





EXPLORING THE ROLE OF SOCIAL PROTECTION IN UK ASYLUM-SEEKER WELLBEING USING HUMAN SCALE DEVELOPMENT THEORY

📅 28 Aug 2025

Article

Exploring the Role of Social Protection in UK Asylum-Seeker Wellbeing Using Human Scale Development Theory

Michelle James ^{1,*}  and Rachel Forrester-Jones ² 

¹ Department of Social & Policy Sciences, University of Bath, Bath BA2 7JP, UK

² School of Health Studies, Faculty of Health Sciences, Western University, London, ON N6A 3K7, Canada; rforre@uwo.ca

* Correspondence: mj773@bath.ac.uk

Abstract

This article utilises Max-Neef's Human Scale Development (HSD) framework (1991) to answer two research questions: what impact does government and community-based social protection (SP) have on UK asylum-seeker wellbeing; how are interactions with all forms of SP, both as giver and receiver, supporting or harming the satisfaction of asylum-seekers' fundamental human needs at this time? The research study utilised a mixed-methods, collaborative, case study design situated within a refugee and asylum-seeker (RAS) support charity in Southwest England. Methods included peer-led Qualitative Impact Protocol interviews, Photovoice, surveys, and staff interviews. Data were subjected to an inductive, bottom-up process on Causal Map software (version 2, Causal Map Ltd., 39 Apsley Rd., Bath BA1 3LP, UK) and the analysis used the HSD framework. We found eight overarching themes. The four main needs-violators/destroyers of asylum-seeker wellbeing were dehumanisation, unfreedoms, enforced ignorance, and (re)traumatisation, and the four main needs-satisfiers were common humanity, autonomy and resistance, exerting agency through knowledge exchange, and healing. Five policy and practice-focused bridging satisfiers are recommended to help move individual and collective experience from a negative to a positive state in the research population. Policy and practice should be transparent and evidence-based, efficient and equitable, supportive of participation and productivity, trauma-informed, and multi-agency.



Summary

Michelle James and Rachel Forrester-Jones wrote an article in the International Migration section of the Social Sciences journal, in which they used Causal Map to analyse qualitative data to understand the impact of government and community-based social protection (SP) on UK asylum-seeker wellbeing and how interactions with all forms of SP are supporting or harming the satisfaction of asylum-seekers' fundamental human needs.

Abstract

This article utilises Max-Neef's Human Scale Development (HSD) framework (1991) to answer two research questions: what impact does government and community-based social protection (SP) have on UK asylum-seeker wellbeing; how are interactions with all forms of SP, both as giver and receiver, supporting or harming the satisfaction of asylum-seekers' fundamental human needs at this time?

The research study utilised a mixed-methods, collaborative, case study design situated within a refugee and asylum-seeker (RAS) support charity in Southwest England. Methods included peer-led Qualitative Impact Protocol interviews, Photovoice, surveys, and staff interviews. Data were subjected to an inductive, bottom-up process on Causal Map software and the analysis used the HSD framework.

We found eight over-arching themes. The four main needs-violators/destroyers of asylum-seeker wellbeing were dehumanisation, unfreedoms, enforced ignorance, and (re)traumatisation, and the four main needs-satisfiers were common humanity, autonomy and resistance, exerting agency through knowledge exchange, and healing.

Five policy and practice-focused bridging satisfiers are recommended to help move individual and collective experience from a negative to a positive state in the research population. Policy and practice should be transparent and evidence-based, efficient and equitable, supportive of participation and productivity, trauma-informed, and multi-agency.

Keywords: asylum seeker; refugee; social protection; wellbeing; social policy; human-scale development

[Access the article here](#)

Reference (APA): James, M., & Forrester-Jones, R. (2025). Exploring the Role of Social Protection in UK Asylum-Seeker Wellbeing Using Human Scale Development Theory. *Social Sciences*, 14(8), 474.