

The psychosocial well-being of sub-Saharan African migrant parents in Ontario: a scoping review



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Background

Ontario, the most populous province in Canada, has seen a significant influx of migrants from sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) in the past several years, with Nigeria and South Africa as the top countries of origin for Black African newcomers. Conditions resulting from overcrowding and provincial attempts to accommodate this influx have led to medium-sized cities, like Hamilton and Ottawa, and small communities becoming increasingly popular destinations for immigrants.

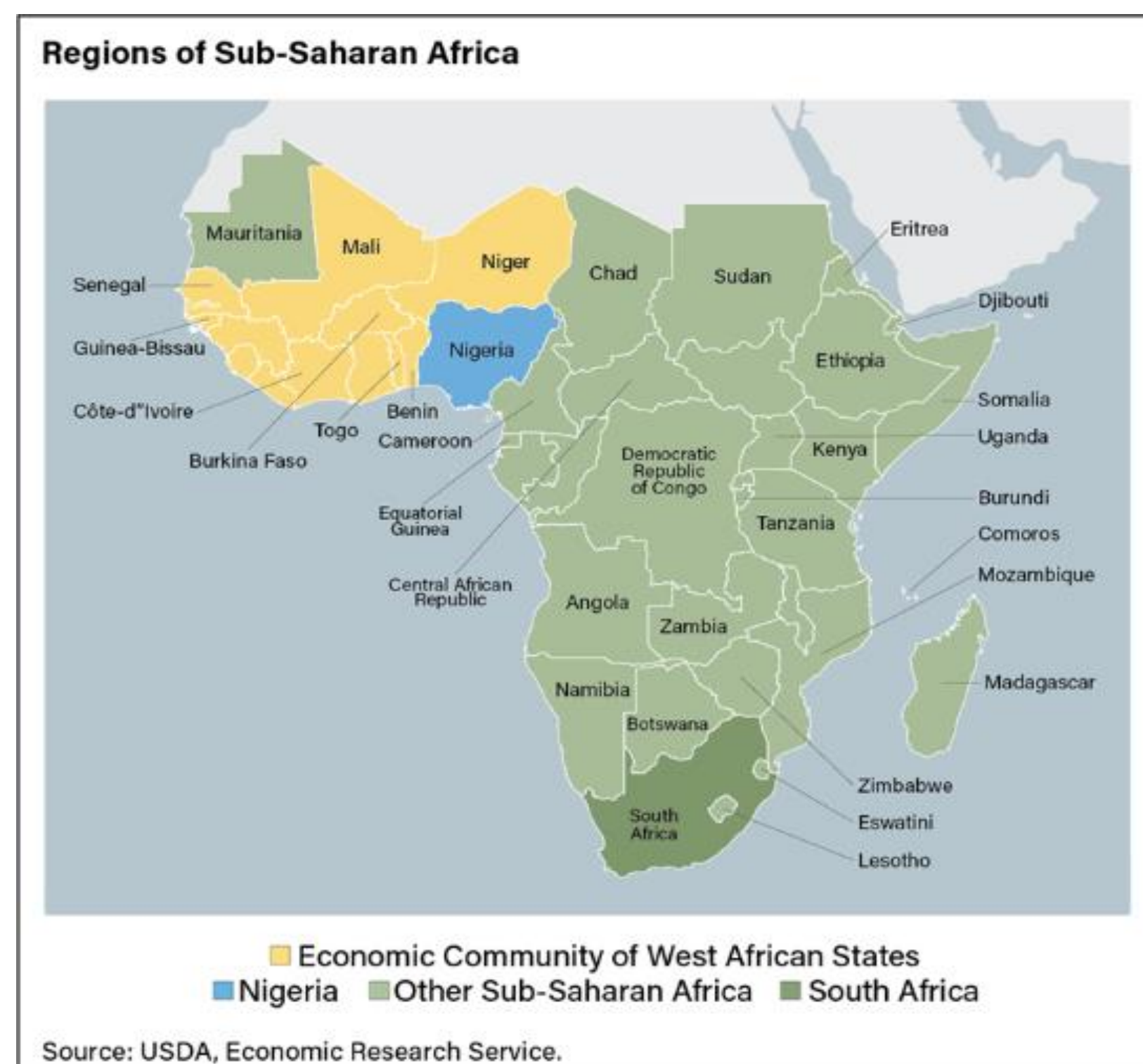


Fig. 1 Regions of sub-Saharan Africa [12]

Objectives

1. To identify the outcomes, indicators, concepts and perspectives related to the psychosocial well-being of SSA migrant parents in Ontario, including but not limited to the following aspects:
 - Interaction with health and social systems, including parenting resources
 - Family reunification process, if relevant
 - Racial discrimination
 - Belonging
 - Coping strategies
 - Resilience
2. To discuss the knowledge gaps on the psychosocial well-being of SSA migrant parents in Ontario

Methods

This review was conducted according to the JBI guide on evidence synthesis. The results were reported in line with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for scoping reviews (PRISMA-ScR). An extensive search strategy was developed for application across six databases: PubMed, Scopus, ProQuest, Web of Science, OVID, and CINAHL. 473 studies were screened.

Results

15 articles were included in the scoping review. The review revealed five major themes, described in Figure 2. Stressors related to adapting to life in Ontario and managing parenting responsibilities simultaneously are addressed mainly through communal coping strategies that emphasize mutual responsibility among African newcomers. Studies were concentrated in major urban centers like Toronto and smaller communities were overlooked. This gap is significant with the recent implementation of the Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot Program, which encourages migrants to resettle in smaller communities in Ontario.

Psychosocial well-being or “health” as a culturally embedded concept

Health is understood subjectively. Often, spirituality is interwoven into definitions of health. Subjective understanding of illness leads to misunderstandings with clinicians.

The politicization of health and its impact on psychosocial well-being

Political discourse around how certain conditions should be treated that creates stigma (for HIV, autism) or affects how resources are allocated, affecting health for Black African migrant parents.

Generational dynamics and parenting challenges

Older and younger parents face some unique stressors related to parenting.

The interplay of trauma and resilience in the resettlement journey

Trauma from their home country carry over into the host country and manifests symptomatically in different ways.

Agency and resourcefulness

Parents leverage informal support systems to respond to specific needs when formal systems fail (e.g. tontines).

Fig. 2 Themes of Scoping Review

Conclusion

Black African migrant parents maintain transnational connections through parenting and communication with relatives back home, making them vulnerable to the psychosocial effects of conditions in their home countries. Their psychosocial well-being can be enhanced by incorporating their cultural perspectives into senior care, maternal health, HIV care, and mental health services.

Actionable Recommendations

1. Fund longitudinal studies on the psychosocial well-being of Black African migrant parents in Ontario's smaller communities and mid-sized cities, including those on temporary permits or separated from their children.
2. Build multi-sector partnerships among healthcare providers, community organizations, and local health authorities to integrate cultural perspectives into senior care, maternal health, HIV care, and mental health services, informed by insights from Black African migrants of all ages.