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Ageing, Migration, and Health: Experiences of Elderly African and Asian Immigrants in Finland and Sweden. A Comparative Study

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Abstract

The intersection of ageing, migration, and health represents a critical frontier in sociological and public health research, especially within Nordic welfare states experiencing rapid demographic diversification. This study explores the lived health experiences, care needs, and support systems of elderly African and Asian immigrants in Finland and Sweden—two countries often lauded for their universalist welfare models yet increasingly challenged by multicultural realities. Drawing on a multidisciplinary theoretical lens that includes transnationalism (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004), intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991), and the social determinants of health (Marmot, 2005), this research interrogates how age, race, migration status, and cultural identity shape access to healthcare, perceptions of wellbeing, and experiences of inclusion or exclusion in host societies.

Contrary to the notion of the welfare state as an equalizer, preliminary findings and prior literature suggest that elderly immigrants often face structural and linguistic barriers, culturally incongruent care, and social isolation (Soininen & Vuori, 2020; Torres, 2006). At the same time, many express resilience through faith networks, intergenerational care, and transnational ties that redefine notions of ageing and support. This study contributes a novel comparative perspective by foregrounding voices often marginalized in both migration and ageing research, while also questioning the cultural competence of Nordic eldercare systems in an era of demographic transition. Ultimately, the paper calls for a rethinking of health equity and social citizenship through the lens of migration and ageing in globalized welfare states.

Keywords: Elderly Immigrants, Health Inequities, Nordic Welfare States, Transnational Ageing, Cultural Competence in Healthcare, African and Asian Diaspora