Visible Minority Immigrants as Transnational Carer-Employees Amidst COVID-19

CONTEXT

This project is part of a larger five-year study on Transnational Caregiving that explores the transnational caregiving experiences of Indigenous, visible minority, and European Carer-Employees (CEs) in London, ON. Transnational Carer-Employees (TCE) are immigrants or Indigenous populations who reside and work in Canada while simultaneously providing care to parents, adults living with a disability, and children who live in their home country. Transnational caregiving may involve long-distance moral, emotional, and/or financial support. It is also possible that, in addition to providing care, the participant is the decision maker for their family and/or friend’s care, finances, and/or funeral rites.

BACKGROUND

- One in every five persons in Canada is a visible minority (19.1% of the total population), of which 65.1% are immigrants (Statistics Canada, 2013).
- Many of these immigrants provide transnational caregiving because of an increase in global mobility and the aging population worldwide (Sharma, 2014).
- In London, Ontario, immigrants represent 21.2% of the population while visible minority immigrants represent 18% (of which 51% are female and 49% male) (MacTaggart et al., 2013; Statistics Canada, 2017).

OBJECTIVE

The goal of this project was to explore the transnational caregiving experiences of visible minority CEs pre-COVID-19 and during the pandemic.

METHODOLOGY

- Community-based participatory research and arts-based ethnography methodologies were used to engage participants in 60-90 minute face-to-face (pre-COVID-19) or virtual interviews (post-COVID-19).
- Interviews were conducted in English, Spanish, and Arabic.
- Purposive and snowball sampling.
- 24 participants in total.

Preliminary thematic analysis revealed the following themes:

- Increased sense of responsibility for transnational-care due to COVID-19.
- Guilt over a decreased ability to provide financial assistance.
- Feelings of grief.
- Increased anxiety over the economic, social and physical wellbeing of care-recipients.
- Expressions of gratitude.
- Caregiving and gender: male participants stated gender did not play a role in caregiving responsibilities while female participants believed it did.
- Participants were not aware of Carer Friendly Workplace Policies (CFPWPs).
- Pre-existing transnational caregiving responsibilities, combined with the added pressures and travel restrictions caused by COVID-19, have posed unique emotional and mental health challenges to TCEs and their loved ones.

SPECIFIC PRE AND POST COVID-19 FINDINGS

A sample of participants were interviewed before and after the pandemic, COVID-19 impacted participants differently. Participants with stable employment had more options connecting with families in different time zones due to pandemic flexible working conditions. They had more disposable income due to a decrease in social expenses.

- Participants who were laid off had an added stressor and financial burden. Syrian participants had a unique worry for post COVID-19.
- COVID-19, have posed unique emotional and mental health challenges to TCEs and their loved ones.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

- Findings illuminated intersectional factors that emphasize the multiple roles of TCEs as employers, caregivers, partners, siblings, providers.

PRELIMINARY RESULTS

- Participants were asked to submit an art piece that represented their transnational caregiving experiences. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the interview data and the artwork.

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