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Vulnerable to Precarity: COVID-19 and the Experience of Difference by Newcomers, Immigrants, and Migrant Workers in Canada

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Abstract

When COVID-19 struck Canada in 2020, immigrants, newcomers, and migrant (agricultural) workers were among those most vulnerable to the pandemic. Their experiences of the pandemic were accentuated by an exacerbation of pre-existing racial and other forms of discrimination. The article emerged from a systematic review and thematic synthesis of the broadly defined literature on immigrants, newcomers, and migrant workers' experiences of multifaceted challenges amid the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada. We established inclusion criteria and systematically searched for articles in databases, including JSTOR Journals, Social Work Abstract (EBSCOhost), PsycINFO, and other grey literature published between March 2020 and January 2023. The findings suggest that immigrants, newcomers, and migrant workers in Canada experienced systemic inequalities, which worsened their socio-economic status, placing them at higher risks of poor health outcomes. The following themes that underscore the experiences of immigrants, newcomers, and migrant workers in Canada were identified: a) that immigrants, newcomers, and migrant workers in Canada experienced negative socio-economic impacts due to COVID-19, b) that immigrants, newcomers, and migrant workers in Canada experienced aggravated precarious and inequitable employment during COVID-19, c) that immigrants, newcomers, and migrant workers in Canada experienced COVID-19 related racial discrimination, and d) that COVID-19 negatively impacted immigrants, newcomers, and migrant workers' mental health and well-being. Important directions for future research, including for studies that prioritize new immigrants, are provided.

Keywords: COVID-19, Canada, newcomers/new immigrants, employment discrimination, racial discrimination, marginalization, access/barriers to social support, mental health, and well-being

Vulnerable to Precarity: COVID-19 and the Experience of Difference by Newcomers, Immigrants, and Migrant Workers in Canada

At 0.5%, Canada has one of the highest population growth rates among the industrialized nations of the world (World Bank, 2022). This rate is spurred by immigration (Statistics Canada, 2021a, World Bank, 2022). For example, Statistics Canada (2022) revealed that over 8.3 million people, representing nearly 23.0% of Canada's population, were immigrants. The projection by Statistics Canada (2022) is that the immigrant population could reach somewhere from 29.1% to 34.0% of the Canadian population by 2041. From 2016 to 2021, a little over 1.3 million new immigrants were reported to have settled permanently in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2022). Of this number, 748,120 were admitted into the country under the Economic Class. In 2019, Canada admitted 341,175 permanent residents, granted study permits to 401,050 international students, and 368,730 temporary work permits (Feenan & Madhany, 2021). According to Feenan and Madhany (2021), international students injected about $22 billion into the Canadian economy and supported about 170,000 employment opportunities. In October 2020, the government of Canada introduced Canada's Immigration Levels Plan for 2021-2023. According to this plan, Canada aimed to welcome 401,000 new permanent residents in 2021, 411,000 in 2022, and 421,000 in 2023 (Government of Canada, 2020).

Similarly, in November 2022, the Federal government released Canada's 2023–2025 Immigration Levels Plan, which aimed to admit 465,000 new immigrants in 2023, 485,000 in 2024, and 500,000 in 2025 (Government of Canada, 2022). Furthermore, in August 2022, the federal government introduced a policy that allowed former international students whose post-graduation work permit expired or will expire between September 20, 2021, to December 31, 2022 to extend their work permit for another 18 months or apply for a new one for a

similar length of time (Government of Canada, 2022). Prior to this new policy, former international students whose post-graduation work permits expired before they could transition to permanent residents were expected to return to their home countries. All these changes and relaxations in Canada's immigration policies created a positive impression of the country both locally and internationally as an open and welcoming country for newcomers. However, an important reality is that Canada has, for a long time, depended on immigrants to meet its labor market demands. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic slowed down the inflow of immigrants and greatly impacted the country's ability to fill employment vacancies. For example, Statistics Canada (2022) reports that towards the end of 2021, job vacancies in the country were 80% higher than they were before the pandemic hit in the first quarter of 2020. This shortfall in the supply of labor meant the government of Canada had to find ways to incentivize foreign nationals to come to the country or for those who were already in the country on a temporary basis to regularize their stay as permanent residents. For the purpose of this review, newcomers refer to immigrants who have lived in Canada for five years or less.

Despite the significant contribution of newcomers in terms of the population growth and economic prosperity of Canada, they are exposed to systemic inequalities and intersecting forms of oppression during their quests for employment and integration in Canada. Furthermore, at the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, Canada lost three million jobs between March and April 2020. Thus, economic activities came to a standstill over this period (Atlin, 2020). When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020, immigrants, newcomers, and migrant workers were among those most vulnerable to the pandemic. This review aims to provide an in-depth understanding of immigrants, newcomers, and migrant workers' experiences amidst the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada. A systematic review and thematic synthesis (Popay et al., 2006) approach was employed for

this project. The key question that guided our exploration of the literature and analysis of extracted data was: What were the employment experiences of immigrants, newcomers, and migrant workers to Canada during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Methodological Approach

To answer our stated questions, we identified, collected, and screened extant publications on new immigrants' job search and employment experiences in the Canadian labor market during COVID-19. Shortlisted publications were critically reviewed and analyzed for this paper. Webster and Watson (2002) suggest that, in order to conduct a literature review, it should start by searching for relevant studies in leading journals. We searched databases, including JSTOR Journal, Social Work Abstract (EBSCOhost), and PsycINFO. In addition, we obtained grey literature from Google Scholar to complement empirical literature. Keywords used to conduct the search were: "Newcomers," "new immigrants," "temporary migrant workers," "COVID-19," "employment challenges," and "employment barriers." These key terms were searched individually and in combination, along with the phrase "in Canada." For this review, the search focused on peer-reviewed journal articles published in the English language between March 2020 and January 2023. Again, a qualified article must be based on the labor market experiences of newcomers or new immigrants in Canada. During the preliminary search of the terms listed above, we identified 39 related articles. Upon initial review of the titles and abstracts, we eliminated articles that did not meet the foregoing predetermined inclusion criteria. Articles that met the inclusion criteria were included in the final pool that was reviewed for this paper. Overall, a total of 17 articles were included in the pool that were reviewed and analyzed. In order to build context and ensure a robust discussion of our findings, we relied heavily on grey literature from Government of Canada publications, including those from Statistics Canada and Immigration, Refugees and

Citizenship Canada. In all, our analysis generated four major themes, which we present and discuss subsequently.

Socio-Economic Impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic, which began in China sometime in November 2019, quickly assumed the status of a global crisis with local consequences in Canada by March 2020, when social and economic activities came to a nearly complete standstill. It created unprecedented job losses across the provinces and territories of Canada. Hou et al. (2021) indicate that, in Canada, three million jobs were lost between the months of March and April 2020. Accordingly, Ivanova (2020) states that in the province of British Columbia (BC) alone, more than 590,000 workers lost their jobs or work hours due to the pandemic. The onset of the pandemic accentuated the already worsening systemic inequalities in the Canadian labor market for immigrants, especially for those who were new to the country. More workers who were engaged in precarious employment (e.g., temporary, part-time, low-paid positions) lost their jobs compared to workers in secure and highly-paid jobs. It is imperative to note that most of the workers in the former category are immigrants who are mostly new to the country (Karki & Moasun, In Press). Ivanova (2020) argues that the disproportionate impact of the pandemic among BC workers needs to be understood in order to design effective and equitable solutions for rebuilding the provincial economy post-pandemic. Helps et al. (2021) suggest that the "*structural inequities have persisted despite the government and society in Canada re-imagining such workers as essential during the pandemic due to their indispensability within Canadian food chains*" (p. 161).

In Canada, the COVID-19 pandemic tested the safety nets of federal, provincial and local unemployment systems for immigrants and newcomers in an unprecedented way due to the pace and extent of layoffs resulting from the

pandemic. Gelatt (2020) indicates that many of the immigrant workers in frontline industries, despite being hard-hit, were classified as non-citizens and were unable to access safety-net support and services. Studies have demonstrated that a limited number of newcomers, despite widespread financial difficulties, reported receiving social benefits that were purposefully created to cushion residents against the effect of financial hardship. For example, Atlin (2020) found in a study that about one-third of respondents received social benefits in June, which was up from 13% in April. However, 48% of respondents among newcomers who believed they were eligible to receive social benefits began to receive support in June.

Hou et al. (2021) argue that the pandemic affected newcomers more than Canadian-born citizens. The COVID-19 pandemic affected more newcomers with no social connections than those who had been residing longer in Canada. The core argument by Hou et al. (2021) is that because newcomers are most often employed in precarious and low-paying jobs, they are more likely to be laid off or experience cuts in work hours during an economic downturn. Beland et al. (2020) found that immigrants reported a compromised ability to meet financial obligations and were more concerned with losing their jobs than Canadian-born individuals. Thus, the COVID-19 pandemic has negatively impacted newcomers' ability to meet financial responsibilities and essential needs, and were more likely than Canadian-born citizens to fear losing their jobs (Beland et. al. 2020).

LaRochelle-Côte and Uppal (2020) argue that for most newcomers, their economic well-being is a paramount concern, and therefore, it is possible for them to stress more about finances than those who are born in the country. Studies suggest that the economic downturn engendered by COVID-19 had a devastating effect on the finances of newcomers in Canada. For example, Atlin (2020) conducted a survey among newcomers to Canada and found that more than 15 % of the respondents reported losing their jobs during COVID-19, while 24 % of

immigrants who were self-identified as Canadian residents and 22 % of migrant workers had fluctuating experiences of job losses at one point during the pandemic. Further, about 24 % of permanent residents could not afford to pay either rent, mortgages, or utilities (Atlin, 2020). The author also found that there was a great fiscal impact of the pandemic among international students. It was established that up to 26% of international students lost their primary sources of income, and 34% were unable to either pay for their rent or utilities.

Guttmann et al. (2020) found that environmental conditions seriously impacted the health and well-being of newcomers during the pandemic based on how immigrants resided in communities where there was a problem of overcrowding. The authors indicated that newcomers were more susceptible to catching the COVID-19 virus itself due to overcrowding and the inability to maintain social distancing. This position is affirmed by Amoako and MacEachen (2021), who equally make the case that much of the immigrant population in Canada reside in overcrowded housing arrangements and poorly maintained neighborhoods, which make it impossible to maintain physical distance from other community members. Bowden and Cain (2020) argue that the reason cities such as Toronto and Montreal became the epicenters of COVID-19 in Canada was that there were significant newcomer populations who resided in areas of the cities dominated by substandard housing. As a result, the virus was able to quickly spread among them.

Mo et al. (2020), in their comparative analysis, found that immigrant women were more prone to social and economic disparities due to a myriad of intersectional factors, including race, gender, and immigration status, than their Canadian-born counterparts. Amoako and MacEachen (2021) posited that immigrant women, due to systemic inequalities, were subjected to racial and gendered barriers in employment, experiencing limited opportunities. Women entrepreneurs among the newcomers had their businesses hit harder than

Canadian- born businesses (Turcotte & Hango, 2020). This experience suggests that the financial impacts of the pandemic on female immigrants and newcomers can exacerbate social concerns and disrupt family and social relationships due to financial difficulties and loss of business opportunities as well as employment.

The COVID-19 pandemic interrupted the services that supported the economic, social, and cultural integration of newcomers in Canada. Barker (2021) posited that the ability of newcomers to form social connections allows them to develop social capital and foster the links of social bonds which migrants form among families or people from the same ethnic background and religious or political associations. The social bridges represent the newcomers' abilities to build an inclusive community in partnership with other racial minority groups, while the ability of newcomers to perform their civic responsibilities toward the state and community is referred to as the social links. However, the pandemic hindered social networking among immigrants, particularly newcomers, who were in the most disadvantaged position due to the lockdown and travel restrictions imposed by the government. Against the dominant discourses of improved access to services by immigrants to services, Ghahari (2020) also raises the issue of housing insecurity, arguing that many newcomers do not have a family member or close friends they can live with if they lose their accommodation.

Precarious and Inequitable Employment

The COVID-19 pandemic created uneven (im)mobility for citizens of different countries. The implementation of lockdowns, border closures, and other travel restrictions was applied unevenly by different Nations across the world. Trans-national traveling was negatively impacted, with nations determining who was permitted to enter their jurisdictions and who was not (Caxaj et al., 2020; Hamilton et al., 2022). Within countries, the labour force was categorized into essential and non-essential, with only essential workers allowed to move,

sometimes out of their homes and only for the purposes of work during the peak of the pandemic when lockdowns were in effect. This categorization and the subsequent restriction of non-essential workers from going to work had dire consequences for newcomers and migrant workers in Canada. Dempster et al. (2020) posited that over 60% of the newcomers worked in highly impacted sectors compared to their Canadian-born counterparts. As a result, there was a widespread loss of employment and an increment in the level of poverty among newcomers. The loss of employment was compounded by the inability of many newcomers to access government-sponsored social benefits.

The Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) was the government's flagship social support program that was rolled out immediately following the announcement of the nationwide lockdown decision by the federal government. CERB involved a $2,000-a-month support for those who stopped working because of COVID-19. In order to qualify for the CERB, one must have lost his/her job due to COVID-19 related reasons; must have earned at least $5,000 in 2019 or in the 12 months prior to their CERB application; and must not have quit his/her job voluntarily (Jingco, 2020). The CERB conditionalities had negative consequences for newcomers on different grounds. First, newcomers who were unemployed at the time of the lockdown were automatically excluded from accessing the CERB facility. Again, a newcomer who might have recently been employed prior to the onset of the pandemic and who due to the low-paying nature of his/her job would not have been able to earn up to the minimum $5,000 could not meet this threshold to be able to access CERB. While we acknowledge that these conditions affected newcomers, Canadian citizens, and long-term immigrants alike, our argument is that with no social network and existing family support in Canada, many newcomers, including international students became stranded and suffered physically and mentally (Hargreaves et al., 2020; Jingco, 2020)

Studies have demonstrated that immigrants and newcomers are overrepresented in the lower end of the job market. Immigrant workers are disproportionately overrepresented in jobs such as hospitality, retail, care, and manufacturing which placed them at risk of the pandemic (Guttmann et al., 2020). Further, many immigrants made up for their low-paying jobs by taking on extra shifts and hours. Hence job-related restrictions significantly reduced migrant worker shifts and their ability to take on more hours to increase their income, adding to the impoverishment of newcomers and migrant workers. Again, travel restrictions imposed by the government of Canada prevented newcomers and migrant workers who were adversely affected and would have wanted to return to their home countries in order to escape from the harsh realities of COVID-19 imposed hardships from doing so. This meant that many newcomers and immigrants lived in perpetual fear and uncertainty, which had implications for their physical, psychological, and mental well-being.

Barker (2020) posited that systemic barriers that excluded newcomers from access to social and other support services were responsible for the creation of 'us' versus 'them' between the newcomers and the Canadian-born citizens. Newcomers, in contrast to the Canadian-born population, were often denied some rights and privileges, such as access to healthcare. The nature of the jobs of many newcomers and migrant workers, including those working as personal support workers or live-in caregivers, meant most did not have the opportunity to work from home. This did not only leave them working in fear of contracting the virus as some of their employers continued to work as essential workers, but also, it meant that live-in care workers were prevented by their employers from seeing their families because of the fear that they would be exposed to the virus if they were allowed to frequent their homes. Some live-in care workers complained of not seeing their families, sometimes for months (Migrant Rights Network, 2020). They were not paid for their overtime hours and had no access to social and

personal support networks. Migrant Rights Network (2020) indicates that most care workers in Canada lived with their employers and kept working while everything was at a standstill, which contributed to the high level of care worker workload and exploitation during the pandemic. The migrant care workers were unable to help their families who relied upon them for sustenance during this period because they were not being paid while they continued to work for their employers, looking after their children, and providing care for the seniors during COVID-19 (Learning Network, 2020).

Caxaj and Cohen (2021) assert that Canada usually grants over 50,000 visas under the temporary migrant worker program to foreign nationals on a yearly basis which represents a substantial portion of Canada's agricultural industry labor force. However, Canada does not appear to put commensurate measures in place to care for migrant worker populations. The lack of support services for migrant worker populations in Canada was heavily exposed to the onset of COVID-19. Our analysis of the literature suggests that temporary migrant workers had the largest exposure to COVID-19 outside healthcare facilities in Canada (Caxaj & Cohen, 2021). Despite the known risks and barriers faced by migrant workers, there were no established procedures to prevent and/or provide quick responses to positive COVID-19 cases among migrant workers (Caxaj & Cohen, 2021).

In sum, COVID-19 caused high levels of unemployment among newcomers, with those who qualified to become welfare-dependent while those who did not qualify found themselves in abject struggles. Some of those who remained in employment lost significant hours and became underemployed, while others were de-skilled because they were only employed in jobs that were not commensurate with their educational and professional qualifications.

COVID-19 Related Racial Discrimination

The outbreak of COVID-19 in Canada was also accompanied by racial prejudicial exclusionary and discriminatory behaviors towards newcomers. This was exacerbated by the pervasive discriminatory assumptions about who needs public protection and who does not (Caxaj & Cohen, 2021). Caxaj et al. (2022) found that Mexican migrant agricultural workers in British Columbia reported:

> high rates of experiences of threats and violence by employers, [had] limited faith in the follow-through of both Canadian and country-of-origin authorities when reporting concerns, and a unanimous lack of knowledge in how to file a claim of a legal matter (p. 139).

Furthermore, Sonnenberg (2020) posited that migrant agricultural workers were made the scapegoat amidst the pandemic across the country because some health units and employers actively blamed migrant agricultural workers with the excuse that migrant workers did not comply with the request to be tested. However, Mojtehedzadeh & Keung (2021) report that migrant agricultural workers complained of being exposed to COVID-19 when multiple workers had to be transported by one bus to their various farm locations. As expressed by one migrant worker: "*We cannot continue a plantation system of labour where Black and brown workers are subjected to deadly dangerous and dirty work because no level of government will take the necessary steps to protect workers*" (para. Mojtehedzadeh & Keung, 2021, p. 33).

Individuals from racial minority groups experienced discrimination due to their skin colour or countries of origin. Statistics Canada (2020a) indicates that most newcomers were more than likely to be exposed to racial harassment, attacks, and stigmatization as opposed to the dominant groups, which added to their stress levels. Caxaj et al. (2020) argue that using the race of migrant workers to classify them as non-belonging is in-tune with the prevailing racial discrimination which was responsible for the hostility migrant workers faced from

their host communities. Racialized individuals, including Chinese, Koreans, Southeast Asians, Blacks, and Indigenous women, reported experiencing race-based discrimination during the pandemic (Statistics Canada 2020b). At the onset of the pandemic, many Chinese migrants and other individuals with Asian backgrounds were scapegoated and discriminated against on the pretext that they were the origin of the virus (Barker, 2021; Liu et al., 2020). The knee-jerk reaction of the government in enforcing the travel ban and health screening of newcomers further reinforced the anti-newcomer sentiments held by the general public (Omidvar, 2020). The government's reaction only buttressed the opinion of the dominant narrative that newcomers are less deserving of rights and respect even at a time when everyone faced the same virus, and the virus did not discriminate against race, ethnicity, or nationality.

COVID-19-related racial discrimination has thus contributed to the disproportionate experiences of negative impacts of the pandemic by racialized minorities, particularly immigrants, migrant workers, and, more significantly, newcomers to Canada during the pandemic. For the avoidance of doubt, Learning Network (2020) reports that newcomers, immigrants, and racialized individuals were less likely to have access to health care when they contracted the COVID virus. As a result, disproportionately more COVID-19 related deaths occurred among newcomers, immigrants, and racialized population groups (Statistics Canada, 2021a). The quote below, though characterizing the impact of COVID-19-related racial discrimination in the US, typifies the situation in Canada:

> Race doesn't put you at higher risk. Racism puts you at higher risk. It does so through two mechanisms: People of color are more infected because we are more exposed and less protected. Then, once infected, we are more likely to die because we carry a greater burden of chronic diseases from living in disinvested communities with poor food options [and] poisoned air and because we have less access to health care (Wallis, 2020, para. 4).

It is important to note that these disparities did not begin with COVID-19 but have only been exacerbated by the pandemic (Abbott, 2021; Learning Network, 2020). Again, it is imperative to note that COVID-19 related racial discriminations are not exclusive to Western countries such as Canada and the United States. In India, for example, Chakma (2020) reports on attacks on individuals from the Northeast of the country amidst the pandemic based on racial discrimination. The individuals were called derogatory names and were openly glared at in public. Chakma (2020) argues that some Indian citizens who have mongoloid looks were subjected to name calling such as "Coronavirus," "Corona," "Chinese," and "Chinki" while going about their lawful duties. They were not allowed access into eateries or apartment complexes or coercively isolated despite having negative COVID-19 certificates because they looked Chinese - the presumed sources of the COVID-19 virus.

The India case was not different from how migrant farm workers were treated in Canada, where members of the public would approach migrant workers demanding they should put on their masks or go back to the farm whenever they venture out from the farm into the community. Craggs (2020) asserts that migrant workers in southern Ontario were issued identity (ID) cards which they were expected to carry along with them whenever they entered the community, to prove they had complied with the two-week mandatory quarantine requirement before they could move around in the community. Such labeling is a form of othering that points to them as different and so deserving to be treated differently. Hennebry et al. (2020) argue that advocates considered such practice as racial profiling because the policy was targeted at migrant farmworkers and not other groups. D'Arcangelis (2017) argues that the practice fits into the dominant discourses and stigma of blaming foreigners as carriers of disease who need to be sanctioned. Camp (2004) and Ginsburg (2007) likened the use of ID cards to the

way the Canadian government required indigenous people to show a permit to allow them to travel outside their reserves.

COVID-19 Pandemic and Mental Health and Well-being

In this final section of the article, we discuss, in some detail, the mental health and well-being implications of the experiences of COVID-19 related discrimination among immigrants, newcomers, and migrant workers. The spread of the virus among newcomer populations had more implications for their well-being than the usual health implications. With the levels of fear and stigma of the disease at the earlier stages, it meant many of them stood the risk of being neglected, which explains the disproportionate COVID-19 related deaths among immigrants and newcomers in Canada (Statistic Canada, 2021a). Immigrants constitute 20% of the Canadian population younger than 65 years. However, immigrant COVID-19 related deaths within the same population bracket nationwide were disproportionately high at 30%. The distribution varied among various provinces. For example, in BC, immigrants constituted 28% of the population aged 65 and under. However, immigrant COVID-19 related deaths constituted 41% of deaths in the province (Statistics Canada, 2021a).

Prior to COVID-19, newcomers to Canada were exposed to poor health and poor housing conditions due to systemic racial and economic inequities (Waldron, 2010). The COVID-19 pandemic has only come to aggravate this and worsen the impact on the mental health and well-being of newcomers arising from intersecting forms of oppression and discrimination (Learning Network, 2020; Mensah & Williams, 2022; Wallis, 2020). Such discrimination has often triggered psychosocial stressors among newcomers, thereby complicating their health and also hindering them from making use of healthcare resources (Amoako & MacEachen, 2021). A discriminatory healthcare system amplifies health

complications among marginalized populations (Amoako & MacEachen, 2021; Thomas, 2021; Waldron, 2010).

In line with the above findings, CBC News (2020) reported a story about a migrant worker Bonifacio Eugenio Romero who died in his hotel while in isolation. His death exposed the risk placed on migrant workers as they are expected to overcome the challenges of the systemic barriers confronting them solely by their own efforts. In light of the above case, Caxaj and Cohen (2021) argue that the pandemic has exposed systemic structures that depended on the temporary status of people who help to feed the nation from a system that put a unique responsibility on them to safeguard the needs of Canadians but fails to address the needs of migrant workers. Thus, the adverse effects of the pandemic on the mental health and well-being of newcomers are engendered by racial discrimination, and immigration status is unparalleled (Mensah & Williams, 2022; Wallis, 2020). Nakhaie et al. (2020) argue that newcomers develop mental health problems at a higher rate than other individuals who are permanent residents and the Canadian-born population. Newcomers were unable to access mental health support during the period of their vulnerability when all necessary support was needed for their successful integration into Canada.

Newcomers to Canada faced a unique set of barriers, such as the lack of community support and language barriers during COVID-19. Ghahari (2020) states that these barriers affected newcomers' access to information. Similarly, the stress of having family members overseas exposed newcomers to the risk of mental health issues. It is thus critically important to develop additional support that is necessary for newcomers. This situation is worsened by the fact that amid the pandemic, many newcomers lacked healthcare insurance. The lack of health insurance and paid leaves impacted the health of newcomers and their well-being disproportionately, coupled with the challenges of school closures, immigration removals and emergency medical care (Cholera et al., 2020). Further, due to the

loss of cultural and religious practice, language barriers, lack of social protection, and limited access to healthcare, newcomers' mental health significantly deteriorated (Choudhari, 2020).

Conclusion

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, immigrants, newcomers, and migrant workers in Canada faced intersecting systemic inequalities and oppression in their bid to make a living. These struggles are in spite of the significant role they play in advancing Canada's socio-economic development. Across the country, there are systemic barriers embedded in legal, administrative, and social structures which negate the principles of human rights as expressed under various Canadian Laws (Feenan & Madhany, 2021). These barriers, some of which are invisible, compel many immigrants, newcomers, and migrant workers to work in jobs below their potential, education, and experience in Canada. For many newcomers and migrant workers, the opportunity to find employment that is commensurate with their qualifications and skills is critical for their socioeconomic well-being (Henderson, 2004; Udah et al., 2019a, 2019b). With regards to newcomers, successful integration into the Canadian labor market helps increase their sense of fulfillment, empowerment, and esteem. It upgrades their social standing and financial independence, which together contributes to their overall health and well-being.

The overrepresentation of immigrants, newcomers, and migrant workers in precarious employment has the propensity to trap them in economic and social marginalization. Dempster et al. (2020) suggest that policymakers should input and implement economic inclusion and equitable labor force policies so that newcomers have access to employment that is compatible or commensurate with their skills and educational qualification. Extant literature suggests that the Canadian labor market is divided between immigrants and Canadian-born

citizens. Such hierarchy and discrimination in employment opportunities are what Heikkila (2005) refers to as 'labor market dualism.' Thus, blue-collar jobs (or precarious jobs) are reserved for immigrants, while more stable white-collar jobs are reserved for Canadian-born and often White citizens. In this context, race, nationality, and immigration status predict the types of jobs immigrants and newcomers may get in the labor market (Herring et al., 2004; Vickers,2002).

Social justice targeted at eliminating systemic barriers and employment discrimination of newcomers in Canada was established from the extensive reviews of scholarship on the topic, which is the subject of this paper. As Guadagno (2020) and Barker (2021) suggest, an inclusive approach that guarantees and upholds the rights of Canadians, immigrants, newcomers, and migrant workers to health and well-being would allow our societies to build back better and reduce the risk of similar challenges in the event of a future pandemic.

Limitations and Future Directions

We note that this is a systematic review of available literature, which limits our ability to discuss in-depth the differential experiences of immigrants, newcomers, and migrant workers as separate categories. Thus, in this paper, we discussed common experiences of immigrants, newcomers, and migrant workers as pertained in literature. It will be prudent for future research to consider the differential experiences of these heterogeneous groups.

The scholarly works that were analyzed leading to this article have indicated that immigrants and newcomers have less favorable outcomes in the labor market. However, it is our view that a large sample with longitudinal quantitative research be conducted to establish the role intersecting factors such as gender, race, and migration pathways play in immigrants' and newcomers' labor market productivity. The outcome of such a study will lead to the development of evidence-informed immigrant and newcomer-friendly labor market policies.

Finally, the dominant discourse in Canadian society is that immigrants are drawers of net social and economic benefits. Such a discourse entrenches the notion that the Canadian government has provided enough services for this population to successfully enhance their well-being, while this is not the case. Future research is needed to deconstruct such discourses in order to reposition immigrants, newcomers, and migrant workers as essential contributors to Canada's socioeconomic development who deserve equitable employment, respect, and recognition.

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