

Looking through the Lens: A photovoice study examining access to services for newcomer children

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Background

Canadian new immigrant families (also known as newcomers) encounter challenges navigating systems when trying to access programs critical for their children's healthy development.

The purpose of this study is to understand how newcomer families find and use early childhood programs and services from the perspective of families and early childhood educators (ECEs) working within a settlement organization.

Methods

Six ECEs and eight newcomers with young children participated in a series of virtual workshops where they took photos that reflected their experiences finding and accessing programs.

Participants discussed the meaning of the photos using SHOWeD as a prompt:

- What do you see here?
- What is happening here?
- How does this relate to our lives?
- Why does the issue exist?
- How can we become empowered through our new understanding?
- And, what can we do about it?

Participants identified themes during the workshops to inform the results of the study.

Conclusions

This research illustrated the lived experiences of families and identified opportunities to address inequity, improve early childhood programs and ensure families have access to supports.

Key Findings

The **family participants** identified four themes that influence their ability to find and use programs for their children.

1. Understanding and appreciation of cultural and racial diversity:

" [At school] the bullying is you know very important issue and if [my child] lost trust in the school you know the school should respect all culture, all religion yes.



1. Blooming through the storm

2. Employment



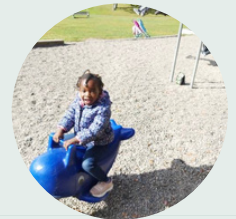
2. Where we live matters

3. Language



3. My future

4. Social networks



4. Power of play

"The car seat, [we] didn't used to have [in my country] or use it before... It was very difficult to put her in a car seat when we first arrived... Our sponsors, brought and prepared the car seat before our arrival... The caring that was offered here."

The **ECE participants** identified four themes:

1. Unique family stories



My story of sunflower

2. Social networks



Our capable and confident children



Our glimpse during the pandemic

3. Feelings and emotions

"... I saw schools without compound walls and I was so taken back because we've always had a really high compound walls and really big gates and it— it did make me question the concept of safety here."



My view of safety is different from yours

4. Systemic barriers