

Non-Discriminatory and Inclusive Approaches: A Case Study of Chechen Migrant Children in Istanbul

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Abstract

Children are a primary focus of intervention as they are some of the highest users of services. Viewing children as active agents and encouraging their active participation have important implications for service provision for children. For an effective intervention, children must be approached as knowing subjects and their participation and partnership should be sought in caring for them. Participation does not merely refer to involvement in formal decision-making processes, but rather refers more widely to individuals' self-determination in taking actions and making choices as active citizens. This paper examines the service provision for Chechen migrant children in Istanbul through the eyes of the children. Drawing on ethnographic research on Chechen migrant Children in Istanbul, this paper argues that it is vital to help children develop a sense of belonging and ownership in the service provision by empowering them. Such an approach helps these children with their integration process, while its lack only contributes to their further exclusion and isolation from society.

Key words: Chechen Migrant Children, experience of refugees, children's participation

Introduction

Turkey is a country at the centre of various migratory routes and receives migrants from the Middle East, Asia, Eastern Europe and parts of Africa. Since the beginning of 2000, Turkey has become one of the countries to host Chechen migrants as well. The history of Chechnya consists of many wars, conflicts and migration waves. After the last war with Russia in 1999, a migration movement took place out of Chechnya toward neighbouring states within the Russian Federation, such as Georgia. However, a second flow took place, because of people fleeing Russian bombing attacks. Some of those who could afford it went to Europe where they were granted refugee status. On the other hand, some 3,000 to 4,000 Chechens arrived in Turkey between 1999 and 2001, though the number has declined since then. While some of the refugees returned to Chechnya, the vast majority fled to Europe through Bulgaria or Ukraine because of the difficult living conditions in Turkey (Brody, 2005).

Chechens in Turkey

Chechens live in non-official camps in Turkey: Fenerbahce (184), Umraniye (152) and Beykoz (114). There are also rent and charity houses in Istanbul holding 335 Chechen asylum seekers. All of the refugee camps where Chechens stay are completely inappropriate for residence.

The refugees, both those in the camps and those outside, do not have any sort of permanent official status under law, including official refugee status. The only official right provided for them is a temporary residence permit. This makes their lives extremely difficult. They are devoid of many basic human rights such as employment, education and health care. In addition, the consequences of the war and its sufferings still deeply affect their psychology. As well as their very bad living conditions, misery, illnesses, the official ignorance towards them and everything that makes their life harder in Turkey, the murders of three refugees during the last year have traumatised the community, bringing fear and an increased feeling of insecurity.

Chechen refugees in Turkey do not have the official right to work. The only way they can earn their living is to get aid and support. This support consists of the donations of some NGO's, some citizens who are sensitive to their situation, and the limited and irregular food aid of the local municipalities. However, except perhaps during Ramadan and the charitable periods when Muslims traditionally help each other, this aid is far from being sufficient.

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Since Chechen refugees have no official rights except for their temporary resident status, they have no officially sanctioned or formal access to healthcare. Health is obviously a fundamental human problem, and the right to access health service is one of the basic human rights. The health status of Chechen asylum seekers, who have already come from terribly bad conditions, are becoming even worse day by day. Especially in winter time, diseases appear frequently among children and elderly refugees. Due to the hygiene problems of their environment, they also face the danger of epidemic diseases.

The Case of Chechen Children in Turkey

Until a short time ago Chechen children and teenagers did not have the official right to a regular education. Depending on the initiative of the headship of the school, the Chechen students could only be accepted to study as “guest students” at best. Nowadays, Chechen students are able to register to a school and to have education as a student. Children at last have an actual right to an official education, after about 10 years of residence in Turkey.

The case at “home” has many difficulties for them, as well. They live in small houses where none of them has privacy. This overcrowding means that even their basic needs as children, such as playing, doing homework, and spending time with friends, can hardly be satisfied.

The Socially Constructed Character of Childhood

Childhood can only be analysed in terms of its social context. Therefore, a sociological perspective on the concept of childhood is particularly relevant when exploring the situation of Chechen children in Istanbul. In this regard, the concept of the ‘socially constructed character’ of childhood (James et al. 1998) constitutes one of the major theoretical tools.

Sociologists have only recently started to focus on children and childhood (James et al. 1998). Much of the early work in sociology on childhood had emphasised the institutional aspect of the subject, outlining the rise of the school system, child labour legislation, specialised agencies for juvenile delinquents, infant welfare services and the like. Ideas about childhood and the children themselves, however, had hardly been given scope (Heywood, 2002). Heywood argues that it was the eighteenth century thinkers who came closer than any of their predecessors to our contemporary notions of childhood. They asserted that children were important in their own right rather than being imperfect adults. The reasons for the marginalisation of children for so long in sociology has been their subordinate position in societies and, hence, in the theoretical conceptualisation of childhood. James et al. (1998) have argued that children are pushed to the margins of the social structure by adults since their lives, needs and desires are often seen as causes for alarm, and thus as threatening social problems that need to be resolved.

The concept of the child’s perspective is particularly helpful in thinking about childhood as it sees children as individuals, with opinions, interests, and viewpoints that they should be able to express (Skivenes and Strandbu, 2006). Adults’ perceptions, including their images of children’s capacities, and their self-interest in maintaining their own position with respect to children are put forward as the primary barriers to children’s participation.

In this respect, Wyness, et al. (2004) have identified several cultural norms of childhood that limit the extent to which young people participate in public and civic matters and get recognized as influential social agents. The first of these norms, ‘privatisation of childhood’, locates children within the private realm of the family; that is a relatively detached and private environment excluded from a political community whereby, parallel to the traditional view, children are seen only as the successful or unsuccessful products of adults. According to the second norm, ‘childhood as an apprenticeship’, children are not fully constituted members of the social world. This reflects a recurrent tendency to view children as ‘human becomings’ rather than ‘human beings’ (Qvortup et al., 1994). Children’s ‘trainee’ status together with their exclusion on grounds of ‘irresponsibility’ has led to a third norm; the notion of ‘children’s incompetence’, or the view that children are socially and morally incompetent, which can be linked to a recurring view of western children as moral and social innocents, i.e., to their perceived vulnerability. This legitimises children’s political exclusion and adults’ right to talk on their behalf. It also limits the opportunities for children and young people to participate collectively, depriving them of the preparation afforded them as future participants. As a result, children do not consider themselves to be political.

Children's Participation

The United Nations Convention on The Rights of The Child (UNCRC) has been a powerful driver in encouraging greater participation by children, providing the agenda and a tool that can be used by practitioners or young people themselves to justify and help achieve inclusion (Hill et al 2004). The discourse on children's participation appeared in Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), in which children are given the right to participate in matters directly affecting them (Skivenes and Strandbu, 2006). Article 12, No.1 in the CRC states that "Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity." Skivenes and Strandbu (2006) have proposed the concept of the child's perspective as containing three aspects on two different levels; the structural and the individual. The structural level is concerned with children's rights and position in society, as well as their legal protection. The individual level is concerned with considering children in the present as 'human beings' rather than only in a future perspective, as 'human becomings', and also considers the context of children's lived realities.

In thinking about children, it is important to consider whether they are citizens and articulate social actors who have much to say about the world and should be encouraged to speak out, or whether they are a symbolic voice of innocence and therefore recognized as silenced spectators (James et al. 1998). Prout (2000) has argued that it is crucial to establish childhood as presenting a specific problem for two reasons. The first of these allows childhood to be conceptualized separately from the institutional context such as the family, schooling or welfare systems, and within which it has been hidden. The second avoids constituting childhood as a narrow empirical field outside and adrift from general social theory and analysis. Understanding children from a generational perspective can help to raise awareness of generation as a dimension of social organisations, working alongside, in and between others, such as class, gender, disability and ethnicity. The notion of generation encourages children and adults to be understood within a system of relations between the generations.

Participatory approaches are based on a positive view of children's capacities and recognise the importance to children of the physical places and social contexts in which they lead their lives, whether in formal services or in more informal spaces. Grew (2005), for instance, has argued that children are more likely to adapt to and even embrace the new than any other segment of the society.

Participation, as Smith (2006) has emphasised, does not merely refer to involvement in formal decision-making processes, but rather refers more widely to individuals' self-determination in taking action and making choices as active citizens. Therefore, Smith suggests that creating spaces for dialogue, interaction and learning between groups as part of the participation process is invaluable, adding that for meaningful change to occur, it is necessary to engage with the complex dynamics of social and cultural interaction that shape social norms, values and action. This emphasis reminds us once again of the culturally constructed character of childhood.

Raising children under regulations and surveillance is a means of bringing children under family/state control. This, as James (2007) sees it, has to do with the cultural politics of childhood that shape children's everyday lives and experiences. The concept of 'governmentality', as defined by Foucault (1991, cited in Holmes, 2002, p.84) is helpful in thinking about bringing children under state control. Governmentality can be understood in the broad sense of techniques and procedures for directing human behaviour, involving "government of children, government of souls and consciences, government of a household, of a state, or of oneself" (Rosa et al., 2006, p. 83). Foucault's analysis of political power in terms of governmentality implies a deliberate attempt to direct human conduct in order to regulate, control and shape (Holmes, 2002). The principles and practices of government involve the many and varied alliances between political and other authorities that seek to govern economic activity, social life and individual contact. Morris (1998) has drawn attention to the process of 'governing at a distance' to fully understand the art of government as understood by Foucault.

Theoretical Background: Migration and Children's Mental Health

The term 'refugee' is used to include people at all stages of the asylum process. When an individual enters a new country seeking asylum, they are called 'asylum seekers' and when asylum is granted, they are no longer refugees, they have all the rights of the citizens of the host country. In many studies the experience of being a refugee is defined as a 'traumatic' one. One could argue that the term 'trauma' here loses its specific psychological meaning and instead becomes synonymous with painful experience.

Some psychoanalytic writers use the term trauma to mean any violent shock and its consequences to the personality; more radically, it may even threaten the integrity of the personality. A person's reaction to the traumatic experience of refugee life is characterised the feeling of helplessness and the loss of containing objects (Bion, 1970), which, in extreme situations, carries the threat of the ego's disintegration and dissolution and a blurring of boundaries. Trauma results from overwhelming experiences of feeling helpless, powerless and hopeless, being unable to make sense of the world or to protect oneself. The trauma of being a refugee might be said to impose a connection between events and psychological experience. The Grinbergs (1989) have written that:

It is our view that the notion of trauma should be applied not only to single, isolated events (for example the sudden death of a family member, a sexual attack, unexpected surgery or accident) but also to events which may be prolonged for greater or lesser periods, such as affective deprivation, separation from parents, residence in boarding schools or nursing homes, hospitalisation or migration (p. 10)

Another consideration when thinking about the experience of being a refugee is the perceptions of and responses to the transition from a culture of extended families and wide support to one of enforced relative isolation. The Grinbergs (1989) emphasise the need for a potential space that can be used as a 'transitional place' and 'transition period' between the mother country/object and the new outside world. If one fails to create this potential space, the continuity between the self and the surroundings is broken.

Papadopoulos (1997) argues that the most usual way of approaching the mental health issues of refugees is by using the diagnosis of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). It can be argued that post-traumatic stress disorder is a normal reaction to an abnormal amount of stress. Moreover, it includes the symptoms of depression, emotional numbness, and the avoidance of people, places and things that remind the individual of the original traumatic event.

The experience of being a refugee may involve many disturbing losses to one's life, such as loss of identity, loss of home, or loss of relatives. In the case of children, it is reported that changing countries is usually met with the added stress of separation from extended family members, decreased parental support, living with distressed adults, and peer rejection (Winter & Young, 1998).

Migrant children share with non-migrant children the desire to be accepted by their peer group. They may experience a role and dependency reversal in which they may function as interpreters and "cultural brokers" for their parents at home. Additionally, they may confront society's discrimination and racism, while at the same time trying to accomplish the central task of childhood, which is to develop a sense of identity, while also trying to bridge generational and cultural gaps. In the end, however, their greatest problem may not be the stress of belonging to two cultures but the stress of belonging to none of them (Lee, 1988; cited in Fantino & Colak, 2001). The process of belonging or not belonging to a culture – in other words of adapting to the new/old cultural behaviours, attitudes, and values – leads to a feeling of cultural uncertainty and is generally accepted in the literature as a mediator of anxiety, especially in children (Roberts & Schnieder, 1999).

Children are most often obligated to uproot with their family. However, not all migrant groups experience the same emigration process. For example, many children who have migrated to Turkey in recent years may have experienced pre-migration trauma (either personally or through family members) as a consequence of exposure to war. In other words these children confront not only the difficulties of cultural transition; they may also suffer from post traumatic stress (Sonderregger & Barrett, 2004). Studies indicated that these children have frequently emotional and behavioural problems and are diagnosed mostly as post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety disorders and depression. However, children do not fulfil a single diagnostic category, but show a mixture of the symptom list, such as a mixture of PTSD and depression (Fazel & Stein, 2002).

It is reported that even if children have not been directly exposed to war trauma, societal and/or family experiences and recovery process may lead to indirect psychological consequences (Baker & Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 1999). For example, in one study, mothers of 152 Lebanese children from pre-school programs in Beirut were interviewed. It was reported that their mothers' depressive symptoms were found to be the best predictor for the disease being reported in the child (Bryce et al., 1989). In a study of two groups of internally displaced refugee families in Croatia, one group of 65 families was living in a refugee camp, and the other group of 118 families staying with families in local communities.

It was found that children whose mothers experienced difficulties in handling refugee life had more stress symptoms than other children, and that children from the refugee camp were at greater risk of emotional problems than children who were accommodated privately with their family (Ajdukovic & Ajdukovic, 1993).

Some studies have also explored resilience factors among refugee children, including a supportive family environment, an external societal agency that reinforces a child's coping efforts, and a positive personality disposition (Garmezy & Masten, 1994).

Children's Active Participation from the Childhood Studies Perspective

Encouraging children's active participation is also important from the childhood studies perspective. This suggests that children should be positioned as participating subjects in the research process and that research should be carried out *with* children rather than *on* children as the objects of adults' research. James (2007) contributed to this idea by drawing attention to the very important point that childhood research is not simply about making a child's own voice heard by presenting the child's perspective, but is also about exploring the nature of that voice. When carrying out anthropological research with children to explore their perspectives as social actors, James has identified three interlocking themes which constitute the problems that childhood studies face. The first relates to matters of authenticity. To present an authentic account of children's issues as social actors, they need a helping hand as their voices and concerns are not immediately accessible. A second and related theme highlights the risks of glossing over the diversity of children's own lives and experiences. Therefore, children should be given greater audibility and visibility as social actors inhabiting a variety of different social worlds rather than as collective inhabitants. The third theme involves questioning the nature of children's participation in the research.

Engaging children in research has shown that they have a perspective on social life which often appears different to that of adults (Prout, 2002). James (2007) has written that children's participation in such research "is not only about letting children speak, it is about exploring the unique contribution to our understanding of and theorising about the social world those children's perspectives can provide" (p. 262). The tendency to take more account of children's views within research has parallel developments in consultation with children's organisations (Hill et al 2004). Although many studies have put forward the importance of the active participation of children, in the real process we still see the prevention of children's participation in society.

Methodology

The narrative research method and in-depth interviews were elected as the way to generate research data for two reasons. One is that to ensure the active involvement of research participants as a research *subject* as opposed to being a research *object*. The other reason for choosing this method is to hear the authentic voices of children.

The term 'generation' is used rather than 'collection' to encapsulate the wider ranges of relationships between the researcher, social world and data which qualitative research spans. The narrative technique is a distinct form of qualitative research, but in this case narrative and ethnographic methods were used in conjunction. Narratives were captured in contexts that were familiar to the respondents, and we looked for both the themes and assumptions underlying the discourse, and also for the cultural and contextual understandings that shaped those discursive actions. This was based on an acceptance that we can learn cultures primarily through language but also through artefacts, rituals, art, customs and the layout of spaces. Hence the observations made were broader than the discourse alone would have allowed. All the research participants were interviewed in their everyday environments.

In the scope of this research 10 children were interviewed in the Fenerbahçe Camp. The children's ages varied from 11 to 18. The children are asked to talk about the following subjects:

- Life in the camp
- Their school life
- Whether they think that they have a right to speak, have any influence over important decisions or their opinions are valued
- Their future plans

Findings

Not surprisingly, all the children who participated in the research described their situation like being in prison. They constantly drew attention to their problematic situation and expressed the feeling of being trapped. The following extract is one of several examples that demonstrate how children feel stuck:

Life here is like a prison, very boring. We are bored here. Things have always been the same here. We have been living in such a confined environment, since we came here 11 years ago. Due to financial problems we cannot even go to the park. (13 year old male)

As the above narrative also shows, these children are devoid of many basic children's rights, such as going to a park. They live through a different childhood when compared to the average child. They are lacking basic rights. In their narratives, the children constantly drew attention to the dramatic difference between the life in the camp and the life just behind the walls of the camp. The camp is ironically located in a very rich area of Istanbul, and this contributes even more to the feeling of abandonment, neglect and isolation. The two quotations below illustrate this point further:

It is like another city built in Turkey. Out there is a different world, whereas in the camp there is another one. Our lives are confined to this camp. (17 year old female)

There is no life in here. Every day is the same. Somehow, we are trying to hold onto the life. We do not even have a home address. We are abandoned here. (14 year old male)

Given their situation, the children are struggling to make sense of their situation and questioning their position in life. This has led to them feeling confused, let down, undermined and even insulted. As a result, the findings show that the only word they can use to describe their life situation is 'bizarre'.

Life here is bizarre. It is different from the ordinary people's lives. It is as if we we're pathetic losers. They are feeding us (referring to the meals they are given on a daily basis) (18 year old female)

Findings suggest that children are struggling hard to make sense of their life conditions. In their narratives, the children not only reveal a lot about their thoughts but also about their emotional states. Negative feelings were cited by the children, such as frustration depression, mourning and so on. These emotions indicate how their trauma continues. The quotations below draw attention to the tragic consequences of their situation for the children.

I want to sit down and cry. My parents have not seen their parents since they came here 12 years ago. I want my parents to see their parents. Every time I make a movement, I feel scared. (13 year old female)

Being a refugee is not of itself a pathological condition. However, the findings confirm that painful experiences such as leaving home, family and relocation do engender stress responses, which can lead to the temporary, or sometimes permanent, psychological dysfunction in individuals, families, and communities. These children confront not only the difficulties of cultural transition; they also suffer from post traumatic stress, and their parents' experiences and recovery process can also lead to indirect psychological consequences. The children reported that coming to another country brought the added stress of separation from extended family members, decreased parental support, and living with distressed adults. As they reported, their parents' emotional states had resulted in them having stress symptoms of their own. In addition to these negative feelings, children also talked strongly about the desire for revenge:

When people ask me about where I live I felt embarrassed. They live a normal life, but I live in a situation like this. Destiny! There is such thing in life as revenge. Russians never let Chechens go. (Close to tears) (17 year old female)

The consequences of the war and suffering still deeply affect their psychology, and it is the combination of these feelings and their life conditions which determine the general atmosphere in the camp. The children's narratives suggest that some adult members of the camp community have created their own control mechanisms over the children to prevent them from living through their childhood, even as much as their life conditions allow them to. This control mechanism is imposed especially on the female youngsters. A quotation below from a female child clearly shows this.

There are always rumours around. Even though adults themselves are doing it, they say to us 'Do not do this! Do not do that!' Those conservative and strict people in the camp are also influencing our parents. We cannot go out. We cannot do things that ordinary young people do, like going to a concert or asking for a signature from Tarkan (a well known pop singer in Turkey). Normal young people meet with their friends and hang around. We do not have such opportunities. Every time we get a chance we try to live out our childhood. But we have all forgotten that we are young. (17 year old female)

Children continuously point out that their basic needs such as playing or spending time with friends can hardly be satisfied. This is due to both their own emotional states and the life conditions which result from their asylum seeker circumstances and their amplification of cultural factors. The example above resembles many others given by the children showing that, in the camp, a strong control mechanism is developed by some adult members of the camp and then imposed upon them. They imply that a deliberate attempt is made by some adults to direct their behaviour and attitude in order to regulate and control them:

We don't live like ordinary young people. We do not go out with our friends and spend time with them. Rumours are everywhere. We have to watch out every move we make. Everyone has two sets of eyes on us. I do not think in the way that young people think. We cannot even play volleyball. (13 year old female)

Due to the limiting camp conditions, these children have been forcibly located within the private realm of the family, excluded from social participation within a detached and private environment. In parallel to the traditional view, they are increasingly seen as the unsuccessful or problematic products of adults. Perhaps quite predictably, while children are stuck in the camp and not allowed to live through their childhood as fully as they could, they are simply considered as "human becomings" rather than "human beings". Consequently, children's 'trainee' status in the eyes of the grownups, together with their exclusion, has led to the notion of 'children's incompetence', both socially and morally.

They say that I know nothing. In our culture children are never asked what they think. It is always dads who make decisions. If there is no dad it is the mother who decides. I wanted to go the university but because my mum got ill I had to stay at home to take care of my siblings. (17 year old female)

As the above narrative clearly points out, children are not viewed as members of the social world as individuals, with opinions, interests, and viewpoints that they should be able to express. Adults' perceptions with respect to children can be seen as the primary barriers to children's participation. Ironically, although they are not considered as individuals with opinions, they are considered old enough to take on the role of a mother.

Children strongly emphasise that they have no influence over any decisions, and that their opinions are not valued. Raising children under regulations and surveillance is a means of bringing children under control. The children's narratives suggest that their feelings of hope and optimism have diminished as time has passed.

Things were nice when we first came. It now turns into a shanty town. We used to play Chechen music and do folk dancing a lot in the camp. But those people have gone either to Europe or gone back home. The newcomers are all narrow-minded people. Even if you begged them they would never dance. I miss the old days. When we first came here, there was a sense of solidarity. (13 year old female)

Thus cultural factors, their parents' depressive state of mind and despair constantly make them think of the situation back at home and the people they left behind. It seems to them as if the only way they can connect to the people left at home is to stop living a lively life. As time has gone by it has become even harder for them to hold on to collective life.

On the contrary, children talk positively about their school life. They think that they are respected more at school as individuals. For example, they appreciate the fact that in school they choose their class representative.

We do balloting at school. But in the family and in the camps we were never asked what we have to say. When I become a grownup I will have a right to say things. I will be active then. (13 year old female)

Until they become an adult their silent position in life will continue. The only way for them to have a voice is to become a “grown up”. But their narratives show that their becoming an adult in itself is not enough for them to become active citizens in life. When the children were asked about their future plans, they expressed disbelief about their future.

I will wait and see how things unfold. I have no idea about my future. I am indecisive about the job I will choose. Apart from my big brothers, nobody has any future plans. (18 year old female)

The children’s thoughts about future vividly reflect their current situation. Just like their present situation, their future contains much uncertainty and ambiguity. Their negative circumstances and emotional states have further increased the hostility they feel towards Russians. While the girls expressed despair and helplessness, the boys expressed their strong desire for revenge.

When I am 18 years old I will go to Chechnya to become a mujahidin (13 year old male)

For the boys, the only role they could take up in future is to become a fighter. Their trapped situation accompanied by such depressive feelings has left no space for them to become active agents. Retaliation has even become the only motivation for them in life. As mentioned above, their negative and dehumanising life conditions only contribute more to their vengeful feelings against the Russians.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is important to emphasise the fact that whatever the particular nature of a refugee’s experience, the interaction between the event and the individual is always complex. Some refugees have problems that will need specialist help and support. In the case of Chechen children, this is even more complex.

Chechen children’s deprivation is an alarming situation in all aspects. The exclusion and marginalisation they experience together with their unknown circumstances have left no space for them to exercise their rights. The children’s exclusion and the adults’ right to talk on behalf of children limits the opportunities for children and young people to participate collectively, depriving them of the preparation they need as future participants. The children’s detached and private environment has excluded them from a political community, and this has increased their political apathy and alienation. As a result, children do not consider themselves to be political. Perhaps this is why the only way children think of becoming active and do something about their situation is to become a soldier, or *mujahid*.

Besides all this, the children are at risk of serious emotional problems. The findings reveal that children located in the refugee camp have a greater risk of emotional problems than children who are accommodated privately with their family. This is because these children lack most of the resilience factors identified: since most parents experience difficulties in handling refugee life, they do not have a supportive family environment, but an unstable and censorious one; while school as an external societal agency may reinforce their coping efforts, it also highlights for them their exclusion and disenfranchisement; and, as a result of trauma, they do not develop a positive and optimistic personality disposition. For all these reasons, refugee children, and particularly those living in camp conditions, present more stress symptoms than other children.

Finally, as this particular case study reveals, for world peace and security we have to investigate such children. Unless children experience human rights and are treated as individuals, world peace will be always at a risk.

The findings suggest that creating spaces for dialogue, interaction and learning between groups as part of the participation process is invaluable. For meaningful change to occur, it is necessary to engage with the complex dynamics of social and cultural interaction that shape social norms, values and action. This emphasis reminds us once again of the culturally constructed character of childhood.

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