Clocking In: Employment Outcomes for Unaccompanied Refugee Minors Leaving Foster Care

in the United States

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Abstract

Millions of people around the world experience forced displacement from their homes because of war, natural disaster, and political turmoil. A particularly vulnerable sub-group of this population includes children who migrate without parents or guardians, termed unaccompanied children (UC). In recent years, dramatic increases in the number of UC from the Central American countries of El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala have arrived to the US seeking asylum from violence and refuge from destitution. Yet, relatively little is known about outcomes for this population after their arrival. The current study uses a secondary analysis to explore employment outcomes for UC from El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, and 23 other countries who exited the Office of Refugee Resettlement's Unaccompanied Refugee Minors Program in 2015 *(N=187)*. Results indicate that each additional month in care increased the odds of being employed part-time or full-time at time of discharge by 3.2%. The odds of being employed part-time or full-time are 92.0% lower for UC from El Salvador, compared to UC from other countries. The results support immigration policy development that increases lengths of program duration for UC. Results also identify UC from El Salvador as particularly vulnerable to accessing employment opportunities.

Introduction

In recent years unaccompanied children (UC) from the Central American countries of El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala have entered the US at the US/Mexico border at steadily increasing rates. According to the US Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), the biggest spike occurred from 2013 (24,668 referrals) to 2014 (57,496 referrals). The largest number of referrals to ORR in recent years occurred in 2019, with 69,488 children (ORR, 2020). Little empirical research has been conducted to understand the needs of UC from the Northern Triangle after their arrival to the US, or how services might be developed to support these needs. This study provides an empirical analysis of one life domain – employment – that can be critical to UC's stabilization and integration in US society.

1.1 Unaccompanied Children Arrival and Placements

Some literature exists that describes the reasons UC from the Northern Triangle migrate to the US. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2014) completed a study on the migration experiences of 404 children who arrived to the US/Mexico border from the Northern Triangle. Findings suggest that UC, after traveling thousands of miles by walking, riding on trains, and at times being smuggled in trucks, travelled to the US in search of safety from imminent threat of harm. More specifically, UNHCR reports that 48% of children reported fleeing their country of origin because of threats from gangs or organized crime syndicates. There were also clear differences by country of origin: 66% of children from El Salvador reported fleeing organized crime, compared to 25% of children from Guatemala, and 44% of children from Honduras (UNHCR, 2014). In addition, 21% of children reported experiencing abuse in their homes from caregivers. Many reported migrating because of deprivation or widespread poverty: 7% of children from El Salvador, 29% of children from Guatemala, and

21% of children from Honduras. These findings suggest a multifaceted array of factors

contribute to UCs' decisions to migrate to the US, with the majority of children reporting

situations that meet standards for receiving international protection (UNHCR, 2014).

Upon arriving at the US/Mexico border, UC are usually apprehended and processed by

the U.S. Customs and Border Patrol. Within 72 hours of apprehension, UC from noncontiguous

countries should transition to the care of ORR, which is part of the U.S. Department of Health

and Human Services. ORR is the federal agency directly responsible for the care and protection

of UC. Upon processing by ORR, most UC who do not have a parent or caregiver in the US to

receive them are typically placed in short-term shelter placements operated by the ORR with the

exception of special cases. Such cases include UC under 10 years of age and pregnant/parenting

teens who may be placed in foster-care placements facilitated by refugee resettlement agencies

with federal oversight provided by the ORR (Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services

[LIRS], 2015). Currently, there is little research on the outcomes of UC from foster care in the

US who are not placed with a sponsor (Crea, Lopez, Taylor, & Underwood, 2017), although

limited evidence exists from other countries.

1.2 Employment and Immigrant Integration

The integration of immigrant populations almost invariably includes discussion on how

best to integrate immigrant skill and talent into the US economy. One pathway for this

integration is through securing and maintaining stable employment (National Academies of

Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine [NASEM], 2015). Understanding this pathway and

removing barriers to immigrant integration in the economy is particularly important given that as

recently as 2019, 17.4% of the US labor force was comprised of foreign-born persons (US

Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020). Compared to native-born US citizens,

immigrants in the US have low rates of unemployment, but they are more likely to be employed in low wage jobs that do not require the full use of their skills (Terrazas, 2011).

Refugees are a distinct population of immigrants in the US that experience unique challenges to their integration in the US economy (Ager & Strang, 2008). A major challenge for refugees is their experience of traumatic events prior to and during their migration to the US, and subsequent symptoms of mental health problems, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and anxiety, which impede their functioning in the workplace (Kirmayer et al., 2011). In a mixed-method study of refugees living on the US-Mexico border (*n*=39), Paat and Green (2017) found that pre-migration exposure to trauma was a risk factor for poor mental health including increased stress, sadness, and anxiety. Furthermore, respondents consistently reported that availability of employment opportunities in the US enhanced their ability to integrate into communities.

An aspect of navigating employment settings and the labor market that is unique to immigrant populations is legal status. Massey and Gentsch (2014) examined the wages of Mexican immigrants between 1970 and 2009. When controlling for factors such as age, occupation type, education level, and number of prior months in the US, the results of the study indicate that undocumented immigrants, compared to immigrants with immigration documents, earned 14 percent less in wages. Similarly, Bean and colleagues(2013) examined the socioeconomic integration of Mexican immigrants in the US using a sample of 935 participants drawn from the Immigrant Intergenerational Mobility in Metropolitan Los Angeles (IIMMLA) Study. Results indicate unauthorized immigrants earn 67 percent (male) and 66 percent (female) lower hourly wages compared to US-born workers. Furthermore, the wage gap is far less for other immigrants. For example, legal permanent residents earn 35 percent (male) and 31 percent

(female) lower wages compared to US-born workers (Bean et al., 2013). The evidence of a wage penalty for vulnerable immigrants, including undocumented immigrants, is particularly concerning given the importance of employment as a marker of integration for immigrants in the US (NASEM, 2015).

Much of the literature base on employment outcomes for refugees and immigrants has focused on adults; research on how UC in the US navigate employment opportunities is vastly underdeveloped (Berger Cardoso, et al., 2019). In FY2018, the majority of unaccompanied children referred to the Unaccompanied Refugee Minor (URM) foster care program were between the ages 15 and 17 (69%). Specifically, 16% of UC were between 0 and 12 years old, 12% were between 13-14 years old, 37% were between 15 and 16 years old, and 35% were 17 years old (ORR, 2020). Examining employment outcomes is an important area of new research with UC in the US, particularly because the majority are older and closer to entering employment settings. Understanding barriers and facilitators to employment can identify new ways of supporting UC as they strive to gain stable employment and successfully integrate into US communities, similar to other immigrant populations such as refugees (Terrazas, 2011). Research on vulnerable native-born adolescents in foster care in the US highlights the importance of employment during the transition from adolescence to young adulthood.

1.3 Foster Care and Employment Outcomes

Education is an important factor associated with stable employment and higher wages (Okpych & Courtney, 2014). However, research on education and employment outcomes for unaccompanied children is lacking. One multivariate, cross-sectional study examined predictors of educational attainment of unaccompanied children exiting the URM program in the US (n=193) (Crea, Hasson III, Evans, Cardoso, & Underwood, 2018). Results indicated that length

of time spent in care was positively associated with educational attainment. This study also found that permanent legal status was associated with greater high school graduation rates. Yet, significant variation in educational attainment emerged between children from the Northern Triangle and other countries of origin, as well as within these countries. For example, UC from Guatemala had higher odds of being enrolled in a K-12 education setting compared to children from other countries, UC from El Salvador had higher odds of having a high school diploma compared to children from other countries, and UC from Honduras had lower odds of being enrolled in college at their time of discharge from the URM program (Crea et al., 2018). Our literature search did not identify any other studies that have examined educational outcomes for unaccompanied children in US foster care.

By comparison, however, a wide body of research has been conducted in the area of supporting young adults as they age out of domestic US foster care (Dworsky & Gitlow, 2017; Naccarato, Brophy, & Courtney, 2010; Okpych & Courtney, 2014). This research clearly documents the importance of maintaining employment in the transition out of care for native-born US children exiting foster care (Reilly, 2003). In addition, Naccarato, and colleagues (2010) evaluated employment outcomes for youth exiting foster care and found the wages for youth exiting care were not enough to lift them out of poverty, leaving them economically unstable. Furthermore, research suggests difficulty with securing and maintaining employment for youth aging out of care can persist until into young adulthood. Stewart, et al. (2014) examined employment rates and earnings for young adults who aged out of foster care, and found that young adults experienced low employment rates through 24 years old, and until 30 years old in North Carolina. In addition, this research indicates there is some evidence that longer lengths of stay in foster care is associated with positive employment outcomes (Stewart et al., 2014).

There is an established body of research on employment outcomes for US-born youth exiting the foster care system (Dworsky & Gitlow, 2017; Okpych & Courtney, 2014). For example, Dworsky and Gitlow (2017) completed a cross sectional study examining the employment outcomes of 1,943 youth who recently exited the foster care system. Results of logistic regression models indicated that a variety of factors decrease the odds of being employed after exiting the foster care system, including being African American, compared to White or Latino, having more children at the time of exiting foster care, running away from foster care placements more frequently, and being involved in both child welfare and juvenile justice systems at the time of discharge (Dworsky & Gitlow, 2017).

For youth exiting foster care, education appears to be a particularly important investment for later positive employment outcomes. In a study based on a nationally representative sample of US youth, Okpych and Courtney (2014) compared employment outcomes between adolescents exiting foster care with similarly aged youth in the general population. Results indicated that youth exiting foster care earn approximately half as much income and have an employment rate 20 points lower than counterparts with no foster care experiences. Among youth exiting foster care, there is a positive relationship between education level and earnings; those with a high school diploma, compared to those with no education credentials, experience higher earnings. Youth exiting foster care with some college, 2-two year degrees, and 4-four year degrees experience higher earnings and a higher likelihood of being employed, compared to youth without a high school credential (Okpych & Courtney, 2014). This body of research highlights clear benefits of education attainment on employment rates and earnings for youth exiting foster care.

While there is much research that suggests transitioning out of foster care is associated with various life stressors for native-born US youth, including financial strain and difficulty accessing stable housing, little is known of the employment outcomes for unaccompanied children exiting foster care. The current study will address this gap by exploring the employment status at discharge from the URM foster care program in 2015. In light of the recent dramatic rise in youth arriving from the Northern Triangle countries, this investigation focuses on employment outcomes specifically for these children, compared to those from other countries of origin. The following research questions guide the study:

(1) To what extent is country of origin associated with employment outcomes?

(2) To what extent is length of stay in the URM program associated with the employment status?

(3) To what extent is legal status associated with employment status at time of discharge from the URM program?

Method

2.1 Sample

The data in the current cross-sectional study were collected by LIRS, one of two agencies that operate the URM program in the United States. The sample includes all children and youth who discharged from the LIRS URM foster care program in 2015 (*n*=193). While in care, URMs are placed in family-based foster care, group homes, and semi-independent living placements such as apartments for older youth, and URMs reside in California, Colorado, Massachusetts, Michigan, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, Washington D. C., and Washington state. The data used in this study are collected on a quarterly basis by case managers across the country, and report basic outcomes for youth who have discharged from the URM program. Missing data was

minimal (<2%). For the purposes of this cross-sectional analysis, six cases were dropped using list-wise deletion, resulting in an analytic sample of 187 participants. Three cases were dropped because their country of origin was listed as "N/A", two cases were dropped due to missing employment data, and one case was dropped due to missing age data. The study protocol was approved by the [*removed for blind review*] IRB. See Table 1 for demographic statistics.

2.2 Measures

The dependent variable in the study is employment status in FY 2015, measured as a three item categorical variable (1=employed full-time, 2=employed part=time, 3=not employed). Case workers documented if a UC was unemployed, or employed full or part time at the time of discharge from the URM program. This data was stored in an administrative database and later shared with researchers. Length of stay in foster care was measured as a continuous variable of the number of months a youth was in the URM program. Age at the time of discharge from the URM program was measured as a continuous measure (i.e., number of years). Gender is a categorical variable (1=male, 0=female). Country of origin was measured as three dichotomous variables: El Salvador (1=*Yes*, 0=*No*); Guatemala, (1=*Yes*, 0=*No)*; Honduras (1=*Yes*, 0=*No*). Legal permanency is measured as a dichotomous categorical variable (1=UC has a Green Card, is a Legal Permanent Resident, or has US citizenship, 0=Other Legal Status). The majority of children in the sample had a Green Card upon exiting the URM program *(n=117)* and a small number are Legal Permanent Residents *(n=27)* or US citizens *(n=3)*. Other legal statuses include Special Immigrant Juvenile Status *(n=19)* or T-visa *(n=7)*.

2.3 Analysis Procedure

The secondary analysis includes one-way ANOVA tests and chi-square analyses to explore bivariate relationships between employment outcomes and associated independent

variables. A multinomial logit regression model was created to explore factors that predict the

employment status for UC upon discharge from the URM program (full-time employment, part-

time employment, and not employed). Odds ratios are used to interpret the strength and direction

of various predictors and how they relate to employment status for UC exiting the URM

program. Various demographic variables included in the model as covariates are gender, length

of time (months) in the URM program, age of UC at admission to the URM program (in years),

legal permanency (whether or not the youth currently holds a Green Card, is a Legal Permanent

Resident, or a US Citizen), and country of origin (El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala).

Multicollinearity was tested using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) statistics, and no concern

was indicated (maximum VIF=1.20, mean VIF=1.11).

Following the use of the multinomial logit regression to understand how employment is

associated with various independent variables, the Independence of Irrelevant Alternatives

assumption (IIA) was tested. Results from the Hausman test reveal the IAA was violated. Closer

examination revealed the categories of Full-Time Employment and Part-Time Employment in

the dependent variable, Employment, should be combined (Full-Time Employment & Part-Time

Employment=1, Unemployed=0). This recoding led to the use of one binomial logit regression

model to examine how employment is associated with gender, age at discharge, length of stay,

legal status, and country of origin. Analyses were conducted using STATA 15 software.

Results

Most UC in the sample were not employed at time of discharge (39.57%), followed by

youth who were employed full-time (36.36%), and youth employed part-time (24.06%). The

majority of youth in the sample were male (77.54%), the mean length of stay in foster care was

35.35 months (*SD*=22.42), and the mean age of a youth at discharge was 19.87 years old

(*SD*=1.74). The majority of UC in the sample (64.17%) had legal status at time of discharge from

the URM program. Out of UC who had legal status at their time of discharge, more UC were

employed full or time part (67.50%) compared to not employed (32.50%) (*p* < .01). The majority

of UC in the sample migrated from the Northern Triangle, with 7.49% of youth from El

Salvador, 17.65% from Guatemala, and 28.34% from Honduras. Other countries represented in

the sample included Burma/Myanmar, Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Eritrea, Nepal,

Afghanistan, Ghana, India, Iran, Iraq, Sudan, and Tanzania.

One-way ANOVA tests indicated significant differences across employment status and

months in care and age at time of discharge (see Table 1). Specifically, a longer length of stay is

associated with being employed part-time or full-time at discharge (*p*<.001), and older UC are

more likely to be employed part-time or full-time at discharge (*p*<001).

[insert Table 1 about here]

Multivariate results are provided in Table 2. Model 1 is the full binomial logit regression

model. Results indicate that each additional month in care increases the odds of a UC being

employed full-time or part-time by 3.1 percent (*OR*=1.03, *CI*=1.01 – 1.05, *p*<.01), holding all

other variables constant. Results also indicate the odds of being employed full-time or part-time

are 91 percent lower for UC from El Salvador, compared to UC from other countries (*OR*=0.09,

CI=0.02 – 0.52, *p*<.01). A reduced model (Model 2) was constructed with only significant and

marginally significant covariates included. Goodness of fit statistics reveal a difference in BIC of

13.51, which strongly supports the reduced model. Results from Model 2 indicate that each

additional month in care increases the odds of a UC being employed part-time or full-time by

three percent (*OR*=1.03, *CI*=1.01 – 1.05, *p*<.001), holding the variables legal status and El

Salvador as a country of origin constant. Additionally, the odds of being employed part-time or

full-time are 92 percent lower for UC from El Salvador, compared to UC from other countries (*OR*=0.08, *CI*=0.01 – 0.38, *p*<.01), holding the variables months in care and legal status constant.

Discussion

Stable employment is a key part of successful integration for immigrants in the US (NASEM, 2015). UC are a particularly vulnerable group of immigrants arriving to the US who experience various traumatic events that influence their migration, including family separation and community violence in their country of origin (UNHCR, 2014). The purpose of this study was to examine how country of origin, length of stay in the URM program, and legal status are associated with UC employment status at time of discharge from the URM program. Overall, most UC in the study (39.57%) were unemployed at their time of discharge from the URM program. However, substantial numbers of UC were employed either full time (36.36%) or part time (24.06%) at time of discharge. The findings suggest UC in the URM program are exposed to supports that are associated with securing full- or part-time employment. After examining the rates of employment for UC exiting the URM program, the study also assessed how country of origin, length of stay in the URM program, and legal status are associated with employment outcomes.

The reduced model for the binomial logit regression model (Model 2) indicates the only covariates significantly associated with full-time employment or part-time employment at time of discharge are UC who are from El Salvador and the number of months in care at time of discharge. Results of the reduced binomial logit model indicate UC from El Salvador have significantly lower odds of being employed full or part time at their time of discharge from the URM program. This finding aligns with previous research that indicates UC from El Salvador have lower rates of employment after migrating to the US. For example, in a study involving

over 400 UC from Central America who were in ORR custody, researchers with UNHCR (2014)

found that only 50% of UC from El Salvador reported being engaged in a work setting,

compared to 68% of UC from Guatemala and 65% of UC from Honduras. The data used in the

current study were collected in 2015, suggesting that rates of full or part time employment could

be part of a trend for UC from El Salvador, however longitudinal data analysis is an important

area for future research.

One interpretation of this finding is the unique context of crime in El Salvador, and how

this compares with other Northern Triangle countries. Before data collection for the current

study, between 2012 and 2015, crime in El Salvador steadily increased. According to The World

Bank (2020), the homicide rate in El Salvador was 41.7 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2012, 40.2 in

2013, 62.3 in 2014, and 105.4 in 2015. The dramatic increase in homicides, in particular more

than double between 2013 and 2015, could have impacted UC's ability to attain and sustain

employment due to safety concerns and community violence. In stark contrast to El Salvador,

homicide rates in both Guatemala and Honduras declined between 2012 and 2015. For example,

the homicide rate per 100,000 inhabitants in Guatemala was 33.8 in 2012, 33.7 in 2013, 31.4 in

2014, and 29.4 in 2015. The homicide rate in Honduras per 100,000 inhabitants was 84.3 in

2012, 74.3 in 2013, 66.9 in 2014, and 57.5 in 2015 (The World Bank, 2020). What is clear from

this data is that community violence (UNHCR, 2014) was much more prevalent in El Salvador in

the years preceding data collection in the current study. It is possible community violence

negatively impacted UC's from El Salvador from attaining employment, and that this lingered

after their migration to the US.

The second main finding from the reduced binomial logit model is that UC who are in the

URM program longer periods of time have higher odds of discharging with part-time or full-time

employment. One possible explanation for this finding is that unaccompanied children who are

in care longer are also able to complete higher levels of education due to supports such as

tutoring, funding towards education, and program specific academic supports. This finding aligns

with previous scholarship documenting the association between education attainment and

employment rates and earnings (Okpych & Courtney, 2014). In addition, this aligns with

research that indicates longer lengths of stay in foster care are associated with improved

employment outcomes (Stewart et al., 2014). However, additional research is needed to better

understand nuanced factors unique to immigrant populations, such as location, politics, and

access to services, that could contribute to the positive effect of being in the URM program for

longer lengths of stay.

Interestingly, legal status, specifically having US Citizenship, Legal Permanent

Residency, or a Green Card at time of discharge, was not significantly associated with any

employment outcomes in either the full or reduced binomial logit models. This finding suggests

that, in the current sample, a UC's legal status at their time of discharge from the URM program

is not significantly associated with any employment outcome. This finding is interesting in two

respects. First, it conflicts with previous research which indicates legal status is a critically

important part of integration for vulnerable immigrants, including refugees (Ager & Strang,

2008). Second, previous research suggests not having legal status is associated with lower wages

for undocumented immigrants from Mexico, Dominican Republic, and Nicaragua (Donato,

Aguilera, & Wakabayashi, 2005), whereas results in the current paper indicate having legal

status is also not associated with employment status.

One possible explanation for these discrepancies is that, while legal status is important

for all immigrants, UC are particularly vulnerable and may have other acute needs (e.g. health,

mental health) that supersede, temporarily, the challenges of legal status. For example, research

indicates UC in the US have elevated rates of PTSD, depression, and anxiety (Berger Cardoso,

2018), and this finding is consistent with UC in other contexts, such as the United Kingdom

(Bronstein, Montgomery, & Ott, 2013). In addition, research suggests UC present complex

mental health challenges, including unique symptom profiles of PTSD (Hasson III et al., 2020).

The discrepancies in the findings for legal status suggest more research is needed on the effects

of legal status on employment for UC. Finally, the results do not indicate that gender is

associated with higher odds of being employed full-time. This finding is at odds with previous

research that suggests female UC are more likely to struggle with various life domains, including

mental health (Vervliet, Lammertyn, Broekaert, & Derluyn, 2014).

The findings of the study provide important implications for shaping social work practice

with UC along with shaping continued debate on immigration reform. First, the results indicate

that UC from El Salvador, compared to UC from other countries, have lower odds of being

employed full or part-time at time of discharge. This finding can help social workers and allied

helping professionals critically examine the needs of UC from El Salvador upon their arrival to

the US and more closely examine factors that may be related to their difficulty with securing

employment upon discharge from care. A second major implication from the results of the study

can help inform immigration policy reform. The finding that each additional month is care is

associated with higher odds of being employed part-time or full-time at time of discharge

suggests the URM program provides levels of support for UC to integrate into communities.

Continued debate about immigration policy reform should use this result to advocate for

enhanced support for UC in the URM program. Because extended lengths of stay in the URM

program are associated with higher odds of UC being employed part-time or full-time at time of

discharge, and thus are meaningfully involved with and contributing to the economy, policy makers should view the URM program as an investment in helping UC become meaningful participants in the economy and members of the community.

Along with practice, the results of the study offer implications for future research. First, because of the small sample size, the current study was not able to examine employment outcomes for part-time and full-time separately. Future research should examine employment outcomes with larger samples to assess any differences between full and part-time employment. Second, future research on employment outcomes for UC should include analysis of wages. Research indicates other groups of immigrants, for example undocumented Mexican immigrants, experience lower wages in the US labor market due to legal status restrictions (Durand, Massey, & Pren, 2016). Additional research should also track employment outcomes and wage trends using longitudinal research designs so employment can be examined over longer periods of time. Finally, future research should employ qualitative methods focused on how unaccompanied children describe work settings and their experiences navigating the labor market. This research method can provide researchers, policy makers, and clinicians detailed descriptions of the challenges UC experience navigating the labor market, UC strengths and assets, and how they experience resilience. In addition, qualitative research can help amplify the voices of this marginalized and stigmatized population.

4.1 Strengths and Limitations

The study has numerous strengths, including use of a unique sample of a particularly vulnerable population of immigrants in the US who are especially hard to reach for research purposes. Second, the study is among the first known attempts to apply quantitative research methods to understand dynamics influencing employment outcomes for UC in the US. However,

several limitations should also be mentioned. First, the study is a secondary analysis using data from an administrative data set at a non-profit, were not randomly sampled, and are not representative of all UC in the US. However, the sample does include all URMs served by the agency, which is about half of those served in the US. Second, the study is cross sectional in design, and only examines the point of time a UC discharged from the URM program. This design limits our ability to assess causality in the relationships between factors and the dependent variable. Third, the analyses indicate a binomial logit regression model, with employed full-time and part-time combined as the dependent variable, is the best fitting model for the data. Because this model combined both employment statuses, it was not possible to determine whether full-time or part-time employment had different sets of predictors. Finally, a major limitation in the study is the limited number of covariates available in the administrative data set. Future research would benefit from including covariates specific to the context of employment, including variables that measure the number of individual jobs a UC works, wage data, number of hours worked per day, week, and month, work settings and conditions, and benefits such as health insurance and paid time off.

4.2 Conclusion

Due to war, political conflict, and natural disasters, increased numbers of people are experiencing forced displacement from their homes. Many of these individuals are UC who experience profound hardships prior to and during their forced migration, and they deserve stability and opportunity during their placement in the US. Part of this opportunity is the ability to gain and sustain employment. This paper provides compelling evidence that can help guide the implementation of social work interventions to support this vulnerable population as they adjust to living in the US. In addition, the results of this study can guide policy debates and

developments to ensure future immigration reform meets the needs of the most vulnerable

individuals seeking refuge in the United States.

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Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Differences in Employment Status

	Total (*n*=187) % or M(SD)	Employed FT (*n*=68) % or M(SD)	Employed PT (*n*=45) % or M(SD)	Not Employed (*n*=74) % or M(SD)
Months in Care	35.35 (22.42)	40.56 (22.48)	42.09 (23.46)	26.44 (18.73)
Age at Discharge	19.87 (1.74)	20.11 (2.20)	20.54 (1.33)	19.25 (1.22)
Gender (male)	77.54	41.38	22.07	36.55
Legal Status	64.17	69.12	75.56	52.70
Country of Origin El Salvador	7.49	7.14	7.14	85.71
Guatemala	17.65	39.39	15.15	45.45
Honduras	28.34	43.40	20.75	35.85
Other	46.52	35.63	32.18	32.18

Table 2. Determinants of Binomial Logit Regression Models

	Model 1 FT/PT Employment OR (CI)	Model 2 FT/PT Employment OR (CI)
Months in Care	1.03** (1.01 – 1.05)	1.03*** (1.01 – 1.05)
Age at Discharge	1.19 (0.97 – 1.47)	
Gender (male)	1.84 (0.82 – 4.14)	
Legal Permanency (Green Card Holder/US Citizen)	1.99 (0.89 – 4.47)	2.11 (0.97 – 4.58)
Country of Origin (Other) El Salvador	0.09* (0.02 – 0.52)	0.08** (0.01 – 0.38)
Guatemala	1.00 (0.39 – 2.54)	
Honduras	1.67 (0.71 – 3.95)	
N	187	187
Constant	0.01	0.37
AIC	222.06	221.48
BIC	247.91	234.40

Notes: 95% confidence intervals are in parentheses. Model 1 is the full binomial logit regression model; Model 2 is the reduced binomial logit regression model.
*p<.05, **p<.01. ***p<.001