

Intergenerational refugee aspirations and academic success:

from uncertain pasts to promising futures

Key Messages

These key messages are from research into the impact of refugee-background parents' aspirations for their children. 50 participants were interviewed: educators, refugee parents, and academically successful children and young people. The participants' countries of origin include Afghanistan, Bhutan, Burundi, Nepal, Rwanda, Sudan, Syria, Uzbekistan and Vietnam.

The research highlights the important role of refugee-background parents in supporting the educational success of their children through valuing education, articulating aspirations and fostering dispositions for learning. As families with effective communication, positive cultural identity, and meaningful connection between the past, present and future, parents contribute significantly to their children becoming accomplished, confident and respectful young adults.

Sharing these key messages with other refugee-background parents can empower them to understand their important role and the capacity they have in supporting their children's educational success and promising futures.

Child–parent relationships: caring and respectful communication

When parents foster close, connected, caring family relationships, and enable their children to have a voice in discussions, with all parties contributing and listening, **children are then more likely to become young adults** who have strong, close connections with family, participating in two-way caring, empathetic and considerate conversations.



Towards a better life: from uncertainty to safety

When parents share in a considered way the reasons why they undertook their refugee journey, **children are more likely to become young adults** who draw from these stories purpose and motivation for their education and future, and retain strong connections with, and respect for, their parents.



New beginnings: foundations for the family's future

When parents work towards providing a secure foundation for their family and the children's education, **children are more likely to become young adults** who develop respect and gratitude for their parents' support, and in turn are motivated to work hard in their studies for a better future.





Cultural identity: from family to the wider community

When parents facilitate a strong home culture, including maintenance of their home language, and encourage their children to relate within the wider community, **children are more likely to become young adults** who respect the home culture and language, relate well with people from diverse cultural backgrounds, and are confident, culturally proud and accomplished young people.

Valuing education: aspirations for future opportunities

When parents promote positive dispositions for learning, share their aspirations and also listen to their children's aspirations, **children are more likely to become young adults** who confidently pursue their own aspirations for their future while valuing their parents' earlier aspirations, and are intrinsically self-motivated with a strong belief in their own abilities and efforts.



Parent-school relationships: building partnerships

When parents understand their role in partnership with schools, provide a supportive home environment that complements the school learning environment, and engage personally with their children's school, **children are then more likely to become young adults** who stay engaged in education, value their parents' contribution and connect with educators and mentors along the way.



The research was funded by the Channel 7 Children's Research Foundation and was conducted during 2019–2021. The full report can be accessed on the UniSA webpage: bit.ly/UniSARefugeeAspirationsandAcademicSuccess

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