

Table 2 Themes, subthemes and representative quotes retrieved from the interviews and focus group discussions

Theme title	Summary of theme	Representative quotation
Low test utilization	Syrian refugees underutilize testing and do not believe in prevention	- NGO physician: "They are most vulnerable to infection from overcrowding and the drastic living conditions; still they underutilize testing, resulting in underestimating the prevalence of COVID-19 in the camps". - Private laboratory director, Bekaa: "It is rare to find a refugee diagnosed with COVID-19 because they generally do not test". - NGO director: "They neither wear masks, nor use sanitizers, and neighbours still gather in the same tent even when they have symptoms". - Nurse, Bekaa: "They are not worried about their own health. It is not a matter of lack of knowledge; we do a lot of awareness sessions, but the hand-gel box at the entrance of our centre is still full after a couple of weeks". - Private laboratory director, South Lebanon: "Nobody tests for prevention; they only do the test when they want to cross the border back home, as a requirement".
	Testing is used only when obliged to, for travel or medical procedures	- Physician: "Most refugees who do a PCR are obliged to do it for hospital admission; otherwise nobody cares". - Male refugee, city: "What else am I supposed to do? I did it 4 times already, every time I visit Damascus, I do it in Lebanon then in Syria, that is normal". Female refugee, camp: "I did it twice in the hospital before delivery".
	Some private laboratories practice fraud and sell reports with negative PCR results	- Private laboratory director, South Lebanon: "Many people come to our lab to request a negative COVID-19 lab report... of course we refuse, but some small private labs do".
Availability of testing services	Testing services were provided for free by UNHCR	- NGO director: "UNHCR covers free testing for any symptomatic refugee in coordination with governmental hospitals and NGOs".
	Testing services from private laboratories were geographically accessible	- Female refugee, camp: "The centre is not far, and when there is any emergency, distance is not a problem... In case of emergency we can use motorcycles to reach Chtoura".
Operational challenges	Process of free testing by UNHCR is unclear	- Male refugee, South Lebanon: "I am still confused, could we go directly to the hospital? Is there a UNHCR telephone number?".
	Concerns were expressed about testing campaigns provided by NGOs	- NGO physician: "These campaigns were random and not done on a regular basis and many were organized just to show off or for marketing".
	Testing at private clinics was perceived costly and complicated and refugees relied on pharmacy consultations upon having symptoms	- Male refugee, camp: "Why go to a clinic, wait and wait again for the test results, and pay more? I can simply go to the nearby pharmacist and get medications immediately". - Female refugee, camp: "The pharmacy is next door, and the pharmacists always treat you immediately and provide medications. Medications work fine, 100%, without doing a PCR, the same as in Syria".
Psychological challenges	Refugees had a low risk perception to COVID-19	- Female gynaecologist: "I think that it is not just a matter of money or difficulty; our patients are not convinced about testing, they believe it is a transient allergy or common cold...when we recommend symptomatic patients to test, they totally refuse".
	Perceived severity and vulnerability to COVID-19 differed among refugees residing in cities and those in camps	- Female refugee, city: "Her husband is tall, strong and healthy, always wears a mask, yet he was hospitalized for 2 weeks and had kidney damage". - Female refugee, camp: "Our neighbour had COVID-19 and I was not afraid to enter their home and I did not get sick". - Female refugee, camp: "We do not care anymore, to be honest. If someone in the camp gets COVID-19, people around visit him; it is no big deal".
	Fear of stigma was commonly noted among refugees in cities.	- Female refugee, city: "I was afraid of being diagnosed with COVID-19 because our neighbours would scold and avoid us".
	Belief in fate	- Male refugee, camp: "If we get sick it is in the hands of God and if we die, it is written". - Healthcare centre director, Beirut: "Refugees believe that getting sick or not is nothing but God's will; so, you find people sharing the same tent with a positive COVID-19 case, even without using face masks, and sometimes do not mind smoking shisha (water pipe) in the same tent; they say God protects".