

CHAPTER NINE

Im/migrants' Well-being in Canada: Navigating Acculturation and Racism in the Post-Pandemic Era

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ABSTRACT

Despite Canada's reputation as a welcoming multicultural nation, the lived experiences of many im/migrants reveal deep tensions between national narratives and everyday realities. This chapter examines how Asian immigrants and their children experience well-being in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, a period marked by intensified racism, economic hardship, and social isolation. Drawing on psychological research, acculturation theory, and racial trauma scholarship, the authors analyze how generational differences, discrimination, and cultural adaptation shape mental health outcomes. The pandemic serves not as an anomaly but as a magnifying lens that exposes longstanding inequities. By situating immigrant well-being within structural and interpersonal contexts, this chapter calls attention to the urgent need for mental health frameworks that account for racism, intersectionality, and cultural nuance.

KEYWORDS: Im/migrant, Well-being, Acculturation, Racism, Post-Pandemic

Despite Canada's long-standing reputation as a multicultural society, the psychological toll of racism, particularly in the form of racial trauma, remains significant for many immigrants and ethnic minorities. This impact is especially pronounced for Asian immigrants and their children, who experience these challenges at the intersection of both groups. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated these issues, highlighting the need to examine the overall well-being of Asian immigrants in Canada during the post-pandemic era. The pandemic not only brought economic hardships and limited healthcare access but also intensified anti-Asian sentiment, leading to increased instances of racial discrimination, social isolation, and psychological distress within this population (Zhao et al., 2022). Given the significance of these challenges, this chapter aims to explore the complex interplay among acculturation, generational differences in immigrant experiences, racial discrimination, and overall well-being.

Recent studies underscore the differential impact of the pandemic on ethnic minorities and immigrants, revealing that these groups currently perceive higher pandemic-related threats, which are closely linked to negative psychological outcomes. These challenges align with the broader process of acculturation, suggesting that the unique stressors experienced by immigrants, such as heightened threat perceptions and unjust treatment, contribute significantly to their overall well-being (Wang et al., 2023; Zhao et al., 2022). For immigrants whose first language is not English, acculturation is particularly crucial, as it directly influences their cultural adaptation and success in Canadian society (Dua et al., 2005).

Moreover, the process of acculturation often involves making employment choices that accommodate family needs, which can result in underemployment and associated stressors. Skilled immigrant women, in particular, have faced disproportionate impacts during the pandemic, struggling with intensified work-from-home arrangements and difficulties in online job searches, compounded by a lack of social support from both direct and extended families and communities (Lee, 2023). These issues highlight the gendered nature of work-life imbalance among immigrants.

Second-generation minorities, referring to individuals who are born in a country to immigrant parents, continue to grapple with racism and exclusion despite often presenting with mainstream appearances. This is particularly pronounced during childhood and adolescence, where identity threats stemming from systemic and overt racism can have lasting impacts on their psychological well-being. Understanding how generational differences influence minority negotiations with Canadian society is essential for addressing these disparities and promoting well-being among immigrant populations (Fang et al., 2023).

The pandemic has not only exacerbated existing racial tensions but has also brought to light the urgent need for post-pandemic anti-racism interventions. Asian Canadians, in particular, have been subjected to a surge in racism, underscoring the deep-seated systemic barriers that persist within Canadian society. Addressing these issues in the post-pandemic context is crucial for fostering a more inclusive environment that supports the well-being of all immigrants (Guo & Guo, 2021; Van Ngo et al., 2023).

The upcoming subchapters examine the psychological impact of racial discrimination, the intricacies of the acculturation process, the generational differences in identity formation, and the challenges to mental well-being in the post-pandemic era.

Biases, Discrimination, and Racism before and during/after the Pandemic

Despite Canada's reputation for multiculturalism, significant challenges related to biases, discrimination, and racism persist, particularly affecting Asian immigrants. Previous literature has consistently highlighted how racial trauma, resulting from these forms of discrimination, significantly contributes to mental health issues among racialized communities. The historical foundations of Canadian institutions have created systemic and systematic barriers for people of color, which continue to manifest in various aspects of daily life, from employment to healthcare (Henry & Tator, 2009; Dua et al., 2005). The pandemic has further exacerbated these barriers, leading to a dramatic increase in biases, discrimination, and racism faced by Asian immigrants in Canada.

Before the Pandemic

Before the pandemic, Asian immigrants in Canada already faced considerable biases and discrimination. Historically, Asian communities, including Chinese, Japanese, and South Asian immigrants, have experienced exclusionary policies, such as the Chinese Head Tax and Japanese internment during World War II, which have left long-lasting impacts on these communities (Henry & Tator, 2009). Although Canada's official multiculturalism policy promoted inclusivity, Asian immigrants have often encountered systemic barriers in various areas, including employment, education, and healthcare.

Many Asian immigrants faced underemployment, despite having high levels of education and professional qualifications. Studies have shown that Asian job applicants were often subject to implicit biases, leading to discrimination in hiring practices. For instance, applicants with Asian-sounding names were less likely to receive callbacks for job interviews compared to those with Anglo-Saxon names, even when qualifications were similar (Oreopoulos, 2011). Additionally, the devaluation of foreign credentials and work experience has been a persistent issue, contributing to the underutilization of skilled Asian immigrants (Guo, 2015).

Socially, Asian immigrants often encountered microaggressions and stereotypes that painted them as perpetual foreigners, regardless of how long they had lived in Canada or their level of integration. These stereotypes included the "model minority" myth, which, while seemingly positive, imposed unrealistic expectations and masked the real challenges faced by Asian communities, including mental health struggles and economic disparities (Wong et al., 2010).

During and After the Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic marked a significant escalation in the biases, discrimination, and racism faced by Asian immigrants in Canada. The pandemic not only exacerbated existing issues but also introduced new forms of xenophobia and hate. During the pandemic, there was a dramatic increase in hate crimes and racist incidents targeting Asian Canadians. The pandemic, which originated in China, fueled xenophobic rhetoric and scapegoating, leading to a surge in verbal and physical assaults against individuals of Asian descent. Reports indicated a sharp rise in anti-Asian hate crimes, with Asian Canadians being blamed for the spread of the virus, facing harassment in public spaces, and being subjected to racial slurs (Wang et al., 2023; Zhao et al., 2022).

The pandemic also worsened employment discrimination for Asian immigrants. As economic uncertainty grew, Asian workers, particularly those in frontline and service industries, faced increased job insecurity and layoffs. Additionally, there were reports of workplace

harassment, where Asian employees were unfairly associated with the virus, further marginalizing them in professional environments (Sim, 2022).

The mental health implications of this heightened discrimination were profound. Asian immigrants experienced increased levels of anxiety, depression, and stress due to the combination of direct racist attacks and the pervasive atmosphere of xenophobia. The pandemic exacerbated pre-existing mental health challenges, with many Asian immigrants reporting a greater reluctance to seek help due to fear of stigmatization or cultural barriers (Chen et al., 2023).

Pre-Pandemic vs During and Post-Pandemic

Before the pandemic, biases and discrimination against Asian immigrants in Canada, while present, were often more insidious and subtle, manifesting primarily through systemic barriers and social stereotypes. Asian immigrants frequently faced underemployment despite having high levels of education and professional qualifications. Their foreign credentials were often devalued, resulting in significant challenges in finding employment that matched their skills and experience (Guo, 2015). Additionally, many Asian immigrants were subjected to microaggressions - subtle, often unintentional, forms of discrimination that reinforced the notion of Asians as perpetual foreigners, regardless of how long they had lived in Canada or how integrated they were into Canadian society (Wong et al., 2010). Although these forms of discrimination were harmful, they generally did not escalate to widespread, overt hostility or violence.

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, however, the situation dramatically worsened. The COVID-19 pandemic triggered a sharp increase in overt racism and xenophobia, particularly in the form of hate crimes against Asian Canadians. The virus's origins in China led to a surge in racist rhetoric, scapegoating, and violence directed at individuals of Asian descent. This wave of discrimination was not only more visible and violent but also deeply traumatic, as it directly threatened the physical safety and mental well-being of Asian immigrants (Wang et al., 2023; Zhao et al., 2022). The pandemic amplified existing vulnerabilities within Asian communities, revealing the fragility of the social protections supposedly afforded by Canada's multicultural policies. The rise in hate crimes and xenophobic incidents during this period underscored the persistent and deep-seated nature of racism in Canadian society, making it clear that the post-pandemic period would require significant efforts to address these intensified forms of discrimination.

Interventions to mitigate biases, discrimination, and racism

While biases, discrimination, and racism have long affected Asian immigrants in Canada, the pandemic has exacerbated these issues, making them more overt and harmful. The comparison between the pre-pandemic and post-pandemic periods highlights the urgent need for targeted interventions to address both the historical and newly emerging challenges faced by Asian communities in the post-pandemic era.

One of the most crucial interventions is the implementation of comprehensive anti-racism education. Anti-racism education is vital in dismantling the systemic and interpersonal forms of racism that have been magnified during the pandemic. This education must go beyond simply raising awareness; it should actively challenge the stereotypes and biases that contribute to discrimination and provide practical tools for individuals and institutions to combat racism. For example, schools and workplaces can implement mandatory training programs that focus on understanding racial trauma, recognizing microaggressions, and addressing systemic biases. Such

programs could incorporate case studies and scenarios that reflect the real experiences of Asian Canadians, helping participants to better understand the impact of their actions and the importance of allyship (Lee, 2023). Additionally, anti-racism education should include historical context, such as the Chinese Head Tax and Japanese internment, to highlight how past injustices continue to influence the present (Henry & Tator, 2009).

Community-based initiatives are also indispensable in the fight against racism. Organizations like the Canadian Race Relations Foundation have launched campaigns to counter anti-Asian racism by promoting inclusivity and educating the public about the contributions of Asian Canadians. These initiatives can be further supported by strong government policies that ensure accountability for hate crimes and provide resources for victims (Guo & Guo, 2021).

Moreover, integrating anti-racism education into mental health services is critical. Mental health professionals should be trained to recognize the specific challenges faced by Asian immigrants, including the stressors related to acculturation and the impact of racial discrimination on mental health. By offering culturally competent care, these services can better support Asian immigrants in navigating the complexities of life in Canada post-pandemic (Chen et al., 2023).

In conclusion, the post-pandemic era presents an opportunity to address the intensified racism and discrimination that Asian immigrants have faced. By prioritizing anti-racism education and ensuring it is embedded in all levels of society - from schools and workplaces to community organizations and mental health services - Canada can move towards a more equitable and inclusive future for all its residents. Now more than ever, it is essential that we harness this moment to create lasting change and ensure that every individual, regardless of their background, feels valued and supported in Canadian society.

Acculturation

Acculturation is a critical process for immigrants as they adapt to a new cultural environment. This subchapter examines the challenges that Asian immigrants face in navigating acculturation, particularly in the context of the post-pandemic world. The discussion focuses on how second language acquisition, cultural adaptation, and the need for employment that accommodates family needs contribute to the stressors associated with acculturation (Dua et al., 2005). The impact of underemployment and the specific struggles faced by skilled immigrant women, including work-life balance and online job searches during the pandemic, are also explored (Lee, 2023).

Definition and Importance of Acculturation

Acculturation is defined as the process of cultural change and psychological adjustment that occurs when individuals from different cultural backgrounds come into prolonged contact (Berry, 2005). He was one of the first to extensively explore and describe acculturation as a dual process involving changes in both the individual and the host culture.. Berry's model of acculturation includes four strategies: assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization, which describe how individuals adapt to a new culture while maintaining their original cultural identity (Berry, 1997).

Assimilation occurs when individuals adopt the cultural norms of the host society while losing ties to their original culture. Assimilation often leads to a significant shift in identity as immigrants fully embrace the new culture. Second, separation involves individuals maintaining their original cultural identity and avoiding interaction with the host culture. This approach can

lead to social isolation as immigrants remain within their cultural enclaves and reject the dominant culture. Third, integration involves maintaining one's original cultural identity while also participating in the larger society. This strategy is considered the most balanced approach as it

allows individuals to retain their cultural heritage while adapting to the new environment. Lastly, marginalization happens when individuals neither maintain their original culture nor assimilate into the host culture. This often results in a loss of cultural identity and social alienation, leading to negative psychological outcomes (Berry, 1997).

Acculturation is a critical process for both individuals and societies, as it influences various aspects of life, including mental health, social integration, and economic success. For individuals, successful acculturation can lead to better psychological well-being, as it helps them navigate the complexities of living in a new cultural environment. Research has shown that well-accultured individuals often experience lower levels of stress and anxiety, and they are better able to build social networks and support systems (Sam & Berry, 2010). From a societal perspective, acculturation is important for fostering social cohesion and reducing conflicts between cultural groups. Integration, one of Berry's acculturation strategies, is particularly beneficial as it promotes mutual respect and understanding between immigrants and the host society. This can lead to a more inclusive society where diversity is valued and celebrated. Additionally, effective acculturation policies can enhance the economic contributions of immigrants by helping them access education, employment, and other resources more efficiently (Schwartz et al., 2010).

Acculturation of Immigrants in Canada

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, studies explored the challenges faced by immigrants of first-generation, second-generation, and gender perspectives, in Canada during the acculturation process. According to Noh and Kaspar (2003), first-generation immigrants often faced significant challenges such as language barriers, underemployment, and social isolation. Noh and Kaspar (2003) highlighted how perceived discrimination contributed to depression among first-generation immigrants. Their study suggested that coping mechanisms and ethnic support could mitigate these effects, emphasizing the importance of community support systems.

Other studies, such as those by Hynie (2018), have explored how social and institutional support structures could enhance the acculturation process. These studies concluded that better integration programs and policies are essential for improving the well-being of first-generation immigrants. Hynie (2018) noted that immigrants who received comprehensive support were more likely to experience positive acculturation outcomes, such as improved mental health and greater social integration.

Second-generation immigrants, while more integrated into Canadian society, often faced their own set of challenges. Studies by Phinney et al. (2001) indicated that second-generation immigrants experience identity conflicts and discrimination. These studies emphasized the need for policies that promote multicultural education and anti-discrimination practices in schools to help second-generation immigrants navigate their dual identities.

Gender also played a crucial role in the acculturation process. Research by Man (2004) focused on the unique challenges faced by skilled immigrant women in Canada, such as underemployment and the balancing of professional and family responsibilities. These studies concluded that targeted employment programs and support networks are necessary to address the specific needs of immigrant women.

Acculturation of Immigrants in Canada: Pandemic Impact

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted the acculturation process for immigrants in Canada, introducing new challenges and exacerbating existing ones (Lou et al., 2022; Su et al., 2022). Several studies conducted during and after the pandemic highlight the multifaceted difficulties immigrants faced, ranging from increased social isolation to economic instability and mental health concerns. These issues act as negative factors in the acculturation of Canadian immigrants (Miconi et al., 2021; Nakhaie et al., 2022).

The pandemic's restrictions on social interactions and mobility significantly increased feelings of isolation among immigrants. According to Su et al. (2022), the psychological well-being of older Chinese immigrants in Canada was particularly affected, with loneliness and lack of social support emerging as significant issues. The disruption of community support networks, which are crucial for the acculturation process, led to higher levels of anxiety, depression, and loneliness compared to pre-pandemic levels (Nakhaie et al., 2022).

Economic instability emerged as a significant issue during the pandemic. According to Lou et al. (2022), immigrants, particularly those in precarious employment or sectors heavily impacted by the crisis, such as hospitality and retail, faced higher rates of job loss and underemployment. They noted that ethnic minority and immigrant populations experienced severe economic setbacks, complicating their financial stability and overall acculturation. In addition, the pandemic also intensified xenophobic sentiments and discriminatory practices against immigrants. Lou et al. (2022) noted a notable increase in discrimination, particularly against individuals of Asian descent. This hostile environment exacerbated the acculturation challenges, as immigrants had to navigate not only the stress of the pandemic but also increased societal prejudice.

Access to health and social services was another critical issue for immigrants during the pandemic. According to Miconi et al. (2021), language barriers, lack of awareness about available services, and fear of discrimination prevented many from seeking help. They noted that the strain on healthcare systems also meant that non-urgent health needs, which are often critical for the well-being of immigrants, were deprioritized. This limited access compounded existing health disparities and negatively impacted the overall acculturation process (Miconi et al., 2021).

For immigrant families, the shift to online education posed significant challenges. Tseu et al. (2023) found that incoming international students faced difficulties adapting to remote learning due to language barriers, lack of parental support, and limited access to technology. These educational disruptions had long-term implications for their academic success and social integration. Additionally, Yang et al. (2022) highlighted that Mainland Chinese in Canada faced non-pathological psychological distress due to these educational challenges.

Acculturation is a complex and ongoing process that significantly impacts the lives of immigrants and the societies they join, particularly in a diverse country like Canada. Through the lens of Berry's acculturation strategies - assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization - we gain a deeper understanding of the diverse experiences and outcomes of individuals as they adjust to new cultural environments within the Canadian context. In Canada, both before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, immigrants have faced numerous challenges, from social isolation and economic instability to discrimination and access to services. These challenges highlight the importance of effective support systems and policies in Canada that facilitate positive acculturation outcomes. By addressing these issues, Canada can better support immigrants in their journey toward cultural adaptation, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive and harmonious society.

Generation Differences

This subchapter addresses the generational differences in acculturation and how these gaps influence identity formation among Asian immigrants. While first-generation immigrants often focus on cultural preservation, second-generation individuals face unique challenges, including systemic racism and identity threats during critical developmental stages like childhood and adolescence (Fang et al., 2023). The discussion here emphasizes the importance of understanding these generational dynamics in order to effectively support the well-being of both first- and second-generation immigrants within Canadian society.

Educational Mobility and Resilience in Immigrant Families

In Canadian society, the classification of individuals into three distinct groups - immigrants, the second generation, and the third-plus generation (Berry & Hou, 2021). Immigrants are individuals who were not born in Canada but have chosen to make Canada their home. The second generation comprises individuals born in Canada with at least one immigrant parent or foreign-born but arrived in Canada at age 12 or younger. They represent a unique demographic as they straddle two cultural identities, blending aspects of their parents' culture with Canadian norms. Lastly, the third-plus generation includes individuals who were born in Canada to two Canadian-born parents, embodying a more established Canadian identity.

People who immigrated to Canada as children and those who were born in Canada to immigrant parents constitute a highly diverse and growing segment of the total population. This segment often faces unique challenges and opportunities. Growing up in a multicultural environment, these individuals navigate between their cultural heritage and Canadian identity. Berry and Hou (2021) delved into the complexities of immigrant acculturation and well-being across generations and settlement contexts in Canada. Immigrants face a myriad of challenges related to acculturation, including language barriers, navigating cultural differences, and coping with discrimination. These challenges can significantly impact their well-being and mental health, leading to feelings of isolation, stress, and identity confusion.

Specifically, this study found nuanced differences in the acculturation experiences and well-being of immigrants across generations. First-generation immigrants, who were born outside of Canada, often faced significant challenges related to acculturation. They had to navigate language barriers, cultural differences, and the process of adapting to a new environment. These challenges could impact their well-being and mental health, leading to feelings of isolation and stress. In contrast, second-generation immigrants, who were born in Canada or arrived at a young age, tended to experience fewer challenges. They were more likely to be fluent in the language, familiar with Canadian cultural norms, and have a stronger sense of identity and belonging. As a result, they reported higher levels of well-being compared to first-generation immigrants. This study suggested that generational differences play a role in the acculturation process, with later generations of immigrants often experiencing greater integration and well-being in Canadian society.

In addition, immigrant communities frequently showcase remarkable levels of resilience, adaptability, and unwavering determination. Many strive to excel academically and professionally, driven by the aspirations of their families and the opportunities afforded to them in Canada. Hum and Simpson (1999) argued that education acquired in Canada offers higher returns in terms of career advancement and earnings potential for immigrants compared to education obtained elsewhere. This finding underscores the value of education acquired within the Canadian context

for immigrant integration and success in the labor market.

Particularly, De Broucker and Lavallée (1998) revealed a compelling trend: children of immigrants often achieve higher levels of education than their parents. This upward educational mobility within immigrant families highlights the opportunities and aspirations that drive second-

generation immigrants to excel academically. It also underscores the positive impact of education as a pathway to integration and success in a new society. This trend reflects the resilience and determination of immigrant families to build better futures for themselves and their children through education.

Family Dynamics and Cultural Integration

Building on the theme of family and generational dynamics, Foner (1997) emphasized that immigrant families engage in a nuanced cross-fertilization process, melding kinship norms from their home countries with those of the new society. Hence, the extent to which generational differences are manifested varies significantly depending on the cultural and societal context of each country. Substantial disparities in perspectives on parental authority and children's rights were uncovered within Asian immigrant families, underscoring profound generational differences.

For instance, Korean immigrant families often associate themselves with entrenched hierarchical authority structures and male domination (Shon & Ja, 1982). Research conducted on Korean immigrant families underscores the importance of conformity within the family—a deeply rooted value in Korean traditional culture (Strom et al., 1987). Thus, traditional parenting norms among Korean immigrant adolescents often fuel conflict, as strict parental control is seen as a sign of parental hostility and rejection, exacerbating familial tensions (Kwak & Berry, 2001).

Moreover, an essential factor contributing to generational differences within the East-Indian community is gender dynamics, particularly notable among foreign-born Hindu parents in Canada. Dhruvarajan (1993) highlighted pronounced male dominance and female subservience within these families, alongside a clear division of labor. This gendered cultural framework underscores the complex interplay between traditional values and the evolving expectations of subsequent generations, shaping the experiences of immigrant families in their adopted countries.

While strong family cohesion is often upheld within Asian communities in Canada through extensive intra-family cooperation, significant generational disparities still emerge. These disparities are largely due to differing preferences for intercultural contacts among Asian adolescents and their parents, reflecting the evolving dynamics within immigrant families navigating cultural integration. Immigrant adolescents, in particular, experience a notably accelerated and varied process of intercultural adaptation in comparison to their parents.

Chung and Bemak (2006), for instance, delve into the nuanced dynamics of this adaptation, highlighting the rapid pace at which adolescents navigate and integrate into diverse cultural spheres. Nguyen and Williams (1989) further contribute to this discourse by examining the various challenges and opportunities that arise during the adaptation process, illuminating the diverse pathways through which adolescents negotiate their identities and cultural affiliations. Finally, Rosenthal et al. (1996) offer valuable insights into the intercultural adaptation experiences of immigrant adolescents, highlighting the pivotal role of social networks, peer relationships, and educational environments in shaping their acculturation trajectories. Together, these studies paint a comprehensive picture of the intricate and multifaceted nature of intercultural adaptation among

immigrant adolescents, underscoring the importance of considering diverse contextual factors in understanding their experiences.

Intercultural Adaptation Among immigrant Adolescents

The generational differences play a significant role in shaping the acculturation experiences of immigrants in Canada. First-generation immigrants face distinct challenges related to language, cultural adaptation, and discrimination, often impacting their well-being. In contrast, second-generation immigrants, more familiar with Canadian norms and language, tend to experience higher levels of integration and well-being. Despite these challenges, immigrant families often exhibit remarkable resilience and adaptability, with education serving as a critical pathway to integration and success. The experiences of immigrant adolescents further underscore the complexities of intercultural adaptation, highlighting the influence of social networks and educational environments. Understanding these generational differences is crucial for developing policies and support systems that foster positive acculturation outcomes, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive and cohesive Canadian society.

Well-Being of immigrants and migrants (1245)

Well-being is a crucial aspect of people's lives, encompassing various dimensions such as health, socioeconomic status, safety, and environmental contexts (Voukelatou et al., 2021). It can be evaluated through objective well-being, which involves physical conditions like health status and employment (e.g., health status, employment, societal security, and environmental quality), and subjective well-being, which includes personal evaluations and life satisfaction (Su et al., 2022; Voukelatou et al., 2021).

Dimensions of Well-Being for Immigrants and Migrants

Researchers across disciplines like public health, psychology, and economics have explored factors influencing well-being, finding that high levels are associated with robust physical and mental health, financial stability, strong social networks, and active civic participation (Raphael et al., 2001; Revens et al., 2021; Su et al., 2022). Studies on immigrants and migrants reveal significant well-being challenges such as economic stability, mental health, social integration, and access to services, with language and cultural differences posing critical hurdles to their acculturation and well-being (Alarcao et al., 2022; Hayward et al., 2021).

With much attention to well-being across disciplines such as public health, psychology, human resources, and economics, numerous researchers have explored factors influencing the well-being of individuals. In existing literature, subjective well-being is often used interchangeably with psychological well-being or emotional well-being (Diener & Ryan, 2009; Lent, 2004). Findings indicate that people with high levels of well-being typically experience robust physical and mental health, financial stability, strong social support networks, increased productivity, and active participation in civic activities (Raphael et al., 2001; Revens et al., 2021; Su et al., 2022). These elements are repeatedly highlighted in the literature as essential components of overall well-being, encompassing both objective and subjective aspects.

Throughout the world, studies on immigrants and migrants have been extensively conducted, revealing significant factors affecting their well-being. Research highlights several issues that hinder the well-being of this population, including economic stability, mental health, social integration, and access to services (Alarcao et al., 2022; Hayward et al., 2021). Language

and cultural differences fundamentally create substantial hurdles to integration in host countries, posing critical challenges to acculturation across all age groups from children to adults, which negatively impacts their experience of well-being (Su et al., 2022). It has been shown that even with similar income levels, immigrants, particularly those beyond middle age, exhibit poorer mental health compared to non-immigrants (Assari, 2020).

Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Immigrant Well-Being

Multiple studies have found that the well-being of immigrants and migrants significantly worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic. Economic instability was a major issue, as many immigrants were employed in sectors requiring low qualification professions (e.g., cleaners, personal care, and drivers), which were severely impacted by lockdowns and social distancing measures (Fasani & Mazza, 2020). This resulted in heightened financial insecurity, which exacerbated existing vulnerabilities. The mental health of this population also deteriorated, with increased levels of stress, anxiety, and depression (Gosselin et al., 2021). Specifically, access to essential services, including healthcare, created additional obstacles related to language difficulties and concern about deportation, limiting their access to the COVID-19 testing and vaccination (Hayward et al., 2021). A recent empirical study by Su et al. (2022) underscores that seniors, who are the most susceptible to illness and mortality, experienced more severe psychological well-being issues than young adults, suggesting the targeted societal interventions to support this group of people.

Among immigrants, particularly Asian including Chinese immigrants and migrants, have faced severe challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. This group was often framed as responsible for spreading the virus, leading to significant psychological well-being issues. Increased incidents of xenophobia resulted in elevated anxiety and depression levels, affecting not only Chinese immigrants but also other Asian immigrants (Chen et al., 2021; Lou et al., 2022).

In particular, Chen et al. (2021) provided an in-depth examination of the health implications of COVID-19-related racial discrimination against Asian Americans, given the significant rise in anti-Asian sentiment and hate crimes during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study explored the mental health impact of COVID-19-related discrimination and argued that Asian Americans may be particularly vulnerable to mental health challenges during the pandemic due to a combination of factors: cultural stigma, social isolation, and intergenerational tensions. There is often a cultural stigma associated with seeking mental health care within Asian communities, which could lead to underutilization of mental health services even in the face of increased need. Similarly, the stigmatization led to isolation and difficulties in community engagement, and fear of such negative stereotypes deterred many Asian immigrants from accessing essential healthcare services, exacerbating their health vulnerabilities or crisis (Cheah et al., 2020).

The pandemic has intensified social isolation, particularly for older Asian Americans who may already be marginalized due to language barriers or other factors. Additionally, the potential for intergenerational tensions within Asian American families can arise, particularly as younger generations may be more aware of and vocal about racial injustices, while older generations might prioritize avoiding conflict or downplaying discrimination (Chen et al., 2021). Within the complexity of the mental health impact due to COVID-19-related discrimination, the scholars highlighted the urgent need for targeted public health interventions and policy measures to address these challenges.

In Canada, immigrants have reported experiencing severe loneliness, lack of emotional support, and social integration issues during the pandemic, all of which negatively impacted their well-being (Su et al., 2022). The study found that loneliness was a significant predictor of psychological distress among older Chinese immigrants during the pandemic. The isolation caused by social distancing measures, combined with existing barriers such as language difficulties and cultural differences, exacerbated feelings of loneliness.

In addition to loneliness, research on racism has further emphasized that the threats and discrimination faced by immigrants significantly hinder their ability to adapt to the culture and society of the host country (Lou et al., 2022). These negative experiences not only diminished the life satisfaction of immigrants and migrants but also led to identity issues, exacerbating their social integration problems (Su et al., 2022; Lou et al., 2022). Such challenges can significantly impact other minority groups and future generations of immigrants/migrants, leading to broader social, cultural, and economic issues in Canada.

The Importance of Social Support and Policy Interventions

Research highlights that social support is a critical factor for immigrants and migrants as a coping resource that allows them to handle stress and loneliness stemming from various obstacles (Su et al., 2022). Social support, including family, friends, and community organizations, plays an important role in providing emotional support, practical assistance, and a sense of belonging (Lin, 2017; Simich et al., 2005). A meta-analysis has demonstrated that immigrants with strong social ties are better able to navigate the challenges of adapting to a new environment, which positively impacts their mental health and overall well-being (Bender et al., 2019). Additionally, involvement in ethnic and religious communities has been found to enhance resilience and provide a buffer against unique challenges and stressful circumstances such as discrimination and cultural adjustment (Revens et al., 2021).

Understanding the obstacles faced by immigrants and migrants is crucial, as it provides insights into the multifaceted challenges affecting their overall well-being. The key issues include the need for social support networks, culturally sensitive healthcare, financial stability, and efforts to combat discrimination. Implementing comprehensive and targeted policies and practices can significantly improve both their objective and subjective well-being. Such initiatives will not only enhance the quality of life for immigrants and migrants but also enrich the social, cultural, and economic aspects of host countries (Simich et al., 2005). Future research and policy development should prioritize these areas to address immediate concerns and create long-term strategies for fostering an inclusive society for all members (Cheah et al., 2020).

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