An Exploration of Key Informant Perspectives on Factors Influencing Settlement of Male Hazara Youth Who Migrated to Melbourne as Unaccompanied Minors

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ABSTRACT

The global displacement crisis has grown significantly, with the number of forcibly displaced people rising from 45.2 million in 2012 to 70.8 million in 2018, positioning Australia as a key destination for asylum seekers, including unaccompanied minors from conflict-affected regions such as Afghanistan (UNHCR, 2016, 2017, 2018). This qualitative case study examines the settlement experiences of Hazara unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors (UAMs) and former UAMs (fUAMs) in Melbourne, Australia. Guided by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory and Social Networks theory, the study explores how structural, social, and cultural dynamics interact to shape the settlement trajectories of male Afghan Hazara youth.

Data from 12 semi-structured interviews with caseworkers and English language teachers reveal a sharp discontinuity in support based on age. While UAMs under 18 benefit from comprehensive, government-funded services supporting language acquisition, education, and social engagement, these services are abruptly withdrawn at age 18. As a result, fUAMs face heightened risks of housing instability, unemployment, low health and financial literacy, and social isolation. These vulnerabilities are compounded by intersecting challenges related to ethnicity, religion, visa status, trauma, and disrupted education.

Despite these barriers, Hazara youth often demonstrate resilience through community networks, cultural coping strategies, and civic engagement. However, the study finds that internal strengths alone are insufficient without ongoing, structured support. It calls for the implementation of a *Post-18 Continuum Model* and highlights international best practices from Sweden, the Netherlands, and the UK as models for trauma-informed, developmentally appropriate care.
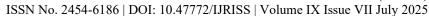
The findings underscore the urgent need for culturally responsive, rights-based settlement policies that address both the immediate and long-term needs of refugee-background youth in Australia.

Key Words: Hazara Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeker Minors (UAMs); Former UAMs; Afghan Hazara; Refugee Youth Settlement; Integration; Immigration Policy; Australia

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

The global increase in forced displacement—from 45.2 million in 2012 to 70.8 million in 2018—has created a mounting humanitarian challenge, driven by war, persecution, and political instability (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2016, 2017, 2018; Vervliet et al., 2015). Within this context, Australia has emerged as a key destination for asylum seekers among Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, despite the fluctuating number of boat arrivals and increasingly restrictive immigration policies (Phillips, 2017; McAdam & Chong, 2014). These policy changes, influenced by public debates and media narratives around asylum-seekers and crime, have shaped the settlement experiences of refugee-background youth, particularly those arriving without parents or guardians—referred to unaccompanied asylum-seeker minors (UAMs) (Baxendale, 2019; Wahlquist, 2018). Definitions of key terms used in this paper

are provided in Appendix A.

Among UAMs, male Hazara youth from Afghanistan represent a significant and historically marginalized group, displaced by longstanding ethnic persecution, sectarian violence, and forced military conscription (Tellis & Eggers, 2017; Saikal, 2012ab). Many undertake perilous journeys to Australia with limited protection and often arrive just before turning 18, at which point they transition from federally supported care into less structured mainstream support systems (Harvey et al., 2017; Katz, Doney & Mitchell, 2013; Katz et al., 2013). Although UAMs under the age of 18 often benefit from community-based detention programs that provide case management, housing, and educational support, these services are significantly reduced once they turn 18, heightening their vulnerability (see Appendix B) (Kenny, Procter & Grech, 2016; Department of Immigration and Border Protection [DIBP], 2015).

LITERATURE REVIEW AND IDENTIFIED GAPS

This study adopts a narrative literature review to comprehensively synthesize existing knowledge on the settlement experiences of Hazara unaccompanied youth. The aim is to provide a broad and contextualized overview of the protective and risk factors shaping their wellbeing and integration outcomes (Ferrari, 2015). The review, which draws on both international and Australian studies published between 2001 and 2020 and focuses on UAMs and fUAMs, identified nine key themes (see Appendix C).

The search strategy incorporated both peer-reviewed and grey literature published in English and focused on UAMs and fUAMs originating from Latin America, the Middle East, and Africa. Using Boolean operators, the search was restricted to studies involving resettlement in Western destination countries, including North America, Europe, and Australia. Academic databases consulted included Scopus, ProQuest, PsycINFO, Informit, Global Health (EBSCO), MEDLINE, PubMed, and SocINDEX. Supplementary materials were sourced via Google Scholar and through manual screening of the reference lists of relevant studies.
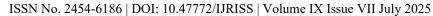
While unaccompanied refugee youth often face substantial settlement challenges, the literature also underscores their capacity for resilience—the ability to recover and adapt following traumatic experiences (Hariharan & Rana, 2017). Cumulative trauma endured throughout the migration journey is associated with adverse psychological outcomes (Von Werthern, Grigorakis, & Vizard, 2019). Nonetheless, such effects can be mitigated through inclusive policy frameworks and access to trauma-informed, culturally responsive services (Aflaki & Freise, 2021).

Further findings highlight that refugee youth wellbeing is influenced by a complex interplay of factors, including age, accessibility of services, and social inclusion (Peterson et al., 2017; Chase, 2013). Despite these insights, notable gaps remain. Many studies demonstrate limited methodological rigour and insufficiently incorporate the views of frontline service providers—an omission that constrains the practical relevance of their findings.

Although the policy importance of refugee youth resettlement is widely recognized, empirical research specifically focused on Afghan Hazara UAMs remains scarce. In particular, few studies explore how service providers perceive the settlement journeys and support needs of this group (Nardone & Correa-Velez, 2015; Tudsri & Hebbani, 2014). This study addresses this critical gap by examining the perspectives of two key stakeholder groups: professional caseworkers and volunteer English language teachers who work directly with Hazara UAMs and fUAMs.

Statement of the Problem

Australia's community detention policies provide structured settlement support to UAMs under the age of 18. However, upon reaching adulthood, these supports are significantly reduced or withdrawn, leaving former UAMs (fUAMs) at heightened risk of social exclusion, housing instability, mental health challenges, and limited access to education and employment pathways. While broader research has explored refugee youth integration and well-being (Lawrence et al., 2016; Sleijpen et al., 2013), there is limited knowledge of how this service discontinuity specifically affects male Hazara youth—a group with unique cultural, ethnic, and migration experiences in Victoria. Furthermore, the perspectives of frontline service providers, who play a critical role in

facilitating early adjustment and long-term integration, remain underexplored in both academic and policy contexts. This knowledge gap constrains efforts to develop responsive, targeted interventions for this highly vulnerable population.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the settlement experiences of male Afghan Hazara UAMs and fUAMs in Victoria, Australia, with a focus on how changes in support structures around the age of 18 affect their integration outcomes. Drawing on the perspectives of frontline service providers—specifically caseworkers and English language volunteers—the study aims to identify systemic gaps in service provision and explore how these affect youth resilience, social connectedness, and access to essential services. The goal is to generate evidence that can inform more inclusive, age-appropriate, and culturally responsive policy and practice.

Significance of the Study

This study addresses a critical gap in refugee research by centering on male Afghan Hazara youth, a group underrepresented in policy and academic discourse despite their significant presence in Australia and high protection needs (Phillips, 2013; Igbal et al., 2012; Phillips, 2012). By incorporating the voices of both formal and informal settlement workers, the research provides unique insights into the delivery, adaptation, and limitations of current support services. These findings are particularly relevant to the Victorian context, where many Hazara refugees have settled in municipalities such as Greater Dandenong and Casey (Adult Multicultural Education Services [AMES], 2014). The study's outcomes are expected to inform targeted policy reform, particularly in the area of transitional support beyond age 18. Additionally, the findings contribute to broader discussions on refugee integration, youth transitions, and the long-term impact of temporary protection policies in Australia and other resettlement countries.

The paper is structured into three main sections. It begins by outlining the theoretical and methodological foundations, then presents key findings on the migration experiences, settlement expectations, and support needs of male Hazara youth. The final section offers a discussion of the implications for policy and practice.
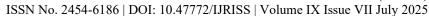
Theoretical and Methodological Foundations

Theoretical Approach

This study is guided by Ecological Systems Theory and Social Networks Theory to investigate the socio-environmental and relational factors shaping the settlement experiences of UAMs and fUAMs in Australia. Drawing on Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979, 1994), the study examines how the microsystem (e.g., interactions with caregivers and teachers), mesosystem (e.g., school-service coordination), and macrosystem (e.g., immigration policy and cultural norms) interact to influence youth development and wellbeing (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2013; Bronfenbrenner, 2005). Within these nested contexts, institutions such as schools and casework services play a crucial role in fostering belonging, stability, and early adjustment (Pedersen et al., 2008).

Complementing this perspective, Social Networks Theory explores how UAMs and fUAMs access resources and support through formal and informal ties (Wrzus et al., 2013). The theory differentiates between strong ties—such as family and ethnic community connections—which provide trust and emotional security, and weak ties—such as school mentors and broader community members—which enhance access to diverse information, opportunities, and integration pathways (Ryan & D'Angelo, 2019). This framework is particularly useful in understanding the barriers (e.g., language, exclusion) and enablers (e.g., trust, shared identity) that shape the capacity of refugee youth to build networks essential to their long-term settlement (Flores-Yeffal, 2014; Mansouri & Skrbis, 2013). Together, these theories enable a nuanced understanding of how structural and relational factors shape the settlement trajectories of refugee-background youth.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA

This study employs a qualitative case study methodology situated within an interpretive/constructivist paradigm

to explore the settlement experiences of UAMs and fUAMs in Melbourne, Australia. Drawing on the methodological principles outlined by Yin (2014) and Creswell (2005, 2013), the case study design is appropriate for addressing the "how" and "why" questions relevant to understanding lived experiences in complex real-life contexts. The focus is on six essential service domains identified in refugee settlement literature—accommodation, English language acquisition, education and training, employment support, income assistance, and casework/management (Correa-Velez, Gifford & Barnett, 2010).

A dual-sector embedded case unit design was adopted, incorporating 12 key informants—six professional caseworkers and six voluntary English language teachers—who work directly with Hazara UAMs and fUAMs (see Appendix D). This design allowed for a multi-voiced analysis across both welfare and educational sectors, supporting cross-case comparison (Creswell, 2013). Snowball sampling was employed to recruit participants due to the hard-to-reach nature of the population (Noy, 2008).

Data collection consisted of semi-structured interviews conducted between September and November 2016. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and subjected to qualitative thematic analysis (Silverman, 2015). The coding process followed an inductive approach, supported by memo-writing, iterative refinement, and mapping of themes to theoretical constructs (Guest et al., 2012; Yin, 2009). Analytical procedures ensured that findings were grounded in participants' narratives rather than imposed categories (Crotty, 1998, 2020).

Nine thematic areas (see Appendix E) were distilled from the data and later synthesized into six analytical categories based on ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1994) and social networks theory (Ryan & D'Angelo, 2019; Wrzus et al., 2013). These included migration trajectories, settlement support expectations, structural barriers and enablers, life-skills development, network formation, and psychosocial risk/protective factors.

Although the research provides rich insights into service provision for Hazara UAMs and fUAMs, the findings are based on service provider perspectives rather than direct accounts from unaccompanied asylum-seeker youth themselves. As such, results are context-specific and not readily generalizable to other refugee groups. Nevertheless, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how key service actors perceive and influence settlement outcomes for one of Australia's most vulnerable refugee subgroups.

Key Study Findings

This study explored the settlement experiences of Hazara UAMs and fUAMs in Melbourne, Australia, revealing several critical themes.
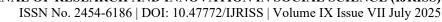
Migration Trajectories of Hazara Youth

While this was not the central focus, informants briefly acknowledged that Hazara youth were often pushed to migrate by ethnic persecution, political instability, and armed conflict. However, little was said about pull factors, despite literature highlighting education and safety as key motivators (Schuster, 2017; Correa-Velez et al., 2015; Correa-Velez, Nardone & Knoetze, 2014; Igbal et al., 2012). Similarly, the influence of age and gender—especially the prioritization of older boys due to their survival odds and lower risk of deportation—was overlooked (Crock & Kenny, 2012). This suggests a service sector emphasis on post-migration over pre-migration dynamics .

Expectations and Needs of Settlement Support Services

Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework (1979, 2005) illuminated key disparities in support for UAMs and fUAMs. Informants consistently emphasized the vital role of English language acquisition for integration. One English teacher explained:

"Without solid English, they can't study, can't work, and definitely can't connect with others socially."

UAMs under 18 received structured, government-funded language programs, but these were withdrawn for fUAMs post-18 (AMES, 2016). Informants noted this gap left many struggling with literacy and communication,

a trend supported by Australian and international research (Peterson et al., 2017; Due et al., 2016).

Disparities were also evident in educational resources. A caseworker highlighted:

"The most available teaching resources are textbooks, but since they have minimal English, they struggle to read and understand. We have few computers and TVs, but I rarely use them."

This mirrors findings from AMES (2016) and Mallows (2013), which describe fUAMs' limited access to learning materials, affecting their self-sufficiency and long-term outcomes.

Formal Settlement Support Structures

A structured government-led settlement model was found to be pivotal. The Operational Framework and Meaningful Engagement Program (MEP) provided UAMs with holistic support—housing, education, health, and recreation—enhancing resilience and social wellbeing (Department of Social Services [DSS], 2018; AMES, 2015a; Katz, Doney & Mitchell, 2013). However, fUAMs were excluded from these frameworks, left to navigate adult life with minimal guidance. As one caseworker described:

"Some service providers did a better job than others. You would have a five-bedroom house with one bathroom, while another had 12 young people in a double-storey house—that is not productive."

This reflects broader implementation inconsistencies also seen in the USA and Europe (Wernesjo, 2019; Torrico, 2010), suggesting a critical need for transitional programs tailored to fUAMs.

Employment, Financial, and Health Literacy

Employment opportunities, along with financial and health literacy training, were identified as essential in fostering the independence of unaccompanied youth. These supports are particularly critical during their transition to adulthood, as they help promote economic self-sufficiency, reduce reliance on support services, and contribute to a stronger sense of belonging and long-term stability. Government-funded programs existed for UAMs, but fUAMs, constrained by visa limitations and reduced welfare access, struggled to secure jobs (Obschonka & Hahn, 2018; O'Higgins, 2012). Similarly, fUAMs faced barriers to health services due to low health literacy. A caseworker recalled:

"When the nurse went in the clinic with the young person (fUAM), the nurse was able to hear all the healthcare information... But it is unlikely that young person will do much with all that information given in the doctor's surgery" – Jacob, caseworker.

This captures the disconnect between service availability and actual comprehension, a gap well-documented in research on refugee health (Riggs et al., 2016; Slewa-Younan et al., 2014).

Forms of Social Networks and Their Impact on Early Adjustment

Social networks are critical to the early adjustment of Hazara UAMs and fUAMs, offering emotional support, cultural belonging, and pathways to socioeconomic participation. Drawing from Wells (2011) and Hagan (1998), social networks are sustained through trust, shared norms, and culturally mediated interactions. The study's findings show that structured social support, particularly for UAMs, significantly facilitated sociocultural integration, while fUAMs remained at risk of isolation due to the absence of formal programs and structural barriers.

Sociocultural Adaptation and Programmed Social Engagement: UAMs who participated in federally funded initiatives like the MEP benefited from facilitated peer connections, sporting activities, and intercultural learning. One caseworker explained:

"This [cultural orientation] happens through case managers who link them with community members or... wherever they live." – Mohser, Caseworker.

These programs fostered cross-cultural competency, trust-building, and community belonging (Katz , Doney & Mitchell, 2013; Hagan, 1994). However, fUAMs—excluded from such programs—faced significant barriers in forming relationships, exacerbated by language challenges and cultural dislocation (Petersen et al., 2012). These gaps mirror international and Australian findings that link weak post-18 support to poor integration outcomes (Cardoso et al., 2019; Mansouri & Skrbis, 2013).

Trust, Self-Disclosure, and Interpersonal Barriers: Trust and self-disclosure were uneven across participants. While some UAMs opened up to caregivers and peers, others—particularly fUAMs—remained reserved due to trauma, visa insecurity, or fear of judgment. Informants observed that those unwilling or unable to disclose their needs often became socially withdrawn:

"Some of them keep everything inside. You try to help, but they don't want to open up. They don't trust easily." – Sarah, Youth Support Worker.

This aligns with research by Ni Raghallaigh (2014), Crock (2006), and Kohli (2005), who found that mistrust among asylum-seeking youth undermines social bonding and limits access to support systems. In both Australian and international contexts, selective self-disclosure acted as a coping strategy but deepened feelings of exclusion (Van Os et al., 2018; Lenette, 2015).

Media, Politics, and Public Perception: Media and political narratives significantly shaped how Hazara youth were perceived and integrated. UAMs were often misrepresented in public discourse as overly dependent on government assistance, leading to stigma and public resentment. One informant explained:

"People think they get everything for free—housing, education—so there's this resentment. It makes it hard for them to make local friends." – Jacob, Caseworker.

This echoes findings from Eberl et al. (2018) and Katz, Doney and Mitchell (2013) who documented how negative portrayals of asylum-seekers in media and politics create social barriers and foster distrust. For fUAMs, such portrayals intensified feelings of alienation, reinforcing stereotypes and restricting social engagement (Cooper et al., 2017; Pedersen & Hartley, 2015).

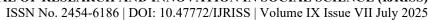**Risk and Protective Factors in Early Settlement and Wellbeing Outcomes**

This study reveals that while Hazara UAMs and fUAMs demonstrate remarkable resilience, their early settlement experiences are shaped by complex risk and protective factors. These factors operate across personal, social, and systemic levels, influencing their wellbeing and adaptation in Australia.

Risk Factors Across Migration Phases: Hazara youth encounter significant cumulative risks throughout their migration trajectories. These include persecution in Afghanistan, exclusion in transit countries like Iran, and precarious conditions post-arrival. One key informant illustrated the depth of this adversity:

"[UAMs] experienced conflicts in Afghanistan that forced them to relocate to Iran, where they were denied education, work, and permanent settlement. Others endured horrific events like family deaths, torture, and persecution." – Andrew, English Teacher

These findings are consistent with Australian and global research highlighting ethnic persecution, prolonged instability, and systemic marginalization as key drivers of displacement and psychological distress (Kronick, Rousseau & Cleveland., 2015; Correa-Velez, Nardone & Knoetze, 2014). Post-migration risks for fUAMs, such as visa insecurity, limited housing, and interrupted social supports, further compound their vulnerability, increasing their risk of mental health issues (Silove & Mares, 2018; Fazel, Reed & Stein, 2015).

Protective Factors Enhancing Resilience: At the macrosystem level, Australian government programs offering housing, education, and healthcare to UAMs have significantly moderated early stressors. These formal supports fostered stability and aided recovery. However, many informants expressed concern about the abrupt withdrawal of services at age 18, leaving fUAMs unsupported. As one service provider noted:

"Once they turn 18, most of the help is gone. They're expected to manage everything themselves—housing, work, even legal stuff." – Sarah, Social Worker

This gap in post-18 support is echoed in research calling for extended settlement services to sustain resilience and reduce long-term hardship (Raithelhuber, 2019; Katz, Doney & Mitchell, 2013).

At the mesosystem level, structured engagement through sports, cultural activities, and community involvement offered emotional support and a sense of belonging. UAMs with access to such networks reported improved wellbeing and connection. Conversely, fUAMs—lacking formal access—faced cultural isolation and discrimination, hindering integration (Rivera et al., 2016; Mansouri & Skrbis, 2013).

At the microsystem level, Hazara youth often showed agency, hope, and motivation despite hardship. Informants noted their strong drive to pursue education and employment. These internal assets, while protective, were often insufficient in the face of structural barriers such as job discrimination and insecure housing. As Sarah, a youth worker, put it:

"They're incredibly driven, but without a stable home or a job, resilience can only take them so far."

An Australian report (Centre for Multicultural Youth [CMY], 2013), along with research by Hutchinson and Dorsett (2012) and North American scholars (Southwick & Charney, 2018; Ungar, 2018), affirm that resilience is not an innate trait but rather a capacity that must be continually supported by external factors—particularly when individuals face persistent adversity.

Importantly, resilience responses are not universal. Ungar and Hadfield (2019) caution that some protective strategies may be ineffective—or even harmful—if not culturally or contextually appropriate. The Resilience Research Centre (Ungar, 2019) found that while most youth recover with basic services, a significant minority require targeted or specialized interventions. Moreover, Raghavan and Sandanapitchai (2019) argue for culturally grounded approaches that recognize the specific coping mechanisms and needs of refugee-background youth like the Hazara.
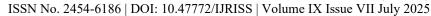
DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussion

This study provides a nuanced and intersectional analysis of the settlement experiences of Hazara unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors (UAMs) and former UAMs (fUAMs) in Australia. Framed through Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, the findings illuminate the dramatic shift in support systems once UAMs turn 18, leaving many fUAMs without the foundational resources needed to sustain housing, mental health, education, and employment. The loss of structured care at this critical developmental stage significantly increases the risk of social exclusion, emotional distress, and economic precarity—an issue echoed across global contexts (Raithelhuber, 2019; Katz, Doney & Mitchell, 2013).

Intersectionality—originally conceptualized by Crenshaw (1989, 2021)—offers a critical lens to understand these outcomes. Hazara UAMs and fUAMs navigate complex intersections of ethnicity, religion, visa status, and age that shape both their vulnerabilities and their resilience. Their racialized and ethnic identity often exposes them to systemic discrimination within education, housing, and welfare services (Fernández-Reino, 2020), while religious identities—particularly as practicing Muslims—invite Islamophobic responses that hinder inclusion and trust (Ozalp & Ćufurović, 2021). Precarious immigration status and delays in legal processing add further psychological strain and restrict access to key services (Menjívar & Perreira, 2019; Kohli, 2007, 2011). Language barriers, often compounded by disrupted schooling, inhibit social participation and economic mobility (Dossa, 2025).

Despite these intersecting barriers, Hazara UAMs and fUAMs frequently demonstrate remarkable resilience, supported by ethno-religious networks, cultural coping strategies, and adaptive identity formation (Androff & Mathis, 2022; Kohli, 2011). Some youth engage in civic participation and advocacy, using their lived

experiences to amplify the needs of asylum-seeking populations (Chase, 2013). However, such resilience is not innate; it requires consistent structural support.

Crucially, this study finds that the abrupt withdrawal of formal settlement services at age 18 undermines many protective factors—such as access to education, housing, and social networks—placing fUAMs at a severe disadvantage compared to their younger counterparts. While UAMs benefit from federally funded programs such as the Meaningful Engagement Program (MEP), fUAMs are left to navigate adulthood with minimal guidance, mirroring challenges documented in international settings (Wernesjö, 2019; Torrico, 2010).

Global models offer valuable lessons. In Sweden, guardianship programs combined with personalized care plans ensure continuity in legal and emotional support (Çelikaksoy & Wadensjö, 2017). The Netherlands' reception centres integrate mental health, language training, and education immediately upon arrival (Zijlstra et al., 2017). The UK's "Every Child Matters" framework, despite inconsistencies, highlights the potential of embedding asylum-seeking children's welfare within broader child protection systems (Sanchez-Clemente et al., 2023; Wade et al., 2012). These examples underscore the importance of trauma-informed, developmentally aligned, and systemically integrated support mechanisms.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Extend Settlement Support Beyond Age 18: Establish a Post-18 Continuum Model that includes transitional housing, case management, education pathways, and mental health care for at least two additional years. This model should reflect the developmental needs of young adults and mitigate service drop-off (Silove & Mares, 2018; CMY, 2013).
2. Develop Tailored Language and Literacy Programs: ESL programs should be restructured to accommodate fUAMs with interrupted education histories. Multimodal learning, trauma-informed pedagogy, and access to digital resources are essential to reduce isolation and enhance participation (AMES, 2016; Due et al., 2016).
3. Expand Culturally Responsive Mental Health Services: Cultural competency must underpin mental health delivery. Services should engage community leaders, peer support workers, and interpreters to build trust and address trauma in culturally relevant ways (Riggs et al., 2016; Slewa-Younan et al., 2014).
4. Support Employment and Financial Literacy Pathways: Vocational training, job placement, and financial education must be adapted to address visa limitations, gaps in formal qualifications, and unfamiliarity with local systems (Obschonka & Hahn, 2018; O'Higgins, 2012).
5. Institutionalize Participatory Youth Engagement: Involve UAMs and fUAMs in policy development, program design, and evaluation through youth advisory boards and participatory research. Co-production ensures solutions reflect lived realities (Raghavan & Sandanapitchai, 2019; Ungar & Hadfield, 2019).
6. Launch Public Education and Anti-Stigma Campaigns: Address harmful narratives that stigmatize Hazara youth by promoting inclusive media representations and public engagement. Community storytelling initiatives can counter myths and foster empathy (Eberl et al., 2018; Pedersen & Hartley, 2015).
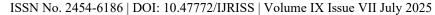
CONCLUSION

This study calls for a shift away from fragmented and age-bound models of care toward a comprehensive, culturally responsive, and developmentally aligned policy framework. To ensure that Hazara fUAMs are not left behind at the threshold of adulthood, Australia must embed intersectionality and trauma-informed practice at the heart of its settlement policy. Only then can it truly uphold the rights, dignity, and potential of unaccompanied refugee youth.

Declarations

Funding Declaration

Clinical Trial Registration

Clinical trial number is not applicable.

Ethics Statement

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the University of Melbourne Human Research Ethics Committee (ID: 1441663.1), and all informed consent procedures were conducted in accordance with institutional guidelines and ethical standards.

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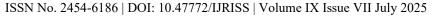
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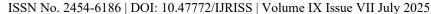61. Nardone, M., & Correa-Velez, I. (2015). Unpredictability, invisibility, and vulnerability:

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Table 1 Definition of Key Words

Key Word	Definition
Afghan Hazara	An ethnic minority group native to Afghanistan who have experienced exploitation and persecution (Saikal, 2012a).
Unaccompanied asylum-seeker minor (UAM)	A person, generally under 18 years old, who travels without a parent or legal guardian to seek asylum protection (Wade et al., 2012).
Former unaccompanied asylum-seeker minor (fUAM)	A person aged 18 years old and over who is seeking asylum protection (Hancilova, Knauder & Sutter, 2011).
Asylum-seeker	A person who flees his country due to conflict/war to seek protection as a Convention refugee in another country (Crock, 2015).
Refugee	A person who is outside his/her country of origin and is unable to return owing to a well-founded fear of persecution (McAdam & Chong, 2014).
Resettlement	Involves identification, selection and transfer of refugees from a country of asylum to another country that has granted them permanent settlement (UNHCR, 2011, 2017).
Settlement	Is a complex and gradual process for refugees to re-establish themselves in a new country (Nunn et al., 2017).

Appendix B

Table 2 Australia's Structure of Onshore UAMs' and fUAMs' Support Services

UAMs Pre-18 Years	fUAMs Post-18 Years
Federally funded intensive support services (community detention)	**Highly reduced support services (mainstream community)**
Full professional casework and carer support	Minimal casework support
Full time school and education resources in mainstream schools	Highly reduced vocational education and training
Full English language training in language centres and government schools	Highly reduced English language training in poorly resourced NGOs, few days/hours of attendance and volunteer tutors
Full accommodation support in suitable and furnished group homes and 24-hour support	Limited housing and accommodation support through housing agencies
Provided with a living allowance and financial skills, but no work rights but offered financial management skills	Minimal income assistance (at 89% of Centrelink benefits). Have work rights since 2014
Formal social networks through the Meaningful Engagement Program (MEP) (in activities such as sports, leisure, and cultural connections)	No formal social network support, mainly informal networks (through friends and social media)
Full transport support (i.e., vans/cars and myki cards)	Reduced transport support including driver's license training
Full access to healthcare (i.e., general practitioners, medicines, counselling)	Have healthcare support through Medicare but have to purchase own medicines

Note: Adapted from DSS (2018); RCOA (2015, 2018); AMES (2015ab); Jesuit Social Services (2015); Buckmaster & Guppy (2014); Katz , Doney and Mitchell (2013).

Appendix C

Table 3 Nine Themes in the Global and Australian Literature on Support Services for UAMs Compared to fUAMs

Themes	Description of Support Services
Perceived risk of criminal and anti-social behaviour	This involves support provided to unaccompanied youths to reduce their risk for committing crime and behaviors likely to cause distress to others, enhancing their settlement outcomes
Housing and accommodation support	This involves support provided to unaccompanied youths to access stable and suitable accommodation and housing in the community which could enhance their initial adjustment process and social functioning
Education and training support	This refers to support given to unaccompanied youths to enroll, attend and receive instructions and training in schools/institutions,

	developing new skills, and boosting their productivity and settlement outcomes
Social welfare support	This entails case worker/carer support given to unaccompanied youths to access and use services and supports, facilitating their development of personal agency and adjustment process
Psychological healthcare support	This entails support provided to unaccompanied youths to enable them to access effective and culturally appropriate mental health services (e.g., trauma counselling services) which may promote their adjustment process and wellbeing outcomes
Legal support and protection	This refers to support provided to unaccompanied youths such as guardianship and access to free legal aid to help in their applications of temporary/permanent visas which could improving their settlement process
Income and employment support	This involves provision of a regular income, budgeting skills, and job-readiness skills to unaccompanied youths which could increase their productivity and access to job market
Social network support	This refers to support provided to unaccompanied youths allowing them to access meaningful engagement activities (e.g., sports) and ethnic/Australian community connections, for better community participation and cultural adaptation
Host-country language support	This refers to support provided to unaccompanied youths to access country-specific languages which could promote their further education and community participation in new country

Appendix D

Table 4 12 Key Informant Profiles

Participant	Type of Organization	Language(s) Spoken	Expertise/ Training	Youth Group	Years worked/ Type of employment	Identity/ Migration Status
Rita	Government	English/ Zindebele	Case Worker Bachelor of Youth Work	UAMs	7 years Paid/full-time	Skilled migrant (Zimbabwe)
Mzee	Government	English/Iteso	Case Worker Master of Public Health & Master of Arts (Asylum-seeker Policy)	UAMs/ fUAMs	5 years Paid/full-time	Skilled migrant (Uganda)
Mohser	Government	English/ Hazaraghi/	Case Worker Bachelor of Social Work	UAMs/ fUAMs	7 years Paid/full-time	Asylum-seeker (Afghanistan)

		Dari				
Mark	Government	English/ Kiswahili	Case Worker Diploma in Community Services	UAMs/ fUAMs	3 years Paid/full-time	Skilled migrant (Kenya)
Jairus	Government	English/ Spanish	Case Worker Bachelor of Sports Science	fUAMs	4 years Paid/full-time	Skilled migrant (Brazil)
Jacob	Non-government	English	Case Worker Education unknown	fUAMs	8 years Paid/full-time	Australian
Susan	Non-government	English	English language teacher Bachelor of Education (TESOL)	fUAMs	3 years Volunteer (18 years in government & NGOs)	Australian
Andrew	Non-government	English	English language teacher Certificate IV in CELTA	fUAMs	1.2 years Volunteer	Skilled migrant (Ireland)
Maria	Non-government	English	English language teacher Certificate IV in CELTA	fUAMs	4 years Volunteer	Australian
Carl	Non-government	English	English language teacher Certificate IV in TESOL	fUAMs	5 years Volunteer	Australian
Glen	Non-government	English	English language teacher Certificate IV in CELTA	fUAMs	3 years Volunteer	Australian
Lynne	Non-government	English	English language teacher Bachelor of Education (TESOL)	fUAMs	2 years Volunteer (20 years in government & NGOs)	Australian

Appendix E:

Figure 1 *Nine Themes that Emerged from the Analysed Data*.