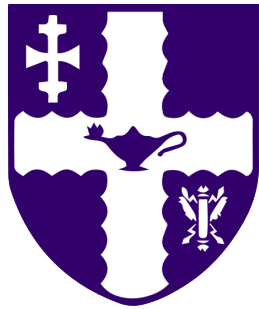


**More Than Just a Game: An Exploration of Forced Migrant Experiences  
of Football in the UK**



**Loughborough  
University**

**Alex Wilkinson**

**B719862**

**Wordcount: 7981**

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Bachelor of  
Science of Loughborough University

© Alex Wilkinson (May 2021)

School of Sport, Exercise and Health Sciences Loughborough University

## **Abstract**

The present study explored forced migrant's (FM) experiences of football within the UK. The researcher aimed to explore the meaning and importance of football for FM, and how differences in immigration status between asylum-seekers and refugees may impact on this. Six participants (one female and five males) involved with football in the UK took part in semi-structured interviews exploring how football impacted their life. A reflexive thematic analysis approach was used to examine the data for patterns and themes. Three main themes were constructed: i) Football as a Safe Space Activity, ii) Importance of Social Connections, iii) Football on the Mind. Successful participation in football rested on the feeling of being in a safe and secure environment as coaches encouraged players to support and communicate with new arrivals. Football was competitive between players, sometimes resulting in conflict which contrary to previous research was found to positively impact on social relationships and connectedness. Meaningful connections were initially made through football, but FM maintained social relationships outside of football. Furthermore, football was found to have a greater importance for individuals during the asylum-seeking process than refugees as it provided an escape and positive distraction from the uncertainty of an asylum claim and the fear of repatriation. Football was used as a coping strategy as it provided a distraction and positively influenced the mood and well-being of participants. It was recommended that future research focuses on exploring the long-term development of FM who were supported by football in the UK as it was evident football positively contributed towards their lives.

*Keywords:* Forced Migrant (FM), Football, Safety and Security, Social Relationships, Connections.

### *Acknowledgments*

I would like to give special thanks to my supervisor Dr. Florence Kinnaick for the excellent advice, encouragement and knowledge provided throughout my project. Florence had great belief within the project and inspired me to complete the project to the best of my ability.

Also, I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to Tamba, Keita and Godefroid from ASHA who helped to get all of the inspirational participants involved in the project.

Most importantly I would like to thank all of the kind-hearted participants who volunteered to take part, without their stories this project would have never been possible.

## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>6</b>
Challenges for Forced Migrants .....	7
Migration at the Heart of Football .....	9
The Importance of Sport for Forced Migrants .....	9
Purpose of Study .....	10
<b>Methodology .....</b>	<b>11</b>
Philosophical Perspective .....	11
Reflexivity .....	11
Rigour .....	12
Recruitment .....	12
Participants .....	13
Data Collection .....	15
Data Analysis .....	15
Ethics .....	16
<b>Findings and Discussion .....</b>	<b>17</b>
Theme 1: Football as a Safe Space Activity.....	18
Subtheme 1: Initial Importance of Safety and Security .....	18
Subtheme 2: Failure to Feel Secure .....	19
Subtheme 3: Physically Safe .....	20
Theme 2: Importance of Social Connections .....	22
Subtheme 1: Social Connection on the field .....	22
Subtheme 2: Social Connection off the field .....	23
Subtheme 3: Social Togetherness .....	25
Theme 3: Football on the Mind .....	26
Subtheme 1: Differences in perception of football importance .....	26
Subtheme 2: Football as a coping strategy .....	28
<b>Concluding Reflections .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Future Research .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>References .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Appendices .....</b>	<b>37</b>
Appendix A: Ethical Approval .....	37
Appendix B: Participant Recruitment Information Sheet .....	38

Appendix C: Informed Consent Form .....	42
Appendix D: Interview questions .....	44

*“Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does.”* Nelson Mandela, Inaugural Laureus World Sports Awards, 2000.

According to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the world is witnessing the highest levels of human displacement on record with 79.5 million people forcibly displaced worldwide at the end of 2019 (UNHCR, 2020). As a result of persecution, war and poverty millions of people from the Middle East (e.g., Syria, Iraq, Iran) and Africa (e.g., Eritrea, Ethiopia, South Sudan) have been forced to make abominable journeys to Europe via the Mediterranean Sea or Balkan Routes. By the end of 2019, 6.5 million refugees and 1.2 million asylum-seekers had reached Europe, with 133,094 refugees and 61,968 pending asylum cases in the UK (UNHCR, 2020). The life-threatening journeys with traffickers, military personnel and gangs, adjoined with the lengthy passage across land and sea, has ramifications for refugees related to safety, health, well-being, and social welfare (Garkisch et al., 2017). Extended periods of extreme stress, constant fear for their safety and traumatic experiences cause mental and emotional health issues (Garkisch et al., 2017) such as boredom, trauma and emotional strife (World Health Organisation [WHO], 2010). Also, more debilitating mental illnesses and disorders are prevalent among forced migrants (FM), such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression and anxiety (Hebebrand et al., 2016; Marquardt et al., 2016).

Considering the range of migration-related difficulties experienced by refugees (Demir & Ozgul, 2019), the host countries have an enormous role to play to support these individuals not only practically, but also psychologically and socially. An important aspect of the well-being of FM is the opportunity to develop new social relationships. Current research supports the evidence regarding the protective role of friendships (Motti-stefanidi, 2019) in enhancing the psychological and social adjustment of Syrian refugee adolescents (Karatas et al., 2021). In addition, research suggests that building and maintaining relationships are important for providing young refugees with a sense of belonging and support (Brough et al., 2003; O’Sullivan & Olliff, 2006; Olliff, 2009). Consequently, the question to be asked is how can FM develop social relationships while managing mental health issues and trying to improve their well-being within a totally new cultural environment?

Sport, specifically football, can play a critical role in addressing these issues. Football possesses the power to alleviate the pressures associated with being a FM by helping to develop a sense of belonging and self-identity in the UK (Woodhouse & Conricode, 2017). This research will review the literature highlighting the phenomenon of football in relation to FM, in particular, its potential to improve well-being, mental and physical health, and develop social relationships. In attempting to analyse the importance of football on migrant lives and understand its influence on the well-being of FM, this research contributes to overlapping areas, such as the sociology of sport and migrant studies.

### ***Challenges for Forced Migrants***

The United Nations Refugee Convention took place in Geneva 1951 and provided a framework for the international regime of refugee protection. Refugees are defined and protected by international law. According to Article 1 of the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (Moussalli, 1992), a refugee is defined as:

*A person who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.*

Refugees and asylum-seekers are migrants forced to flee their home country. However, the terms differ in the fact that refugees have gained formal recognition for their need of protection, whereas asylum-seekers are yet to have their claim accepted. Within the UK, the refugee status entitles the individual to remain for a period of 5 years and have opportunities such as the right to work and claim benefits similar to that of a UK resident. In contrast, asylum-seekers do not have these entitlements, so must rely on state support. This limits their opportunities of living a normal life, with considerable free time, little financial support for activities, lack of choice and limited control over their lives (Klingst, 2015; Hartley et al., 2017; Ingvarsson et al., 2016). Subsequently, refugees and asylum-seekers lives differ in several ways that may affect health status such as the fear of repatriation and inaccessibility to employment which will negatively impact the health and well-being of asylum-seekers (Toar et al., 2009; Vincent et al., 2013). Comparative research between refugees and asylum-seekers found the latter have higher levels of self-reported PTSD, depression and anxiety symptoms compared with refugees and significantly higher levels of post migration stressors (Toar et al., 2009).

As such, asylum-seekers may perceive the importance of being actively engaged and positively distracted by sport differently from those who have already been granted with refugee status.

Immigration has been a highly negative, controversial and salient topic of conversation within the British media and politics for the past decade (Duffy and Frere-Smith, 2014). As a result, FM can be subjected to discrimination and ostracism within their newfound community (Quinn, 2014). FM face adversity before, during and after arrival in the UK resulting in complex needs (Newbigging et al., 2010) and challenges that can inhibit social integration (Mayne et al., 2016; Rivera et al., 2016) and have been linked to a greater risk of developing ill-health and mental health problems (Crawford et al., 2016; Huot et al., 2016; Storm & Enberg, 2013; Turner et al., 2003; Whitley et al., 2016). Isolated and apprehensive about their families who they left behind, traumatised and suffering from what they previously experienced, systematic reviews show this population to have a wide variation in the prevalence of mental health disorders from 20% to 80% (Keyes, 2000; Bogic et al., 2015). When compared with the general population, FM are five times more likely to have mental health needs and more than 61% will experience serious mental distress (Tribe, 2002; Eaton et al., 2011). Unfortunately, despite these health issues, data shows this vulnerable group are less likely to receive support as they face difficulties accessing GP treatment (Aspinall & Watters, 2010). Such barriers include unproductive appointments due to cognitive challenges, literacy/language problems, shame, fear and lack of trust (Burnett & Ndovi, 2018). Moreover, many health professionals feel ill-equipped to deal with the complex needs of FM (McColl et al., 2008) thus there is a clear issue of unmet health needs (Toar et al., 2009). Therefore, the role of the voluntary and statutory sectors to support FM is fundamental, especially when facilitating sporting activities which hold great promise for delivering health outcomes for FM (Anderson et al., 2019).

On reviewing the research within migrant studies, it has come under scrutiny for its focus on statistical data not being robust enough to explain the complexity of concepts or issues addressed in relation to the lives of FM (Valentine et al., 2009). Quantitative research lacks understanding of the context of the data, as previous reviews conclude that evaluations are positioned upon ridged measures which do not capture the potential impact on interpersonal relationships and integration (Levermore, 2011). This research aims to contribute a more in-depth qualitative exploration of FM experiences.



The interviews will help facilitate participants to reflect and express themselves providing them with an opportunity to be heard, in a field of research that so often reduces them down to a statistic.

### ***Migration at the Heart of Football***

Football today encompasses an unprecedented global status as the world's most popular sport as well as a mass cultural phenomenon. Migration has been at the heart of football since its inception and early developments of club football around Europe indicate that it was largely founded on the activity of migrants (Taylor, 2006). The spread of football was built upon international networks, as countries developed a range of innovations demanding mass migration of highly skilled and qualified workers from across Europe. In essence, the defining feature of the first football club in Europe was their cosmopolitanism (Taylor, 2006). When Bari Football Club was founded in 1908, Swiss, German, Austrian, French, Spanish, British and Italian tradesmen played alongside one another in the same team (Taylor, 2006). Globalisation allowed football to spread across the world, and football became a *universal language* spoken worldwide and understood by billions. Football is quintessentially about inclusion and representation of all cultures, ethnicities and backgrounds as the most accessible sport worldwide. Ohlander (2020) argues football language may serve as a communicative link across barriers related to nationality, culture and language while possessing the potential to promote integration and a sense of identity in superdiverse societies.

### ***The Importance of Sport for Forced Migrants***

Football and other sports have been shown to be of real interest for FM as a safe setting for recreation and to experience social interaction, inclusion, connectedness and belonging in countries of resettlement (Abur, 2016; Amara et al., 2005; Darcy et al., 2014; Hoyer et al., 2015; Olliff, 2008; Spaaij, 2015). These experiences of football positively affect both physical and mental health outcomes as more social interaction led to more participation (Berg et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2020) in turn affecting health both directly and indirectly (Anderson et al., 2019). Thornton and Spalding (2018) discovered that gaining a sense of well-being through engagement with activity was a common theme for FM.

Further to this, Knappe et al. (2019) found higher levels of participation in physical activity improved physical health and reduced anxiety symptoms in males in a Greek refugee camp.

Moreover, a systematic review and meta-analysis revealed that physical activity also produced beneficial effects in terms of well-being outcomes and psychological symptoms for several mental health conditions (Purgato et al, 2021). However, the migrant populations analysed were pooled together from a range of refugee, asylum-seeker and voluntary migrant populations who clearly have a diverse range of motivations to migrate.

Additionally, sport engagement provides a distraction from the participants' more pressing concerns and problems as well as a distraction from endless tedious days (Stone, 2018; Thornton & Spalding, 2018). Further research focused on sport stimulating different attentional processes providing distraction from negative thoughts (Ley & Barrio, 2019). Football has the potential to alleviate, even if only momentary, issues of language, exclusion and stress (McDonald et al., 2019). Sport provides a rare opportunity for FM to engage physically, mentally and socially thus improving their health and well-being (Trimboli & Taylor, 2016).

In summary, while several studies have carried out research in host countries of migrant populations, little research has been implemented in the UK among FM specifically in football. Moreover, the existing studies have focused on sport facilitating integration, improving well-being and mental health issues, whereas research on the meaning and importance of football to FM is absent. Migrant and sport research provides a good base of literature as meta-analyses and systematic reviews collate findings from the past 20 years. However, some research is limited as studies use a combination of voluntary migrants in samples, rather than FM, which reduces the usefulness of research, as the pre- and post-migration experiences differ enormously.

### ***Purpose of Study***

This study set out to address a gap in literature by aiming to (i) investigate the experiences of FM in football in the UK, (ii) explore the meaning and importance of football for FM in the UK, (iii) and how differences in immigration status between asylum-seeker and refugees may impact on the meaning and importance of football for FM in the UK.

By exploring these concepts within football, it will allow the researcher to understand what elements are most salient, important and beneficial to FM.

This research can help inform sports coaches, clubs and organisations as to what areas in their football programmes are most important to focus and channel resources, in order to meet the challenging demands of FM.

## ***Methodology***

### ***Philosophical Perspective***

This research is guided by the principles of interpretivism, ontological relativism and epistemological social constructionism. Interpretivism seeks to comprehend phenomena by examining the meanings that people ascribe to them, thus a meaning-oriented methodology of interviewing is used, which relies on a subjective relationship between the researcher and subjects. Social constructionism values the role of the participating person but recognises the influence of the collective researcher in creating the individual. As such the process of an interview allows both the emergence of the individual's experience and the creation of a combined understanding of the phenomenon (Roots et al., 2007). The philosophical perspective assumed by the researcher aligns with developing an understanding of the wider interpersonal factors relevant to the experience of football in the UK to help better meet the needs of FM.

### ***Reflexivity (Positionality)***

The researcher must be cognisant of the positionality as well as the combination of gender, race, age and other characteristics which will have an influence on the relationship with participants and how this might impact the outcomes of the study. The researcher acknowledges as an outsider, their influence on and in the research process and how participants are apprehensive about interviews due to their asylum claim (Holmes, 2020). The researcher, as a white male, undergraduate student in a position of privilege accessing higher education, reports on the experiences of a marginalised group and provides a 'voice' to those who are rarely heard within society. After working as a coach with ASHA, the researcher witnessed first-hand the extensive benefits experienced by FM which subsequently inspired the inception of the research. However, participants were unaware of the researcher's role as a coach as all players were new.

In regard to reflexivity, the researcher continuously critiqued themselves and reflected on each step of the research process, examining how their role may impact on the research objectives. This is especially important within a social constructivist epistemology where the researcher is a co-creator and active participant in the research.

### ***Rigour***

In the study, rigour was addressed by using rules of scientific research and methods of reflexivity. According to Robson (2002) research must be conducted systematically and sceptically. However, as shown by Roots (2007) a deeper level of scrutiny of these rules allows for a wider scope to scientific research. In relation to social constructionist epistemology, firstly, systematic investigation requires excogitation to why the researcher is investigating this particular domain and how they may proceed (Robson, 2002). This involved scrutiny of the role of the researcher, their values, how this may impact the research process, what motivates that interest as well as the best method to meet the objectives of the study (Roots, 2007). The researcher scrutinised their role in the interview and challenged how their experience of being both a coach and researcher may interact with the participant's response. The constructionist perspective enabled scrutiny of the researcher's view and the extent to which those views may affect the interpretation of data, which increases the rigour of the study. Secondly, the study was conducted sceptically as throughout the research ideas and concerns were shared with the supervisor, postgraduate students, other lecturers and researchers allowing for scrutiny. Although a challenging process to expose one's research to the critique of peers and more established academics, it provides beneficial feedback and suggestions showing different perspectives.

### ***Recruitment***

A purposive sampling strategy was utilised to recruit participants from representing programmes that provided FM the opportunity to partake in football.

The research was promoted via direct email outreach. Potential participants were identified through discussions between the researcher and with representatives of organisations from governing bodies, community interest companies, not-for-profit organisations, local councils, charities, grassroots and elite clubs. Predominately participants were recruited from ASHA, which the researcher had previously established links with, a charity based in North Staffordshire which supports and actively promotes social inclusion for FM.

The representatives from the organisations facilitated the initial connections with individuals. The researcher then provided information and details about the study; participants were given the opportunity to ask any questions regarding the study. As well an incentive was offered to win a football shirt to show appreciation for their participation. Participants were contacted to see if they required the information sheets to be translated to aid their understanding, one participant requested a French translation.

### ***Participants***

Six participants (one female and five male) took part in semi-structured interviews. The participants, each able to speak some English, fled their country of origin travelling across Europe to the UK. Their age, gender, nationality, years in UK, legal status and sporting history are detailed (*See Table 1*). All adult participants digitally signed written consent forms prior to their participation in the interview. Ethics approval for the project was obtained from Loughborough University Ethics committee (Protocol number 2021-2417-2962).

**Table 1:** *Descriptive Table of Sample*

Participant	Age	Gender	Nationality	Years in UK	Legal Status	Football History
(1)	29	Male	Cameroon	4	Asylum-seeker	Played football growing up as a young child and played in a team from 12 years old.
(2)	23	Male	Eritrea	2	Refugee	Played football in Ethiopia with a ball made from socks in the street as young child.
(3)	18	Female	Ethiopia	2	Refugee	Played with Dad at home and joined an academy at 10 years old.
(4)	21	Male	Ethiopia	2	Asylum-seeker	Started to play around 12 years old with brothers and neighbours in street.
(5)	27	Male	South Sudan	1	Asylum-seeker	Started playing in 2007 in South Sudan in the street.
(6)	30	Male	Sudan	3	Asylum-seeker	Has always played football as long as he can remember.

## ***Data Collection***

Data was collected between March and April 2021 through semi-structured interviews involving open-ended questions to allow unanticipated and anticipated themes to emerge. Semi-structured interviews were utilised as they provided an opportunity for conversation to take place and helped to facilitate the opportunity for the participant to tell their experiences and emotions providing rich insightful data (Sankar & Jones, 2007; Smith & Sparkes, 2016). Interviews were conducted via the telephone at a time convenient to the interviewee and lasted an average of 35 minutes with a range of 16 to 50 minutes, with a total of 220 minutes. At the start of the interview, the researcher read out the information sheet and explained any information that participants could not fully comprehend until they were satisfied. English language used in the questions was clear and simple after being carefully considered to ensure non-native speakers could fully understand them. Interviews were structured to focus on the player's experience and involvement in football within the UK, what football meant to them and how football impacted their life and well-being. Interview prompts focused on elucidating the objectives of football participation and identifying the factors (facilitators and barriers) and key features involved which affected the experience of participants. Example interview questions are: "What does football mean to you?" and "How does football make an impact on your life?". Refer to appendix (D) for interview guide.

## ***Data Analysis***

Interviews were recorded using an Olympus digital voice recorder and transcribed verbatim. Participants were anonymised and transcripts were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006), examining the data for patterns and themes. Reflexive thematic analysis enables the researcher to be a storyteller, actively engaging in interpreting the data through their own lens of cultural membership and social positioning (Terry et al., 2017). The researcher used Braun and Clarke's (2012) six phases of thematic analysis to ensure methodological rigour which includes: Familiarising oneself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and producing the report. Analysis was inductive with open and organic coding, with no use of coding framework (Terry et al., 2017; Braun & Clarke, 2020). A popular criterion for determining sample size within thematic analysis is saturation of data where no new information is generated with additional data collection (Terry et al., 2017).

However, within the categorization of FM there is a multitude of races, ethnicities, cultures and beliefs so with such a diverse sample population it would be unwarranted to claim saturation of data. Therefore, to determine sample size the researcher was informed by contextual and pragmatic considerations. Contextual considerations such as the amount of richness of data collected from each participant and breadth of research question helped inform the decision (Braun and Clarke, 2012). Pragmatic considerations such as previous published research using seven participants (Almohamed & Vyas, 2016) further aided the decision that six participants would be sufficient. Although saturation of data was not achieved, typically, 6-7 interviews (6 interviews to reach 80% saturation) will capture the majority of themes in a sample (Ando et al., 2014; Guest et al., 2020; Hennink et al., 2017).

### ***Ethics***

When interviewing FM, it is important to take into account ethical considerations in order to protect participants (Arifin, 2018). The researcher carefully considered questions to ensure they were sensitive and non-intrusive, as the sample were regarded as a vulnerable group. FM will have been subject to extensive and thorough interviews from the Home Office as part of their legal claim to stay. They will have discussed highly distressing and sensitive details, and as a result the sample were very apprehensive of interviews. The researcher gave reassurance before and after that the interview would not affect their asylum claim and explained the process of disclosure and confidentiality to gain participants trust and make them feel relaxed (Abbas et al., 2021). Furthermore, participants were reminded that the interview could be stopped any time and had the right to withdraw (Arifin, 2018; Hugman et al, 2011). The researcher, a previous coach at the ASHA football session, was aware of the potential for harm in this context and therefore was vigilant to ensure the participants felt safe enough to discuss their experiences openly. It was ensured all participants were protected from identification both during and after the research as no other person knew who they were, and the data was presented using unidentifiable participant numbers. All participants were provided with specific refugee helpline number as a precaution, they were debriefed and offered the opportunity to ask any question.



## ***Findings and Discussion***

This study aimed to explore both the experiences of FM within football in the UK, as well as the importance and meaning of football to them. The researcher aimed to investigate how the differences in immigration status, may impact on the meaning and importance of football within the UK.

**Table 2:** *Themes Constructed from Thematic Analysis*

Themes	Subthemes
Football as a Safe Space Activity	Initial Importance of Safety and Security Failure to feel safe Physically Safe
Importance of Social Connections	Social Connection on the field Social Connection off the field Social Togetherness
Football on the Mind	Differences in perception of football importance Football as a coping strategy

## ***Theme 1: Football as a Safe Space Activity***

### ***Subtheme 1: Initial Importance of Safety and Security***

In this theme, key findings are highlighted which relate to the importance of safety and security of FM within UK based football sessions. Successful participation in football rests on the feeling of being in a safe and secure environment, enabling FM to enjoy themselves. The very definition of a refugee is based on a ‘well-founded fear of being persecuted’, forcing them to leave their own country. Therefore, feeling safe in the host country is paramount, and was found to be one of the most important aspects of football, as the following quotes demonstrates:

Participant 4: *I feel safe and healthy... I can't explain, but it's good, you feel safe, you feel peace.*

For many FM, the feeling of safety is not familiar, instead more negative emotions of shame, fear and lack of trust are experienced (Burnett & Ndovi, 2018). Football provides safety and protection to a vulnerable group that are at risk of isolation with a physical activity that provides stability in their life (Abur, 2016). Pre-migration experiences are commonly traumatic leaving individuals feeling the world is an unsafe place, as well as post-migration acculturation stress further challenging their sense of security. Within this research, the participants associated football with feelings of safety and peace, thus helping to prevent health issues as the constant fear for safety can result in mental and emotional health issues (Garkisch, 2017). A safe space is key for psychosocial support as football allows participants to explore one's own and others' experiences, perceptions and behaviours, which may have been absent for a long period of time (Ley & Barrio, 2019). As such, the settings of football enable participants to safely experiment with alternative experiences and effects of behaviour, which help to make sense of a new reality and reduce acculturation challenges. Football is one of the few places in their new cultural environment where they feel able to express themselves more openly and begin to establish connections with others while developing physically, emotionally and mentally.

Additionally, the role of the coach is crucial to ensure that all individuals feel welcomed and safeguarded within the football session, particularly in the initial stages of participating. As the following quote shows:

Participant 1: *I think the coach, the first thing they want you to do is make you feel secure and safe, several people are around you.*

The coaches, many of whom are cultural insiders as staff members within ASHA, are sensitive and aware of the specific needs of the participants, so are able to create a safe environment by encouraging others to communicate and support new arrivals. The inclusion of cultural insiders and teammates help FM to feel more comfortable and relaxed in the environs of the pitch, as they share the same experience and understand the unique challenges of FM (Hartley et al., 2017). The active socio-personal skills and cultural sensitivity of coaches enables them to create a safe environment for all participants to express their identities, cultures and nationalities. This prevents individuals from feeling discriminated against, excluded or unwelcome. Importantly this helps individuals to develop a sense of security and openness within the group so that they feel confident enough to establish social relationships.

### ***Subtheme 2: Failure to Feel Secure***

Unfortunately, some individuals encounter difficulties and struggle to develop a sense of security at football which results in more introverted behaviours and a withdrawn experience from the group in the new environment. As illustrated in the following excerpt:

Participant 1: *In the beginning is hard that's why I think communication will be something really good to build that connection. It took times for people to be together and really open themselves to other people, even when they come to play football some people just don't want to talk to others, they come here to play and keep themselves closed so you cannot blame them for not being open they just don't feel secure, that doesn't feel trust with other people or maybe they don't just feel confident enough to be open.*

In the beginning it is very difficult for participants to feel secure at football as many FM have previously experienced extreme and traumatic events, inhibiting them from opening up and trusting others. They will perceive the security of the space, team and sport differently from one another, as past experiences impact on their feelings of trust, sense of comfort and connection with their home culture while at football in the UK (Whitley et al., 2016). Individuals need to spend time at football, acclimatising and making sense of an unfamiliar environment as initially they present as being guarded and closed off. Additionally, some FM are more sceptical and untrusting of new individuals due to extreme past experiences. Like expressed in the following quote:

*Participant 1: You can see in the eyes of most, a lot of people when they just come there, they don't feel safe, they don't feel secure, they don't really trust people around them.*

The eyes of a FM reflect the pain, anguish and terror experienced, as the scared expression mirrors the turmoil and hardship they have been through. The participant recognises and feels their plight as they have been through similar experiences. Sadly, many FM traumatic past experiences have changed their perceptions of the world; including how they perceive people, groups and new environments (Newbigging et al., 2010; Toar et al., 2009). As such they may experience heightened states of arousal and anxiety at football which can negatively impact how they perceive the situation and instil feelings of insecurity and disconnection from the group. Conversely, they find comfort in playing football as it provides an escape from the intimidating social domain and enables them to communicate in a language with no words, only actions (Woodhouse & Conricode, 2017; Ohlander, 2020). Overall, this highlights the importance of feeling secure in football, as without this the individual will lack confidence, openness and trust. This prevents them from communicating and establishing connections with others, instead they remain closed as a form of self-protection.

### ***Subtheme 3: Physically Safe***

Participants explained how they were able to have a better-quality experience of football in the UK because they felt safe and protected within the game through the use of the correct equipment, rules and referees. As highlighted by some interviewees:

Participant 5: *If you play football in UK it very nice because you have good feel, you play whatever you want you never get injured, very good. There's a rule there [UK], and there's referee you want, but there there's [Sudan] not sometimes somebody can injure you easily...because there [Sudan] there's no rule...if you get there even fell it can be injury because no grass... there is ground, not great at all it can injure you very easily.*

The experience of football within the UK is highly positive, as rules provide structure and meaning to the game which instil sportspersonship and respect for one another. Referees enforce rules to prevent injuries and conflicts enabling everyone to feel more secure making the experience more enjoyable. ASHA football sessions are played on suitable surfaces such as specialised 4G pitches or grass, further protecting players from injury, in comparison to the concrete streets or hard ground which FM previously played on. For example:

Participant 2: *The infrastructure you know the floor, the shoes, everything here [UK] is good. My people [Eritrean] make ball using sock you know all the socks, inside socks, you put another one you know make it a circle ball.*

In addition, FM have access to suitable sports equipment in the UK, including boots, clothes and footballs, which help to further increase physical safety when participating, for example:

Participant 4: *When I was in my country I can't get the boot easily as well the clothes, I can't get them, I can't afford them. But here [UK] you can afford everything easily, that's why it's different... If you have everything to play you can get better experience by playing every day, you can play every day with shoes and you can get experience.*

Sports equipment in the UK is affordable enabling FM to play football wearing boots, which enhances their performance, protection and enjoyment. Also, football boots provide stability and support allowing the individual to safely play more frequently, at a higher intensity for longer durations. Subsequently, they will experience more social interactions, connectedness and social capital as well as positive benefits on both physical and mental health (Darcy et al., 2014; Hoye et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2020).

## ***Theme 2: Importance of social connection***

### ***Subtheme 1: Social Connection On the Field***

Connection with others was an important factor expressed by many participants in the development and maintenance of social relationships within football. Firstly, their shared interest of football enabled participants to create deeper connections on the field by communicating with teammates about football. As the following quotes demonstrate:

Participant 4: *So we don't know each other outside, but we just know on the football, then we can help each other on the pitch.*

Players arrive at football not knowing each other therefore, football initially serves as the safe space to meet others. Tournament style activities are run with small teams of 4-6 players on the pitch.

Participant 2: *You can communicate each other, you can talk about the team or the problem when you lose one game, you come outside and then you go new team. Do conversation about why lose or maybe mistake.*

Conversations during the game focus on discussing tactics and positioning with teammates, conveying ideas about why they may have lost and ways to improve. These problem-solving conversations build connections and allow players to understand their teammates more. On the contrary, some participants described negative outcomes of football as players engaged in conflict, for example:

Participant 2: *You feel competition, very hard game you know try to not losing maybe sometimes with one player you get angry about aggressive play its football you know it's nice... We do fighting inside the match when that match finish I just say sorry...After when that match finish you can talk to them it's just normal, just a game.*

Players are very passionate which can create conflicts as friendly matches become too competitive. These conflicts could be potentially harmful and damaging in the maintenance of relationships, however, once the match is finished these players are magnanimous and apologise. This shows how individuals negotiate through the complexities of social relations at football.

By understanding others' perspectives and apologising for in game conflicts it creates harmony and increases social connectedness between individuals. This is beneficial for players as Dukic et al. (2017) found that increased social connectedness through team sports led to asylum-seekers living a healthier lifestyle. Also, this research shows that “*aggressive play*” and conflict were perceived as “*nice*” which did not pose a problem amongst players. Good conflict management and social skills enabled players to forgive in match conflicts and return to normal conversation after football. This research partially supports Olliff (2008) who claimed that sport can be a site for conflict. However, in this research rather than a barrier to friendship and mutual acceptance, conflict was constructive within social relationships and increased connectedness. Football acts as a catalyst in forming strong social connections where language may be barrier, but individuals are able to express themselves through actions and develop social relationships. In addition, these findings support the literature about how sport participation facilitates social interactions and connectedness (Abur, 2016; Darcy et al., 2014; Hoyer et al., 2015).

### ***Subtheme 2: Social Connection Off the Field***

Playing football together is clearly important for participants as in the social sense it ignited connections between players during the game and developed stronger social relationships off the field. As illustrated in the following excerpt:

*Participant 5: We are good friend even sometimes we meet other side than football. We go together and talk, communication, share some idea, everything's good, good relationship, good friend.*

After football, new-found teammates became friends sharing ideas, stories and offering help. Similarities in terms of past experiences, countries of origin, asylum claims, and current situations help FM to appreciate and understand one another on a deeper level, which helps to form a stronger connection. Similarly, this supports research by Woodhouse and Conrict (2017) who found that asylum-seekers develop connections based on commonly shared values and desires as well as sharing cultural knowledge. Participants identified communication to be central in developing an increased understanding and connection with one another.

This is particularly evident in the following excerpt when a participant discussed their journey to safety:

*Participation 4: You can meet new people, maybe even my country, people is they get travel story and they talk for the first time I was seen on the football. After integrating and where you come from, which city? Talking each other, No problem. I will living one year and you are new, I will show you something.*

A “travel story” to the UK is very personal, unique and is often filled with traumatic memories, so the act of sharing this sensitive information is a monumental milestone in their social relationship. Divulging these details is representative of the vast amount of trust and connectedness between individuals. Furthermore, individuals share knowledge in relation to culture, asylum claims, desires and ideas, consider the following for example:

*Participant 2: Very good connection with people, after football finish we talk about what is going on in life, you know what asylum is going on. Sometimes you change your phone number, you know they call me come to play sometimes you know it's good connection for all.*

Social relationships expand outside of football which is pivotal to the majority of FM as they have left their families behind. New social relationships are very important for the well-being of FM by having the opportunity to talk to someone about life helps to alleviate stress and provides support to individuals (Brough et al., 2003; Olliff, 2008). Also, the role of friendship helps protect an individual (Motti-stefanidi, 2019) and enhances the psychological and social adjustment within the host country (Karatas et al., 2021). The findings within this research support the literature regarding sport participation leading to feelings of belonging and friendship (Amara et al., 2005) as well as sport programmes helping to connect players and build strong friendships (Olliff, 2008; Whitley et al., 2016). This clearly highlights the importance of football as it establishes an initial avenue to meet others and ultimately it enables FM to create meaningful social relationships which can provide a multitude of benefits to FM within the UK.



### ***Subtheme 3: Social Togetherness***

Football has united FM due to a common interest and love for the sport. Now as a collection, these individuals have created a meaningful relationship and sense of togetherness through football, as the following quote shows:

*Participant 1: Basically, football is a collection like be together because it's the first of all is a team game... So I think football is something you have to be with people and being with people means building something together and trying to play to have fun and knowing each other a bit more.*

Findings support current research whereby football possesses the power to alleviate pressures in host countries by helping to develop a sense of togetherness and belonging in the UK (Woodhouse & Conricode, 2017). Once social relationships are established, participants reinforce and maintain connections by socialising together as a group. This research, similar to Stone's (2018), shows that football provides countless opportunities for connections to be made at the cultural, communal, and personal level which develops a sense of togetherness. However, for any sense of togetherness and belonging to be experienced it relies upon the ability to unite these momentary connections together at football (Stone, 2018). If each FM represented a piece of a disorganized and mismatched puzzle, the shared commonality of football has collected all the pieces together. Through the process of playing football together the players connect these pieces of the puzzle to create a picture of solidarity, belonging and togetherness. Furthermore, football has the power to unite and bring together a multitude of races, ethnicities and nationalities which is especially important for FM who experience discrimination, racism and stigma (Quinn, 2014). Consider the following quote:

*Participant 1: See other people from other countries or their backgrounds and whatever your colour skin or where you come from, it doesn't matter just make sure you can come and open yourself to other people.*

Football is a gathering of diversity; open and inclusive for all, enabling the group to feel a sense of solidarity. No individual is excluded, but it is important that players open themselves to others, forgetting past prejudices of other cultures by respecting and considering the feelings of individuals.

ASHA football club is built up from a mosaic of ethnicities allowing all players to feel ethnically or culturally similar, for example:

*Participant 2: Football when you see now its altogether is no religion, no colour, no where you come...So many people here especially when you play with refugee when people come from Sudan, Iran, Asia, you know, British, you know, so many people, but people is making team together and playing, good connection.*

Discrimination of religion, race, skin colour or nationality, is not evident within the ethno-centric club as these are the unique factors which bring together FM at football. All cultures participate alongside one another in football providing a sense of comfort, safety and togetherness within the UK which supports previous research (Ley et al., 2018; Spaaij, 2015; Stone, 2018; Whitley et al., 2016).

### ***Theme 3: Football on the Mind***

#### ***Subtheme 1: Differences in the Perception of Football***

Asylum-seekers and refugees share many of the same experiences as both are migrants which were forced to flee their home country. However, refugees have been granted official leave from the Home Office entitling them to 5 years within the UK. On the other hand, asylum-seekers have not gained formal recognition for their need of protection, meaning they encounter very different pressures and stressors compared to refugees. As the following quotes demonstrate:

*Participant 2 [Refugee]: Now thank god me I get this five-year document. I don't have to stress about my refugee you know I just get this one and I play more than free...You know I enjoy more than, I enjoyed more than before, you know...Because I can work, you know I can work legally right at the moment, when I want to go to school, I can write to go school, you know they give me everything ...You know this is this is big difference between asylum-seeker and refugees.*

This highlights how the difference in immigration status can alleviate the perturbations and uncertainties associated with an asylum claim. Without the burden of stress, football is more enjoyable as the refugee status brings freedom on and off the pitch. They are free and safe to be who they are at football, without the fear of being persecuted for their beliefs or values.

Whereas asylum-seekers are overloaded with uncertainty and stress, inevitably suppressing their freedom and enjoyment of football. The refugee is able to legally work and go to school, creating a 'meaningful' everyday life and providing a sense of belonging (Herslund, 2021). The participant has experienced both legal statuses and consequently understands the impact on the mental health and well-being of being an asylum-seekers, consider the following for example:

Participant 2 [Refugee]: *I think it's different you know, when you are asylum-seekers you don't know what is going on your life... Maybe when I don't get this document [legal refugee status]... maybe they kick you out the house, so you got it difficult, your mind has lots of things you know.*

The implications of an unsuccessful asylum claim can mean individuals lose their rights to state support such as housing, financial support and healthcare. As found in previous research, asylum-seekers live in a state of uncertainty and constant fear of repatriation which was found to negatively impact well-being (Hartley et al., 2016; Vincent et al., 2013). Interestingly, this research discovered that asylum-seekers engage in maladaptive coping strategies such as substance use (smoking and drinking) in an attempt to moderate the effects of negative emotions, for example:

Participant 1 [Asylum-seeker]: *A lot I have been talking with, they said I didn't smoke before, but now I smoke and it's because of stress. Yeah, I didn't drink before now I drink because of stress.*

As asylum-seekers have unoccupied free time, they are more likely to experience negative thoughts, psychological distress and post-migration stress due to the uncertainty and uncontrollability of their asylum application (Hajak et al., 2021; Solberg et al., 2021; Toar et al., 2009). Asylum-seekers try to escape the repetitive daily reality by smoking and drinking which is a maladaptive coping mechanism to deal with acculturation stress. In doing so their limited money is misspent whereas it could finance healthier lifestyle choices. Furthermore, it is unlikely they will receive appropriate support for stress or mental disorders due to barriers accessing GP treatment (Aspinall & Watters, 2010; Burnett & Ndovi, 2018). The failure to support FM with their unique challenges leads them to experience post-migratory stress. Moreover, the lack of accessibility to resources prevents them from coping with the issues pragmatically.

It is noted that asylum-seekers have significantly higher levels of post-migration stressors compared with refugees (Toar et al., 2009). Post-migration stressors and psychological distress are directly related to mental disorders and negatively affect well-being (Bogic et al., 2015; Hajak et al., 2021). Equally, maladaptive coping strategies like smoking and drinking, further predict negative health outcomes such as depression, anxiety and PTSD (Dempster et al., 2015; Woltin et al., 2018).

### ***Subtheme 2: Football as a Coping Strategy***

Football, very importantly, provides an outlet to escape endless monotonous days and a distraction from the distress experienced by FM (Stone, 2018). Football is used as a coping strategy which helps to fill a void in the life of FM with an activity which positively affects both their mental and physical health. As illustrated in the following quotes:

Participant 1 [Asylum seeker]: *The beauty of the game it is like you are doing meditation at the time you start playing you forget everything else... You just focus your attention on what you are doing at the moment. That's the beauty of that and is really helpful to calm your mind and feel good in your body after that.*

Being described as “*meditation*”, football clears the mind and permits individuals to find momentary relief and peace. These findings are important as they demonstrate that football within the UK is an effective tool to help FM feel calm, reduce symptoms of anxiety and positively affect their well-being (Thornton and Spalding, 2018; Knappe et al., 2019). Football helps to positively distract individuals and allows them to forget about the stress and challenges they face. Consider the following, for example:

Participant 2 [Refugee]: *Some people used to play football to forget something you know. When you have your life you have, you struggle less when you play football, the time you played that moment you maybe you feel better... the most important thing is just for you know, just for mental you know.*

By actively engaging in physical activity, the attentional focus was directed away from somatic sensations and towards cues related to playing football which provides a distraction effect.

Thus, the distraction effect disengages the individual from experiencing negative thoughts, somatic arousals and body sensations, instead they experience positive effective states, mastery experiences and reprieve from anxiety (Fetzner & Asmundson, 2015; Ley & Barrio, 2019). As a result, football momentarily appeases FM and alleviates stress, and these experiences impact positively on motivation for participation and self-determined maintenance of football (Ley & Barrio, 2019).

### ***Concluding Reflections***

This research provides novel insights into the importance of football supporting FM to cope with acculturation stress as they navigate a new culture and establish social connections. Cultural insiders as coaches helped create football into a safe space, encouraging players to support and communicate with new arrivals enabling them to feel more confident to establish social relationships. Football also helped them to feel secure enough to share travel stories which resulted in strong social connections. As a result of these findings, it is recommended clubs and organisations focus on developing initial feelings of security to facilitate social connections, inclusion and enjoyment from football. Another insight was the competitive meaning of football which created conflict on the field, albeit positively impacting on social relationships and increased connectedness off the field. FM initially developed meaningful connections through football and then maintained social relationships outside of football. Further, football provides a constructive coping strategy for FM which positively influences their mood and well-being. A strength of this study is its focus on football with a culturally diverse sample of refugees and asylum-seekers allowing the researcher to make comparisons. From this sample, football was found to have a greater importance for individuals during the asylum-seeking process than refugees, as it provides an escape and positive distraction from the uncertainty of an asylum claim and the fear of repatriation. One limitation to the work is that the researcher is not a FM so their character and background may influence the interpretations of the data through a privileged lens. The experiences shared by FM, were interpreted and written through the words of the researcher which highlights the subjective nature of the meaning and importance of football in supporting FM. Furthermore, FM were interviewed in a non-native language which may have prevented them from articulating or expressing certain aspects of their experience. Also, the impact of COVID-19 resulted in a reduced and more limited sample as all FM football sessions were cancelled so the majority of participants were recruited from ASHA which limits the generalisability of the findings.

### ***Future Research***

The contribution made by this research provides a platform for future research to examine more thoroughly the difference football has made to FM over a continuum of time. The impact the immigration status made on the experience of football was evident within this limited sample, so further exploration into the long-term development of FM who were supported by football would be of value. Furthermore, an interdisciplinary social science approach could provide a more advanced and innovative insight. An important consideration needs to be given to create more specialised football programmes attending to the divergent and specific requirements of both asylum-seekers and refugees.

## References

- Abbas, P., von Werthern, M., Katona, C., Brady, F., & Woo, Y. (2021). The texture of narrative dilemmas: qualitative study in front-line professionals working with asylum seekers in the UK. *BJPsych bulletin*, 45(1), 8-14.
- Abur, W. B. (2016). Benefits of participation in sport for people from refugee backgrounds: A study of the South Sudanese community in Melbourne, Australia. *Issues in Scientific Research*, 1(2), 10-26.
- Almohamed, A., & Vyas, D. (2016, June). Designing for the Marginalized: A step towards understanding the lives of refugees and asylum seekers. In *Proceedings of the 2016 acm conference companion publication on designing interactive systems* (pp. 165-168).
- Amara, M., Aquilina, D., Argent, E., Betzer-Tayar, M., Coalter, F., Green, M., & Taylor, J. (2005). The roles of sport and education in the social inclusion of asylum seekers and refugees: An evaluation of policy and practice in the UK. *Loughborough: Institute of Sport and Leisure Policy, Loughborough University and Stirling University*.
- Anderson, A., Dixon, M. A., Oshiro, K. F., Wicker, P., Cunningham, G. B., & Heere, B. (2019). Managerial perceptions of factors affecting the design and delivery of sport for health programs for refugee populations. *Sport Management Review*, 22(1), 80-95.
- Ando, H., Cousins, R., & Young, C. (2014). Achieving saturation in thematic analysis: Development and refinement of a codebook. *Comprehensive Psychology*, 3, 03-CP.
- Arifin, S. R. M. (2018). Ethical considerations in qualitative study. *International Journal of Care Scholars*, 1(2), 30-33.
- Aspinall, P., & Watters, C. (2010). Refugees and asylum seekers: A review from an equality and human rights perspective. Equality and Human Rights Commission Research report 52, University of Kent.
- Berg, B. K., Warner, S., & Das, B. M. (2015). What about sport? A public health perspective on leisure-time physical activity. *Sport Management Review*, 18(1), 20-31.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2012). Thematic analysis.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2020). One size fits all? What counts as quality practice in (reflexive) thematic analysis?. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 1-25.
- Bogic, M., Njoku, A., & Priebe, S. (2015). Long-term mental health of war-refugees: a systematic literature review. *BMC international health and human rights*, 15(1), 1-41.

- Brough, M., Gorman, D., Ramirez, E., & Westoby, P. (2003). Young refugees talk about well-being: A qualitative analysis of refugee youth mental health from three states. *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, 38(2), 193-208.
- Burnett, A., & Ndovi, T. (2018). The health of forced migrants. *Bmj*, 363.
- Crawford, E., Turpin, M., Nayar, S., Steel, E., & Durand, J. L. (2016). The structural-personal interaction: Occupational deprivation and asylum seekers in Australia. *Journal of Occupational Science*, 23(3), 321-338.
- Darcy, S., Maxwell, H., Edwards, M., Onyx, J., & Sherker, S. (2014). More than a sport and volunteer organisation: Investigating social capital development in a sporting organisation. *Sport Management Review*, 17(4), 395-406.
- Demir, S. B., & Ozgul, V. (2019). Syrian refugees minors in Turkey. Why and how are they discriminated against and ostracized?. *Child Indicators Research*, 12(6), 1989-2011.
- Duffy, B., and T. Frere-Smith. 2014. *Perceptions and Reality: Public Attitudes to Immigration*. London: Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute.
- Dukic, D., McDonald, B., & Spaaij, R. (2017). Being able to play: Experiences of social inclusion and exclusion within a football team of people seeking asylum. *Social Inclusion*, 5(2), 101-110.
- Eaton, V., Ward, C., Womack, J., & Taylor, A. (2011). Mental Health and Wellbeing in Leeds: An Assessment of Need in the Adult Population. NHS Leeds.
- Garkisch, M., Heidingsfelder, J., & Beckmann, M. (2017). Third sector organizations and migration: A systematic literature review on the contribution of third sector organizations in view of flight, migration and refugee crises. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 28(5), 1839-1880.
- Guest, G., Namey, E., & Chen, M. (2020). A simple method to assess and report thematic saturation in qualitative research. *PLoS One*, 15(5), e0232076.
- Hartley, L., Fleay, C., & Tye, M. E. (2017). Exploring physical activity engagement and barriers for asylum seekers in Australia coping with prolonged uncertainty and no right to work. *Health & Social Care in the Community*, 25(3), 1190-1198.
- Hebebrand, J., Anagnostopoulos, D., Eliez, S., Linse, H., Pejovic-Milovancevic, M., & Klasen, H. (2016). A first assessment of the needs of young refugees arriving in Europe: what mental health professionals need to know.
- Hennink, M. M., Kaiser, B. N., & Marconi, V. C. (2017). Code saturation versus meaning saturation: how many interviews are enough?. *Qualitative health research*, 27(4), 591-608.
- Herslund, L. (2021). Everyday life as a refugee in a rural setting—What determines a sense of belonging and what role can the local community play in generating it?. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 82, 233-241.



Holmes, A. G. D. (2020). Researcher Positionality--A Consideration of Its Influence and Place in Qualitative Research--A New Researcher Guide. *Shanlax International Journal of Education*, 8(4), 1-10.

Hugman, R., Pittaway, E., & Bartolomei, L. (2011). When 'do no harm' is not enough: The ethics of research with refugees and other vulnerable groups. *The British Journal of Social Work*, 41(7), 1271-1287.

Huot, S., Kelly, E., & Park, S. J. (2016). Occupational experiences of forced migrants: A scoping review. *Australian occupational therapy journal*, 63(3), 186-205.

Hoye, R., Nicholson, M., & Brown, K. (2015). Involvement in sport and social connectedness. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 50(1), 3-21.

Ingvarsson, L., Egilson, S. T., & Skaptadóttir, U. D. (2016). "I want a normal life like everyone else": Daily life of asylum seekers in Iceland. *Scandinavian Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 23(6), 416-424.

Karataş, S., Crocetti, E., Schwartz, S. J., & Rubini, M. (2021). Psychological and social adjustment in refugee adolescents: The role of parents' and adolescents' friendships. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*.

Keyes, E. F. (2000). Mental health status in refugees: an integrative review of current research. *Issues in mental health nursing*, 21(4), 397-410.

Kim, A. C. H., Ryu, J., Lee, C., Kim, K. M., & Heo, J. (2020). Sport Participation and Happiness Among Older Adults: A Mediating Role of Social Capital. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 1-19.

Klingst, M. (2015). Dangerous boredom: Young Muslim men who wait idle in homes for weeks - can this become explosive? *Retrieved August, 17, 2017*.

Knappe, F., Colledge, F., & Gerber, M. (2019). Impact of an 8-week exercise and sport intervention on post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms, mental health, and physical fitness among male refugees living in a Greek refugee camp. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 16(20), 3904.

Levermore, R. (2011). Evaluating sport-for-development: Approaches and critical issues. *Progress in development studies*, 11(4), 339-353.

Ley, C., & Barrio, M. R. (2019). Promoting health of refugees in and through sport and physical activity: a psychosocial, trauma-sensitive approach. In *An Uncertain Safety* (pp. 301-343). Springer, Cham.

Marquardt, L., Krämer, A., Fischer, F., & Prüfer-Krämer, L. (2016). Health status and disease burden of unaccompanied asylum-seeking adolescents in Bielefeld, Germany: Cross-sectional pilot study. *Tropical medicine & international health*, 21(2), 210-218.

- Mayne, J., Lowrie, D., & Wilson, J. (2016). Occupational experiences of refugees and asylum seekers resettling in Australia: A narrative review. *OTJR: occupation, participation and health*, 36(4), 204-215.
- McColl, H., McKenzie, K., & Bhui, K. (2008). Mental healthcare of asylum-seekers and refugees. *Advances in Psychiatric Treatment*, 14(6), 452-459.
- McDonald, B., Spaaij, R., & Dukic, D. (2019). Moments of social inclusion: asylum seekers, football and solidarity. *Sport in society*, 22(6), 935-949.
- Motti-Stefanidi, F. (2019). Resilience among immigrant youths: Who adapts well, and why?. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 28(5), 510-517.
- Moussalli, M. (1992). Handbook on Procedures and Criteria for Determining Refugee Status under the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees. *Geneva: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*.
- Newbigging, K., Thomas, N., Coupe, J., Habte-Mariam, Z., Ahmed, N., Shah, A., & Hicks, J. (2010). Good practice in social care for asylum seekers and refugees. *London: Social Care Institute for Excellence*.
- Ohlander, S. (2020). From National to Global Obsession: Football and Football English in the Superdiverse 21st Century. *Nordic Journal of English Studies*, 19(5).
- Olliff, L. (2008). Playing for the future: the role of sport and recreation in supporting refugee young people to 'settle well' in Australia. *Youth Studies Australia*, 27(1), 52-60.
- Olliff, L. (2009). Amplifying the voices of young refugees. *Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA)*. Retrieved from <https://apo.org.au/node/19907>
- O'Sullivan, K., & Olliff, L. (2006). Settling in: exploring good settlement for refugee young people in Australia. *Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY)*.
- Purgato, M., Richards, J., Prina, E., Kip, A., Del Piccolo, L., Michencigh, G., ... & Barbui, C. (2021). Efficacy of physical activity interventions on psychological outcomes in refugee, asylum seeker and migrant populations: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 101901.
- Quinn, N. (2014). Participatory action research with asylum seekers and refugees experiencing stigma and discrimination: the experience from Scotland. *Disability & Society*, 29(1), 58-70.
- Rivera, H., Lynch, J., Li, J. T., & Obamehinti, F. (2016). Infusing sociocultural perspectives into capacity building activities to meet the needs of refugees and asylum seekers. *Canadian Psychology/psychologie canadienne*, 57(4), 320.
- Robson, C. (2002). *Real world research: A resource for social scientists and practitioner-researchers*. Wiley-Blackwell.

- Roots, E. (2007). Making connections: The relationship between epistemology and research methods. *Special Edition Papers*, 19(1), 19-27.
- Sankar, P., & Jones, N. L. (2007). Semi-structured interviews in bioethics research. In *Empirical methods for bioethics: A primer*. Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- Smith, B., & Sparkes, A. C. (2016). Qualitative interviewing in the sport and exercise sciences. *Routledge handbook of qualitative research in sport and exercise*, 103-123.
- Spaaij, R. (2015). Refugee youth, belonging and community sport. *Leisure Studies*, 34(3), 303-318.
- Stone, C. (2018). Utopian community football? Sport, hope and belongingness in the lives of refugees and asylum seekers. *Leisure Studies*, 37(2), 171-183.
- Storm, T., & Engberg, M. (2013). The impact of immigration detention on the mental health of torture survivors is poorly documented—a systematic review. *Dan Med J*, 60(11), A4728.
- Taylor, M. (2006). Global players? Football, migration and globalization, c. 1930-2000. *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung*, 7-30.
- Terry, G., Hayfield, N., Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2017). Thematic analysis. *The Sage handbook of qualitative research in psychology*, 17-37.
- Thornton, M., & Spalding, N. (2018). An exploration of asylum seeker and refugee experiences of activity: A literature review. *World Federation of Occupational Therapists Bulletin*, 74(2), 114-122.
- Toar, M., O'Brien, K. K., & Fahey, T. (2009). Comparison of self-reported health & healthcare utilisation between asylum seekers and refugees: an observational study. *BMC public health*, 9(1), 1-10.
- Tribe, R. (2002). Mental health of refugees and asylum seekers. *Advances in Psychiatric Treatment*, 8, 240–247.
- Trimboli, C., & Taylor, J. (2016). Addressing the occupational needs of refugees and asylum seekers. *Australian occupational therapy journal*, 63(6), 434-437.
- Turner, S. W., Bowie, C., Dunn, G., Shapo, L., & Yule, W. (2003). Mental health of Kosovan Albanian refugees in the UK. *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, 182(5), 444-448.
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR] (2020). Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2019  
Retrieved from <https://www.unhcr.org/5ee200e37.pdf>
- Valentine, G., Sporton, D., & Nielsen, K. B. (2009). Identities and belonging: a study of Somali refugee and asylum seekers living in the UK and Denmark. *Environment and Planning D: Society and space*, 27(2), 234-250.

Vincent, F., Jenkins, H., Larkin, M., & Clohessy, S. (2013). Asylum-seekers' experiences of trauma-focused cognitive behaviour therapy for post-traumatic stress disorder. *Behavioural and cognitive psychotherapy*, 41, 579-593.

Whitley, M. A., Coble, C., & Jewell, G. S. (2016). Evaluation of a sport-based youth development programme for refugees. *Leisure/Loisir*, 40(2), 175-199.

Woodhouse, D., & Conricode, D. (2017). In-ger-land, In-ger-land, In-ger-land! Exploring the impact of soccer on the sense of belonging of those seeking asylum in the UK. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 52(8), 940-954.

World Health Organisation [WHO] (2010). Global recommendations on physical activity for health. *Geneva World Heal Organ*, 60.

## Appendices

### Appendix A: Ethical Approval

Research & Enterprise Office  
Loughborough University  
Leicestershire LE11 3TU UK

T: 01509 222222  
W: www.lboro.ac.uk



Dear Alex

PROJECT TITLE: Exploring the experiences of UK based male refugees and asylum seekers within football in the UK.

PROJECT ID: 2417

On behalf of the Ethics Review Sub-Committee I can confirm that the proposal 2021-2417-2962 has full ethical approval.

***Where possible we recommend that studies are conducted online. However, if it is necessary to conduct face-to-face research you must ensure that you follow the latest Government guidance on COVID-19. In addition, there is a Health and Safety Process that must be completed after the ethical review. You are not permitted to begin data collection which requires any face-to-face interactions with participants in person without the appropriate COVID-19 risk assessments signed by the School Safety Officer and Julie Turner, in the Health and Safety Office, and with approval from the Dean.***

***Studies can be moved online without requiring an amendment, unless this substantially changes the study in which case an amendment is required.***

If in the future you wish to make any amendments to the study please submit an amendment using the relevant form.

You are required to report to the Sub-Committee any incidents that have an adverse effect using the Adverse Events Report form in LEON.

This approval applies until 05/05/2021. If the study continues beyond this date you should submit a request for an extension.

Kind Regards,

Jackie

on behalf of Ethics Review Sub-Committee

## *Appendix B: Participant Recruitment Information Sheet*



### **Exploring the experiences of UK based refugees and asylum seekers within football in the UK.**

#### **Adult Participant Information Sheet**

##### **Investigators Details:**

Alex Wilkinson, Loughborough University, Epinal Way, Loughborough, Leicestershire, LE11 3TU, [a.wilkinson-17@student.lboro.ac.uk](mailto:a.wilkinson-17@student.lboro.ac.uk),

Florence Kinnaick, Loughborough University, Epinal Way, Loughborough, Leicestershire, LE11 3TU, [f.e.kinnaick@lboro.ac.uk](mailto:f.e.kinnaick@lboro.ac.uk), +441509226364

We would like to invite you to take part in our study. Before you decide we would like you to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. One of our team will go through the information sheet with you and answer any questions you have. Talk to others about the study before making a decision if you wish.

##### **What is the purpose of the study?**

The project aims to explore the experiences and mental well-being of UK based refugees and asylum seekers currently participating in football within the UK. During the project participants will be required to complete a telephone interview with a researcher which will last up to 40 minutes.

Capturing the experiences of refugees and the effects of football on their lives in the UK (e.g., mental wellbeing, social network, inclusion) will allow researchers to understand to a deeper level what refugees currently go through while in the UK and the effects of football on their life. Collecting the experiences of refugees and understanding how they feel towards sport can help create future interventions which tailor sport towards the needs of refugees.

##### **Who is doing this research and why?**

This study is part of a Student research project supported by Loughborough University. Alex Wilkinson will be conducting all of the telephone interviews with the participants. As an undergraduate student Alex has the support of a research supervisor called Dr. Florence Kinnaick who will help Alex to complete the research project. There are no sponsors or funding for the study.

##### **Are there any inclusion or exclusion criteria?**

All participants must be: over 18 years old, a refugee, asylum seeker or migrant. They must have taken part within a football session in the UK.

##### **What will I be asked to do?**

The participants will be interviewed on their experiences of playing football within the UK. The interview will be conducted by Alex Wilkinson which will take up to a maximum of 40

minutes with additional 10-15 minutes of explaining the research and debriefing participant. The telephone interview will be recorded via a Dictaphone so all answers can be accessed and analysed. All participants will be able to withdraw any of their data prior to the data analysis stage.

### **Once I take part, can I change my mind?**

After you have read this information and asked any questions you may have if you are happy to participate, we will ask you to complete an Informed Consent Form. This consent form can be emailed back to Alex Wilkinson. However, if at any time, before, during or after the sessions you wish to withdraw from the study please just contact the main investigator. You can withdraw at any time, for any reason and you will not be asked to explain your reasons for withdrawing. All participants will be able to withdraw any of their data prior to the data analysis stage.

However, once the results of the dissertation *have been submitted (expected to be by 1/4/21)*, it may not be possible to withdraw your individual data from the research.

### **Will I be asked to attend any sessions and where will these be?**

*You will not be asked to physically attend any sessions.*

### **How long will it take?**

The whole interview process will take 50 minutes to 1 hour as the participant information sheet will be explained over the phone and informed consent will be completed beforehand and emailed over to Alex. All participants will be required to provide informed consent prior to the research either by completing by hand and returning as a photograph or if participants are unable to print, they can type their details into the form and return by email.

### **Are there any disadvantages or risks in participating?**

During the research project participants may be asked sensitive personal information about their mental well-being. Researchers will complete a full debrief at the end of the interview allowing the participant to ask any questions and is a chance for researcher to remove any misconceptions and anxieties that the participants may have. Participants are able to highlight that they may have been affected by the topics discussed, thus researchers can provide the participant with support so that they can leave the interview in a similar frame of mind as when they entered.

Relevant support services for participants can be accessed below:

Migrant Help UK – Helpline: 08088010503

Red Cross – Helpline: 08081963651

Citizen Advice – Helpline: 0808 233 1133

Asylum Help – <http://asylumhelpuk.org/> Phone: 0808 8010 503

## **Data Protection Privacy Notice**

Loughborough University will be using information/data from you in order to undertake this study and will act as the data controller for this study. This means that the University is responsible for looking after your information and using it properly.

### **What personal information will be collected from me and how will it be used?**

The personal information being collected is your name, Date of Birth, contact details (email address) and telephone number.

The identifiable personal information will be the participants names, phone numbers and Date of birth. The data is needed for arranging meetings with participants and the audio data recorded is used for gaining informed consent and for analysis. This identifiable information will be destroyed as soon as it is no longer needed, which is on submission of the dissertation project on 5th May. Any sensitive personal information collected from participants about mental well-being will be used in the study to explore the experiences of those participating within Football, the data will only be used for this study and details of participants will stay anonymised. The identifiable data is not shared beyond the research team and identifiable information will be removed from transcripts by methods of changing names (pseudonym used). Any other identifiable data used for the purpose of arranging interviews will be destroyed after the interview.

### **What is the legal basis for processing my personal information?**

Personal data will be processed on the public task basis. For further details on the data protection legislation see: <https://ico.org.uk/your-data-matters/>

Under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), some of the personal data which will be collected from you is categorised as “sensitive data”. The processing of this data is necessary for scientific research in accordance with safeguards. This means that study has gone through an ethical committee to ensure that the appropriate safeguards are put in place with respect to the use of your personal data.

### **How long will my personal information be retained?**

The personal identifiable information will be destroyed as soon as it is no longer needed, which is on submission of the dissertation project on 5th May. Any other identifiable data used for the purpose of arranging interviews will be destroyed after the interview.

### **Will my personal information be shared with others?**

*The personal information will be shared between researchers Florence Kinnafick and Alex Wilkinson who will collect and process the recorded data. Only the two researchers involved in the study will access the data.*

### **Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?**



The identifiable data is not shared beyond the research team and identifiable information will be removed from transcripts by methods of changing names (pseudonym used). Personal information will be kept confidential and will only be viewed by Alex Wilkinson or Florence Kinnaick when trying to arrange interviews or contact the participant. All of the data will be held in accordance with the University's information governance guidance and stored on a secure password protected university IT cloud system. The telephone recordings will have all the stored information, these will be used to transcribe the interview and the recordings will be destroyed *1 years after the study has finished (5/5/2022)*. The identifiable information will be destroyed as soon as it is no longer needed, which is on submission of the dissertation project on 5th May.

### **How will the anonymised data/results collected from me be used?**

The data collected will be used within a final year university dissertation project. The audio recordings will be listened to, transcribed and analysed to find out the experiences of refugees and migrants within UK based football session.

### **How long will the anonymised data/results be retained?**

The telephone recordings have all the stored information, these will be used to transcribe the interview and the recordings will be destroyed *1 years after the study has finished (5/5/2022)*. Any other data used for the purpose of arranging interviews will be destroyed after the interview.

### **I have some more questions; who should I contact?**

Alex Wilkinson can be contacted at [a.wilkinson-17@student.lboro.ac.uk](mailto:a.wilkinson-17@student.lboro.ac.uk)

### **What if I am not happy with how the research was conducted?**

If you are not happy with how the research was conducted, please contact the Secretary of the Ethics Approvals (Human Participants) Sub-Committee, Research & Enterprise Office, Hazlerigg Building, Loughborough University, Epinal Way, Loughborough, LE11 3TU. Tel: 01509 222423. Email: [researchpolicy@lboro.ac.uk](mailto:researchpolicy@lboro.ac.uk)

The University also has policies relating to Research Misconduct and Whistle Blowing which are available online at <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/committees/ethics-approvals-human-participants/additionalinformation/codesofpractice/> .

If you require any further information regarding the General Data Protection Regulations, please see: <https://www.lboro.ac.uk/privacy/research-privacy/>.

## *Appendix C: Informed Consent Form*



**Participant ID:**

Exploring the experiences of UK based refugees and asylum seekers within football in the UK.

### **INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

(to be completed after Participant Information Sheet has been read)

#### **Taking Part**

**Please initial  
to confirm  
agreement**

The purpose and details of this study have been explained to me. I understand that this study is designed to further scientific knowledge and that all procedures have been approved by the Loughborough University Ethics Approvals (Human Participants) Sub-Committee.

-----

I have read and understood the information sheet and this consent form.

-----

I have had an opportunity to ask questions about my participation.

-----

I understand that taking part in the project will involve [being interviewed and recorded audio]

-----

I understand that taking part in the study has the discussion of sensitive topics as potential risk.

-----

I understand that the personal information collected will be the [name and date of birth]

-----

I understand that sensitive personal information about mental well-being will be collected during this study.

-----

I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in the study, have the right to withdraw from this study at any stage for any reason, and will not be required to explain my reasons for withdrawing.

-----

#### **Use of Information**

I understand that all the personal information I provide will be processed in accordance with data protection legislation on the public task basis and will be treated in strict

-----

confidence unless (under the statutory obligations of the agencies which the researchers are working with), it is judged that confidentiality will have to be breached for the safety of the participant or others or for audit by regulatory authorities.

I understand that information I provide may be used for publications and research outputs.

-----

I understand that personal information collected about me that can identify me, such as my name or date of birth, will not be shared beyond the study team.

-----

I agree that information I provide can be quoted anonymously in research outputs.

-----

### **Consent to Participate**

**I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.**

-----

_____ Name of participant	_____ [printed]	_____ Signature	_____ Date
_____ Researcher	_____ [printed]	_____ Signature	_____ Date

## *Appendix D: Interview questions*

### Interview Questions

What is your nationality?

Where is your home country?

What age did you first come to the UK? – How long here in UK?

What is your current immigration status?

What is it like to live in the UK?

- What are some of the challenges/hard/bad?
- In what situations do you usually interact with other refugees or migrants?
- Do you enjoy interactions with other refugees?

What does football mean to you?

#### Prompts

- What do you enjoy about football?
- How do you feel when you play football?
- Tell me about your earliest experiences playing football?
- Where did you first play football?
- Who did you play football with?

What is it like to play football in the UK?

#### Prompts

- What are the highlights/ best thing?
- What are the challenges?
- How long after arriving in the UK did you start playing football? When
- Who do you play football with while in the UK?

Why do you play football?

What differences are there between football in UK and from your home country?

#### Prompts

Where do you prefer to play? Why?

- Could you provide an example?
- What are the similarities?

How do you describe the relationships between you and the football coaches?

#### Prompts

- How do the coaches make you feel while playing football?
- How do you describe the relationships between you and other refugees at football?
- How does playing with other refugees make you feel?

Do refugees and asylum seekers have a different experience at football?

What suggestions would you make about ways to improve refugees' experiences of football?

How could football

#### Prompts

- Have you had any problems/issues while playing football?
- Do you have any recommendations/ suggest/advise for staff to improve the football session?
- What would make football sessions better?

What does mental health mean to you?

- What would good mental health be for you?
- does football affect your mental health?
- Can you realise emotions at football?

How does football make an impact on your life?

Prompts

- How does football effect your physical health? In what ways?
- How does football effect your mental health? In what ways?
- Do you find that football affects your mood?
- Do you feel like you can talk to someone or ask for help with mental or physical health issues at football?
- Would you be interested in having access to more mental health resources at football?