's slowly, it is not that it's not happening, it's happening but some of them might also not integrate, we see people that cannot follow. So yes, we have a slow adjustment to the new environment, the language barrier also it's a very big issue for the communication because communication is very important. Also the culture, for them and for the staff because you have to know, you have to educate and learn how to deal with the specific population and sometimes you come into conflict with their beliefs and your beliefs. The other difficulties, if I can put into categories it's the adjustment to start school, it's very difficult for them. Yes, some are registered to school because we also have the law that until 15 years they must go to school but the schools, from my experience are not prepared to have a decent and appropriate type of education to give to this population and this is something very difficult because we see minors who stop going to school back to their countries and they have some education and they want to

continue here but it's difficult for them because of the system. And from a psychological perspective, it makes them feel more.. they lose their motivation and their goals if they see that it's not so helpful.

Me: So how are they dealing with these challenges?

8: We see a lot of minors losing their temper, we have this aggressiveness or we have also the opposite thing that they isolate themselves, you don't see them around the shelter, they don't attend to anything and they are on their phones and in their rooms and doing something more individual and more isolated.

Me: Can you think of a more positive and constructive way that they are maybe able to deal with the challenges?

8: I will not speak about the school, the government and how the system works, if I speak about the shelter, because we provide lessons here and activities. If you create a good relationship with the minor, even if you are a personal officer, social worker or psychologist, you can create with him, based on his needs, a program so he can start to adjust and participate to different events and to slowly they can go more outside and do more activities.

Me: So, they need the support of the staff in order to find more positive ways of dealing with the difficulties in order to after find more individual ways on their own?

8: Yes, the important thing about this support is the relationship, the communication and for the person who is going to provide the support, to listen to the needs of the child, not to have expectations.

2. What individual characteristics one should have or develop in order to adapt well in the shelter?

8: Resilience, the first thing that they need to have is resilience and some boys, if I think of some examples, they came very afraid with trust issues and they didn't believe in themselves but when they understand the environment and the relationships that they create with the staff, you see the changes of their character and what they are

doing. But, because I spoke about resilience, it's my belief that they have resilience from the time they choose to travel. The travel is not easy but the environment and the situation until they come to the destination is difficult, they might get bullied, robbed, physically abused or verbally abused, so resilience is very important. Another characteristic to develop, some have it from their families or are developing is to be more open or to respect.. not to respect I don't want to use this word.. I want to say to be more open to the new things of the environment

Me: To be open minded?!

8: Yes, to be open minded, yes. Something that is going to help them in order to adapt, integrate, to have goals and motivation.

3. Who or what is the biggest support for the boys and why?

8: Their biggest support is their families. But families I mean not the uncles that are in Cyprus, but somehow they are also a support group, but the family that they left behind it's a support because they are talking everyday, for the boys who have the communication and close relationship. Because they left, they were asked by their families to leave so they have the obligation to adjust and to continue what they are going to do.. are they are going to find a job and send back money, they are going to have status so in the end can invite also the family to the country?

Me: But the way you are saying it I see it as a two way: because this can be support but they also feel a lot of pressure which works the other way around?!

8: Yes, this is what I wanted to continue saying.. It is like a very opposite things, they are not the same but they connect. But they don't understand that they feel that pressure and that's why we also see the aggressive behaviors it's because of the pressure that the family might put on them or because they have this uncertainty. But they don't realize it until they see it, this is a big true but even with this pressure I believe that their strong support system is their families. And for those who don't have families, they will find in the future, when they build a good relationship with officers, the officers with whom they feel the trust to share, but this might not be a

strong support system, it's a support system.

4. Who do they see as a role model and why?

8: Again their families, their father, their uncles, okay because we have this culture most of the time are male figures. But we have also sometimes the figure of the mother but it's more caring, it's not "how I want to be when I get older". I think they have in their mind that "when I am older I want to support my family" which they do it now also, from the time they left their country, they are supporting their families. Also, some officers can be role models and we see it now and in the past that they take the positive or negative behaviors and they want to be like them.

5. What keeps them motivated?

8: Hmm, this is a very difficult question because we don't see a lot to be motivated. The only thing that keeps them motivated is the fact that they have a family back home and they need to support them. This is somehow a motivation that they have, it's not a personal motivation, it's for somebody else. The truth is that they don't have personal motivation or if they have, most of the times they feel guilty to have this motivation because it's like they betray the cause of traveling to a new country which causes other issues and problems. But some of them have, they want to finish school or they have motivation to receive knowledge because they want to become architects or doctors and we have strong examples about this and it's very important. The percentage of the people who are motivated and want to do something it's low but even the low ones they have the motivation let's say to maybe go to the semi-independent program, you need to follow some rules and you are going to go or to your family, it's a motivation again the reunification with the family. For example, I want to learn German because I will travel to Germany. But most of them don't have their own motivation and it's important to work on this.

6. What factors contribute to their mental health?

8: The traveling, it's a positive and negative..

Me: You mean when they come here or when they are leaving?

8: When they are coming.. we have the PTSD in high levels because they see and receive a lot of things and they put their lives in danger most of the times so this is a negative impact but we also have the positive in the negative which is that they are leaving from dangerous places. Okay, when they come to the country we see the depression or the PTSD that they might have not as a diagnosis but as symptoms because they need to adjust, they don't know where they are arriving and if they don't have families it's even more difficult. And also the rules we have in the shelter might be a negative contributor to their mental health because they might not know what is this and they need to follow and maybe it's difficult for them. About the positive is that they have a place to stay so they might feel more secure. They might not say "I feel secure" but are secure, there is no war, there is no someone to chase them, they have food and their basic needs are covered which contributes to a positive impact on their mental health. Also the support they get from the psychologists at the shelter because it's very important that we have this, all the professionals working for the cases, but again it depends on the person if he wants to work or not, it's a personal thing about the mental health but it's something that the professionals here are trying with alternative ways also, not only the western typical approaches that are used in the general population. I think this is also a positive impact for them. The activities that they participate have a positive impact because they are receiving something that they might never had or they had, they lost it and now they have it again.

7. What factors contribute to their adjustment in society?

8: Hmm, okay.. Also again here I think it's the support of the professionals, the rehabilitation trainings and the importance of knowing the area of where they are living and what they have around them about services, labor, bank, migration, asylum, this they get it from the contribution of the officers. Also, if you see it in a more social perspective it's if they make friends outside of the shelter or if they friends here are in the same age and they are going to socialize and go outside and make a network.

8. In your opinion, what other factors promote their resilience as individuals?

8: When they adjust to the environment they know the society, how it works, they create also resilience and you can see when a change comes how to manage this change, but in order to have this skill, you need to (pause and takes some time). The support system, they can get it from the support system..

Me: The shelter you mean?

8: The shelter, maybe it's the family, maybe it's the outside. Any support system that has positive impact on the person. But, it depends on the person because the resilience is from the person. From my experience and what I see, most of them are coming with resilience and they need to work it, change it, you see this. Because imagine that they are coming, and their life does not have a stable things, everytime, every morning, every day, something is different so they need to adjust again and again.. and for me this is resilience.

Me: So it's the process itself..

8: Yes, yes, exactly. It's not like somebody is going to tell them "you know today we are going to speak about resilience and I am going to give you resilience and you need to apply it"

Me: Yes, but resilience it's actually something that can be teached.. you can work on it. But it's interesting because you said that they come with resilience. So how do you think they build that resilience in their countries?

8: Yes. The changes, the situations that they live. One day they have war and the next day it's peaceful and everything it's okay, and when it's okay you see a bomb exploding in your village and you need again to.. yes you can teach, you can tech.. that's why I am saying that every boy here has resilience, you need to grab that resilience he has and work with it and expand it.

Me: Do you think they are in survival mode?

8: Yes, when they come here yes. After, because they might stay here for 5 years so it's not a survival mode, they adjust, but coming here or another country, they are in

survival mode, even we saw a lot of boys lying about their age and if I translate that, it's survival mode it's a way to survive because "I will have much more benefits if i say I am a minor". Also this suspicious, their suspicious and their not trusting it's a survival mode.

Appendix I: Interview 9

Age: 40

Nationality: Cypriot

Gender: Male

Religion: Agnostic

Educational background: BA Psychology and MA Counseling Psychology

Amount of time working at the shelter: 3 years and 2 months

Current role and/or previous roles in the shelter: Counselor

Previous experience working with a similar population group: Yes, with immigrant minors and refugee camp with all ages

1. What are the biggest challenges that the minors face in the shelter?

9: One big challenge, they are without their family, second big challenge in a cultural different context, third challenge they are in an institutional context, eh.. which in itself has a few challenges, fourth challenge language, fifth they are in a very precarious situation, meaning everything it's unknown in terms of their future, if they have family if they will be able to reunite with them if not if they stay in Cyprus if they can get status or if at some point they will be asked to leave the country; insufficient educational opportunities and lack of appropriate support and care. This is if I go in short titles of the biggest challenges.

Me: And what ways are they using to deal with these challenges?

9: Ehh.. they try to form bonds between them and with the staff. They also try to maintain connection with their families wherever they are. They enter into a space of (pause), they focus on the day, so because everything it's unknown and uncertain, they forget about what goals they want to achieve, where they want to go, who they want to be and they focus more on day to day. To develop social skills and also emotional resilience and capacity, more extroverted, I can see that for a person that comes here, having extrovert qualities is very helpful.

2. What individual characteristics one should have or develop in order to adapt well in the shelter?

9: (Pause) They need to become super flexible. They need to become quite self-sufficient for their age, which again it's coping, I don't know if it's a good thing. They need to develop kind of a certain level of maturity. They need to develop quite fast socialization skills to be able to relate to adults and people their age. They need to become quite tuff, the ones who are not because otherwise they get bullied or excluded. They need to become assertive and maybe to some extent aggressive to survive.

3. Who or what is the biggest support for the boys and why?

9: I think an initial quite important support is the sense of safety and to an extent stability of being here, knowing that probably until they are 18 they can be here and their needs are met, they are relatively safe so I think that is quite substantial for them. Who can be.. it can be different people like 1 or 2 or 3 friends they make that can be very substantial, it can be a relationship with a support officer, a social worker or psychologist that they establish and of course, relationships with family either through phone or here if they have somebody.

4. Who do they see as a role model and why?

9: That's very personal to each one of them. I am feeling a bit reluctant to enter into it because I feel it's quite personal to each of them.. To be honest I think it's a big issue, the lack of role models because they are like pooled out of their social context and family context and put into a place where they become lost in terms of a role model and you know, maybe for the kids it's one of the teenagers here.. the shelter has kind of the leaders or the most popular ones or the most dominant ones and some of them can become role models. I don't think any of use take, unless some of the children that come from a more upper class background, they want to study and they see themselves more related to us and maybe they see some aspects of us as role models and I don't know to the extent they look up to their family members as well, the ones they are still in contact with.

5. What keeps them motivated?

9: Necessity. Ehh.. basic necessities. Motivated to relate to others, motivated to establish safety, motivated to have some economic resources or stability, motivated to reunite with family or go live with their families. Motivated to follow the aspirations of their parents who sent them here, motivated to follow the aspirations of their culture and religion and for the younger teenagers, it's like their daily instability, mood swings, precarity, they might be motivated to have a friends to feel safe enough or be a person who can fit in with the rest of the group in order to survive here you know

6. What factors contribute to their mental health?

9: This is a thesis question (laughs). (Pause). I would go back into answering the first question and take all that like talked about the precarity of the situation, about a certain level of safety but that it's total level of stability, unknownness, ungroundedness, there is a lack of family, support systems, a foreign culture which they don't understand, the trauma that a lot of them have gone through, there is having to sort of establish their place in the social system which can be quite tuff, there is lack of appropriate boundaries and structure, program, sort of a stable structure that will hold them in place and sort of dictate for them a place and a way to be, like normal children have, like you have to wake up at that time, you have to go to school, you have certain expectations, a routine that stabilizes that and besides that their families might be in danger, they are at war zones, they are in poverty, they see them sometimes they don't have enough food to take on the place to that can also be very impactful for them

7. What factors contribute to their adjustment in society?

9: A big one is their social skills. Straight away you see the children who are more socially apt have a lot more chance to relate to the boys and to the staff. Intelligence and education also play a role, how fast they can learn the language, how fast they can understand and navigate into a strange social context to them, and that goes for inside and outside of the shelter. We see the children who are more ready to learn the language and go out and socialize and make friends outside and start integrating

8. In your opinion, what other factors promote their resilience as individuals?

9: The way I think about resilience it's that it's external and internal and both are quite important. In terms of internal resilience, this is a lifelong process and it's always related to the environment and it's about sort of developing the capacity to withstand challenges and fail and be able to try again, tolerate rejection and be able to be okay with that, process loss and the way loss is processed which can become a way of coping and strengthening the person. This internal resilience always goes hand with hand with establishing a support system. It's so important to be able to sustain losses and to be able to accomplish one goals and have networks to whom you can rely on, develop different skills and interests, a person who has skills that might be needed outside in the labor market already it's more resilient because "I know I can rely on this" as "I know I can rely on a family member or on my own strength to be able to sustain losses" so it's all this factors combined that can help.

Appendix J: Interview 10

Age: 23

Nationality: Lebanese

Gender: Male

Religion: Christian

Educational background: BA Physics

Amount of time working at the shelter: 11 months

Current role and/or previous roles in the shelter: Support officer

Previous experience working with a similar population group: Yes

9. What are the biggest challenges that the minors face in the shelter?

10: The miscommunication, when they think something is the way they perceive it and they are fixated on it, and they think they are targeted, they are the center of the problem and we have an issue with them specifically, not with the other boys. And I would say, they think everybody is after to get them and everybody is racist and discriminatory towards them. Also, they don't know the language, they are without their parents and they come from an arab background where it's a totally different mindset when it comes to the female population and how they think about it, their roles about themselves and the family, they are used to starting to work at this age. The fact that here it's mostly female figures, it triggers them because they are not used to women being superior then them and getting into an european community it's very difficult because they are not raised in this way. Also coming from war and trauma.

10. How are they dealing with these challenges?

10: Some positively by communicating and telling us that they are going through this difficult acclimation but others negatively, when they get triggered by something, their reaction is aggressive, they never have a neutral approach to anything. When with care and growth, I can give examples, their approach becomes neutral but now it's aggressive, the way they were raised basically, they deal with it with a slap.

11. What individual characteristics one should have or develop in order to adapt well in the shelter?

10: Patience, of course. Understanding and not to think of themselves as they are the center of attention. Bring their ego down, humility, they should learn that. And I would say perseverance. Communicate in a nonviolent way.

12. Who or what is the biggest support for the boys and why?

10: Their relatives, their first relatives: mother, father or aunt.. that's it. Other than us here, that's it.

Me: Do you think the staff here is also perceived by them as a support?

10: Yes, yes. Some who weren't raised by their mothers, they cling to the female officers

13. Who do they see as a role model and why?

10: Not their parents and their uncles, they are war heroes of their country. This goes to all the Arab population. Like there are rebels of the country that are against the government, they take those as role models. Basically spokes people of the country, they are role models. And I guess whoever they have a closer relationship here at the shelter but not their parents, at least from my conversations, nobody here said like "I wanna be like my dad" some say "I want to be like my brother" or "I want to be like you, you are educated" or "I want to be like this spokesperson or rebel".

14. What keeps them motivated?

10: Leaving (laughs). Their parents, sending money back to their parents or bringing them here, keeps them going. Some, I would say, to be successful in life, to have an academic background, keeps them going and some have just leaving the shelter and having a life outside, that's what they want, that is what motivates them.

15. What factors contribute to their mental health?

10: The news of the stories back home, how much they talk to their parents, how much we communicate with them and what we say to them, very important. Our

reaction and body language. How much time they spent in the shelter and their friends. I would say mostly the news back home, that has a big impact.

16. What factors contribute to their adjustment in society?

10: Their community, seeing others from their nationality succeeding in that community. Seeing real life examples of other people who left their country and they are in a different community. I guess if they have jobs, if they succeed in their career, it would show them how to fit in the community. And their social circle, if they have friends only from here and they don't experience anything from the outside, they will not put effort into community. So I would say their experience outside of the shelter.

17. In your opinion, what other factors promote their resilience as individuals?

10: I would say to be touted the rules of society and the community they are graduating to, to learn from.. (pause) they see people who are also arabs and from other nationalities speaking and in these protests and all that stuff, so they think this is going to be when they leave, so they form this type of resilience and I would say also repulsion from any help they would get and they become close minded and not accepted of advice, so it's external factors like.. I don't think it's internal. I think it's the way they were raised, the way they talk, other people talk to them, their role models, it's all interaction and they learn from that. So they develop this resilience or repulsion to any help or any positive interference.