



Resilience and coping strategies among migrant youth: a systematic review of the literature

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Abstract

The resilience of migrant youth is under-theorised and poorly understood, yet it is crucial for successful adaptation and integration. This systematic review examines the literature on resilience and coping strategies among migrant youth. A systematic search of four academic databases (Emerald Insight, Google Scholar, ProQuest, and Scopus) identified 1,273 studies, of which 20 met the eligibility criteria for inclusion. The studies were thematically analysed, and their methodological quality was assessed using the Effective Public Health Practice Project (EPHPP) and the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) tools. Findings indicate the importance of family, peers, community support, and personal agency in fostering resilience. Despite growing empirical evidence on the impacts of social networks on migrant youth's resilience and well-being, there is a research gap regarding the role of family processes and parental mental health literacy in promoting resilience among migrant youth experiencing psychosocial externalising challenges. Our findings indicate a need to adopt an intersectional and ecological lens to fully understand migrant youth experiences, resilience and coping strategies. There is a need for more evidence on the effects of specific types of resilience on the adversity experienced by migrant youth. However, the scope and methodology of the included studies are limited, necessitating further research to elucidate how resilience and coping support the well-being of this population.

Keywords Adaptation and integration · Coping strategies · Mental health and wellbeing · Migrant and refugee youth · Resilience

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Introduction

Over the past five decades, there has been a consistent increase in the number of migrant youth seeking opportunities in Western countries (Bates-Eamer, 2019; Udah et al., 2019a, 2019b). As of May 2024, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) estimates that the global count of international migrants is approximately 281 million, constituting approximately 3.6 per cent of the global population (International Organisation for Migration, 2024). In the last quarter of 2023, 40 per cent of the 117 million forcibly displaced persons were young people under 18 (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2023). Globally, 15 per cent of all international migrants are also young people under 20 (United Nations, 2013). Thus, global migration statistics indicate that a significant proportion of the youth population is involved in migration.

Migration is a complex and evolving phenomenon shaped by factors unique to each individual and their circumstances (Sabie et al., 2022). In many cases, the pursuit of resilience and survival becomes paramount, particularly for those navigating unconventional migration routes (Ullah et al., 2022). Migration is commonly influenced by ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors, with the former typically involving adverse conditions such as social, political, environmental, and economic crises, while the latter often reflects positive attractions, drawing individuals towards destinations that promise better opportunities (Naval et al., 2024). Given the substantial involvement of youth in both regional and international migration, these push and pull factors are central to scholarly discussions and vital for formulating effective migration and integration policies. Such policies are essential for fostering resilience and supporting migrant youth’s survival in their new environments (Boland et al., 2024; Selotlegeng-Mbe, 2023).

According to the European Union initiative, youth refers to people aged 13 to 30 (European Belmonte & McMahon, 2019; Commission, 2011). However, the World Health Organisation (WHO) defines youth as persons aged 15–24 (World Health Organisation, 2021). Migrants are individuals who relocate to another country for various reasons (UNHCR, 2018). Thus, migrant youth comprise diverse groups with varied migration intentions, goals, and aspirations. A proportion of migrant youth are identified as unaccompanied migrants who arrive at their destinations without parents, caregivers, or responsible adults (Stevens et al., 2024).

Regardless of their migration intentions and goals, they generally experience varying precarious social and health conditions (Gyan et al., 2024). Forcibly displaced migrant youth are often victims of human rights violations, including persecution, torture, and deprivation of liberty, as well as political instability, armed conflict, natural disasters, and pandemics (Martin, 2017). Driven by a desperate need for survival and the pursuit of their dreams and aspirations, they are often victims of modern slavery (Dryjanska et al., 2022) and experience discrimination, xenophobia, and homelessness (Kaur et al., 2021). These experiences may lead to frustration, aggression, and even suicidal ideation (Cogo et al., 2022). Generally, the precarious experiences of migrants may heighten their vulnerability and affect adaptation and integration in host countries, given limited knowledge and understanding of their resilience and coping strategies. Hence, this review draws on intersectional, ecological, and mul-

tisystemic lenses to examine migrant youth's resilience. It aims to understand, in depth, migrant youth resilience and coping strategies, and the factors that promote resilience and constitute risks to it, in light of their multifaceted challenges and conditions of vulnerability.

Resilience is the capacity of individuals, groups, or populations to thrive in the face of adversity (Denckla et al., 2020; Owen, 2023; Ungar, 2021). Although resilience is enabled by personal traits, attributes, or qualities that help individuals overcome challenges (Connor & Davidson, 2003; Owen, 2023), it is also developed through complex ecological interactions between individuals and various systems (Udah et al., 2024). In this context, resilience extends an individual's innate capacity to overcome life challenges and becomes an influential process facilitated by institutions such as government, families, and communities (Preston et al., 2022). Hence, personal attributes and institutional resources may serve as promotive and protective factors that foster resilience among migrant youth. Resilience frameworks emphasise the dynamic and complex nature of resilience, recognising the essential roles of ecological factors in supporting or hindering its development (Kondili et al., 2024). In addition, a proposed theoretical model underscores the importance of an individualised approach to understanding the integration and well-being of young migrants (Marcos et al., 2024). This individualised approach incorporates intercultural, sociological, and ecological factors that shape migrants' experiences, fostering resilience by acknowledging intersectionality across race, ethnicity, gender, and social status.

These frameworks reveal the interplay of diverse factors shaping our understanding of resilience and highlight the pressing realities facing vulnerable groups. They underscore a collective social responsibility to advance research, policies, and interventions aimed at migrant health and social well-being by understanding the unique resilience processes shaped by time, location, personal experiences, and environmental factors (Ullah et al., 2022). These resilience processes and factors are often linked to adversity, risks, and outcomes that hinge on an individual's physical and social capacity to recover rather than solely on personal agency (Udah et al., 2024).

In light of the adversities that challenge migrant youth resilience, social constructionists advocate conceptualising resilience with a focus on the social and cultural communities that influence intersectional experiences and identity (Alamgir et al., 2024). Framing resilience solely through individual agency can limit our understanding, as it overlooks the environmental and social factors that shape resilience as a contextual phenomenon (Udah et al., 2019a, 2019b, 2024). Practices that build resilience within migrant communities often involve strengthening community resilience.

Experts identify four key factors that strengthen community resilience in migration contexts: economic factors addressing employment and resource access, community competence in skill development, effective communication with health and social services, and social capital for network-building and essential support (Olcese et al., 2024). Community resilience thus mitigates risk factors and strengthens the protective factors essential for migrant resilience. A systematic review by Fadhli et al. (2024) has identified evidence supporting a range of risk and protective factors affecting migrant survival, health, and well-being. Therefore, this review is pivotal for an in-depth understanding of resilience and coping strategies among young, vul-

nerable migrant groups who are often victims of social exclusion and discrimination but strive for a better future (Cigrand et al., 2022).

The term ‘coping’ is often used interchangeably with ‘resilience’ to refer to adaptive capabilities. It is conventionally conceptualised as one’s practical and proactive approach to ameliorating, enduring, accepting, avoiding, or dealing with stressful situations (Mayordomo et al., 2016). Coping entails both cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage stressors and primarily answers the question of ‘how’ a situation or problem was handled or overcome through direct or indirect actions (Hallen et al., 2020). Hence, coping strategies comprise practical approaches that migrant youth employ cognitive and behavioural actions to foster resilience. Although resilience is often used interchangeably with coping, a body of literature suggests the two are distinctive (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013). For instance, personal, social, and community resources such as motivation, family and friends, and skill acquisition may promote resilience.

In contrast, the effort required to seek and apply these resources may translate into coping. Thus, while resilience involves a multifactorial, multisystemic, and dynamic ‘capacity’ to bounce back, coping reflects the ‘what’ and ‘how’, or the efforts applied in managing adversity (Hallen et al., 2020). In other words, the concept of coping may be strongly and positively associated with resilience. In this review, coping is represented as a complementary variable to resilience. Hence, in understanding resilience, coping strategies may reflect resilience factors adopted by migrant youth through instinctive behaviours, such as ‘proactively’ reaching out to a family member, a mentor, a referee, or a community support facility for mental health, social or economic support. Thus, factors that promote resilience may translate to coping strategies when adopted and applied by this group to extricate themselves from adversity. In confronting challenges that are often unique to their specific environments and circumstances, they strive to be resilient, adopting and implementing strategies despite societal labelling as an economic burden (Bali, 2023) and “perceived” vulnerability (Udah et al., 2019a, 2019b).

Vulnerability is a concept that captures individuals’ susceptibility to risk exposure. Although dynamic, it typically connotes powerlessness, weakness, dependence, and limited capacity (Udah et al., 2019a, 2019b). Hence, some individuals or groups may be rendered more vulnerable than others due to the effects of socioeconomic inequities and dominant societal ideologies, such as ethnic and racial discrimination, marginalisation, and social injustice (Udah et al., 2019a, 2019b). In this sense, vulnerability, as a social concept, may strengthen understanding of migrants’ distinctive lived experiences, risk factors, and resilience capacity (Gilodi et al., 2023). From a risk perspective, individuals or groups with a higher likelihood of exposure to discriminatory actions, violence, natural disasters, and socioeconomic inequity are considered vulnerable (International Organisation for Migration, 2019).

Important determinants of migrant youth’s vulnerability may include membership of a minority or culturally and linguistically diverse group, systemic exclusion, and preponderant political hegemonic anti-immigration state policies (International Organisation for Migration, 2019). When vulnerability denotes a decreased capacity or its absence, it often corresponds with a lowered level of autonomy, leading to

increased dependency (Gilodi et al., 2023). These instances of vulnerability highlight mechanisms that may underpin coping capacity and foster resilience.

Migrant youth face critical challenges stemming from their vulnerability levels as they navigate the precarious path of ecological transition: a shift from their home country's accustomed social, cultural, psychological, and political ways of life to a new approach to health and well-being (Mansouri et al., 2023). While some migrant youth move to safer countries, many are trapped in humanitarian crises with their families in war-torn countries and hard-to-reach military settings, where they are geographically isolated, marginalised, and silenced, necessitating ethical, culturally sensitive, and effective interventions and engagement (Ullah, 2024a).

Confronted with other prevailing nuances and ideologies, such as othering and bullying (Correa-Velez et al., 2010; Heyeres et al., 2021), young migrants also face language and educational barriers, as well as limited job prospects (Joyce & Liamputtong, 2017). These challenges negatively affect successful social integration, assimilation, and adaptation (Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2001; Heyeres et al., 2021; Piller, 2016), leading to distinctive acculturative stress (Joyce & Liamputtong, 2017). Worsened by the absence or loss of parents, other family members, and social networks, they may experience protracted mental health implications, such as depression and symptoms associated with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Derluyn & Broekaert, 2007; Keles et al., 2018). Hence, they are more likely to require emergency and hospital care than the local populations (Markkula et al., 2018; World Health Organisation, 2021). However, compared with their local peers, young migrant youth may have difficulty accessing healthcare services in host countries, leading to poorer health outcomes, including infectious diseases and chronic illnesses (World Health Organisation, 2021).

For instance, limited access to healthcare services and xenophobia (Ullah et al., 2022) contribute to the worst mental health outcomes among migrants, especially during times of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Sol'a-Sales et al., 2021). These experiences attest to the health inequity and social exclusion experienced by young minority populations, particularly young, active groups who may be pursuing educational, economic, and social engagements with limited and restricted residency permits, which limit access to essential health and social support services. Hence, migrant youth's resilience has become increasingly relevant in the post-pandemic era. Recovery from the health and socioeconomic challenges encountered during pre- and post-pandemic periods drives the pursuit of resilience and stability among migrant populations. These individuals adopt various strategies for survival, including patience, acquiring new skills, starting businesses, and seeking new employment opportunities (i.e., coping) (Ullah et al., 2022).

Migrant youth represent a potentially significant proportion of the immigrant population, given their talents, adaptability, self-confidence, resourcefulness, and entrepreneurial attributes (Vries et al., 2024). Therefore, they have the potential to make meaningful social and economic contributions to their host nations if adequately supported. While anti-immigration tensions and rhetoric continue to dominate social and political discourse (Kokkonen & Linde, 2025), young migrants, particularly those from diverse cultural backgrounds, war-torn regions, and low- and middle-income countries, often bear the brunt of social, emotional, and psychological trauma (How-

ard et al., 2024). This may precipitate anxiety, depression, and a loss of motivation, casting doubts on their identity, sense of belonging, and future aspirations, which are essential to their resilience and integration into the community. Thus, the dynamic nature of migration underscores the need to continually review and refine policies on migration, integration, and intervention that promote migrant youth well-being (Coninck & Solano, 2023). The objectives of this review are to identify clusters of resilience factors and survival strategies that have been developed and utilised to build and strengthen resilience among young migrants.

Hence, this review is guided by the following questions:

1. What factors promote resilience?
2. What coping strategies are used to support survival and well-being?
3. What are the characteristics and methodological quality of the included studies?

Given these questions and objectives, this review advances knowledge and contributes to a broader debate about migrant youth's resilience. Specifically, it highlights risks and resilience-promoting factors that are critical to effective social and health policies and to informed decisions that enhance young migrants' well-being.

Moreover, while clinical interventions targeting migrant youth are prioritised, this review examines the relevance and integration of ecological factors across individuals, families, and communities in health promotion, planning, and social interventions. Although resilience models and frameworks are generally applied across multifaceted domains, this review fills a gap in the literature by illuminating the potential of an integrated socioecological and multisystemic resilience framework suited to this demographic population and its unique challenges.

Methods

Relevant peer-reviewed literature was synthesised to provide an overview of migrant youth resilience, drawing on their lived experiences. The justification for this review was informed by (a) a preliminary search of existing literature reviews and (b) a search of the PROSPERO database for planned reviews on migrant youth resilience. After establishing a gap in the literature and reaching consensus on the research protocol, we registered the review (PROSPERO CRD42024532283) before commencing, in compliance with the PRISMA guidelines shown in Fig. 1. We searched for peer-reviewed English-language articles published between 2014 and 2024, focusing on resilience, coping strategies, and survival among migrant youth aged 15–29. The age bracket (15–29) was chosen to account for age differences in classifications used by international organisations such as the WHO and the EU (Table 1).

The broader EU classification of youth (13–30), unlike WHO's definition of youth (15–24), aligns with previous research showing that youth transitions in psychosocial development, education and employment generally extend into the late twenties in the European context (Belmonte & McMahon, 2019). Therefore, this review focuses on migrant youth aged 15–29 to ensure conceptual clarity and comparability with prior studies of youth populations. While the base age limit of 15 years corre-

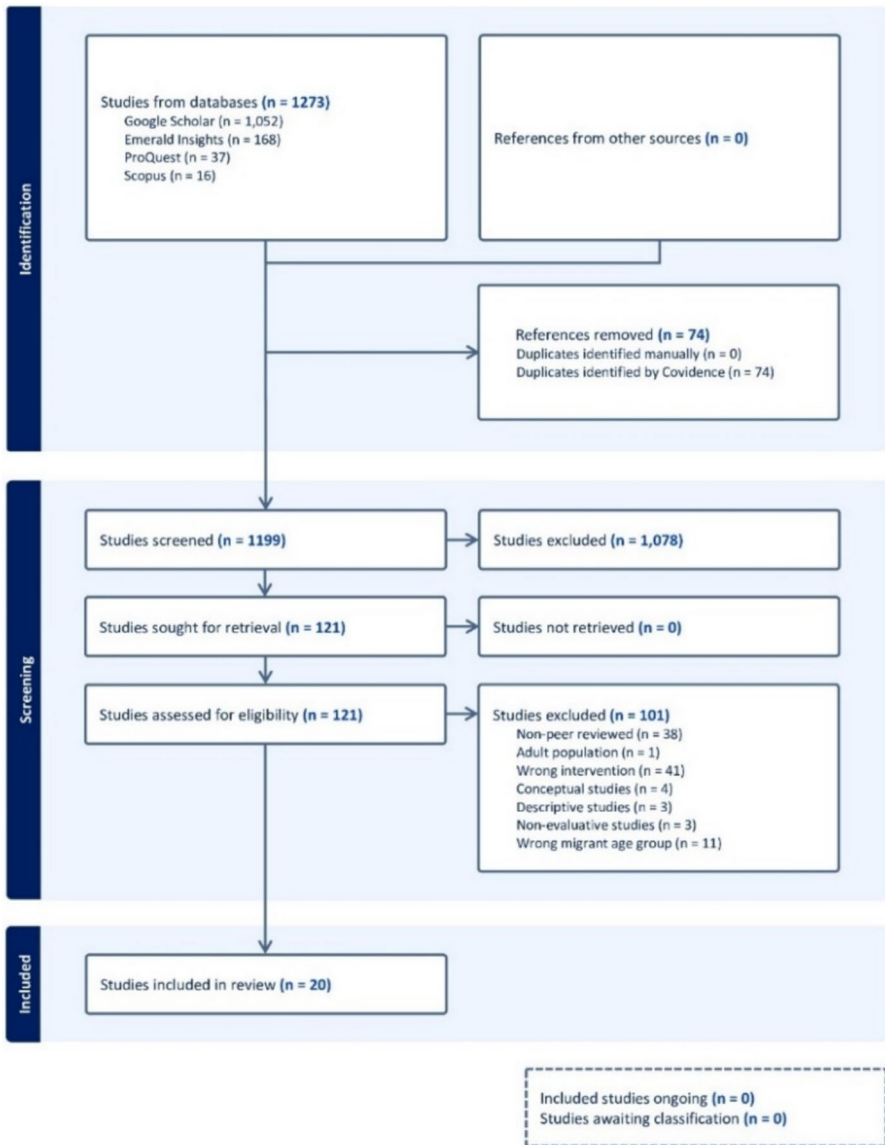


Fig. 1 PRISMA flow diagram

Table 1 Youth age classifications by WHO and EU

Organisation	Youth
World Health Organisation	15 – 24 years
European Union	13 – 30 years

Table 2 Inclusion and exclusion criteria table

Included	Excluded
Peer-reviewed articles	Early childhood studies
Studies published in English	Pre-school-aged studies
Studies on migrant youth resilience	Prim. School-aged studies
Studies on migrant youth coping	Older adult population
Studies on all migrant youth aged 15–29, including refugee, non-refugee youth, and international students	Conceptual, descriptive, and non-evaluative studies

Table 3 Database search strategy

Search fields	Search strings	Search limits	Search end date
Title, abstract, keyword	TITLE-ABS-KEY (resilience OR coping OR “coping strateg*” OR adaptation) AND TITL-ABS-KEY (migrant* OR immigrant* OR refugee*) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (“young people” OR youth OR adolescent* OR teen* OR “young adult*”)	Journals; peer-reviewed; English Language; publication year: 2014–2024	30th April, 2024

sponds with the WHO definition of youth, the threshold of 29 years aligns with some EU policy frameworks, such as Eurostat statistics, which collate and report data on youths up to 29 years, a period of exponential adult role transitions and self-discovery (Hochberg & Konner, 2020). Table 2.

The first author exported 1,273 database search results to EndNote for formatting. The data were then exported to Covidence (a literature review management and streamlining software) for screening and extraction. Three independent reviewers screened each record. Eligibility criteria were assessed to ensure compliance with the inclusion criteria and validated after consensus. Exclusions included conceptual, descriptive, or non-evaluative papers. Studies that exclusively addressed early childhood, preschool, primary school-aged individuals, and older adults were excluded. The entire data management and study selection process was documented in an Excel spreadsheet and in Covidence to ensure transparency and replicability.

A librarian contributed to the development of a robust search strategy. Four databases were searched: ProQuest, Scopus, Emerald Insight, and Google Scholar. The search strategy included terms tailored to each database’s or search engine’s search criteria. The search strategy is presented in Table 3. All database searches and review protocols were completed in December 2025.

Data management and study selection

A database search returned 1,273 studies. Seventy-four duplicates were identified and removed via Covidence, leaving 1199 studies for screening. Of these, 1,078 were irrelevant. We assessed 121 studies for full-text eligibility. Of these, 101 were excluded for the following reasons: (n=41) wrong intervention, (n=38) non-peer-

reviewed studies, (n=11) wrong migrant age group, (n=4) conceptual studies, (n=3) descriptive studies, (n=3) non-evaluative studies, and (n=1) adult population. After screening and removing all duplicates, 19 peer-reviewed studies were included.

Data extraction and analysis

Data on resilience and coping were sought and extracted using an extraction template in Covidence Software. The inclusion and exclusion criteria guided this process. Data that did not explicitly specify resilience and coping strategies but emphasised adaptation, integration, health, and well-being among migrant youth were extracted. Other variables included agentic attributes and cultural and religious factors. Three independent reviewers conducted the extraction. The study characteristics were thematically analysed and described to identify clusters of resilience factors and coping strategies, which were then presented in a narrative format.

Results

All 20 included studies were published within ten years of 2014. A total of 6 studies were published between 2015 and 2020, and 14 were published between 2021 and 2024. The reviewed studies were conducted in 16 countries; Australia (n=3), Australia, North America, and Europe (n=1), Belgium (n=1), Bangladesh and Turkey (n=1), Chile (n=1), Canada (n=2), Denmark (n=1), Germany (n=1), India (n=1), Italy (n=1), Norway (n=2), Poland (n=1), South Africa (n=1), United States (n=1), Greece (n=1), and United Kingdom (n=1). The study types comprise 15 qualitative studies, three quantitative studies, and two mixed-methods studies.

These studies examined resilience strategies; educational resilience and aspirations; homelessness; mental well-being and social resilience; resettlement experiences and resilience; coping strategies; and the effects of resilience and acculturation on integration and social support. The participants in the studies were primarily migrant youth, including refugees who had migrated to different countries for asylum, resettlement, economic reasons, or to escape crises in their home countries.

The synthesis of the results was guided by the reported lived experiences of migrant youth. This informed the rationale for identifying resilience and coping strategies. The heterogeneity of the results was assessed in relation to factors that might have influenced migrant youth's varied experiences, including migration timing, individual circumstances, and differences in migration laws and policies across host countries.

Resilience factors and coping strategies

Three elements—social, community, and agentic factors—formed a cluster of 18 resilience factors, while 24 coping strategies were identified and utilised by migrant youth to boost their resilience. Social factors included relationships with family members, peers, and other relatives. Community factors included engagement with ethnic community, host community resources, educational and support communi-

ties, and religious communities. Agentic factors were essential in building resilience: goal-directed behaviours stimulated planning, objective setting, and action to achieve positive outcomes. Self-motivation was fuelled by a positive mindset, which, in turn, fostered persistence and hard work. In addition, self-reliance and self-awareness helped maintain focus, future orientation, and faith in their survival strategies.

Coping strategies varied across migrant groups but showed consistent patterns among youth from specific geographic regions. Religious engagement and faith-based strategies were essential coping strategies employed by some migrants from the Middle East and northeast Africa to make sense of their challenges (Chinyakata & Raselekoane, 2021; Scott et al., 2024). This strategy helped migrants develop contentment, endurance, and prayerful attributes to navigate adversities. Migrants from the Middle East and Southeast Asia also utilised creative arts and sports to improve mental health, develop self-efficacy, values and relationships (Aljouni et al., 2023; Jarlby et al., 2018; Stark et al., 2019).

Maintaining close ties with families and cultural communities was consistent among migrant youth across Africa, Asia, Australia, North America, and Europe. These coping strategies were crucial to emotional well-being, settlement and integration, particularly among forced unaccompanied migrants (Behrendt et al., 2022; Verbena et al., 2023). Supportive family and social connections were positively correlated with psychological resilience and integration among migrant youth from these regions when facing discrimination (Ziaian et al., 2023). Similarly, migrant youth from Africa and Asia living in Europe leveraged family support as a coping mechanism to boost resilience and educational aspirations (Lynnebakke & Pastoor, 2020). High resilience and low acculturative stress were associated with better academic achievement among migrant youth in North America (Caqueo-Ur'izar et al., 2021). Educational aspirations among migrant youth were an essential coping strategy for navigating language barriers, enhancing English proficiency, acquiring new skills, and improving employability.

Coping strategies and resilience factors adopted by migrant youth were not entirely gender-based; rather, they were primarily influenced by personal, economic, and environmental factors. Thus, migrant youth who migrated primarily as international students during the COVID-19 pandemic experienced varying difficulties that impacted their mental well-being, but also employed resilience and coping strategies (i.e. social connections with family, faith, and self-care strategies) that are synonymous with those demonstrated by migrant youth who experienced similar difficulties in different circumstances (Udah et al., 2024). Central to the above results were reports identifying migrant youth's vulnerabilities, precarious situations and challenges, resilience factors, and survival strategies, presented under the following themes:

Mental well-being and resilience

Four ($n=4$) studies assessed mental well-being and resilience. Exploring young migrants' perspectives on mental health and healing, participants utilised activities such as sports, music, and social connections as coping strategies to manage their mental health (Jarlby et al., 2018). However, promotive factors such as family con-

nections and support, education, religious activities, and positive future aspirations helped build resilience. Another study explored the mental well-being and social resilience of young Eritrean migrants living in Germany to identify social factors that facilitate adaptation (Gebresilassie et al., 2022). A sense of belonging, safety, and security promoted coping and resilience-building. In addition, better life prospects were reassuring, helping them endure discrimination, embrace newfound opportunities, and accept the host country as their home.

Multidimensional factors were reported to affect mental health and resilience in the narratives of migrant youth experiencing homelessness in Canada (Khan et al., 2022). For example, the immigration process was identified as a source of anxiety due to fear of rejection and a possible return to their home countries. Furthermore, housing insecurity, financial stressors, and educational barriers were also risk factors for mental health and resilience. Barriers such as lengthy waitlists for study permits, high international student fees, and limited language proficiency were particularly challenging. Moreover, employment barriers and culture shock were among the risk factors for mental health and resilience. Despite these barriers, participants were reported to have strengthened their mental health and resilience through goal-directedness, future orientation, connections with family, peers, and the community, and an independent mindset. Similarly, a study conducted in Poland examined mindset. Whilst community resources were reported as positive factors, a positive mindset and persistence were central to building resilience (Winogrodzka et al., 2024).

A previous study found an association between resilience and mental health in a similar demographic. In a cross-sectional study of differences in resilience, well-being, and mental health behaviours among migrants and non-migrant adolescents exposed to varying degrees of trauma across six countries (UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, China, and South Africa), migrant adolescents had higher resilience than non-migrants (Gatt et al., 2020). Furthermore, despite migrants' experiences of more traumatic events, non-migrants reported poorer mental health outcomes (Gatt et al., 2020).

Family functioning, family processes, psychological well-being, and resilience

Two ($n=2$) studies assessed family functioning in relation to psychological well-being, youth externalising problems, and resilience. In a study investigating family functioning and the psychological well-being of migrant youth in Australia, positive family functioning was significantly associated with resilience, which, in turn, protected against the negative effects of discrimination and reduced psychological distress (Ziaian et al., 2023). In a similar study, positive family processes, such as parental monitoring, adherence to family obligations, and family structure, had a protective effect on youth from immigrant backgrounds compared to non-migrant youth, thereby reducing youth externalising behaviours and promoting resilience (Vitoroulis et al., 2022).

Thus, whilst non-migrant youth were more likely to come from higher-income households, youth from immigrant families were more likely to live in two-parent households and have more educated parents, with higher commitment to family obligations and higher educational value. Therefore, the influence of positive parenting

and family socioeconomic integration bolstered resilience among first- and second-generation immigrant youth, who exhibited fewer behavioural problems than non-migrant youth.

Resettlement experiences, lived experiences, and resilience

Fourteen ($n=14$) studies reported on resettlement, lived experiences, coping, and resilience among migrant youth. A study investigating resettlement experiences and resilience among migrant youth in Australia found varying coping and resilience strategies (Earnest et al., 2015; Uдах et al., 2024). Coping strategies and resilience were shaped by English language proficiency. This was essential for overcoming the language barrier. Similarly, formal education was pivotal for acquiring new skills and enhancing employability. Social support, family connections, access to health-care, and religious engagement were also identified as factors supporting coping and resilience.

Another study conducted in Italy revealed a significantly different correlation between the empowerment of young immigrants and acculturative resilience (Verbena et al., 2023). Thus, coping strategies and resilience were developed through socio-cultural skills, acquisition of the local language, and relationships with friends and family, facilitated by technology. However, it was argued that resilience alone may be insufficient to promote proper integration without dismantling social barriers that encourage discrimination. Similarly, the acculturation and resilience of immigrant-origin youth in the United States were assessed in a study that identified resilience-protective factors, including a connection to ethnic identity, which predicted lower vulnerability among youth (Motti-Stefanidi, 2023). The study also reported positive social and community engagement outcomes, which have been previously identified as promotive factors for resilience and coping. In contrast, perceived discrimination proved a risk factor for resilience and negatively impacted youth adaptation and psychological well-being, with symptoms of depression and negative socioemotional and academic outcomes (Motti-Stefanidi, 2023).

In a study examining young migrants' coping experiences in the United Kingdom following forced migration, they demonstrated resilience by negotiating independence through social connections with friends and family and through self-reliance (Scott et al., 2024). However, religious engagement and faith were reported as lenses through which young immigrants found self-guidance, patience, and comfort. Arguably, a report from a similar study on lived experiences suggests that family, social and community connections, religious and spiritual values, and self-reliance are consistently significant in building resilience among young migrants (Sapam & Jijina, 2020). Similarly, a longitudinal study of unaccompanied young migrants' care networks in Belgium reported that family, peers, ethnic communities, and volunteers remained central sources of social support, coping, and resilience (Behrendt et al., 2022).

These support networks enhanced overall mental health resilience and stability for migrant youth, especially after experiences of exclusion. Conversely, social networks involving local peers were reported to have compromised migrant youth's self-esteem due to identity disparities, racism, and stigmatisation. However, the best

mental health outcomes were achieved through connections with ethnic groups and the local community.

In another study, the effects of resilience and acculturative stress on the integration and social competence of migrant adolescents were assessed (Caqueo-Ur'izar et al., 2021). The findings indicated a statistically significant direct association between resilience, integration, and social competence, and an indirect association with acculturative stress.

Hence, coping strategies used by youth to manage acculturative stress and support integration reportedly draw on protective resilience factors, such as the quality of social support, family relationships, educational attainment, and personal skills. Furthermore, a study on coping strategies among vulnerable young Zimbabwean women living in South Africa reported several resilience factors and coping strategies, including family and social support, self-awareness, endurance and contentment, religious prayers, avoidance of unhealthy relationships, and hard work (Chinyakata & Raselekoane, 2021). Another study examined the psychosocial well-being of young unaccompanied migrants in Norway. Participants reported using various coping strategies, including relationships with family, social workers, and friends (Johansen & Bendixsen, 2023).

Hence, resilience was built through a positive attitude, critical reflection, seeking positive approaches to challenges, and leveraging educational and employment opportunities. One study investigated educational aspirations and educational resilience. Among recently resettled young migrants, personal attributes such as focus, hard work, and confidence, as well as ecological factors such as a supportive family, social community, and support from health professionals, facilitated resilience and coping (Lynnebakke & Pastoor, 2020). While education is essential for resilience (Jarlby et al., 2018), the studies did not identify the impact of entrepreneurship education on encouraging self-employment.

Research shows that digital art-based activities were utilised to promote young migrants' engagement in Turkey, Bangladesh, and the UK, identifying capabilities to foster counter-narratives to 'othering' discourses (Aljouni et al., 2023). The study revealed that resilience and coping were developed through motivation, the acquisition of creative skills, self-expression, and self-efficacy. A qualitative study of young migrants' resilience identified two elements of resilience and coping (Sleijpen et al., 2017): autonomous actions, particularly when left alone to deal with challenges, helped the young participants persevere; and school performance provided adaptive therapy and alleviated negative thoughts about their traumatic history.

Consistent with previous reports, parental and social support, including peer relationships and community engagement, facilitated resilience through close friendships and emotional comfort. Resilience among adolescent migrants in the United States was investigated, and three resilience themes were reported: self-efficacy, values, and relationships (Stark et al., 2019). These themes centred on recurrent factors such as family, peers, community, individual beliefs, and religion. As identified, agentic attributes promoted migrant youth resilience and coping through goal-directedness, positive mindset, future orientation, self-reliance, self-awareness, self-efficacy, and self-motivation. Previous studies have identified the roles of personal agency and social factors in building resilience among young migrants, yet these factors have

also led to counterproductive outcomes (Sleijpen et al., 2017). Hence, personal agency cannot function in isolation from other factors.

The included studies and reported outcomes are presented in Table 4. Three fundamental ecological factors that support coping and resilience-building among migrant youth are further synthesised from these outcomes and presented in Table 5. These include ‘social factors’, such as family, peers, and friends; ‘community factors’, such as ethnic community, host community resources, educational and support communities, and religious communities; and ‘agentic factors’, such as goal-directedness, positive mindset, self-reliance, faith, persistence, future orientation, focus, self-motivation, hard work, self-awareness, and endurance.

The effects of gender differences in resilience and coping strategies are not mutually exclusive in this review. Factors that shaped male migrant resilience and coping strategies had similar effects among female migrant youth in the same sociopolitical and ecological context. However, one study of female migrants suggests that female migrant youth may exhibit greater social resilience, including stronger family bonds, patience, and the use of religious and faith-based coping strategies (Chinyakata & Raselekoane, 2021).

The methodological quality assessment

We independently assessed the methodological quality of the reviewed studies and reached consensus after comparing and discussing the results. The Effective Public Health Practice Project (EPHPP), a quality assessment tool for quantitative studies, was used to assess the included quantitative studies (EPHPP, 2009). The assessment of these studies relied on eight rating components of the EPHPP tool: selection bias, study design, confounders, blinding, data collection methods, withdrawals and drop-outs, intervention integrity, and analyses. The studies were then rated based on the overall score for each component of the EPHPP tool.

The Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) Qualitative Research Checklist was adopted as an effective tool for assessing qualitative studies (CASP, 2024). The CASP tool comprises three sections (A, B, and C) with 10 questions focused on the research protocol, including the research aim, methodology, ethical considerations, results, and the local value of the findings. Mixed-methods studies were assessed using the EPHPP and CASP tools, which evaluate both quantitative and qualitative components. Of the 19 included studies, 3 employed quantitative methods, 15 employed qualitative methods, and 1 employed a mixed methods approach.

Quantitative studies

The quantitative research studies ($n=3$) were assessed and rated according to the EPHPP global rating scale of “strong”, “moderate”, and “weak” (strong=no weak ratings, moderate=one weak rating, weak=two or more weak ratings). All three studies received a “strong” rating (Caqueo-Ur’izar et al., 2021; Vitoroulis et al., 2022; Ziaian et al., 2023). These studies were rated ‘strong’ based on their high ratings in the study selection bias, study design, confounders, blinding, data collection

Table 4 Summary of resilience factors and coping strategies identified in the included studies

Study	Resilience factors	Coping strategies	Population
(Earnest et al., 2015)	English language proficiency, new skills, employability, education, support, family connection, access to healthcare, religion	Acquiring English language proficiency, new skills, employability, and education. Social support, family connection, access to healthcare, and religious engagements	Male and female migrant youth in Australia (mean age: 18)
(Sleijpen et al., 2017)	Self-reliance, education, family, peers and community support		Male and female migrant youth in Australia, North America, and Europe (mean age: 16)
(Jarlby et al., 2018)	Family support, education, religion, aspirations	Active involvement with Sports, music, and social connections	Unaccompanied adolescent male migrants in Denmark (mean age: 17)
(Stark et al., 2019)	Self-efficacy, values, and relationships		Male and female unaccompanied migrant youth in the USA (mean age: 15)
(Lynnebakke & Pastoor, 2020)	Focus, hard work, confidence, family, social and community support	Focus, working hard, being confident, connecting with family, seeking support from social circles, community, and healthcare-seeking habits	Male and female migrant youth in Norway (mean age: 20)
(Sapam & Jijina, 2020)	Family, social and community connections, religious and spiritual values, and self-reliance		Male and female migrant youth in India (mean age: 23)
(Chinyakata & Raselekoane, 2021)	Social support, family, self-awareness, endurance and contentment, religion, and hard work	Seeking social support, connecting with family, activating self-awareness, endurance and contentment, religious activities, and working hard	Female migrant youth in South Africa (mean age: 26)
(Caqueo-Urizar et al., 2021)	Social and Family bonds, education, personal skills	Building social and Family bonds, furthering education, and acquiring personal skills	Male and female migrant youth in Chile (age: 18)
(Behrendt et al., 2022)	Social support: Family, peers, ethnic communities	Seeking and applying social support from family, peers, and ethnic communities	Unaccompanied migrant youth in Belgium (age: 20)
(Gebresilassie et al., 2022)	Education, social services, social connections, local community reception, better opportunities	Seeking belonging, safety, security, better opportunities, and acceptance of the host country as home	Male and female migrant youth in Germany (mean age: 21)
(Khan et al., 2022)	Goal-directedness, future orientation, connections with family, peers and the community, and an independent-mindset		Male and female migrant youth In Canada (mean age: 20)

Table 4 (continued)

Study	Resilience factors	Coping strategies	Population
(Vitoroulis et al., 2022)	Family processes: parental monitoring, family obligations, family - structure		Male and female migrant youth in Canada (mean age: 15)
(Aljouni et al., 2023)	Motivation, creative skill, self-expression, and self-efficacy	Being motivated, creative skill acquisition, applying self-expression, and self-efficacy	Male and female migrant youth in Bangladesh and Turkey (age: 18–25)
(Johansen & Bendixsen, 2023)	Positive attitude, critical reflection, seeking positive approaches, education, and employment	Developing relationships with family, friends and social workers	Male and female unaccompanied adolescent migrants in Norway (mean age: 17)
(Motti-Stefanidi, 2023)	Ethnic identity, social and community support	Seeking ethnic identity, social and community engagements	Immigrant-origin youth in Greece (Age: unspecified)
(Verbena et al., 2023)	Sociocultural skills, local language acquisition, and relationships with friends and family	Using sociocultural skills, local language acquisition, and relationships with friends and family	Male and female migrant youth in Italy (mean age: 18)
(Ziaian et al., 2023)	Positive family functioning		Male and female migrant youth in Australia (mean age: 18)
(Scott et al., 2024)	Social connections with friends and family, self-reliance, religion, and faith	Seeking and applying social connections with friends and family, self-reliance, religious activity engagements, and active faith	Male unaccompanied adolescent migrants in the United Kingdom (mean age: 16)
(Udah et al., 2024)	Self-care strategies, social connections, and religion	Family, faith, and spiritual beliefs	Male and female international student migrants in Australia (age: 18+)
(Wino-grodzka et al., 2024)	Community resources, a positive mindset, and persistence		Male and female migrant youth in Poland (mean age: 25)

Table 5 Fundamental ecological promotive factors for resilience and coping

Community factors	No. of studies	Social factors	No. of studies	Agentive factors	No. of studies
Ethnic community	14	Family ties	16	Goal-directedness	1
Host communities	4	Peers support	15	Positive mindset	1
Educational and support organisations	7	Relatives	15	Persistence	1
Religious communities	2			Faith	3
				Self-reliance	1
				Future orientation	1
				Focus	19
				Self-motivation	16
				Hard work	17
				Self-awareness	3

methods, intervention integrity, analyses, and participant withdrawal and dropout sections of the EPHPP tool.

Qualitative studies

Fifteen ($n=15$) qualitative studies were assessed and rated as ‘strong’, ‘moderate’, or ‘weak’. Studies rated ‘strong’ (Aljouni et al., 2023; Earnest et al., 2015; Gebresilassie et al., 2022; Jarlby et al., 2018; Johansen & Bendixsen, 2023; Khan et al., 2022; Lynnebakke & Pastoor, 2020; Sapam & Jijina, 2020; Scott et al., 2024; Sleijpen et al., 2017; Stark et al., 2019; Winogrodzka et al., 2024) received a ‘yes’ rating across all three sections of the CASP tool, which focus on the study’s results, validity, and reliability.

Three studies (Chinyakata & Raselekoane, 2021; Motti-Stefanidi, 2023; Verbenen et al., 2023) received moderate ratings due to unclear ethical considerations, study aims, recruitment strategies, study designs, and the relationship between the researcher and the participants.

Mixed methods studies: One mixed methods study (Behrendt et al., 2022) was rated ‘strong’ across both qualitative and quantitative domains. High scores were achieved in the quantitative and qualitative components, including assessments of selection bias, confounders, study design, blinding, data collection methods, and the description of participant withdrawals and dropouts. Table 6 presents a synopsis of the quality appraisal and practice recommendations.

The included studies were categorised into two groups: ‘moderate’ and ‘strong’, following the Canadian Hierarchy of Promising Practices. Promising practice was recommended for all study designs that scored moderate to strong across the EPHPP and CASP tools. The recommendation was based not only on methodological rigour but also on the inclusion of informative studies with positive indications of applicability and overall reasonable potential. These were classified as promising practice (Fazal et al., 2017; Littell, 2018).

The Risk of Bias in Systematic Reviews (ROBIS) tool was used to assess the risk of bias in the review process. ROBIS provides a reliable and valid approach to assessing the risk of bias in systematic reviews (Büchtemann et al., 2017). Two authors conducted a risk-of-bias assessment of the included studies, covering the eligibility criteria, methods, and findings. A low risk of bias was confirmed after consensus was reached. Sensitivity analysis used the EPHPP, CASP, and ROBIS tools to assess the robustness and certainty of the results. A summary of the risk-of-bias assessment results is presented in Table 7.

Discussion

This review examined a range of studies that illuminate the resilience and well-being of migrant youth. These studies provided a rich tapestry of interventions that support understanding of migrants’ lived experiences, coping strategies and resilience. The applicability of these interventions to understanding resilience and coping varies by outcome. The study’s population comprises young migrants, including refugees from

Table 6 Methodological quality appraisal

Studies	Design	Quantitative	Qualitative	Mixed methods	EPHPP score	CASP score	Recommendation
(Earnest et al., 2015)	Interviews		√			Strong	Promising practice
(Sleijpen et al., 2017)	Interviews		√			Strong	Promising practice
(Jarlby et al., 2018)	Interviews		√			Strong	Promising practice
(Stark et al., 2019)	Interviews		√			Strong	Promising practice
(Sapam & Jijina, 2020)	Interviews		√			Strong	Promising practice
(Lynnebakke & Pastoor, 2020)	Interviews		√			Strong	Promising practice
(Caqueo-Ur'izar et al., 2021)	Cross-sectional	√			Strong		Promising practice
(Chinyakata & Raselekoane, 2021)	Interviews		√			Moderate	Promising practice
(Gebresilassie et al., 2022)	Phenomenology		√			Strong	Promising practice
(Khan et al., 2022)	Interviews		√			Strong	Promising practice
(Behrendt et al., 2022)	Longitudinal			√	Strong	Strong	Promising practice
(Vitoroulis et al., 2022)	Cross-sectional	√			Strong		Promising practice
(Verbena et al., 2023)	Narrative		√			Moderate	Promising practice
(Ziaian et al., 2023)	Survey	√			Strong		Promising practice
(Johansen & Bendixsen, 2023)	Interviews		√			Strong	Promising practice
(Aljouni et al., 2023)	Ethnography		√			Strong	Promising practice
(Mottistefanidi, 2023)	Cohort study		√			Moderate	Promising practice

Table 6 (continued)

Studies	Design	Quantitative	Qualitative	Mixed methods	EPHPP score	CASP score	Recommendation
(Scott et al., 2024)	Phenomenology	√				Strong	Promising practice
(Udah et al., 2024)	Surveys and Interviews			√		Strong	Promising practice
(Wino-grodzka et al., 2024)	Interviews		√			Strong	Promising practice

Table 7 Risk of Bias (ROBIS) result summary

Study	Eligibility criteria	Methods (sampling, data collection, data analysis) concerns	Relevance to research aim	Synthesis/Result concerns	Robis Score
(Earnest et al., 2015)	Nil	Nil	√	Nil	Low risk
(Sleijpen et al., 2017)	Nil	Nil	√	Nil	Low risk
(Jarlby et al., 2018)	Nil	Nil	√	Nil	Low risk
(stark et al., 2019)	Nil	Nil	√	Nil	Low risk
(Lynnebakke & Pastoor, 2020)	Nil	Nil	√	Nil	Low risk
(Sapam & Jijina, 2020)	Nil	Nil	√	Nil	Low risk
(Chinyakata & Raselekoane, 2021)	Nil	Nil	√	Nil	Low risk
(Caqueo-Ur'izar et al., 2021)	Nil	Nil	√	Nil	Low risk
(Behrendt et al., 2022)	Nil	Nil	√	Nil	Low risk
(Gebresilassie et al., 2022)	Nil	Nil	√	Nil	Low risk
(Khan et al., 2022)	Nil	Nil	√	Nil	Low risk
(Vitoroulis et al., 2022)	Nil	Nil	√	Nil	Low risk
(Aljouni et al., 2023)	Nil	Nil	√	Nil	Low risk
(Johansen & Bendixsen, 2023)	Nil	Nil	√	Nil	Low risk
(Motti-Stefanidi, 2023)	Nil	Nil	√	Nil	Low risk
(Verbena et al., 2023)	Nil	Nil	√	Nil	Low risk
(Ziaian et al., 2023)	Nil	Nil	√	Nil	Low risk
(Scott et al., 2024)	Nil	Nil	√	Nil	Low risk
(Winogrodzka et al., 2024)	Nil	Nil	√	Nil	Low risk
(Udah et al., 2024)	Nil	Nil	√	Nil	Low risk

various regions. Thus, the resilience outcomes and context of our analysis present dynamic and broad perspectives on the survival and well-being of migrant youth. This review argues that gender perspectives and disparities in resilience and coping strategies may show similar outcomes among male and female migrant youth in the same sociopolitical and ecological context; however, previous studies found that female migrants who experienced economic hardship exhibited higher levels of PTSD and coping difficulties than men (Handiso et al., 2024). These outcomes highlight the effects and importance of the intersectional dimensions of resilience in

relation to gender disparities, particularly among sexual and gender-diverse youth of colour (Adeyeba et al., 2025).

Although a range of resilience and coping attributes are identified, the pivotal roles of social networks in promoting resilience and well-being are instrumental in providing emotional and psychological support, a sense of belonging, and access to the community, all of which are crucial for successful adaptation and integration (Cao et al., 2024). Successful integration of migrants into host countries can significantly shape their social mobility, laying a foundation for upward mobility across socioeconomic and political spheres (Heath & Schneider, 2021). The intersection of migrant youth integration and resilience is also relevant to national identity in some countries that embrace multiculturalism and uphold egalitarian norms (Becker, 2022).

While ethnic and communal identities constitute social sources of resilience and coping, they underscore differences in moral values between migrants and local communities (Suárez & Hannikainen, 2025). In Western countries, emphasis is placed on cultural transmission within minority groups and on migrants' acquisition and assimilation of core national values as critical factors for integration (Reisenzein et al., 2026). However, moral variances still account for minimal gaps in integration between migrants and local communities (Suárez & Hannikainen, 2025). Thus, migrant youth develop a sense of identity and belonging through mutual familial and cultural relationships (Miller et al., 2022). However, an integrated, culturally balanced identity, such as one that encompasses ethnic and national identities, is recognised as an indicator of positive adaptation and resilience among migrant youth (Motti-Stefanidi, 2023).

Moreover, Mansouri and Al-deen (2023) highlight the limiting impact of unidimensional ethnic identity and belonging on migrant youth integration and sociocultural capital, arguing that transcultural capital helps migrant youth navigate barriers to local integration. These intersectional nuances underpin the interconnectedness of a multisystemic approach in fostering resilience (Wu & Ou, 2021).

The multisystemic approach draws on migrant youth's perspectives on resilience. This framework elucidates three central systems of this construct (Wu & Ou, 2021). The microsystem encompasses three clusters of protective factors—genetic, neurological, and psychological that represent intrapersonal resources that facilitate youth resilience. A study argues that individual differences, such as genetics, personality, and temperament, determine responses to risk and protective factors (Luthar, 2015). Thus, certain individuals achieve relatively positive outcomes despite significant stress or adversity, surpassing those of others who have undergone similar experiences (Rutter, 2013). By comparison, this review identifies microsystemic intrapersonal resilience protective factors, including individual agency through which migrant youth build resilience (Aljouni et al., 2023; Johansen & Bendixsen, 2023; Khan et al., 2022; Winogrodzka et al., 2024). In practice, refugee youth counter dominant narratives through storytelling, demonstrating agency and voice, embracing their narrative identity, and becoming active subjects rather than silent victims (Choi & Cha, 2024). Furthermore, the expression of agency, resilience, and resistance by migrants aids understanding and conceptualisation of their experiences of gender violence, including domestic violence and sexual, emotional, and physical violence (Tastsoglou, 2023). While the microsystem alone may not provide conclu-

sive insights without considering other clusters of protective factors, it nonetheless adds to the growing body of literature and evidence-based understanding of the resilience of migrant and refugee youth.

The mesosystem views interpersonal resources within family, school, and community contexts as protective factors that enhance youth resilience. These interpersonal resources reflect ecological resilience factors and demonstrate the relationship between these concepts, which are important for understanding migrant youth resilience. In a mixed-method pilot study examining the impact of a family-focused, gender-based intervention on the well-being of adolescent migrant girls, paired t-tests demonstrated statistically significant improvements in mental distress, resilience, and gender-equitable attitudes across the entire sample (Seff et al., 2022). Moreover, marginal improvements in family functioning were observed. Qualitative findings further illustrated improvements in four domains of girls' well-being: self-efficacy, self-confidence, pro-social behaviours, and mental health (Seff et al., 2022). Thus, interconnected social environments, such as those within families, schools, or communities, shape identity development, foster a sense of belonging, build resilience collectively, and promote the well-being of young migrants (Miller et al., 2022). Consistent with the mesosystem, this study found that interpersonal resources within the family, school, and community strengthen resilience among migrant and refugee youths (Gebresilassie et al., 2022; Vitoroulis et al., 2022; Ziaian et al., 2023). Family support has been reported as critical for improving academic self-efficacy, beliefs, and hope among migrant youth (Asici et al., 2024). While family support is essential, educational integration, incorporating good practices and multi-stakeholder collaboration and partnerships among policymakers, NGOs, researchers, and community organisations, enhances migrant youth's skills, opportunities, and quality of life (Sharma-Brymer et al., 2024).

Therefore, strengthening these ecological domains improves intervention outcomes in education and critical areas such as sexual and reproductive health knowledge, rights, and practices. Additionally, socioecological factors at the individual, interpersonal, community, and societal levels positively influenced sexual and reproductive health decisions among migrant youth by promoting safe sex practices, healthy relationships, emotional security, and values (Napier-Raman et al., 2024). These socio-ecological relationships and dynamics illuminate the intricacies of international migration and demographic shifts with implications for policy at the macrosystem level.

The macrosystem encompasses policy, culture, and religion, which play significant roles in shaping migrant youth's resilience. For example, the adaptation, integration, development, and well-being of young migrants and their families are shaped by factors such as the cultures, economies, and politics of receiving societies (Dryden-Peterson, 2016; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2015; Wu & Ou, 2021). To protect and promote migrant well-being, experts advocate for multilateral, balanced policies that ensure regional stability, economic development, and the protection of human rights during migration (Ullah, 2024b). Significantly, integrating migrant socioecological needs into human rights policies is critical to addressing multifaceted challenges associated with irregular migration, as policy advocates stress the need for migrant-inclusive policies, particularly in education systems,

which have a positive impact on other areas of migrant development, well-being, and resilience (Downes et al., 2024).

Therefore, the multisystemic approach illustrates how resilience manifests and operates across multiple systems, leading to positive developmental outcomes for migrant youth. The evidence from this review demonstrates dynamic and multifaceted resilience outcomes stemming from microsystemic, mesosystemic, and macrosystemic factors that promote resilience and are centred on intrapersonal, social, family, communal, cultural, political, and religious resources. Although the opposite of the reported resilience and coping strategies may be construed as risk factors for resilience and well-being for migrant youth, such as limited access to social and community resources, the absence of family and friends, and deficit well-being and integration policies, a few studies reported context-specific risk factors for resilience (Motti-Stefanidi, 2023; Sleijpen et al., 2017). Perceived discrimination was reported as a risk factor for migrant youth adaptation and well-being, with a negative impact on self-efficacy and self-esteem. To navigate these challenges, Cubas et al. (2023) found that migrant youths challenged the problematisation and framing of their status quo as a potential source of sociocultural anomalies through constructive negotiation of difference and creative ability to access and develop transcultural capital through multicultural engagements.

Given that resilience may be fostered through agentic attributes and traits (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013), it is arguable that attributes such as strength, talent, and sociocultural identities can form constructive narratives that help to understand and interpret life experiences, offering better perspectives for building and promoting resilience among young migrants. Thus, evidence suggests the importance of identifying individuals' strengths and capacities to overcome adversity and facilitate personal growth, rather than focusing solely on the adversity that presents barriers and challenges (Michaud, 2006; Wu & Ou, 2021). Therefore, migrant youths' resilience, when understood in depth and promoted through creative and transformative policies, can position them for societal advantage, enhancing integration and success (Cubas et al., 2023). For instance, a focus on improved policies for migrant and refugee education may boost their motivation, enhance their skills and capabilities, and foster resilience (Cerna, 2019). Improved support for English-language proficiency and recognition of qualifications from English-speaking countries may strengthen labour market integration (Udayar et al., 2021).

Alternative resilience models, such as the inclusive roles of international non-governmental organisations in providing preventive, protective, and promotive social and public health frameworks for the safety and protection of migrant youth, are instrumental to resilience, settlement, adaptation, and integration (Ricucci, 2024). Policies developed through collaborations and partnerships among stakeholders, including national governments, NGOs, and civil society organisations, translate into holistic intervention models for the adoption and implementation of programs to ensure effective surveillance, manage international migration patterns, and strengthen socioecological institutions that foster migrant youth resilience.

For instance, the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) is a model developed through collaboration with governments, NGOs, and international organisations, and is considered the most comprehensive and reliable tool for measuring migrant inte-

gration policies in 56 countries, covering essential areas such as family reunification, education, settlement and integration, anti-discrimination and health (Solano & Huddleston, 2024). In line with our findings, family connections and education are among the socioecological and protective factors that foster resilience. Moreover, a study using the MIPEX Health Matrix argues that social protection for vulnerable groups is critical to accelerating Universal Health Coverage (UHC) by integrating social support interventions with health services (Yokobori et al., 2023).

The Universal Health Coverage is primarily significant in promoting resilience through health justice, equity, and security, especially in perilous times of conflicts, forced migration, and pandemics, during which the most vulnerable groups, such as women and children, and migrant and refugee youths, are significantly impacted (Cuevas et al., 2023). Findings highlight that despite governments' commitment towards UHC, access to affordable healthcare services eluded many populations during pandemics, indicating gaps in population health coverage and equity, worsened in countries rife with stigmatisation, criminalisation, and discrimination of culturally and linguistically diverse populations, minority groups with limited residency rights and low socioeconomic status, including migrant and refugee populations (Cuevas et al., 2023). As reported by the World Health Organisation, access to quality healthcare services by migrants and refugees is fundamental to global health security, human rights, health promotion, and concerted public health campaigns for the reduction in health inequities and the attainment of global commitments, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (World Health Organisation, 2023).

The SDGs comprise 17 blueprints adopted by the United Nations and Member States to advance global health and well-being, environmental protection and climate action, including efforts to improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth (United Nations, 2024a). Forced migration and its impact on young migrants have implications for specific SDGs, such as goal one (no poverty), two (zero hunger), three (good health and well-being), four (quality education), five (gender equality), six (clean water and sanitation), eight (decent work and economic growth), and ten (reduced inequalities). In retrospect, the 2024 SDGs progress report indicates slow progress in global health, gender parity, and education, and increased levels of violence against women and children, given the impacts of COVID-19, political tensions, and rising conflicts (United Nations, 2024b).

Evidence indicates that over 40 million forced migrant youth experience pre- and post-migration stressors and a decline in health and mental well-being, with internalising and externalising problems, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety (Giles et al., 2024). Structural inequalities and injustices driving forced migration among this population lead to early-life adversities, including poverty, hunger, and psychosocial problems that require specific interventions (Santiago, 2024). In turn, dominant societal norms, such as stigmatisation, racial discrimination, and mistrust of support services due to a deficit of cultural sensitivity and awareness, may lead to a loss of interest and motivation in seeking social and healthcare support.

Against this backdrop, our findings underscore the importance of an ecological-centred approach to fostering resilience and promoting the health and well-being of migrant youth through policy updates, research, and holistic interventions that align with current and future migration dynamics. Therefore, to overcome the numerous

challenges confronting migrant youth, resilience is essential across all facets of their migration trajectory. Hence, we argue that the adversities experienced by this population generally affect physical, mental, emotional, psychological, and social resilience, even in the absence of promotive and protective factors within the personal and ecological domains.

Limitations and recommendations

This study draws on the broad and dynamic body of knowledge on migrant youth resilience praxis. As such, different migrant categories are not explicitly isolated; rather, they are grouped as migrants. Thus, resilience and coping strategies identified in this review may not be generalised. The scope, methodology, and appraisal of the included studies may be limited. These limitations may stem from moderate CASP quality assessment, low risk of bias across study domains, and unverified publication bias. As a result, it is challenging to draw evidence-based conclusions about the reliability and adaptability of resilience factors across different individual experiences. Hence, there is a need for more longitudinal studies and studies with best-practice quality appraisal. Future studies should also isolate and examine resilience factors, such as family and other social support networks, as well as cultural and political contexts, to understand their subjective impact on resilience among migrant youth. Although social connections, such as family, peers, and ethnic communities, were central to fostering resilience among migrant youth, few studies examined the role of family processes and parental mental health literacy in promoting resilience among migrant youth experiencing psychosocial externalising behaviours.

This gap in the literature calls for further research to explore the familial contexts that shape migrant youth's behavioural challenges and resilience. Evidence suggests that dominant social norms, such as marginalisation, and an ineffective integration plan in host countries may influence the development of externalising and antisocial behaviours among young migrants (Inofuentes et al., 2022). Thus, future research in this domain will advance knowledge and understanding of mental health and psychosocial resilience among this group.

This study highlights that resilience is essential across all facets of migrant youths' experiences. However, it is limited to specific types of resilience that may be more influential than others in managing varying degrees of adversity. For instance, the impact of psychological resilience may be more or less effective in managing dominant societal norms, such as racial discrimination and prejudice. Therefore, more studies focusing on the effects of specific types of resilience on the overall well-being of migrant youth are recommended.

Conclusions

This review advances understanding of migrant youth resilience and coping strategies. Social, community, and agentic factors contribute significantly to resilience, while coping strategies, including creative arts, agency, religious attributes, and community resources, strengthen resilience and survival among migrant youth. In tandem,

socioecological and multisystemic factors are critical for fostering and strengthening resilience among migrant youth, complementing and synergising with resilience-building frameworks developed by international organisations. Despite promising research, a gap in the literature suggests that more studies are needed on the familial context of resilience and psychosocial behaviours, including more evidence-based longitudinal studies to inform best practice. This study has practical implications for governments, allied health organisations and educational institutions, highlighting the need to adopt an ecological and intersectional lens when providing resources and support to migrant youth.

Key findings

Migrant youth resilience and coping are supported and strengthened by agency and ecological factors, including relationships and support from close social networks, family, community, and peers.

Ecological factors provide protective effects and help migrant youth navigate post-migration challenges, such as acculturation stress, thereby promoting adaptation, integration, and overall mental well-being.

The interplay of ecological factors and agency helps migrant youth develop awareness of their new environment and community, access personal development opportunities, advance their education, acquire new skills, and build new social connections.

Public relevance

This review may be relevant to migration-informed decision-making and awareness, grounded in an evidence-based understanding of migrant and refugee youths' resilience, promotive factors, coping strategies, migration experiences, and vulnerabilities.

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Declarations

Conflict of interest The authors declare no competing interests.

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