

The lived Experience of Ageing and a Sense of Home: A Phenomenological Study of African Immigrant Seniors in Calgary, Alberta.

¹Prof. Dr. Joseph Osuji, ²Stephanie Sanjocvics

¹Professor and Director, School of Nursing and Midwifery, Mount Royal University, Calgary, Ab, Canada

²BN, Student School of Nursing and Midwifery, Mount Royal University, Calgary, Ab, Canada

Abstract

Background: Immigrants are a crucial part of both Canada's and the world's current and future ageing populations. The growing trend of ageing immigrants highlights the need for studies to understand their unique experiences and to create culturally sensitive and appropriate services that support their healthy ageing. For African immigrants in Western countries, growing old can often lead to increased loneliness and isolation, especially as children mature and move away from home. This presents a unique challenge for older African immigrants who have left Africa, where communal living traditionally provided a buffer against the loneliness of ageing and strengthened social connections among elders.

This study examines the lived experience of ageing older adult African immigrants in Calgary, Alberta, exploring how they navigate life and old age in a foreign country. Through a semi-structured interview, thirteen participants answered questions ranging from where they call home to their sense of community and belonging in Canada, to their wishes for ageing and their aspirations for the future.

Method: Theoretically, this study draws from a socioecological framework on ageing and the life-course perspective to examine how African immigrant senior citizens navigate the complexities of ageing in a foreign country while preserving their cultural roots. A descriptive phenomenological approach to data collection and analysis informed the research methodology.

Results: Data analysis highlights four themes that emerged from participant interviews: individuals balancing intergenerational ties between two countries, a desire to maintain strong connections to their birth countries, a yearning for a strong sense of community in Canada, and nuanced conceptualizations of "home" encompassing the emotional and logical nature of home.

Conclusion: The findings highlight the layered, multifaceted, and complex nature of home and sense of belonging for ageing African immigrants in Canada. Strong family and community connections emerge as central to their well-being and sense of belonging. This study suggests the need for further research to deepen understanding and inform policies and practices that support culturally safe care for African immigrants ageing in Canada.

Keywords: Older adult immigrant, sense of home, well-being, phenomenology. life-course perspective, African Immigrants, ageing