

Organisational Practices for Sustainable Careers of Female Refugees: Employers' Perspective

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Abstract

Global conflicts have led to a growing number of refugees entering host-country labour markets. However, although female refugees often demonstrate strong motivation to work, they face multiple barriers, including language limitations, psychological or physical trauma, family responsibilities and limited access to professional networks.

Previous studies have examined refugee labour market integration mostly from policy and individual perspectives. Therefore, we address the research gap through the research question: How do employers and organisational practices contribute to the sustainable careers of female refugees?

We adopt the sustainable career framework, which is based on three dimensions: happiness (psychological dimension), health (physical dimension), and productivity (economic dimension). The analysis draws on 30 semi-structured interviews conducted with Lithuanian employers across diverse sectors, including education, public administration, retail and services, manufacturing, healthcare, transport and logistics, and IT.

The findings indicate that psychological well-being is fostered mainly through informal mechanisms, including mentoring, peer support or inclusive team climate. Yet, the outcomes are inconsistent across organisations as they largely depend on interpersonal goodwill rather than formalised policies.

Health and stability are ensured by offering immediate employment, flexible schedules, and supportive supervision. These “safe-first” measures reduce stress and financial insecurity. At the same time, such practices may delay longer-term career planning.

Finally, the productivity of female refugees appears most constrained due to structural challenges, especially slow recognition of qualifications and native language requirements. This usually leads to task simplification and on-the-job learning rather than structured career pathways, resulting in skills underutilisation and downgrading.

Keywords: Sustainable Career; Female Refugees; Human Resource Management; Employers; Organisational Practices; Lithuania.