

Challenges South Asian Immigrant Youth Face in Transnational Contexts

Dr. Salima Meherali, University of Alberta, Faculty of Nursing; **Mariam Ahmad, MPH**; Dr. Bisi Adewale; Samar Kauser, BComm; Giulia Puinean, MSc

Introduction

South Asians in Canada, making up 5.6% (Statistics Canada, 2017) of the population, face significant health disparities linked to their immigrant status and ties to their home countries. The lack of culturally sensitive policies amplifies these issues, especially for South Asian Immigrant Youth (SAIY) who confront additional challenges tied to racial, cultural, and familial dynamics leading to conflicts.

Purpose

To explore the challenges faced by South Asian immigrant youth (SAIY) living in a transnational context in Canada, particularly in Alberta, and understand how these challenges impact their adaptation to Canadian society.

Participants

The study included 23 SAIY and 13 parents of SAIY from diverse backgrounds. Eligibility criteria required being a SAIY between 15-24 years old or a parent of a SAIY within the same age range and willing to share their immigration experiences and provide consent for participation. Recruitment was done through social media platforms, community and recreation centers, and immigrant service agencies in Edmonton, Alberta, from July to December 2021, using convenience sampling due to the constraints of the global pandemic.

Methods

A qualitative descriptive design was used to closely examine participants' perspectives and experiences. By staying less theoretical and closely adhering to participants' words, the research aims to clearly elucidate the who, what, where, and why of the event under study. The Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Research (COREQ) was adhered to, ensuring rigour and transparency in the research process.



Results

The study focused on South Asian immigrant youth (SAIY) in Canada and categorized the findings into four themes: experiences as SAIY, resources and services for SAIY, challenges faced by SAIY, and future research and recommendations by SAIY. SAIY generally had positive experiences in Canada, though some reported experiences of discrimination. Access to resources and services varied, with some participants unaware of available services. Health services were generally perceived as equitable, but barriers like stigma and parental consent requirements hindered access.

Acculturative stress and identity development issues were reported challenges for SAIY in adjusting to Canadian society. Participants recommended maintaining a cultural balance, strengthening community support, and engaging in social activities to ease adjustment. Parents of SAIY reported concerns about racial discrimination and suggested improving access to mental health and sexual and reproductive health programs. They also emphasized the need for specialized research and increased community involvement in future studies.

The challenges faced by SAIY in adjusting to Canadian society are multifaceted and can have varying effects on their physical, social, and mental well-being. To support them, it is crucial to investigate specific issues like cultural diversity, identity, and employment and their impact on SAIY.

Conclusion

Understanding the perspectives of parents is also important, particularly regarding racial discrimination and access to mental and sexual health programs for their children. This information is vital for developing evidence-based strategies, programs, and policies that facilitate the adaptation of SAIY to Canadian society. Our study provides insight into the challenges and barriers SAIY contend with as they adjust to Canadian life, an issue that is under-researched to date.

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