

The influence of family on Muslim youth in New Zealand and the U.K.



Main research findings

Muslim youth in New Zealand experienced less stress and better adaptation than Muslim youth in the UK.

In both countries, being stressed from adapting to their new host culture meant youth were less satisfied with their life and exhibited more behavioural problems.

Having a strong family congruence and sense of commitment helped reduce behaviour problems and facilitated better adaptation. However, there is a tipping point where familial obligations become too stressful and can actually lead to an increase in behaviour problems and poorer adaptation.

RESEARCH

‘The influence of family climate on stress and adaptation for Muslim immigrant young adults in two western countries’

by Dr Jaimee Stuart, Professor Colleen Ward, and Lena Robinson (2016)

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Background

Moving to a new country and adapting to a new social environment can be difficult for anyone. This is particularly true for young adults who are going through developmental changes. Furthermore, minorities face the additional risk of being a victim of prejudice and discrimination.

For these reasons Muslim youth immigrants are particularly at high risk, therefore making them an important group to follow as they adapt to their new environment.

The Centre for Applied Cross-cultural Research, part of Victoria University of Wellington, undertook a study to investigate how the influence of family can affect the stress and well-being of Muslim youth trying to adapt to a new culture. This study was carried out in New Zealand and the United Kingdom.

Relevance of findings to New Zealand

As Muslims comprise 5% of the population in New Zealand and are the largest religious minority group, they make up an important part of the immigrant population.

The fact that Muslim youth in New Zealand are adjusting better than those in the UK could be partly due to the fact that New Zealand has different integration policies, and generally New Zealanders tend to be more tolerant and receptive to diversity than their UK counterparts.

There may exist an optimal level where family connection can help facilitate positive adjustment, but that too much involvement and pressure to meet expectations, while trying to adapt to their new environment, can actually cause more stress.

The context of the family and the nation influence adaptation of Muslim immigrant youth. It is important for practitioners to consider the influence that family has on youth adaptation and how families can help this process, while decreasing the negative impacts.