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Educational inequality in the Kebribeyah Somali refugee camp in Ethiopia: an autoethnography

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Abstract

Due to the Somali Civil War of 1991, more than 10,000 Somali refugees resettled in Kebribeyah, a town in the Somali region of Ethiopia. For nearly three decades, the local and resettled refugee communities shared the resources the region had to offer, adopted a new common cultural norm, and fostered some levels of social cohesions. It is the education sector, however, that caused social conflicts and hatred between resettled Somalis and the native Somali-Ethiopians. Currently, the education of Somali refugee children is funded by various international organizations, such as the United Nations. On the contrary, the local Somali-Ethiopian children pay their way to schools which leads to poor educational experiences. Using autoethnography as the research method, this article examines the formation of educational gaps between the local and refugee children. Findings suggest that educational inequality can exist between refugee and host communities, if not properly managed, and can ultimately impact social cohesion and stability in the refugee-hosting regions.

Keywords: Autoethnography, Education inequality, Ethiopia, Kebribeyah refugee camp, Social cohesion, Somalia

Introduction

When war breaks out, you run away... leaving your everything. If you don't have an education, then you'll become poor. But if you run away with only your shirt and you have the brain, you can work somewhere and earn a living.... Education is a very essential tool. Also, education is light
(In the words of a Somali refugee living in Kenya, Abroon, quoted from Dryden-Peterson 2017, p.4).

As of today, there are over 82 million people forced out of their homes due to persecution, conflict, or violence (UNHCR 2021). Almost 86% of those forcefully displaced populations are currently living in different countries in the Global South, and in most cases, they are in the neighboring nations (UNHCR 2021). Given that many of

the host countries lack resource for their own people and because these countries do little to protect the newcomers fleeing for their lives, rising tensions between refugees and the host communities are common in refugee crisis (Fisk 2018). The scarce resources these developing countries have to offer can create competition for resources—i.e., water and food—between the refugees and the host communities (Martin 2005). In the recent years, the resource competition between refugees and their host counterparts has seen an increase at many levels of society (Gul et al. 2020). In this context, social assets such as education are seen to play a role in the contention for resources (Wei et al. 2018). According to the United Nations (UN), education allows socio-economic growth and plays a huge role in the fight against poverty (United Nations 2020). Education is part one of a set of human rights, idealized, and enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), which claims that

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every child has a right to education (UNICEF 2018). It holds a dual responsibility to help develop in young people the consciousness and abilities that they need to live free lives and helps them develop the shared values that citizens need to exist in an inclusive society (Gutmann and Ben-Porath 2014). Given its importance, many scholars, policymakers, leaders, citizens, and other members of the global community care about the distribution and quality of education (Ferreira and Gignoux 2014). Therefore, the distribution of opportunities for acquiring a good and quality education and the degree to which family background and other predetermined personal characteristics shape a person's educational outcomes are critical (Obasuyi et al. 2020). The family background of many individuals plays a role in acquiring educational opportunities, especially those who live in refugee camps (Fransen et al. 2018). Many refugees face educational obstacles due to their background which can be credited to the many other challenges refugees face in the camps (Reinhardt et al. 2020). Furthermore, the lack of educational opportunities refugees face can be attributed to the transitional stage of the "durable solutions" refugees spend most of their lives (Bradley 2019).

To respond to the global refugee crisis, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) developed a three-solution system which consist of returning them to the country of origin, an integration into the country of first asylum (most of the time a low-income country), or resettlement to yet another country (UNHCR 2003). However, the process of return or resettlement can take years or even decades, with many refugees remaining in the transition countries for most of their lives (Bruno et al. 2020). With the continued conflicts in their countries of origin and the limited opportunities for resettlement to a third country, many refugees become vulnerable to unpredictable futures (Horst and Grabska 2015). Since refugees do not voluntarily acquire rights within their first asylum (Shehu and Abba 2020), they often face limited opportunities for education (Dryden-Peterson 2016). In addition, education is underfunded within the international organizations or in an emergency context given that less than 6% of UNHCR's 2019 proposed budget was allocated to education (UNHCR 2017).

Despite the UNHCR's limited budget for education, strides have been made to increase the quality of education and school enrollment for refugees around the world. For example, the fourth goal in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDG) prioritizes "Quality Education," with the main target to create an inclusive educational opportunity to provide learning opportunities. Furthermore, educational quality in the refugee context can only be enhanced through

a joint and organized effort at all levels of society-governments, companies, schools, and agencies-and the United Nations urged hosting countries around the world to welcome refugees to their educational systems. UNHCR calls the hosting governments to (a) encourage refugee children to partake in schools under the same conditions as its citizens, (b) include refugees in national education systems, (c) provide refugees access to school without documentation or certification, (d) devise policies and assign budgets for refugee education in national plans, (e) make sure that refugees can sit for national exams and obtain recognized qualifications, (f) ensure refugee girls have fair access to education, and (g) ensure host communities also benefit from educational funding (UNHCR 2019a, b, c).

The systemic and demographic changes in many countries around the world and the UNHCR's recent urge for governments to provide more inclusive educational systems led to a discussion about educational opportunities for refugees, in their host countries. Despite all these strides taken by the international organizations and community, many refugees still lack educational opportunities. For example, in 2018, 63% of refugees had access to primary school (UNHCR 2019a, b, c), compared with 93% of all children globally; at the secondary level, only 23% of refugees had access to education, whereas 84% did globally (United Nations 2020, p. 188). This stresses the need for more inclusive education, especially in countries with large refugee populations. Furthermore, some additional concerns include the lack of educational enrollment for refugee children as well as the lack of quality education. This is a result of the struggle many hosting nations face to meet the needs of their own citizens (Dryden-Peterson 2017).

Since most of the refugees are currently being hosted in countries in the Global South (Khoudour and Andersson 2017), the lack of economic development and other opportunities in those refugee hosting countries makes it difficult to gather data on the educational quality of their refugee residents. Because of data limitations, an assessment of the quality of education among the refugee populations in the Global South is somewhat limited in the literature (Khoudour and Andersson 2017). Furthermore, the unpredictable nature of safety and security in a humanitarian context sometimes creates an extra layer of challenge to get data and information on the quality education among the refugee population. Despite the nature of difficulty and urgency to get this information, deeper insights on quality education have tremendous value not only to the refugees but also to other emergency service providers, including the United Nations and host nations.

In this context, scholars have found autoethnography as an effective research method in various humanitarian

crisis locations (Stahlke 2016; Pitard 2017). Autoethnography displays the researcher's personal stories to explain any nuanced cultural experience in a specific geographical context (Hauber-Özer 2019; Student et al. 2017). In a crisis context, autoethnography can provide a representation of those involved (Buripakdi 2013). In addition, it can provide refugees with a sense of understanding their own lived experience (Alatrash 2018).

The lead author of this article was born to the Somali refugee parents in the Kebribeyah refugee camp in Somali region of Ethiopia. In this article, the author shares his personal stories as a Somali refugee growing up in the Somali Region of Ethiopia and navigating through the educational system in the region. His experience provides a deeper insight and understanding on refugee crisis and educational inequality that might not be acquired through other forms of research approaches conducted by outside scholars, or development practitioners.

Using autoethnography, this article seeks to understand the educational development and its contribution to the existence of the social cohesion in a Somali refugee camp in Ethiopia, called Kebribeyah. Kebribeyah has become home to more than 10,000 Somali refugees who fled the Somali Civil War of 1991. For nearly three decades, the host and resettled refugee communities shared the resources the region had to offer, adopted a new common cultural norm, and fostered some levels of social cohesions. It is the education sector, however, that contributed to growing social conflicts and hatred. Currently, the education of Somali refugee children is funded by various international organizations, such as the United Nations. Conversely, the local Somali-Ethiopian children pay their way to schools which leads to poor educational experiences. In this case, unequal resource distribution to educational opportunities between the native Somali-Ethiopians, and resettled Somalis contributed to increasing social tensions and hatred.

Based on lead author's first-hand experiences, this article assesses the educational inequality between the refugee and host communities in Kebribeyah refugee camp and its implication on social cohesion and local stability. Findings show that educational inequality in the refugee context can affect social cohesion and stability between the groups involved. Even though this article has a geographical focus, the insights are critical and relevant to other distressed refugee contexts, particularly in resource-poor conditions, where various humanitarian organizations, including the United Nations, are struggling with limited resources to provide emergency supports including education to the refugee children and often the children of poor host communities.

Unpacking the complex refugee contexts

Inequality between refugees and host communities

Social and economic inequalities have long been recognized as a harmful tool in many aspects of societies (Allotey and Reidpaht 2003; Stiglitz 2013). Inequality can be produced at multiple levels—cultural, institutional, organizational, and personal (Kusow and Eno 2015). At any level in which inequality functions, resources are being distributed in an increasingly unequal fashion (Gul et al. 2020). These resources include varieties of social capital, though unequal learning opportunities are often at the top of these inequalities (Schmidt et al. 2015).

In recent years, research related to educational disparities has attracted substantial scholarly and policy interests (Zhao 2016; Banzragch et al. 2019), along with the impacts of skilled teachers and quality curriculum to understand inequalities. Educational inequality experienced by marginalized communities, more particularly, racial inequality took a center stage in various social science research (Orfield and Lee 2005; Wei et al. 2018).

Educational inequality in refugee contexts

The lenses through which educational inequality is looked at have changed significantly due to the increase of refugees (Vergou 2019). Many believe that providing education in humanitarian situations is a critical contribution to the protection, human rights, and the construction of societies (MacKinnon 2014). Unfortunately, educational equality between host communities and the incoming refugees has not been a priority since education is grossly underfunded globally (MacKinnon 2014). Until recently, the provision of education as humanitarian assistance remained understudied to a greater extent (Mccarthy 2017).

In a refugee context, education is usually left out of the minimum standards in humanitarian response because it was not a necessity or the most important in an emergency context (MacKinnon 2014). In some cases, those who argue for education not being an essential part of a minimum standard in humanitarian are partially right, since, at the beginning of emergency response, the focus is on the immediate need and necessities for the survival of the refugees. However, upon refugee resettlement, prospects for educating refugees within the host country's education system to create possibilities for future participation in the mainstream workforce are still limited (Lischer 2017). Evidence shows that the educational inequalities born out of the crisis further lead to mistrust and lack of social cohesion between the host and refugee communities (Heyneman 2003a, 2003b).

Social cohesion in crisis contexts

Social cohesion is increasingly relevant in diverse multi-ethnic communities (Dinesen and Sønderskov 2018; Koopmans and Schaeffer 2016). The idea of social cohesion is used to define the social ties, particularly unity among groups and individuals in a community and the relationship with the bigger economic, social, and political outcomes (Valli et al. 2019). It is critical to achieve any local and global development goals, including the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs), since it can create a supportive environment for reducing poverty, improving education and employment opportunities along with many other development targets (Kolev 2017).

While many social concepts relating to UNSDGs have been explored, there has been limited research on the impacts of educational inequality on social cohesion, particularly in resource-poor refugee contexts. Social cohesion as a concept is seen and interpreted by people, businesses, organizations, and institutions in a way that fits their overall agendas or functions (Schiefer and Van der Noll 2017). In addition, it is a complex social construct since different societies have different geographies, political representations, economics, and their own set of challenges (Fonseca et al. 2019). Social cohesion is taken to mean a common national identity built through the development of common values and shared symbols (Cheong et al. 2007). Some find social cohesion as the glue that binds society together, promoting harmony and the common good (King et al. 2010). Furthermore, it encompasses the feeling of trust and norms of reciprocity which is exhibited by participation in networks and organizations (Meer and Tolsma 2014).

Many of the available research on social cohesion can be put into multiple categories and display relevance on many levels. Some researchers have stressed the existence of many facets of social cohesion (Khan 2016; Schiefer and Van der Noll 2017). For example, social cohesion through the perspective of host versus refugee communities emphasizes the challenges nation-states face in maintaining social cohesion within increasingly diverse populations. Meer and Tolsma (2014) break down social cohesion into four dimensions: formality, mode, target, and geographical scope. The most common distinction in the field is between formal and informal social cohesion; interconnectedness or ties between individuals which may be formed by attitudinal or behavioral and can be distinguished by its target (Meer and Tolsma 2014).

The concept of social cohesion plays a critical role in understanding educational inequality in a refugee context. At the same time, education plays an important role in broadening the outlook and increasing tolerance (Heyneman 2003a, 2003b). In the past, social cohesion

was understood to be the outcome of assimilating peoples of diverse religions, ethnicities, and social groups into a nation with a common language and values but that has shifted because social cohesion requires redefinition of a typical citizen (Heyneman 2003a, 2003b). The unequal provision of education—a concept that positively contributes to the overall existence of social cohesion—can lead to mistrust in refugee-hosting regions (Erdem et al. 2016). Social scientists have looked at the relationship between educational inequality and the roles it plays in social stability (Green et al. 2003; Green et al. 2006). Given that education and social cohesion are intertwined, an uneven distribution of education between host and refugee communities can ignite a lack of social cohesion as the refugee children become less likely to transition to their new environment (Kantzara 2011).

Study area

Bar ama Baro (Teach or learn)—Somali Proverb

State collapse, clan war, and famine are some of the major crises that Somali people went through in recent decades. They particularly use the word *burbur* (“catastrophe”) to describe the period between December 1991 and March 1992, when the country was devastated due to clan-based warfare. Four months of fighting in Mogadishu alone killed approximately 25,000 people, and 1.5 million people fled the country to escape the violence and at least 2 million people were internally displaced (Bradbury and Healy 2010; Nyadera and Ahmed 2020). Since the start of the Somali Civil War, between 450,000 and 1.5 million people have died, more than 800,000 are currently refugees, and over 1.5 million people have been internally displaced (Norris and Bruton 2011). Most of the Somali refugees live in neighboring countries such as Kenya, Yemen, and Ethiopia, respectively. While Kenya hosts 256,186 Somali refugees, Yemen and Ethiopia welcomed 250,500, and 192,082 Somali refugees, respectively (USA for UNHCR 2020). Of the 192,082 Somali refugees residing in Ethiopia, about 159,342 live in the Bokolmanyo, Melkadida, Kobe, Hilaweyn, and Buramino refugee camps while Kebribeyah, Aw Barre, and Sheder, in the Jijiga region, shelter another 37,477 persons (Somali Refugees in Ethiopia: Melkadida and Jijiga Situational Update 2020). Kebribeyah is one of the oldest Somali refugee camps in Ethiopia, opening in February of 1991 at the peak of the Somali civil war (UNHCR 2018).

The geographical focus of this study is the Kebribeyah Somali refugee camp (Fig. 1) in Ethiopia. The town Kebribeyah is approximately 55 km away from the Somali regional capital city, Jijiga, and almost 700 km from Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia (UNHCR



Fig. 1 Location of the Kebribeyah refugee camp

2018). As of 2018, it has the population of 120,000, of whom 14,413 were Somali refugees (UNHCR 2018).

The residents of Kebribeyah, some of whom are refugees who fled the Somali Civil War, are Somalis who are an ethnic group that resides in the horn of Africa. The available education system in the Kebribeyah refugee camp follows Ethiopia’s education system. The education system in Ethiopia consists of 8 years of elementary schooling, which is divided into two cycles of 4 years and 4 years of secondary education, divided into two stages of 2 years (Trines 2019). Though this is an experience in all of Ethiopia, the Somali region has a very low enrollment rate. Per statistics from the Ethiopian government, in 2011, 20% of children dropped out as early as grade two, and only about 50% of pupils remained in school until grade eight (Trines 2019). In the Kebribeyah refugee camp, educational and livelihood opportunities remain extremely limited, even though efforts have been made to provide access to such opportunities. The lack of access to education is also shown in all ages as refugees in Kebribeyah are highly characterized by illiteracy and low level of education and high drop rate in intermediate and high school levels (Abdullahi 2009). For example, in a study, it was found that 258 students were enrolled in

1st grade whereas only 86 were enrolled in grade eight (Abdullahi 2009). In Kebribeyah, education tends to be underfunded and educational facilities are insufficient to meet the needs of the refugee population (Durable Solution 2013).

Methodology

Methodologically, this study is based on lead author’s autoethnography. The usage of autoethnography can be very relevant in humanitarian emergency contexts for providing a clear description of the experiences of individuals and communities involved in the crisis. It is unique from other methods in three ways. First, autoethnography takes a systematic approach to collect data, analyze, and interpret about self or social phenomena related to self, self-centered; second, the researcher is the subject and context-conscious; and third, it aims to connect self with others, self with the social, and self with the context (Ngunjiri et al. 2010).

Overall, this methodological approach enables authors to provide personal experience and put themselves in the center of their research (Teame 2020). Over the last couple of decades, there has been an impressive growth of research that has been variously referred to as autoanthropology, autobiographical ethnography or sociology,

personal or self-narrative research and writing, and perhaps most commonly, autoethnography (Anderson 2006). Autoethnography offers a way of giving voice to personal experience to advance sociological understanding and this can be relevant in crisis context (Wall 2008). For example, using autoethnography, Alatrash (2018) shares her journey as a Syrian refugee living in Canada and how that has contributed to her identity. She also uses autoethnography to provide an understanding of the complexities and challenges caused by the crisis Syrian refugees are experiencing. In another autoethnographic work, Teame (2020) shares her personal experience living in a refugee camp in Ethiopia, resettling in Canada in 2004, and how all her experiences shaped her identity over the years. Though both examples derive from two different individuals and regions, they have one similarity: they showcase the realities of refugees through the autoethnographic method. This further allows many groups, who are concerned about the realities of these crisis—who perhaps want to help the betterment of these groups—to get access to the true scope of the livelihoods of those involved.

While autoethnography can be a great methodological approach to use in crisis situations, perspective bias can provide some limitations when it is reported by a single person and does not have large participants (Lapadat 2017). However, the limitation of potential biases can be reduced by using information and evidence from other sources, including documents and reports from the United Nations.

The lead author wrote three different in-depth journal entries about his overall experiences in Kebribeyah. In these entries, the lead author aimed to portray the challenges, inequality, and limited opportunities he faced due to his background as a Somali refugee in Ethiopia. In the first journal entry, the author emphasized his background as a Somali refugee and the Somali culture. This is where the Somali proverbs used in this article are derived from. In the second diary, the lead author provided information on his family dynamics (e.g., family members and financial stability), his educational experiences, and his relationship with the other students. In the final entry, the lead author wrote about the Kebribeyah, its diverse residents, and most importantly, the relationships between the Somali refugees and the local Somali-Ethiopians.

Given the length of these entries, which were quite long, the most useful information shapes the findings of this article and is included in the “Findings” section of this paper. In relevance, these personal diaries consisted of three notions. Firstly, these uncovered the educational experience of the lead author in terms of the relationship between the local school and the refugee school at Dr. Abdul-Majid Hussein Secondary School. Secondly, they

provided a clear message surrounding the lack of social cohesion between the two communities as seen through the lenses of the young student. Finally, those entries incorporated lead author’s personal encounters with social mistrust between the refugee and host communities with bullying from the local children.

The lead author attended Dr. Abdul-Majid Hussein Secondary School (AMHSS) from 2004 to 2011 as a student, from grade 1 to grade 8. AMHSS has a big school compound that houses two different secondary schools—the local and refugee schools—divided by a soccer field. The lead author started his education at the refugee school but transferred to the local school in grade 7, which provided him a comparative perspective on educational inequalities between the two schools at AMHSS—the local children’s school and refugee children’s school. Most of the lead author’s educational challenges started at home, even though neither of his parents attended any formal schooling. As a result, the lead author had no educational or mentoring supports from his parents. Besides, education, though both parents were aware of its relevance for his growth, was not the biggest concern they had at the time. Providing safety, shelter, and food for their children were the major priorities. On the other hand, the lead author’s experiences at AMHSS demonstrate some undiscovered challenges. He and his fellow refugee students went through an educational system that favored their local counterparts over them. Additionally, the Somali refugee children always experienced rising tensions between the local and refugee communities.

In this study, in addition to autoethnography, information, insights, and data from various sources were incorporated to verify lead author’s personal narratives, and interpretations, which allowed both the authors to avoid any biases in interpretation and helped to justify the stated arguments by maintaining objectivity.

Findings

Rag tashaday cir tararay wey toli karaan taako labadeede (If people come together, they can even mend a crack in the sky)—A Somali proverb

In this section, we share three personal narratives of the lead author relating to his personal experiences on education inequality as well as his encounters with the mistrusts between the local and refugee communities in Kebribeyah. Though each narrative might have a short description of the shared experiences, a further account is taken in the “Discussions” section.

Personal narrative

I was born to the refugee parents in the Somali region of Ethiopia, in Kebribeyah refugee camp. A year after my parents got married, neither of whom had ever attended school, they had my elder brother. Once my brother turned two, I was born. About five years later, I recall washing my face with the water I heated up by leaving out in the sun for an hour. My aunt helped me change into my new school uniform—a white shirt and blue pants. I remember her telling me and my two siblings that we would be starting school that day. I was very excited. I had always wanted to learn how to read and write for myself, and above all for my parents. They always went to my neighbor to get help in reading documents. I wanted to help them with that.

The Wadada Madow, or the “black road,” labeled the “main road” was the only paved road in the whole town of Kebribeyah. This long road divided Kebribeyah into two sides: the locals and the refugees. Wadada Madow had no end, and commuters from all over the country would take it. It led to many bigger cities like the Somali Regional capital, Jijiga, and even connected to longer routes that can take one to the capital of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa. When heading toward Addis Ababa, the refugees resided on the left side while the local community occupied on the right side. Figure 2, an overview of the Kebribeyah refugee camp by the UNHCR, shows the Wadada Madow running through the town of Kebribeyah. My family of 10 people at the time lived in the houses right behind the “Mother and Children Community Organization” (MCDO) compound, in Section 4 of Zone 3.

Most days, I walked two miles from our home to my father’s grocery store. I used the “Wadada Madow to take a homemade lunch to my father and his assistant, who both worked at the store. By the time I arrived at the grocery store, I would be tired and exhausted from the Ethiopian hot weather. Before even handing over the lunch that I had brought for him, my father would rush to me and give me bottled water to cool down. However, the exhaustion from the heat was not the only hardship I faced most days. In those two-mile trips, I would encounter bullying from the local children.

Even though Wadada Madow created physical division, it was nothing compared to the effect that social division had on the two communities. The social tensions between the two communities were so impactful that the youth, the parents, and the elderly of both sides had been affected by the lack of social cohesion in Kebribeyah. The two-mile walk to the grocery store always reminded me of the existence of such division. Because I resided directly on the border between the two communities and that my father owned his own business in the town,

I found myself being both the witness and victim of such social tension. Mainly because that was a territory of the locals. During the commutes to my father’s shop, I was bullied by the local children who would be using derogatory terms. The word “qoxoonti” which means “refugee” in Somali was used in a demeaning way to single out refugee children like me. They often stopped me and demanded money, snacks, and sometimes would push me to fight them. Most of the bullying took place on the Wadada Madow, right across from the UNHCR office. This would force me to take a longer route by going through the refugee camp—zones three and two—before joining the main road right behind the Administration of Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA) office. This office was just about half a mile from my father’s shop.

Educational system: lack of opportunities

For secondary school level refugee children, like me, our realities meant attending school at our newly built buildings. Our classrooms were well looked after, often painted, and we were given daily rations during recess (they started doing this in my third-grade year). On the other hand, the local children’s buildings were quite beat up, the paintings were washed off, and they had to pay for their snacks during recess. This often made the local children jealous of the snacks and food we were given—simply because we were refugees. Some organizations were there to give us food, shelter, and education but the local children did not have any of that, hence why our schools were much better quality. For example, our school supplies were provided to us, including our uniforms. Each year, at the beginning of the school year, we were given a certain number of pencils, books, and two sets of uniforms. Sometimes, we had extra sets of supplies that we could use.

During secondary school education, we were well taken care of and given a good educational opportunity. All of that changed by seventh grade. Around this time, many of my peers left school and some, like me, transferred to the local school. There were many reasons why we made these choices, though financial challenges and the absence of the refugee community’s high school were the biggest reasons. The high dropout rate of the refugee members before high school level education was evident in the number of my secondary level friends who were enrolled in school by seventh grade. Upon completion of secondary school, many of the immigrant children, many of my friends, found themselves becoming responsible for their families’ financial endeavors. Many became barbers, construction workers, shoe shiners, and cooks at local restaurants. Aside from the financial hardships we often faced, there was no high school for the Somali refugees. There was only one high school in the town, and it

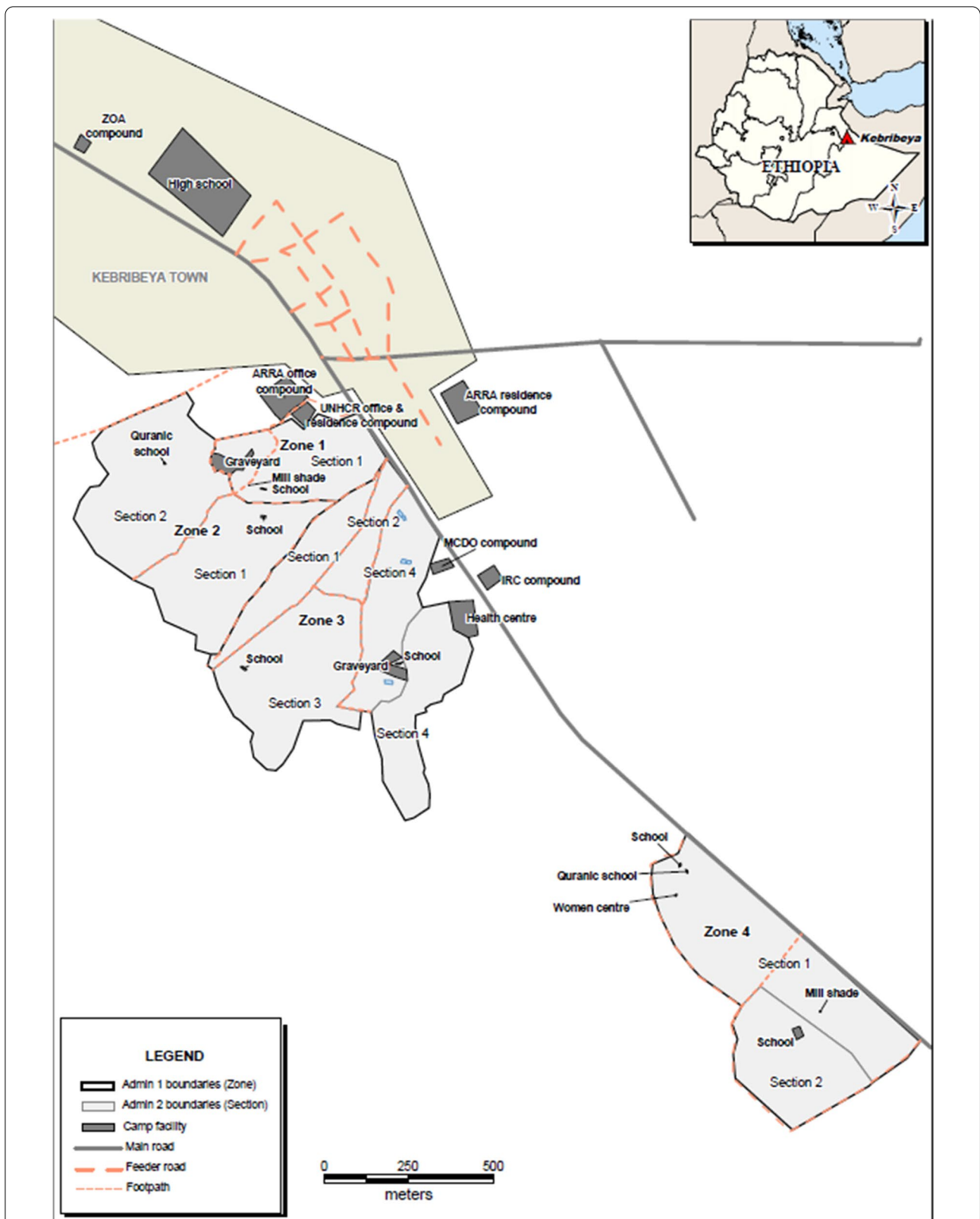


Fig. 2 Kebribeyah Camp (UNHCR, 2012, b) (The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations)

was for the locals. Because of this, entry to high school was quite difficult, especially for refugee students. As a solution, some refugee parents, like my own, transferred their children over to the local community's school—for a better opportunity—around grade seven. Other parents pulled their children out of school to receive financial support from them.

My educational experiences in the refugee and the local schools were quite different. First, our course contents were very different. At the refugee school, it seemed as if the teachers understood our challenges. On the contrary, the local teachers did not have neither the resources nor the training to provide us with the education we needed. The most difficult part of the local school's experience was the fact that my Amharic teacher did not speak Somali, so I was forced to learn many things in a language I was not taught during my years at the refugee school. By the time I finished 7th grade, I was discouraged from ever going to school, but my parents pushed me. One of the main reasons why I no longer wanted to continue school, aside from the difficulty level of the local school, was my cousin, Mohamed. I remember he was the best in his class. He always did homework while the rest of the kids played soccer. He finished 8th grade at the refugee school finishing 2nd in his grade. However, he did not get to go to high school. Instead, he became a shoe cleaner since he had to help his family, financially. He was not the only person whom I looked up to, who didn't continue education after secondary school.

My neighbor, Muna, decided to stay at home after finishing secondary school. She was discouraged by the lack of preparation for high school. She once told me that “no matter how well you do in school, this will be life for you.” About a year later, she married a neighbor of mine. And though Muna's educational endeavors were disheartening, she was among some of the lucky women in the camp. Girls were discouraged from education and given the roles at home. For example, Ayan, the girl next door, never went to school and stayed at home to help with the family affairs. Her father died a couple of years after she was born due to a bullet that hit him during the war. Therefore, with her mom being the main provider of the family, she had to take over the roles of her mom and do the cooking and cleaning around the house. The discouragement of the refugee students in the post-secondary school was quite evident in all areas of the camp. Many students would stop school and start working. Some even would start their own families. I remember one of my friends, Fadhi, 16, got married right after the 7th-grade summer break. He never returned to school and instead became a barber.

Lack of social cohesion between the refugees and locals

We got into fights with the local children, especially during recess. As the bell rang to get back to our classes, the local children would scream “qoxoonti qaaxo duud” which was a derogatory phrase that translated into “the refugees with the crooked backs.” We, on the other hand, called them “dagmo dooralay” which translates to the “dirty locals.” Many times, over, the kids from the local communities reminded us of the privileges we had simply because we were refugees.

One day, I recall, two parents (fathers) fighting outside the school. According to the stories I remember, one of them was a refugee while the other was from the local community. Their two children were in a fight the day before and both parents showed up to the school to report the other child and upon leaving the school, the parents ran into each other getting into an aggressive fight. This resulted in the arrest of both fathers and the suspension of the two students.

The mistrust the refugee children received from the local children was also evident in “football” fields, otherwise known as soccer fields. Right in between the Wadada Madow and the “Mother and Children Community Organization” compound was a soccer field where both the local and refugee children came together to play. Teams from each side would participate in tournaments, which would eventually result in violence between the players. It got to the point that the fights breaking out became a norm. I remember during one tournament when the refugees won, but of course, that upset the team from the local's side. As a result, the aftermath of the game was so violent that some players brought machete knives and a young man died while two others were taken to the hospital that day.

Another day, around the end of 2009, two soccer teams from the two communities got into a very violent encounter and I remember seeing the two captains, around 20 years old, get into a fight after the game. During the fight, one of them was handed a knife and he stabbed the other multiple times. I, along with a couple of kids, decided to leave the scene but we were told that one of the captains had lost his life at the scene. Similar events followed the next couple of months until there were gang groups formed and violence between the refugee and local youth in Kebribeyah was at its peak around the year 2010.

Around 2010, youth groups consisting of both communities formed gangs in Kebribeyah. There were about four groups who had their territories, symbols, and rivals. This formation of groups was not surprising, but the fact that these groups had their origins from Dr. Abul Majid Hussein Secondary School was terrifying.

Discussions

Social cohesion can provide a space within which a broad range of interest and identity groups can establish associations reflecting their multiple and distinctive cultural values (Harris and Young 2009). It has been used to investigate issues related to peacebuilding interventions in culturally and ethnically diverse communities (Laurence and Bentley, 2016). Subsequently, in refugee camps like Kebribeyah, social cohesion becomes critical for developing trust between the host and refugee communities. The mistrust between the two sides oftentimes accelerates so violently due to lack of social cohesion thus leading to causes and consequences of social upheaval and violence (King et al. 2010).

In the broader studies on conflicts and tensions between refugees and host communities, it is important to realize the issues that can cause violence. Walton (2012) credits these tensions to several reasons: the refugees' access to humanitarian aid, refugees' possible negative impacts on the host communities, competition for resources, cultural protection, and refugees being seen as a security threat. Due to the physical separation that often exist between the two communities, the aid (including access to education) enjoyed by the refugees may be exaggerated in the eyes of the host communities (Dryden-Petersen and Hovil 2003). Thus, the social tensions between the two communities often turn into violence. Each of these reasons can be studied in its own way to better comprehend the complexity of the social tensions between refugees and host communities. Ways in which this study can benefit future studies is discussed in the "Conclusion" section of this paper.

Kebribeyah refugee camp is not an exception. It is very similar to the many refugee camps in which social tensions and incidents involving death and serious injuries take place on daily basis (Crisp 2000). Many host nations withdraw protection and directly or indirectly promote violence and atrocities against refugees by painting them as serious threats to the state and host communities (Fisk 2018). Though the state of Ethiopia is known for its welcoming arrangements for refugees from Eritrea and Somalia, the violence the refugees face is quite evident (Tesfaghiorghis 2019). The lead author's encounter with violence is an example of these forces coming hand in hand.

The violence the lead author either witnessed or faced varied from derogatory language, bullying, altercations, and physical violence that even ended in death. While some scholars credit these acts of violence to the prejudice toward refugees which is still widespread among individuals and nations (Piotrowski et al. 2019), some attribute the lack of social rest to the competition for resources and the unequal distribution of these resources

(Schmidt et al. 2015). Kebribeyah's case illustrates the evidence for the competition for limited and unequally distributed resources, most importantly education.

Education is important in enabling societal stability (Osler 2011). It fosters tolerance and lays the groundwork for voluntary behavior with the social norms (Heyneman, 2003a, b). It is only possible when the opportunities are distributed equally. Given opportunity, while there were over 32% of refugee students enrolled in secondary school (grade 1-8), only 10% of them attended high school (grade 9-12). Even though both the refugees and non-refugees had a high drop of enrollment between secondary school and high school, 20% of the local students were enrolled in high school, as supposed to 10% for the refugees (Abdullahi 2009). A more recent data collected by the UNHCR shows a similar number of school enrollments among Kebribeyah refugee students (UNHCR, 2019a, b, c).

Although UNHCR data captures the numbers of the Kebribeyah refugee students' enrollment, it lacks the provision of data on the local students. The education inequality the lead author witnessed while attending school at DAMHS is shown in the disparity of school enrollments between secondary and post-secondary schools. In the academic year of 2019/2020, the average school enrollment rate in the Kebribeyah camps for early childhood education stands at 84% (UNHCR, 2020a, b). For the primary level, the average school enrolment rate is 89%, while for secondary education 39% of the children are enrolled (UNHCR, 2020a, b).

The difference between the percentages of the primary and secondary school enrollment showcases the lead author's autoethnographic narrative on how the refugee students faced discouragement around this age group. While illustrating post-secondary experience, under the educational system, the lead author emphasizes the change in his way of life from secondary school to post-secondary. His narrative explains the routes in which refugee students took given that the educational system was no longer nurturing them as much as it did in the years. This can be credited to the fact that when they reach the time when they must attend high school, they join the local community's high school in Kebribeyah (Abdullahi 2009).

It is worth mentioning that Kebribeyah resides in the sub-Saharan African region, with half of its children not enrolled in school. This is quite evident in Kebribeyah, especially among the refugee community. In terms of quality education, the UN has recently put its efforts into the Jijiga region which Kebribeyah is part of (Peace and Development Trust Fund, 2017). The UN, with its aim to increase the number of refugee students enrolled in schools in Ethiopia, created a project to fund such a goal.

One accomplishment of the project was partnership with the ARRA, the Regional Education Bureau, and Woreda Education Offices to promote peaceful coexistence and integration of the refugees with host communities for longer sustainability beyond the duration of the project itself (Peace and Development Trust Fund, 2017).

Conclusion

Educational inequality exists in the refugee context, and at the same time, it plays a determining role in shaping the social cohesion between the host and refugee communities. In the low-income Global South, an inequality based on education opportunity could engender social tensions and exacerbate further communal conflicts.

The experiences from the two schools in Kebribeyah—the local and the refugee schools—were very different. The reason why the refugee children received a better educational environment in the earlier years was not necessarily because of better quality of education but rather for the international humanitarian support. For example, students from the refugee family get their primary school, intermediate (junior) school education from the schools which were constructed for them by different NGOs such as the International Rescue Committee (IRC), Administration of Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA), and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (Abdullahi 2009). On the contrary, local students' funding is shared between the regions and the federal government, which provides about 50 to 60% of the funding through non-itemized block grants to regional governments, as well as grants given directly to schools, but these schools are often underfunded (Trines 2019).

The illustrated discussions in this article also indicate that in some situations the refugee children might receive better educational environment, opportunities, and supports than the local children due to the direct support from humanitarian organizations. In the process of interventions, international humanitarian organizations sometimes undermine the existing poverty and socio-economic dynamics in the host communities. Host communities deserve a better appreciation since they take a large share of the social and resource scarcity burden due to the mass refugee influx in their areas.

The findings of this article are relevant to agencies, international organizations, governments, and other development partners as it sheds light on the realities and educational experiences of refugees around the world, particularly in the resource-constrained Global South. In addition, methodologically, this article is a critical advancement in the effort to decolonizing research; since in most cases, studies in emergency contexts are conducted by outside scholars or practitioners in a very

short amount of time. Often this can provide inadequate picture of the contexts and ongoing or emerging crisis. In response to that, using autoethnography, this study provides several important insights on “conflict” components that can emerge because of the unplanned and uncoordinated humanitarian and crisis response. Therefore, even though this article focuses on Kebribeyah refugee camps in Ethiopia, the findings are highly relevant to other crisis contexts and to the aid, policy, and decision-makers.

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Declarations

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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