Executive summary (maximum 200 words)
Minnesota is home to the largest population of Somali refugees in the U.S. Many Somali refugees have survived traumatic events that could lead to long-term emotional, physical and psychosocial difficulties including depression and anxiety. The median age of Somalis in the U.S. is 25, which is 12 years younger than the median age of the general population. Somali young adults affected by mental health issues (e.g., depression and anxiety) might resort to harm of self or others and are less likely to fully integrate into society. There is scarcity of reports detailing effective means of coping specific to this group. Among persons who use religion as a source of coping, there are many health benefits including decreased symptoms of depression and anxiety. As many Somali young adults are devout Muslims, it is plausible that these health benefits might be evident in this population. I propose to examine associations among symptoms of depression, symptoms of anxiety, well-being and use of religious coping among Somali college students. This study will yield information about a potentially sustainable, inexpensive and culturally acceptable coping mechanism for Somali college students who are at risk.

Approvals

Check all appropriate approvals required for your proposal. Approvals must be obtained prior to receipt of funding. If you have applied for approval but have not yet received it, indicate that below.

IRB ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ NA ☒ Application pending
IRB application will be submitted in March.

Other ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ NA ☐ Application pending Specify:

Checklist

☒ The proposal is 1000 words or less excluding budget, biographies, references and citations.

☒ The proposal includes a work plan with a specific timeline using months or quarters to identify work to be done and completion dates.

☒ The proposal includes a 1-2 paragraph biography of the applicant and all co-investigators.

☒ The budget form is complete including the funds sought for this project, other pending applications for this project, and the amount/source of matching or other funds.

☒ The applicant’s faculty advisor is copied on the application email. Professional students w/o advisors check NA.

☒ All necessary approvals are pending or received.
Religious Coping, Symptoms of Depression and Anxiety, and Well-being Among Somali College Students

Project Description and Importance

There are multifaceted challenges in the care of those affected by or at risk for mental health ailments; this is especially true among refugee young adults. In light of this, I propose to examine associations among symptoms of depression, symptoms of anxiety, well-being and use of religious coping in a sample of 150 Somali college students attending the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities and Augsburg College. The complex and protracted conflict in Somalia has resulted in thousands of refugees. Many Somali refugees have survived traumatic events that could lead to long-term emotional, physical and psychosocial difficulties including depression and anxiety.¹

This project is important because a large number of Somali college age immigrants reside in Minnesota, who might be or might become affected by mental health disorders. College students are the focus of study because in Minnesota, the Somali population is the largest in the country and has a median age of 25 years, which is 12 years younger than the median age of the general population.⁷ Additionally, published reports reveal moderate to high rates of anxiety, depression, truancy, chemical use and trauma among young adult Somalis.⁴ Moreover, refugee young adults affected by mental health disorders (e.g., depression and anxiety) might resort to harming themselves or others and are less likely to fully integrate into society.⁸ It is therefore, of utmost importance to ensure and support the well-being of this population. Failure to do so is detrimental to their productivity in many spheres of life and is tantamount to transmission of the effects of trauma to future generations.⁷

Mental health ailments create a ripple effect in global health; depression has been cited as the leading cause of disability worldwide and a major contributor to the global burden of
It has been reported that 50% of mental health disorders are diagnosed as early as 14 years of age and 75% by age 24. Consequently, some Somali college students are most likely already diagnosed or are soon to be diagnosed with mental health disorders. In addition, the National Research Council [NRC] estimated the cost of treatment and loss in productivity in young people due to mental, emotional and related disorders at 247 billion per annum. We, as a society, have not been successful in attaining the goal of long-term health and well-being of those who suffer from mental health disorders. There is a dearth of documented means of coping that are acceptable, appropriate, and successful among Somali young adults who report symptoms of depression and anxiety.

Somali youth are predominantly Sunni Muslims and generally tend to adhere to the dictates of Islam. Religious coping has been cited as a strong predictor of physical and mental health, and people tend to turn to matters of faith when faced with crises. Over time and in many studies, scientific evidence has refuted claims such as those by Sigmund Freud who depicted religion as a fantasy and an infantile projection. It is believed that among persons who use religion as a source of comprehending and coping with crises, there are many health benefits including decreased symptoms of depression and anxiety. It is therefore, plausible that the effects reported in previous studies will also be evident among Somali college students who utilize religious coping.

**Innovative Contribution to Interdisciplinary Work**

Examining the use of religious coping in this population will bring me a step closer to understanding an inexpensive, accessible, and culturally acceptable coping mechanism. The challenges of the mental health needs of Somali college students cut across many disciplines and are not restricted to one lens of inquiry. Therefore, achieving the aim of this study will contribute
Eunice M. Areba  
Consortium on Law and Values in Health, Environment & the Life Sciences  

to and inform the work of other professionals who serve Somali college students, especially 
educators, healthcare providers and policy makers. In addition, instruments such as the BRIEF- 
RCOPE, which has not been used previously with Somali college students, have been adapted to 
this population’s social and cultural context. Testing this instrument and other well-established 
measures of the other key variables among Somali college students will validate their use for 
future studies in this population. 

Mental health in culturally diverse groups rarely evolves into a public conversation. Ideally, we should strive to promote well-being and prevent the manifestations of symptoms of depression and anxiety among our young adult college students. Results from this study will provide evidence regarding whether religious coping is a potentially useful and low-cost coping mechanism and provide groundwork for a program of research.

**WORK PLAN 2013-2014**

**SPRING 2013**  
- Refine theoretical framework and instruments  
- Submit abstract to American Psychiatric Nurses Association (APNA)  
- Submit IRB application  
- Start recruitment

**SUMMER 2013**  
- Administer surveys  
- Start preliminary data analysis  
- Start writing thesis

**FALL 2013**  
- Present results at APNA conference  
- Complete data analysis  
- Continue writing thesis  
- Start working on publications

**SPRING 2014**  
- Oral defense of thesis  
- Continue working on publications  
- Submit narrative and financial report to the Consortium by the end of spring semester.
References


Eunice M. Areba
Consortium on Law and Values in Health, Environment & the Life Sciences

Biography

I am currently an international PhD student from Kenya studying in the School of Nursing, with anticipated candidacy by the end of February. As a public health nurse, my research interest lies in the micro to macro level issues at the nexus of health, community, environment and development, especially among refugees from Sub-Saharan Africa. Working as a research assistant and presenting research findings on health and education of minorities and refugees at the American Public Health Association, the Midwest Nursing Research Society and Continuing Medical Education conferences has lead me to be particularly interested in effective community-based coping mechanisms in young adults who are refugees. Additionally, participation in an integrative leadership workshop through the Boreas Leadership Program has equipped me to “work across diverse and sometimes conflicting disciplines.”

Influenced by my experience in the clinical and academic settings, I have a deep interest in innovative and collaborative education of healthcare professionals. As a teaching assistant in the School of Nursing, I have had the opportunity to teach in various settings including in clinical, lab, web-based, interactive television, and traditional classroom settings. To further my teaching abilities, I completed the Preparing Future Faculty Program in the Center for Teaching and Learning, from which, I received a certificate of participation and a letter of recognition. The experiences both in research and teaching have developed my abilities to conduct the proposed independent research project and communicate findings to the community, fellow scholars, health care professionals, and future students. My education at the University of Minnesota has, thus far, been supported through several awards and scholarships through the School of Nursing Foundation, the graduate school, and the Kenyan Embassy.
**Project Title:** Religious Coping, Symptoms of Depression and Anxiety, and Well-being Among Somali College Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description &amp; justification</th>
<th>Requested funding</th>
<th>Matching/other funding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Your stipend</td>
<td>The graduate assistant rate at the school of nursing is $19 - $26/hr. I have budgeted for an 8 week stipend in the months of July 1st - August 31-2013 at a rate of 20 hrs. per week @ $24.94/hr amounting to $4,322. Fringe benefits are calculated at a rate of 15.7%, amounting to $ 678. These estimates were derived from the UMN EGMS website.</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Other personnel</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Speaker honoraria</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Supplies &amp; Services</td>
<td>SPSS student license for data analysis. Pricing estimate is through the University’s bookstore.</td>
<td>$180</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Equipment</td>
<td>Survey administration incentive: A $20 UMN/ Augsburg bookstore gift card for each of the 150 students applied towards book purchases. Each student will fill in 4 surveys.</td>
<td>$3,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Travel</td>
<td>Research dissemination: American Psychiatric Nurses Association (APNA) conference in San Antonio, TX, November 9-12, 2013. Registration fees ($395), Lodging ($106* 3 days), Meals and incidentals ($66*3 days), Transportation ($350). Expense estimated per the U.S. General Service Administration FY 2013 rates for San Antonio, TX at <a href="http://www.gsa.gov/portal/category/100120">http://www.gsa.gov/portal/category/100120</a> used by University of MN.</td>
<td>$1,261</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Subtotal research expenses (2-6)**: $4,441

**TOTAL BUDGET**: $9,441

**Budget Guidelines**

1. Stipend justification. You must justify the amount of stipend you are requesting by identifying the number of hours you plan to work on the project and the hourly wage used for research assistants in your department. Include fringe benefits.

2. Identify all other personnel to be paid from this grant including interpreters, travel guides, etc. and justify their salary by identifying the number of hours they will work and the hourly wage. What is the hourly wage based on?

3. For colloquia, identify the number of speakers and the amount of honoraria you will provide.

4. Supplies and services. List out all supplies and their estimated costs. Explain in line 7 or in the body of your proposal what the supplies will be used for.

5. Equipment costs are allowable only if the justification clearly shows that the equipment is necessary for the project. Include explanation of what will happen to equipment at completion of project.

6. Travel costs must include a description of the purpose of the travel, start and stop dates of travel, transportation costs, housing costs, and allowable per diem (use University rates found at http://travel.umn.edu).
The following items deal with ways you coped with a significant trauma or negative event in your life. There are many ways to try to deal with problems. These items ask what part Islam played in what you did to cope with this negative event. Obviously different people deal with things in different ways, but we are interested in how you tried to deal with it. Each item says something about a particular way of coping. We want to know to what extent you did what the item says. How much or how frequently. Don’t answer on the basis of what worked or not – just whether or not you did it. Use these response choices. Try to rate each item separately in your mind from the others. Make your answers as true FOR YOU as you can.

1 = Not at all  
2 = Somewhat  
3 = Quite a bit  
4 = A great deal

1. Looked for a stronger connection with Allah
2. Sought Allah’s love and care
3. Sought help from Allah in letting go of my anger
4. Tried to put my plans into action together with Allah
5. Tried to see how Allah might be trying to strengthen me in this situation
6. Asked for forgiveness for my sins
7. Focused on Islam to stop worrying about my problems
8. Wondered whether Allah had abandoned me
9. Felt punished by Allah for my lack of devotion
10. Wondered what I did for Allah to punish me
11. Questioned Allah’s love for me
12. Wondered whether my mosque had abandoned me
13. Decided the devil made this happen
14. Questioned the power of Allah