

MIGRANT FAMILIES OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES IN NORTHERN IRELAND: THE STATE OF RESEARCH ON SOCIAL SUPPORT

By;

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Content

- Definition of key terms used in the research
- Study aims and objectives
- Systematic review approach
- Key findings
- Application of the study to social work/social care practice in NI.

Definition of key terms used in the research

Social Support (House, 1981)

1. Instrumental support relates to financial help for families, as well as the availability of other forms of tangible/care giving services and programs.
2. Structural support relates to the ease with which parents can access, utilize, and gain information about their child's disability.
3. Emotional support focus on the social networks (for example, family and friends, coworkers, neighbours) present to help reduce caregiving demands.
4. Perceptive support referring to the adequacy and helpfulness of support the individual feels they are receiving.

Migrant

- According to NISRA (2005), there are three ways of categorising migrants.

1. Migrants from within Northern Ireland (internal migrants) are described as individuals relocating within Northern Ireland.

2. Migrants within the UK and Ireland refers to those who move to or from Northern Ireland to other places within the United Kingdom or Ireland, reflecting Northern Ireland's unique constitutional status.

3. Migrants from the rest of the world allude to individuals who move to Northern Ireland from locations or destinations outside of the UK or Ireland. They are called international migrants.

Study rationale

- As per the 2021 census, 13.5% of NI's population, equating to approximately 256,900 individuals, were born outside Northern Ireland. International Migrants account for 6.5% (124,300) of the population (NISRA 2021).
- A study by Loader et al., (2023) indicated that approximately 20% of the minority ethnic parents interviewed reported that one or more of their children had a disability.
- Dearth of empirical research focused on this minority group within the larger minority ethnic population in Northern Ireland.

Aims and objectives

Overall aim

- This study examines the provision of social support for migrant parents of children with disabilities in Northern Ireland.

Study objectives

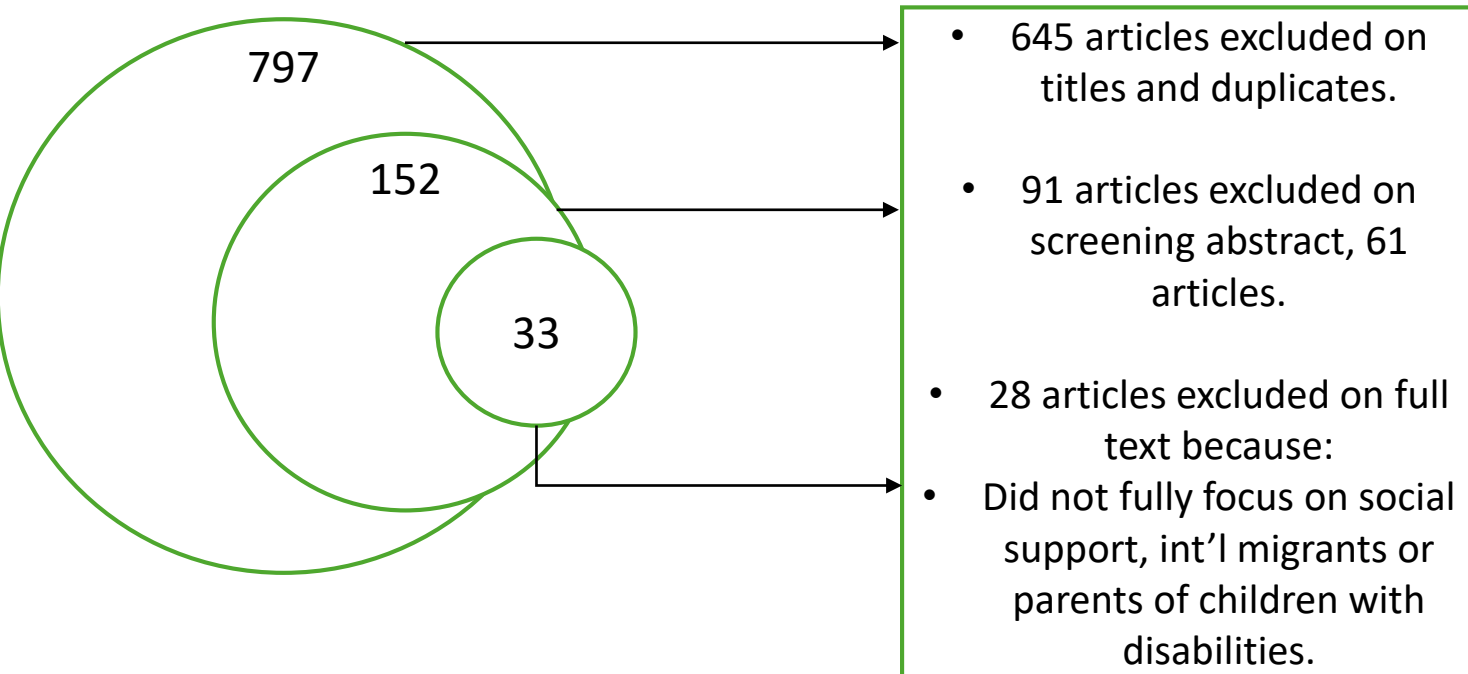
1. To investigate the social support needs of migrant parents of children with disabilities.
2. To explore the forms and use of social support among migrant parents of children with disabilities.
3. To examine the effectiveness of social support in the lives of migrant parents of children with disabilities, from the perspective of parents and key service providers.

A systematic literature review was undertaken to:

1. Examine the existing available research on social support for migrant parents of children with disabilities;
2. Explore the extent of existing *empirical* research on this topic;
3. Analyse the findings of previous research; and
4. Identify knowledge gaps that may inform the current study approach.

Systematic review approach

The systematic literature review approach was employed as follows



OVERVIEW

- Of the 33 papers identified for review, 24 papers reported on original research studies, 9 were papers based on reviews of literature, and 2 articles were published from the same original studies of the 24.
- 19 studies (which include 16 original studies and 3 reviews) focused on migrant parents of children with autism as opposed to other disability types.
- Canada (13) and the USA (11) presented with majority of the studies.
- Australia, the UK, Norway, New Zealand, and other European countries were scarcely represented.
- **NONE in NI.**

Themes - Four themes were identified across the review.

1. Challenges relating to social support for migrant parents of children with disabilities. Most commonly reported challenges include;

- Problems with access to services
- Negative attitudes of service providers
- Economic difficulties
- Language limitations
- Social isolation including other mental health issues.
- Discrimination and stigma (due to child's disability and migrant status).

2. Informal social support as a buffer for migrant parents of children with disabilities.

- Spousal support, immediate family, and extended families.
- Community support organisation/groups.
- Co-workers and neighbourhood support.

3. Influence of cultural understandings of disability on social support for migrant parents of children with disabilities.

- Overwhelming unfavourable perception of disability by some cultures.
- Strict adherence to their cultural perceptions about disability.
- Culture of shame.

4. Coping strategies of migrant parents of children with disabilities.

- Faith (religion).
- Migrant parents' memberships with specific parental support groups.
- Relevant training.
- Participating in religious and cultural activities.
- Collaboration with local organisations.
- Optimistic personality.

Application of the study to social work/social care practice in NI.

1. Better understanding of the unique needs of migrant parents raising children with disabilities.
2. Improved access to support services in NI.
3. Strengthened community awareness and integration.
4. A new niche of research for NISCC.
5. Avenue for discussion around potential funding projects to smoothen the experience of migrant parents of children with disabilities.
6. Provide an evidence base for law, policy and practice relating to migrant parents of children with disabilities in NI.

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