

Growing Old in Adopted Lands: The Nexus of Ageing and Acculturation Research



The problem

Population ageing and migration are connected social issues but commonly researched separately.

Background

The number of older migrants has increased globally. Research on ageing and migration tends to focus on describing the health characteristics of older migrants and comparing them to non-migrants. Most studies examine find that by older age migrants are often in poorer health than non-migrants. Researchers often attribute this gap to migrants' poor adjustment to their host country.

Central Argument

Research needs to consider a more holistic perspective of healthy ageing for migrants. While older migrants value health and independence, family wellbeing and intergenerational connections are also important to them.

We argue that researchers should adopt the life course approach to understand how migrants move through life stages and arrive at old age. This approach can also help us examine the structural and societal factors that facilitate and hinder migrants' healthy ageing.

What This Means

The primary goal of the life course approach is to identify contextual factors that shape migrants' ageing trajectories with an emphasis on systems of disadvantage.

Being a migrant of a particular age, race, ethnicity, gender, class, religion, and sexuality shapes their access to resources at different points of life. This in turn, impacts their health and wellbeing.

Whether migrants' ageing follows a trajectory of vulnerability or resilience depends on interactions between risk and protective factors throughout the life course.

Migrants' ability to age in the way they desire is influenced by individual factors (psychological resilience) and the context of migration (migration policies, xenophobia and social inclusion/exclusion).

Why It Matters

This research approach can inform policies to foster social conditions that enable migrants to live and age healthily.