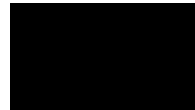Mental Health Impact of Canadian Job Requirements and Recruitment Practices on Nigerian and African Professionals Transitioning into the Canadian Workspace

Iwebunakiti Nwandu

Supervisor's Name: Professor Dennis Raphael
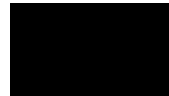
Advisor's Name: Professor Jessica Vorstermans

Supervisor's Signature:

Date Approved: October 10, 2023

'

Advisor's Signature:

Date Approved: October 10, 2023

A Research Paper Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

in

Critical Disability Studies

York University, Toronto, Ontario

October 10, 2023

Abstract

Highly skilled Nigerian/African professionals who have immigrated to Canada through the express entry or other economic class program experience a significant level of discounting of their foreign-acquired skills and credentials as they attempt to transition into the Canadian workspace. The discounting of their skills and credentials often occurs during the job recruitment processes and/or as a result of Canadian job requirements (or licensing requirements for regulated professions) and recruitment practices that place outsize importance on Canadian work experience over their foreign-acquired work experience, creating a catch-22 situation where highly skilled Nigerian/African immigrants need a job in Canada to gain Canadian work experience but cannot access jobs that match their foreign acquired work experience without a Canadian job experience. Unfortunately, this situation forces them to either accept low/entry-level positions in their field of expertise (if available) or work in low-paying precarious jobs that they are overqualified or over-skilled for and unrelated to their expertise as they transition into the Canadian workspace.

Studies have shown that African and Asian skilled immigrants experience the most severe devaluation of their foreign-acquired academic qualifications and trainings, and black African immigrants face increased vulnerability and are more likely to experience skill discounting, underemployment, discrimination, and lower income irrespective of their high human capital net worth (Buzdugan and Halli, 2009; DeSilva, 1997; Pendakur, 2000; Li, 2001, Batalova et al., 2016; Borch and Corra, 2010; Showers, 2015; Zong and Batalova, 2015) causing social disablement that results in depression, anxiety, frustration and other mental health distresses as they work to overcome these challenges to their socioeconomic integration in

Canada. Social exclusion is an important social determinant of mental health and accounts for increased signs of anxiety, depression, and psychological distress among African immigrants. Studies have indicated that black people are the most disadvantaged group facing continuously high levels of negative racial and ethnic stereotyping, and few research reported concerns with depression and psychological distress during the acculturation of African immigrants (Akinsulure-Smith, 2017; Eguakun, 2020; Sellers et al., 2006; Venters et al., 2011, Sherinah et al., 2021).

This research work aims to examine the mental health impact of Canadian job requirements and recruitment practices on Nigerian and African professionals transitioning into the Canadian workspace and seeks to provide answers to the research question, "How do Canadian job requirements and recruitment practices discriminate against Nigerian and African professionals, and put them in a disadvantageous position, causing depression and mental health distress as they transition to the Canadian workspace? To achieve this, ten (10) highly skilled Nigerian professionals who immigrated to Canada through the economic class immigration programs were interviewed, and their interviews were transcribed and analyzed. The results of the analyses of the transcribed interviews, among other revelations, revealed a persistent and significant level of discrimination and discounting of the foreign-acquired credentials, trainings, and skills of the participants and showed a disconnect between the employers, licensing bodies and Canadian immigration office.

Acknowledgement

Special thanks to Professor Dennis Raphael and Professor Jessica Vorstermans for their support and guidance throughout the research work.

Also, I sincerely appreciate my spouse, Chioma Jessica Nwandu, and my friend, Stanley Chibuzor Onwubu, for their efforts and contributions towards the successful completion of this research paper.

Contents

Title Page

1.0   Introduction

1.1   Discounting of the credentials and work experiences of Nigerian and African Professionals

Skilled professionals across the globe have sought to immigrate to Canada through the economic class immigration program (Canada's express entry program) with the intention that they can transition into the Canadian workspace and gain employment in their areas of specialization. This class of immigrants embarks on the immigration journey partly because of the belief that they can resettle and integrate into Canada's labor market with their foreign-acquired education and work experience and subsequently improve their lives in Canada (Eguakun, 2020; Zietsma, 2010; Teelucksingh & Galabuzi, 2005). The Government of Canada equally reflects its preference for skilled workers or economic class immigrants in Canada's immigration system due to the potential for this class of immigrants to quickly become economically independent of Canada's social support system and positively contribute to the Canadian economy (Buzdugan & Halli, 2009).

These foreign-trained professionals put transitioning into the Canadian workspace as an integral part of their resettlement plan to give them a sense of purpose, establish status and identity, build relationships with others, and assist them in the process of adapting to the Country (Aycan & Berry, 1996; Eguakun, 2020). Unfortunately, they found themselves employed in low-paying precarious jobs that they are overqualified or over-skilled for, or unrelated to their expertise (Eguakun, 2020; Dietz, Joshi, Esses, Hamilton & Gabarrot, 2014; Zietsma, 2010; Teelucksingh & Galabuzi, 2005) due to the discounting of their foreign acquired skills, education, and job experience in the Canadian labor market (Dietz et al., 2014). The devaluation of foreign-acquired credentials and work experience is selective and negatively affects certain groups or demography like women (Fagnan, 1995, Pendakur, 2000; Li, 2001), immigrants from

developing countries (Buzdugan & Halli, 2009) and visible minorities (Rajagopal, 1990; Basran and Zong, 1998; Pendakur, 2000; Li, 2001; Buzdugan and Halli, 2009), and immigrants from Africa and Asia have the most severe devaluation of their academic qualifications and trainings (Buzdugan and Halli, 2009; DeSilva, 1997; Pendakur, 2000; Li, 2001). Studies in the United States have shown that black African immigrants (Nigerians inclusive) face increased vulnerability and are more likely to experience skill discounting, underemployment, discrimination, and lower income irrespective of their high human capital and labor participation (Batalova et al., 2016; Borch and Corra, 2010; Showers, 2015; Zong and Batalova, 2015).

Employment and skill-related discriminations of foreign professional immigrants in the Canadian workspace/labor market have been studied by scholars from diverse fields, such as Hakak and Al Ariss (2013), Salaff, Greve and Ping (2002) in human resource management, Reitz (2007) in sociology, and Esses, Dietz, and Bhardwaj (2004, 2006) in psychology. However, very few research have specifically focused on the skill discounting of Nigerian and African professionals in the Canadian labor market. This research will add to the examination of the devaluation of the skills and credentials of Nigerian and African professionals as they transition into the Canadian workspace while also examining the mental health impact of the job requirements and recruitment practices of Canadian employers.

1.2   Problem Statement: Mental Health Impact

The exclusion of ethnic/visible minority skilled immigrant groups (Nigerian/African professionals inclusive) in the Canadian labor market resulting from the discounting of their skills and credentials produces social disablement that causes depression, and mental health distresses as they work to overcome the hurdles of transitioning into the Canadian workspace and attending to the financial cost of living in Canada (paying their bills, housing, and food) while

transitioning to the workspace. This exclusion from the labor force is linked to race-based systemic barriers and discriminations (Basran & Zong, 1998), as perceived by visible minority groups (Dietz, Joshi, Esses, Hamilton & Gabarrot, 2014) and results in underemployment (Buzdugan & Halli, 2009). Studies have shown that underemployment or the inability to access suitable employment can result in physical and mental health problems in immigrants (Chen, Smith, & Mustard, 2010; Subedi & Rosenberg, 2016) and can lead to loss of skills, social status and professional identity and prevent immigrants from completely integrating into the society by keeping them in poverty (Aycan & Berry, 1996; Grant & Nadin, 2007; Teelucksingh & Galabuzi, 2005).

Social exclusion is defined as the processes that prevent individuals or groups from full societal inclusion because of unequal power relations that intersect with social, economic, political, and cultural factors (Sherinah et al. 2021), and it is an important social determinant of mental health. It contributes to increased signs of depression and anxiety and is a source of psychological distress among African immigrants (Sherinah et al., 2021; Akinsulure-Smith, 2017; Sellers et al., 2006; Venters et al., 2011). Also, the experience of social exclusion by skilled black African immigrants has been attributed to negative societal responses and attitudes highlighted by social rejection and isolation (Sellers et al., 2006). Studies have indicated that black people are the most disadvantaged group facing continuously elevated levels of negative racial and ethnic stereotyping (Priest et al., 2018; Williams et al., 2019).

Few studies have examined the mental health of African immigrants and have reported concerns with depression and psychological distress (Akinsulure-Smith, 2017; Sellers et al., 2006; Venters et al., 2011). Other research has also looked at the mental health impact of

acculturation among African immigrants (Eguakun, 2020), but no significant study has been done to understand the mental health impact of Canadian job recruitment practices on highly skilled African professionals, which is the problem at the center of this current research. The present research intends to highlight the mental health challenges that employment-related discrimination in the Canadian labor market produces on Nigerian and African immigrants and bring the challenges to the forefront of scholarly discussion.

1.3   Research Question

In this research work, I hope to provide answers to the question, "how do Canadian job requirements and recruitment practices discriminate against Nigerian and African professionals and put them in a disadvantageous position, causing depression or mental health distress as they transition to the Canadian workspace?

As pointed out by various researchers, the challenges of skilled immigrants accessing the Canadian workspace are multifaceted and cut across social, racial, and demographical discrimination and discounting of the credentials and foreign work experience of skilled immigrants (Rajagopal, 1990; Basran and Zong, 1998; Pendakur, 2000; Li, 2001; Buzdugan and Halli, 2009), and the aftereffect of slavery (Sharpe, 2016). Hence, the research question will be analyzed from the lens of critical race theory, intersectionality, and social disability model in critical disability theory as the theoretical frameworks.

2.0   Literature Review

The mental health impact of Canada's job requirements and recruitment practices on skilled Nigerian and African professionals who migrated to Canada through the economic

immigration programs of Canada has not been studied, and this research aims to review that by answering the research question as captured above.

The government of Canada has always guided its immigration policies in response to the labor market need and to maintain Canada's global competitiveness and economic advantage (Buzdugan & Halli, 2009; Abu-Laban & Gabriel, 2002; Eguakun, 2020). To address the shortage of skilled workforce in the Canadian workspace, the government of Canada has sought to attract skilled professionals from across the globe to immigrate to Canada through its skilled-based economic immigration programs such as the Canadian Experience Class or Federal Skilled Worker Program (Express Entry), a point-based selection system that screens immigrants to admit into the country based on their labor market skills (Antecol et al., 2003; Macaluso, 2022). Immigrants applying to enter Canada through the express entry/economic class immigration system are given admission after passing a point-based ranking selection system that weighs selection criteria such as age, education, language proficiency, occupation, and adaptability to the Canadian system/environment. These selection criteria assess the human capital and potential of immigrants to excel in the labor market and become productive in Canada and less dependent on Canada's welfare system compared to other immigration classes (Antecol et al., 2003). It is generally agreed among politicians, scholars and employers that higher-skilled immigrants are more likely to succeed in the labor market and contribute positively to the economy by bringing needed skills that can drive investment, encourage innovation and raise productivity; hence, the introduction of the comprehensive ranking system in the Canada express entry system was partly aimed at selecting these higher-skilled immigrants with a greater chance of adapting and succeeding in the Canadian labor market from the express entry selection pool, where skilled immigrants have met the basic criteria to enter the pool (Zhang et al., 2023 & Macaluso, 2022).

The Canadian express entry system, like other traditional points-based systems, is a supply-led immigration policy that is structured to increase the skill composition of immigrants that are attracted to the country based on their ability to perform or productivity in the labor market without recourse to the requirement of having a job offer or employment sponsorship, although an immigrant with a job offer/employment sponsorship has a much better chance of being selected from the express entry pool (Zhang et al., 2023 & Macaluso, 2022). The lack of recourse to employer sponsorship or job offer in Canada's supply-led immigration policy allows for more highly skilled professionals to enter the express entry pool and for the admittance of a large number of skilled professionals through a transparent selection process that is determined by simply setting a selection cut-off point, to address skilled labor shortages in the labor market as identified by the Government of Canada (Czaika & Parsons, 2017 & Kaushik & Drolet, 2018). However, this supply-led immigration policy has a disadvantageous side when compared with a demand-driven immigration policy because it appears not to respond to employers' labor needs sufficiently and readily. As a result, skilled immigrants admitted into Canada based on their human capital value face enormous challenges in finding employment that is appropriate to their skills. In responding to this downside of its supply-led immigration policy, Canada's express entry system places more weight on immigrants applying to enter or remain in Canada with corresponding job offers, hence creating a hybrid immigration model that considers the presence of employer sponsorship but still incorporates human capital worth of the immigrant (Zhang et al., 2023). The Canadian Express Entry program was implemented in 2015 as the main program for economic immigrants. It moved Canada away from the pre-2015 supply-driven immigration program that was based on the same selection criteria but on a first-come, first-admitted system

to an invitation-to-apply, hybrid model that reflected both the supply- and demand-led immigration factors (Zhang et al., 2023).

Immigrants admitted into Canada through the Express Entry program represent the most educated and highly trained/skilled immigrants in Canada, but they continue to face challenges in the settlement and integration process, especially as it relates to accessing jobs that match their foreign experience and credentials in the Canadian labor market (Kaushik & Drolet, 2018). As skilled professionals that were admitted into Canada through the economic immigration program, they have high expectations regarding their settlement and integration into the Canadian society and aim to integrate into the labor market with their foreign-acquired credentials since they gained entry into the country based on the positive evaluation of their foreign skills/credentials and ability to contribute to the economy of Canada (Eguakun, 2020; Zietsma, 2010; Teelucksingh & Galabuzi, 2005). Instead, skilled immigrants experiences significant level of unemployment or underemployment in comparison to their Canadian-trained equivalent and are subsequently trapped in low-paying jobs unrelated to their field of professionalism, with their foreign-acquired skills and credentials discriminated against or discounted in relation to Canadian skills and credentials (Eguakun, 2020; Dietz, Joshi, Esses, Hamilton & Gabarrot, 2014; Zietsma, 2010; Teelucksingh & Galabuzi, 2005). The Canadian labor market requirements of Canadian work experience for skilled positions and the recruitment practices of discounting foreign acquired credentials, foreign work experience, and challenges of getting references or job referrals by skilled immigrants create barriers to employment and complicate the economic integration of skilled immigrants (Kaushik & Drolet, 2018). These barriers to the inclusion of skilled immigrants to the Canadian labor market have been shown to be a tool used by employers to discriminate against immigrants (Sakamoto et al., 2010), and the discounting of foreign

credentials is racially and demographically biased toward immigrants from third world countries like Nigeria, resulting in the concentration of minority groups in low paying and poorly regulated secondary labor market (Buzdugan and Halli, 2009; DeSilva, 1997; Pendakur, 2000; Li, 2001).

Researchers have shown that the challenges of skilled immigrants accessing the Canadian workspace are multifaceted and cut across social, racial, and demographical discrimination (Rajagopal, 1990; Basran and Zong, 1998; Pendakur, 2000; Li, 2001; Buzdugan and Halli, 2009), despite Canada's global reputation of being an inclusive and welcoming country to immigrants and having a high living standard and steady economic growth (Kaushik & Drolet, 2018). These challenges prevent the effective integration of skilled immigrants into mainstream society and run contrary to the general belief and expectation that the integration and settlement of skilled immigrants in Canada is moderately easy and that these immigrants succeed in Canada after a short transition period if they remain focus, motivated and hardworking (Hum and Simpson, 2004; & Kaushik and Drolet, 2018). Unfortunately, skilled immigrants in Canada are caught in low-paying transitional jobs for an extended transitional period that impacts their ability to integrate into the society economically and socially, resulting in a disappointing outcome for them in Canada (Lowe and Ortiz, 2015). Various researchers have shown this extended transitional period to be more severe for racialized and minority groups. Hence, the prevalence of race as a social construction and racial discrimination as part of the challenges facing skilled Nigerian/African immigrants in accessing the Canadian workspace can be analyzed using the framework presented by critical race theory (Wallace & Brand, 2012; Delgado and Stefancic, 2004).

Critical race theorists have noted that oppression and racism are products of divergent intersectional factors (Crenshaw, 1991; Ladesma & Calderon, 2015) and the disablement

produced by the discounting of the foreign-acquired skills and qualifications of Nigerian/African professionals and other minority groups ties to the social model of disabilities as theorized by critical disability scholars (Erevelles & Minear, 2010; Hall, 2019). Race and disability have been theorized as relational concepts, and races are formed relationally to each other rather than in isolation (Haney, 2007), such that the white workers enjoy privileges connected to the subordination of people of color (Harris, 1997), as seen in the Canadian workspace.

Studies have concluded that underemployment or the inability to access suitable employment is linked to physical and mental health problems in immigrants (Chen, Smith, & Mustard, 2010; Subedi & Rosenberg, 2016) and prevents immigrants from completely integrating into the society by keeping them in poverty (Aycan & Berry, 1996; Grant & Nadin, 2007; Teelucksingh & Galabuzi, 2005). African immigrants (Nigerians inclusive) face increased vulnerability and are more likely to experience skill discounting, underemployment, discrimination, and lower income, irrespective of their high human capital and labor participation (Batalova et al., 2016; Borch and Corra, 2010; Showers, 2015; Zong and Batalova, 2015).

3.0   Theoretical Framework

The discussion of the analysis of the data collected for this research will be done using three theoretical frameworks: The social model for disability under critical disability theory, Intersectionality, and critical race theory.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is an analytic framework that was established in scholarly writings of American researchers such as Derrick Bell, Kimberle Crenshaw, Richard Delgado, etc., in the 1970s. Critical race theory, defined by Brides (2021), is an "intellectual movement," a "body of scholarship," and an analytical toolset for examining the relationship between law and

racial inequalities. Critical race theory scholars understand race as a social construct that does not originate from biological and natural causes (Ladson-Billings, 2020). Hence, critical race theory presents a framework to analyze the sociocultural, economic, and political realities of the prevalence of race as a social construction (Wallace & Brand, 2012; Delgado and Stefancic, 2004). Critical race theorists, both in law and social sciences, have brought to the forefront of discussions the ways the dominant society racializes different minority groups at different times in reaction to changing needs such as the labor market (Delgado, Stefancic, & Harris, 2017), and seeks to expose racism in its diverse forms and reveal the profoundly rooted racial hegemonic structures enmeshed in the society (Bonilla-silva, 2014; Wallace & Brand, 2012; DeCuir and Dixson 2004). Although slavery has been abolished since the 18th century in Canada, the myth that the black race is an inferior one had taken root in the dominant society (including America and Canada), and representations of black people (Nigerians/Africans inclusive) as intellectually inferior are entrenched in the society and spread through social institutions in such a way that it has become a part of the identity of black people and Africans (Wallace & Brand, 2012; Sharpe, 2016). This false racial identity or negative stereotyping of black people that is driven by systemic racism and belief of "black inferiority" benefits Caucasians (Delgado, Stefancic, & Harris, 2017; Miller & Garran, 2007).

Intersectionality, as an analytical framework, can be used to examine how different aspects of a person's social and political identities combine to produce diverse forms of discrimination and privileges (Crenshaw, 1991; Ladesma & Calderon, 2015). As pointed out by intersectionality scholars, Inequalities are products of the intersections of different social locations, power relations, and experiences; hence, intersectionality as an analytic tool can help to understand the complexity of the social divisions of race, class, (dis)ability, sexuality, or

gender at any point in time (Collins & Bilge, 2016). It serves to understand and analyze the complexity of the interactions of Nigerian/African professionals and their experiences in transitioning to the Canadian workspace.

Social Disability Model: The complex intersection of race, class, demography, gender, sexuality, and caste can lead to social and economic exclusion, resulting in the disablement of an individual or group. The social disability model concept in critical disability theory will equally be used as a theoretical framework to analyze the disabling effects of the job requirements and recruitment practices of Canadian recruiters in the labor market. The social disability model identifies the material conditions (such as poor job prospects, isolated families, and discrimination) within society as what disables a person. Therefore, disability is not a direct result of one's physical or health condition but results from the economic, social, or psychological barriers/limitations the society places on a "disabled person" (Erevelles & Minear, 2010). Critical disability scholars have framed disability as a socially constructed class that gains meaning and social importance from the historical, cultural, economic, and political structures that form social life (Erevelles & Minear, 2010), and as a result, both race and disability are viewed as a social construct. Disability has been described as the outcome of cultural rules on what bodies should be or do and a component of most social differences, mainly race (Garland-Thomson, 1997; Baynton, 2006; James and Wu, 2003). Hence, race and disability have been theorized as relational concepts and races are formed relationally to each other rather than in isolation (Haney, 2007) such that white workers enjoy privileges connected to the subordination of people of color (Harris, 1997), as seen in the Canadian workspace.

4.0   Methodology

The main objective of this research is to answer the question: how do Canadian job requirements and recruitment practices discriminate against Nigerian and African professionals and put them in a disadvantageous position, causing depression and mental health distress as they transition to the Canadian workspace? This qualitative research examined the selective and discriminatory practices and/or discounting of the skills and credentials of Nigerian/African professionals who immigrated to Canada through the economic class immigration program by professional regulatory bodies, employers, and job recruiters in Canada.

4.1   Data Collection

Many Nigerian/African professionals migrate from their home country in search of better economic fortune yearly. Some of these foreign-trained Nigerian/African professionals relocate to Canada in anticipation that they will have better job opportunities and social and economic integration in Canada. These economic immigrants and newcomers join the visible racial and demographic minority groups in the Canadian workspace as they compete for available jobs.

Their experience while trying to access jobs in the labor market and transition into the Canadian workspace forms a valuable source of qualitative data that can be analyzed to understand the mental health impact of labor market-related racism and discrimination of black professionals (Nigerians/Africans). In this research work, I interviewed ten (10) Nigerian professionals who have recently migrated to Canada and have transitioned or are in the process of transitioning to the Canadian workspace to get qualitative data from their experiences. The initial research participants interviewed for this research work were selected from my contact pool that was collected during my job search and subsequent integration into the Canadian workspace, and additional (subsequent) research participants were selected by snowballing. A

total of ten (10) research participants, comprising six (6) males and four (4) females with ages between 30 years and 50 years, were selected and interviewed for the research data collection purposes. Five (5) of the research participants had foreign-acquired work experience in professions that were regulated in Canada and attempted transitioning into similar employment (regulated professions) in Canada. The data collection involved online interviews or conversations recorded and later transcribed for analysis. The research participants were asked open-ended questions (see question sample in the appendix) that enabled them to share their Canadian experience more freely and ensure that extensive data were collected that properly contextualized the participant's experience without the interference of the researcher. The data was collected during the Winter of 2022 and Spring of 2023 and subsequently analyzed.

4.2   Data Analysis and Result Presentation

Introduction

This section presents an outline of the data analysis conducted in the study. Interviews were employed to gather participants' opinions on the mental health impact of Canadian job requirement practices on Nigerian and African professionals transitioning into the Canadian workplace. These interviews were transcribed and then qualitatively analyzed using NVivo 12 software. Thematic analysis, facilitated by NVivo, was chosen as the methodology due to its systematic nature, adaptability, and capability to categorize data into meaningful themes and subthemes.

The interviews were conducted via Zoom online conferencing platform, generating electronic voice recordings that were later used for transcription and analysis. This approach ensured the integrity, trustworthiness, and quality of the data. The transcriptions were then

imported into QSR NVivo 12 software to facilitate the analysis process. The software aided the organization of the coded data into themes and subthemes derived from the interview guide (research questions), allowing for a manageable grouping of the data. The analysis process involved objectively comparing the data in line with the study's focus.

The chosen approach adhered to Spencer's (2011) recommendation for qualitative research, which emphasizes finding a balance between letting the data speak for itself and structuring it according to theoretical models and concepts. Additionally, Saldaña (2015) suggested that a provisional list of codes should be determined in advance to align with the study's conceptual framework. Consequently, the study's themes were predetermined deductively for data collection and analysis purposes, while the subthemes were identified inductively.

Theme 1: Reasons for Immigrating to Canada

This theme explores the reasons for immigrating to Canada by the skilled Nigerian/African immigrants who participated in the study. From the interview, it was uncovered that several reasons informed the immigration to Canada. This is illustrated in Figure 1.
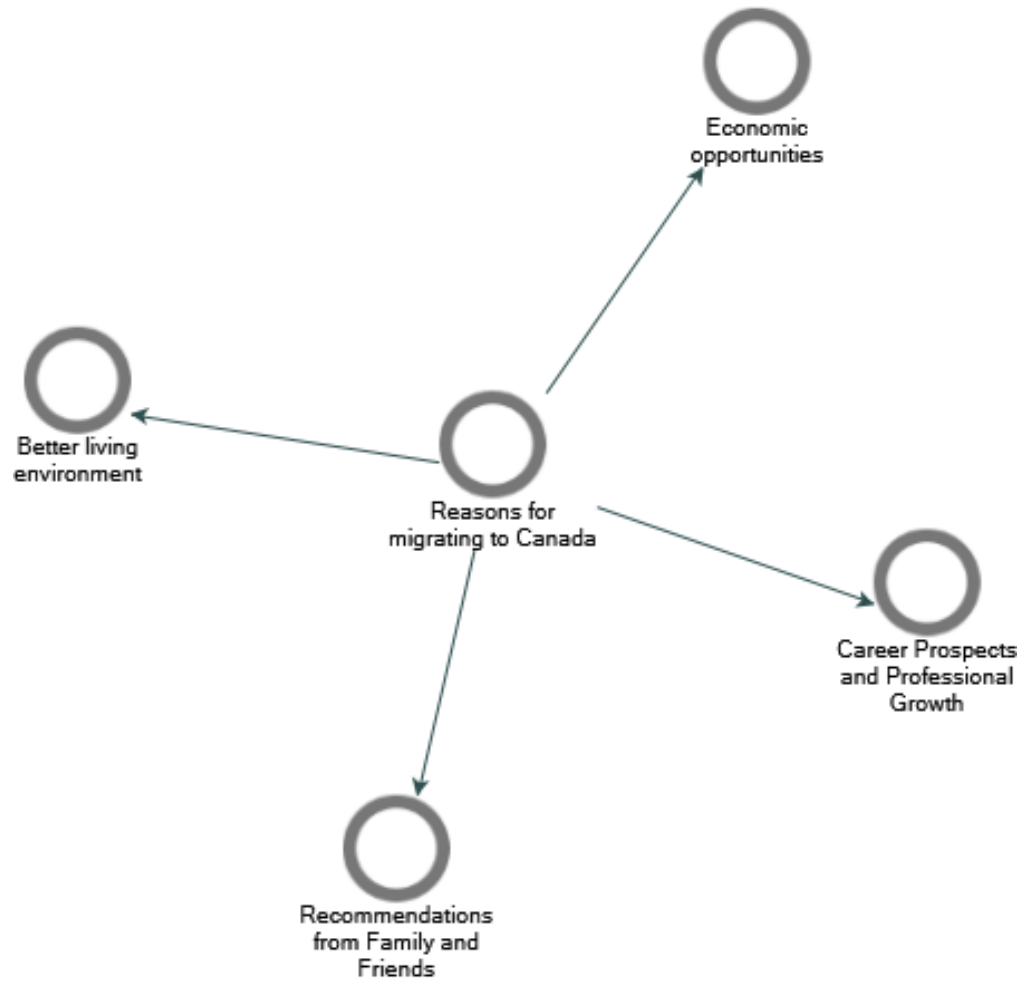
Figure 1: Visualization of the reasons participants immigrated to Canada.

Subtheme 1: Economic Opportunities

The subtheme of Economic Opportunities highlights that many participants decided to come to Canada with the primary goal of seeking better economic prospects. They viewed Canada as a country offering more lucrative opportunities, both professionally and financially, compared to their home countries. The Federal Skilled Worker Program and the Express Entry system were mentioned as pathways used to immigrate to Canada based on their skills and qualifications. The desire for career advancement, better living standards, and the potential to

support their families were key driving factors in their decision-making process to move to Canada.

> *W1 [00:06:12]: "We came to Canada in 2016, and the basis of coming is obviously just on economic bases... looking for a better environment to raise your family... a place where you think gives you more prospect career-wise because that is the only tool you have as it where to move yourself forward."*

> *W2 [00:08:33]: "One of the major reasons I decided to come to Canada was to practice my profession in a more lucrative economy... Canada has a better economy than Nigeria... for greener pastures, both professionally, financially, and otherwise."*

> *W3 [00:11:11]: "I applied for the federal skilled worker program... there are generally better opportunities here for dentists and healthcare workers than in Nigeria."*

> *W8: "So basically, I think it's safe to say it's just seeking greener pasture, trying to explore while growing in my career path. The decision was borne out of the desire to improve myself and get international experience... I felt the urge or the need for me to tour or go to the other side of the world, which is how I came to Canada."*

> *W5 [00:05:05]: "Looking at the options, so the one that, as you know, the easiest way to migrate at that time was Canada, and that was the reason why, you know, I decided to apply to Canada express entry."*

Subtheme 2: Better Living Environment

This theme reveals that a significant motivation for the participants to immigrate to Canada was to provide a better living environment for their families. Several of the participants emphasized the desire to move away from issues and security concerns present in their home countries. Canada was perceived as offering a safer and more comfortable environment to raise children and build a family. The decision to relocate to Canada was often a family decision, where their children's well-being and future opportunities played a crucial role. Creating a better life and ensuring a brighter future for their family members were central reasons behind choosing Canada as their new home.

> *W1 [00:06:12]: "Looking for a better, more comfortable environment where you think you want to live and also you want to raise your family and move on from there."*

W7 [00:04:30]: "We wanted to have a better life compared to the kind of life we're having in Nigeria... in Africa, he was always being mocked... So, myself and my wife we decided to come to Canada through the Express entry program... in order to maximize our potential and seek greater opportunities."

W10: "Well, basically, the aim to come to Canada comes from you trying to get more value and the best opportunity for yourself and your family. And most of the time, especially for your children. So that's the main aim and the reason why I came to Canada."

Subtheme 3: Career Prospects and Professional Growth

The subtheme of Career Prospects and Professional Growth indicates that a substantial number of individuals chose to come to Canada to advance their careers and achieve professional growth. They viewed Canada as a country with modern technologies, more opportunities to enhance their skills and knowledge, and exposure to progressive industries. Many expressed a desire for a change in their work environment and a drive to pursue career decisions and aspirations. Some of the interviewees mentioned that family members already living in Canada had shared positive experiences regarding career opportunities, which influenced their decision to move to Canada. Seeking challenges and international experience were also cited as reasons for choosing Canada as a destination for career advancement and personal growth.

W2: "...practicing here would expose me to more modern technologies, more modern drugs, and more opportunities to expand my knowledge and field of practice."

W4: "...I wanted to change the environment, to help drive the career decisions and desires we had basically... I have family that can support me to settle down."

W6: "...deciding to come to Canada was not... so, I have like a couple of family members in Canada who have been here... and also with the prospect of coming to work and to probably do a postgraduate."

W8: "...trying to explore while growing in my career path... seek greater opportunities that are quite challenging, I felt the urge or the need for me to tour or go to the other side of the world, which is how I came to Canada basically."

Subtheme 4: Recommendations from Family and Friends

The subtheme of Recommendations from Family and Friends highlights that some individuals decided to come to Canada based on the advice and positive experiences shared by their close acquaintances. Family members and friends who were already living in Canada or had previously immigrated to the country played a significant role in influencing their decision. These personal recommendations served as a form of assurance and validation of the opportunities and quality of life that Canada could offer. The positive feedback received from trusted sources encouraged them to pursue immigration to Canada as a promising destination for their future endeavors.

> W3: "It was more of word of mouth... a friend advised me to come here because there are better opportunities here for dentists, healthcare workers generally, than in Nigeria."
>
> W6: "...deciding to come to Canada was not difficult... I have a couple of family members in Canada who have been here. Some have been here for the past 40 years, 50 years, maybe, and they always told me about Canada, how good Canada is, and how beautiful the place is."

In summary, the participants' decisions to come to Canada were primarily driven by economic opportunities, the desire to seek a better environment for their families, prospects for career and professional growth, and recommendations from family or friends who had positive experiences in Canada. Also, many of the interviewees mentioned Canada's more robust economy and, better living conditions compared to their home countries, and access to modern technologies as other factors that influenced their decisions to immigrate to Canada.

Theme 2: Educational and Occupational Experience in Home Country

The individuals interviewed have diverse educational and occupational backgrounds. They include medical doctors, dentists, pharmacists, engineers, IT (Information Technology) professionals, air traffic controllers, business analysts, and professionals in leadership, customer service, and mass communication. They have accumulated considerable experience in their respective fields, ranging from 4 to 12 years, and have worked in Nigeria's public and private sectors. This is further illustrated in Figure 2.

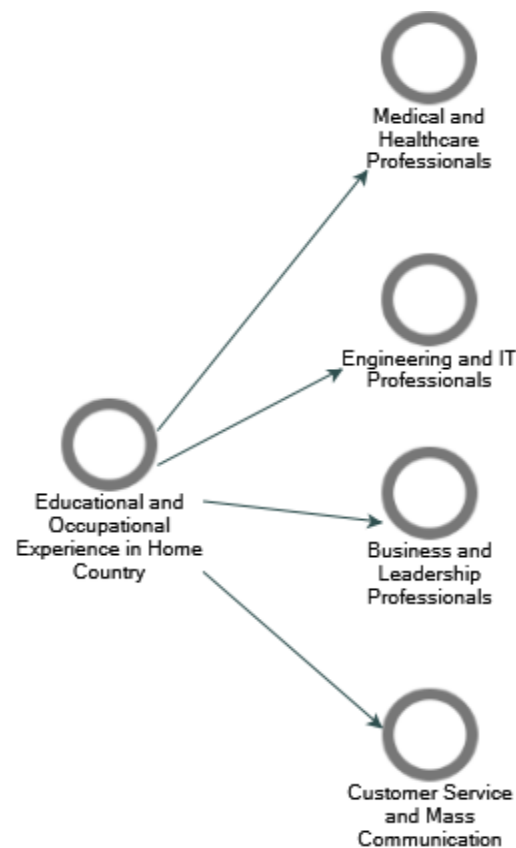*Figure 2: Visualization of the participants educational and occupational experience*

Subtheme 1: Medical and Healthcare Professionals

The medical and healthcare professionals interviewed have diverse backgrounds in different areas of medicine and healthcare. They include a medical doctor with experience in general practice, family practice, occupational health, and emergency medicine; a pharmacist

with additional expertise in health technology and product management; a dentist with experience in public and private practice; and a physician specializing in infectious diseases, family medicine, and emergency care. Their combined experience gave valuable insights into the requirements and difficulties Nigerian/African-trained medical and healthcare professionals face in their efforts to transition into the Canadian healthcare system and workspace.

W1 is a medical doctor with around ten years of practice experience, specializing in general practice, family practice, occupational health, and emergency medicine.

> *W1 [00:07:58]: "I am a medical doctor... I have been practicing for like ten years... involved both in the public and private sector... in general practice or family practice... also a bit of occupational health and emergency medicine."*

W2 is a registered pharmacist with experience in information technology and product management for health technology companies.

> *W2: "I was a registered professional pharmacist back in Nigeria, and I was also into I.T (Information Technology) (Information Technology)., into product management for health technology companies."*

W3 is a dentist with four to five years of experience in both public and private dental practice in Nigeria.

> *W3: "I studied dentistry, so I was a dentist. I became a dentist in 2007... I went into public and private practice, working under another dentist in Lagos and Port Harcourt... before finally coming to Canada. So, I would say I'd like four to five years' experience working as a dentist in Nigeria."*

W6 is a physician specializing in infectious diseases with additional experience as a family and emergency room physician.

> *W6 [00:03:58]: "Trained as a physician with major in infectious diseases... worked as a family physician and emergency room physician... past 10-11 years... worked in South Africa... working as a professional, I was opportune to... live a good life and also to settle my family."*

Subtheme 2: Engineering and IT Professionals

Participant W2 was a registered professional pharmacist who was also into information technology (IT) and product management for health technology companies in his home country.

> *W2 [00:09:49]: "Registered professional pharmacist... also into I.T., into product management for health technology companies... worked as a field pharmacist and health technology expert."*

W5 has a degree in mechanical engineering and worked as a site engineer, production technician, and business developer for a contracting company in Lagos, Nigeria. They have close to six years of experience in the field.

> *W5 [00:07:23]: "Degree in mechanical engineering... worked as a site engineer and production technician... wife had a degree in computer science... worked as a support analyst at a bank."*

Participant W7 worked in telecommunication engineering with a focus on networking. They have experience as an expatriate working on telecommunication projects in different countries, and they also work as a project coordinator.

> *W7 [00:06:34]: "Degree in Industrial Labor Relations and telecommunication engineering... worked for Ericsson as a telecommunication engineer... served as an expatriate in Senegal, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, and the Benin Republic."*

W10 is a graduate of physics science who initially explored networking and database fields. However, they found themselves pursuing their dream of being involved in aviation. They became an air traffic controller and gained flying experience during their career. Before coming to Canada, W10 was transitioning into a managerial role in air traffic control and working towards becoming a certified project manager and business analyst.

> *W10 [00:06:00]: "Graduate of physics science... worked as an air traffic controller... rose to be a control tower chief... moved to radar controller for approach units... in control of aircraft throughout the South of Nigeria... also dabbled into IT and business analysis."*

From the above, one can gather that the Engineering and Technology subtheme features two individuals with backgrounds in different engineering fields. W5 is a mechanical engineer with

experience in site engineering, production, and business development. W7 is a telecommunication engineer with extensive experience in networking, project coordination, and air traffic control, including radar control for aircraft in Nigeria. Both interviewees possess valuable skills and expertise in their respective engineering disciplines. The Air Traffic Control and Aviation subtheme features an individual (W10) who started in a different field but eventually pursued their dream of being involved in aviation. They became an air traffic controller with flying experience and were on the verge of transitioning into a managerial role in air traffic control before moving to Canada.

Subtheme 3: Business and Leadership Professionals

The Business and Management subtheme includes two individuals (W4 and W8) with strong educational backgrounds and successful careers in their respective fields. W4 had a thriving career in the oil servicing industry and pursued additional studies in organizational leadership and strategy. On the other hand, W8 excelled in the financial industry, specifically in the banking sector, and holds expertise in mathematics, computer science, and information technology.

W4 had a successful career working for Schlumberger, an international oil servicing company, for almost 12 years. They held a bachelor's degree in Geology and further pursued studies in business and management, completing an 18-month program in organizational leadership and strategy at Oxford University in the UK.

> W4: "Oh, yes, so prior to coming to Canada, I had a thriving career... I was working for Schlumberger, an oil servicing company, and I worked for them for almost 12 years before we left Nigeria. And I had a bachelor's degree in Geology... I had gone to business school, Oxford University in the UK, and did an 18-month program in organizational leadership and strategy."

W8 holds a bachelor's degree in mathematics and computer science and a master's degree in information technology. They had a successful career in the financial industry, particularly in the banking sector, for over seven years.

> W8: "Educational-wise, I'm a graduate of mathematics and computer science—first degree. I have my master's in information technology. Back home, I worked in the financial industry, precisely the banking industry, for about seven years plus. So, I was pretty much…. thriving in my career path."

Subtheme 4: Customer Service and Mass Communication

W9 worked as a customer service representative back home before travelling to Canada.

> W9 [00:04:41]: "Worked as a customer service representative in one of the biggest telecommunication companies in Nigeria."

Before coming to Canada, the individuals interviewed had diverse educational and occupational backgrounds. They included medical professionals with experience in general practice, pharmacy, and dentistry; engineering and technology professionals with experience in mechanical engineering, telecommunication engineering, and IT project coordination; business and management professionals with experience in geology, banking, and organizational leadership; a customer service representative in the telecommunications industry, and an air traffic controller with experience in radar control and aviation management. Each interviewee brought unique skills and experiences that contributed to their successful careers back home before deciding to move to Canada.

Theme 3: Family Life in Home Country

This theme explores the family life of the participants back in their native home country. It was uncovered that while some of the participants had financial stability, others were noted to experience difficulties back home. This is further illustrated in Figure 3.
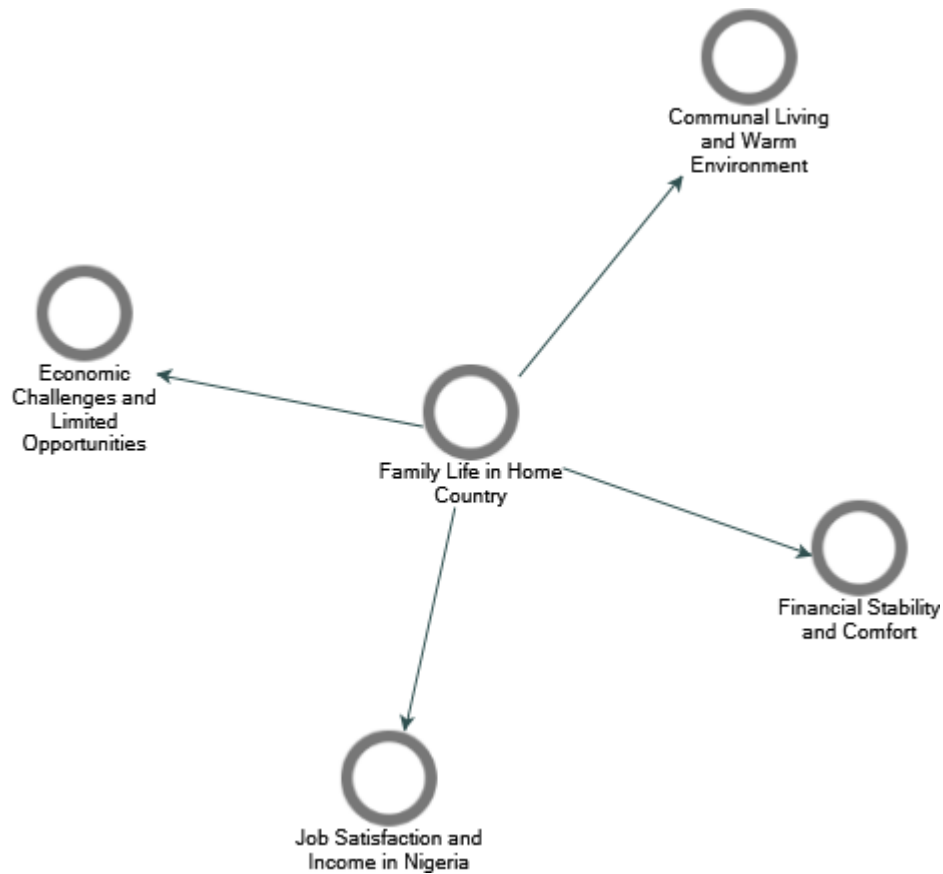
Figure 3: Visualizing the participants family life in home country.

Subtheme 1: Communal Living and Warm Environment

Participants described family life in Nigeria as being characterized by a communal system of living. In this system, individuals are surrounded not only by their immediate family but also by extended family members, creating a warm and supportive environment. They enjoy the support and closeness of everyone around them, including family, siblings, parents, and

friends. This close-knit community has been an integral part of their lives, and they cherish the connections and sense of togetherness it brings.

> W1: "Family life back home was good. Of course, in Nigeria, we have a communal system of living, so you are surrounded by not just your immediate family, you have people around you, extended family, so it is quite a very warm environment where you enjoy the support of everybody, family, siblings, parents, your friends, so it is a closely knitted environment which we enjoyed, and that is what we always known and which we've grown to know and which have become part of our lives."

Subtheme 2: Economic Challenges and Limited Opportunities

Participants expressed that while family life in Nigeria was generally good, they decided to leave the country primarily because of economic challenges and limited opportunities. They believed that by relocating to another country, they could create a better environment for themselves, have more earning potential, and gain greater economic power. In Nigeria, the options for career growth and actualizing their dreams were restricted due to various factors such as government policies, inefficiencies, and difficulties in getting things done. Some participants specifically mentioned the lack of adequate economic benefits, particularly in their professions, which led them to seek better opportunities abroad.

> W1 "So I think family experience back home was good, so we didn't leave the country because probably we have issues with our family or people but it is just because we want to create a better environment, earn more, have a better economic power and be able to actualize our dream, which the options are a bit limited at home just because of the way things are, policy, government and how to get things done and that is the main reason but family life I think it was good."

> W3: "The economic benefits were not there, especially because I was in private practice, but even in public practice, the pay was not fantastic... it just did not make sense. I mean, it was easy for me to cope because I was single. But then, I do not think that is the kind of income you can sustain a family with. And that was one of the reasons why I sought to leave."

Subtheme 3: Job Satisfaction and Income in Nigeria

Participants shared varied experiences regarding job satisfaction and income in Nigeria. Some individuals expressed contentment with their job situations and incomes, stating that they

were making good money and living comfortably. They might have pursued multiple job opportunities and enjoyed financial stability.

> *W2: "Yeah, it was good. I was making money. Like I said, I worked in double fields. Most times, I had extra jobs outside my normal regular jobs. So, I was living comfortably. I was actually making a lot of money and living well, I can say that."*

On the other hand, some participants highlighted dissatisfaction with their income levels, especially concerning the effort they had put into their careers. They felt that their professional skills were not fully utilized, particularly in certain job settings like public practice.

> *W3 "In private practice, you get to use more of your skills, your dental skills. But in public practice, you get a little bit more in terms of pay, but you don't really use much of your skills... the income wasn't just good."*

Additionally, some participants mentioned the relatively lower tax burden in Nigeria compared to their current country of residence, which contributed to their financial comfort back home.

> *W7 "The life back home, I don't want to lie to you, we got tired, but we have never seen the life as the kind of tax... in Nigeria, you work, you get your job, you get paid, you don't have to start thinking of taxes."*

> *W8 "Personally, it was not that bad because I was young or single. I had a good job. Averagely speaking, I was doing well for myself in a developing country like Nigeria."*

Overall, the participants' experiences regarding job satisfaction and income were diverse.

Subtheme 4: Financial Stability and Comfort

Some participants mentioned that they experienced financial comfort and were able to provide for themselves and their families while living in Nigeria. They expressed the ability to afford basic necessities, such as paying rent and meeting their daily expenses. Additionally, they highlighted the advantage of paying yearly rent, which provided some stability and financial ease compared to monthly rent payments in their current country of residence.

W7 "We had everything; you have a job…, you can pay your rent, you know the difference, you pay yearly rent in Nigeria, you pay monthly rent here in Canada. Once you can pay your rent for the year, you are good even when you do not pay sometimes... For me, it was kind of different, like we had it much easier; let me not lie to you."

The participants also emphasized their capacity to provide for their children's education and make investments, indicating a level of financial security.

W10 "Life in Nigeria before coming to Canada, it's a good one... I could afford to take my kids to the best school. My wife and I could afford to plan and invest, and we were doing fine within our means."

Overall, these individuals felt that life in Nigeria allowed them to maintain a comfortable lifestyle and meet their family's needs within their means.

In summary, one can draw from the above narrative that family life in their home country was generally seen as supportive and communal, with close-knit relationships and the support of extended family members. However, there were economic challenges, including limited economic opportunities and relatively low salaries, particularly in certain professions. The individuals interviewed mentioned the desire for better financial stability and more opportunities for growth and comfort. Some expressed that life back home was comfortable but felt the need for further growth and improvement. They highlighted the differences in taxation and financial benefits between their home country and Canada.

Theme 4: Eligibility Criteria for Immigration Program

From the interview, it was revealed that most of the immigrants relocated to Canada through the Canadian Express Entry program. It was, therefore, vital to document the process and eligibility criteria of the program. It was found that the process involves several steps, as shown in Figure 4 and further elaborated below.
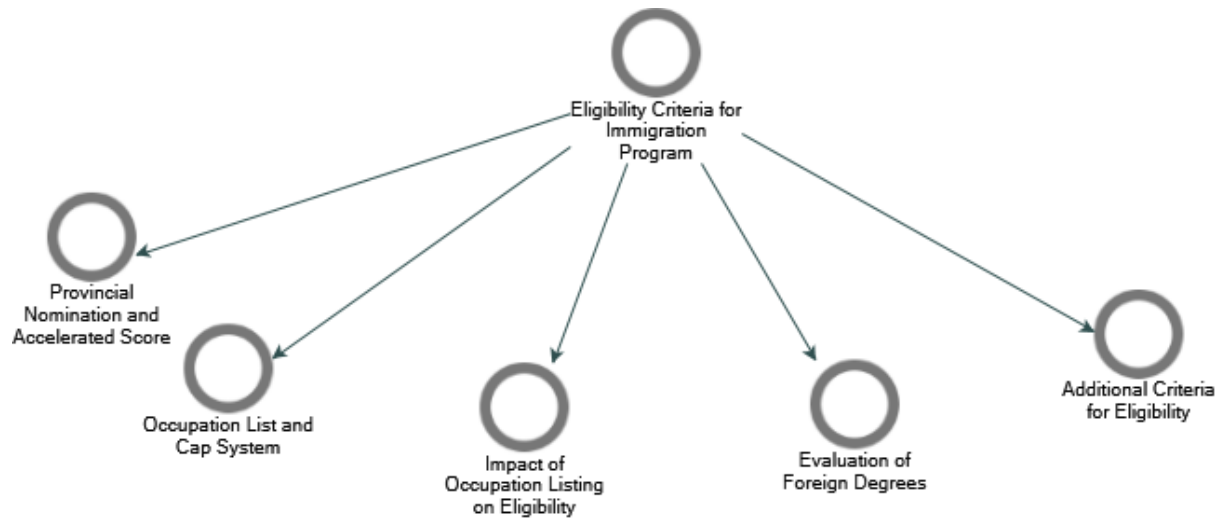
Figure 4: Visualizing the eligibility criteria for Canadian immigration program.

Subtheme 1: Occupation List and Cap System

Before the introduction of the Canada express entry program for skilled immigrants, the Federal Skilled Worker immigration program in Canada was structured around a list of shortage occupations that the country aims to fill with highly skilled foreign-trained professionals seeking to immigrate to the country. The Canadian immigration office released a list of perceived "shortage" occupations, specifying the number of applicants required under the various occupational categories in the list. The eligibility criteria for this aspect involve having a relevant degree and at least one (1) year of paid work experience in one of the listed occupations.

> *W1 "So at that time, like I said, it is a function of what Canada considers to be the shortage occupation that they have at that time, so every year I think they will release a list of occupation they feel they need to fill in the Canadian workspace and then they will say okay all over the world we need 500 doctors, all over the world we need 500 geophysicists... that was the way the process is. The criteria are just so much of having your initial first degree in what they are looking for."*

Subtheme 2: Evaluation of Foreign Degrees

As part of the eligibility process, candidates with foreign degrees need to have their qualifications evaluated to ensure that they are equivalent to Canadian standards. For example, if

32

someone is a medical doctor in Nigeria, their credentials would be assessed to determine if they meet the requirements to practice medicine in Canada.

W1 "...you have done your assessment to say that your degree is equivalent to the Canadian equivalent, so what that is, is that you are a medical doctor in Nigeria, you have sent in your application, they have evaluated it, and they say okay it is equivalent to a medical doctor in Canada then you can apply."

Subtheme 3: Additional Criteria for Eligibility

In addition to the occupation list and evaluation of foreign degrees, other criteria help determine eligibility for the immigration program. These criteria include family size, proficiency in English (through a language test), and proof of financial means to support themselves and their family members in Canada.

W1 "So the other things about the criteria then, of course, are family size, English exam that you have to do, you have to have proof of fund based on your family size."

The above is also supported by another of the participants who explained that he applied for the Express Entry immigration program, which required him to undergo credential evaluation, language tests (such as the International English Language Testing System, IELTS), and submit relevant documents as part of the application process.

W8 "I did apply for the Express Entry program, and as part of the requirements, we needed to do a credential evaluation, did some tests, International English language test (IELTS) and submitted a couple of documents."

Subtheme 4: Impact of Occupation Listing on Eligibility

The most crucial factor affecting eligibility under the federal skilled worker program is whether an applicant's occupation is listed on the shortage occupation list. If their occupation matches the list, they become eligible to apply for the immigration program; otherwise, they are excluded from consideration.

W1: "The major thing is whether your occupation is listed or not. That is what screens you in or screens you out."

Subtheme 5: Provincial Nomination and Accelerated Score

Participant W8 was selected from the Express Entry pool by the Ontario government for provincial nomination. This nomination gave them additional points in the Express Entry system, which expedited the process and increased their chances of receiving an invitation to apply for permanent residency.

W8: "I was fortunate to be in the pool; while in the pool, I was fortunate to be invited by the Ontario government. I went through the provincial nomination process; I was lucky to be nominated. So technically, even though it was the federal skilled worker pathway. But I got a provincial nomination that kind of accelerated my score and gave me a quick opportunity to get the invitation to apply."

The eligibility criteria for the immigration program involved having at least one year of work experience in an occupation listed in the shortage occupation list of Canada's federal skilled worker program. The shortage occupation list is regularly updated to reflect specific in-demand occupations each year. The applicants who came through the federal skilled worker program mentioned that their occupations were on the list in the year that they applied, which determined their eligibility at that time. The application process involved submitting the application and being screened based on the cap or cut-off mark system, which limited the number of applications accepted. The evaluation of educational qualification was also an essential criterion and required applicants to have foreign degrees equivalent to similar degrees in Canada. Additional criteria included English/French Language proficiency, proof of funds based on family size, and/or receiving a provincial nomination.

Theme 5: Expectations regarding Job, Income, and Housing

This theme explores the expectations regarding the job, income, and housing of the participants prior to their immigration. Figure 5 illustrates the expectations of the participants.
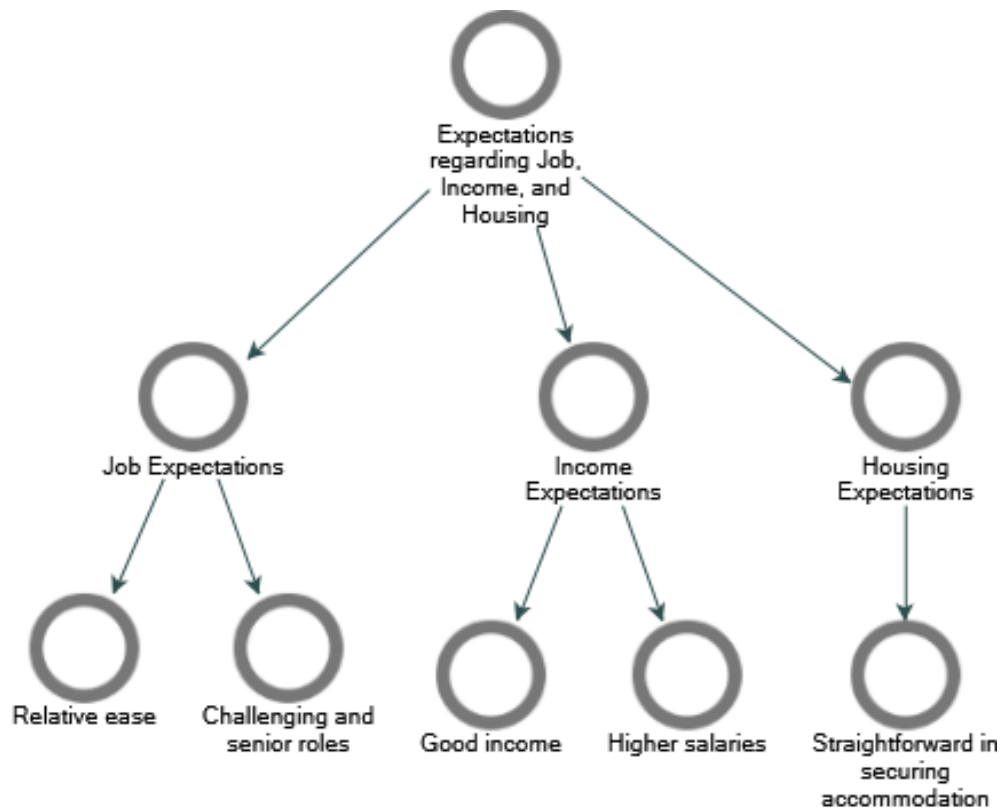
Figure 5: Visualization of the expectations regarding job, income, and housing

Subtheme 1: Job Expectations

The interviewees had various job expectations, but the reality often involved facing challenges and the need to start with transition jobs before reaching their desired career level. Regulated professions, like medicine and dentistry, require passing exams and obtaining licenses, which could be time-consuming. Many immigrants encountered difficulties finding jobs in their chosen professions and had to settle for entry-level positions or transition jobs. The narrative from the participants shed light on the job expectations and realities faced by immigrants in

Canada. Many of them were optimistic and believed that finding a job would be relatively easy once they had the required qualifications. However, the reality was often different, especially in regulated professions like medicine and dentistry, where additional licensing and certification were necessary, as noted in quotes W1 and W3.

> W1 "So jobwise, I knew it was going to take a while for me to get into the medical space; that is number one... I knew I might have to do what we call transition jobs...I had relevant transferable skills that I could use to work so that I could have income to feed my family while I face my career... It is a process, so for anybody that is in the regulated profession, I know it is going to be a process..."

> W3 "I knew I had to write my licensing exams to practice as a dentist... if you have to be a dentist here, apart from getting your license, you also have to think about how to start your own business and starting your own dental clinic."

Some skilled immigrants, like Participant W8, expected to take on challenging and senior roles, but they often had to start with entry-level positions or jobs that paid less than they had hoped.

> W8: "I was looking up to more challenging roles, I was looking up to senior level roles, I was looking up to opportunities that would help me explore and grow at the same time."

The transition from a different country to Canada often required hard work and patience, as illustrated in the statement attributed to participant W10, where the participant expected to see results in six months but faced a different reality.

> W10 "So that was the mindset that, okay, if I'm going to transition fully and not do business analysis on a part-time and probably just do it full time, Canada is the best place for me to do it. I just need to put in the hard work, and my expectation was that in six months, I should be able to start something."

> W10 "Expectation regarding income... I felt I wouldn't come in as an entry-level... Expectations shouldn't be like minimum, nothing less than $70,000... Below that would be like a drawback."

Overall, the job expectations were sometimes met with the harsh reality of needing to gain Canadian work experience, face competition, and accept positions below their initial

expectations. Nonetheless, immigrants demonstrated resilience and a willingness to put in the effort to achieve their career goals in Canada.

Subtheme 2: Income Expectations

The participants had diverse income expectations, with some prepared for temporary income reductions as they focused on their careers or transition to new fields. Many immigrants expected to earn good incomes and believed that their qualifications and experience would secure well-paying jobs. However, the reality was often different, with some facing challenges in getting a job in their respective fields, as seen in Quotes W3 and W9.

> *W3 "Regarding job income, I will say my reality was interesting... I did not realize how expensive it would be to get into the practice. I would say the challenges were much more than I expected when I got here."*
>
> *W9: "I thought the job would just be there... the job will just be there for you as long as you have the credentials, you have the right certificates; the job will be readily available for you."*

The participants had varying expectations, some hoping for similar income levels as they had in their home countries, while others aimed for higher salaries and senior-level positions, as seen in Quotes W4 and W8. However, their actual income in Canada did not always match these expectations.

> *W4 "Well, I knew it may not be the same as back home in terms of being accepted... I was hoping to even if it's not the same, very close or even more because of the 12 Years Experience I had prior to coming here."*
>
> *W8 "I had high expectations overall in terms of career, in terms of income... I felt with my year of experience, transferable skills... I will not come in as an entry-level. I felt I would come in... between entry-level and mid-level..."*

It became evident that the transition to Canada required adjusting income expectations, especially for those starting at entry-level positions and earning lower than they had hoped, as

seen in Quote W10. Nevertheless, immigrants showed resilience in navigating the Canadian job market and adapting their financial expectations accordingly.

> W10 *"In terms of income, I felt I wouldn't come in as an entry-level... expectation shouldn't be like minimum, nothing less than $70,000. That was the expectation... situation changes, but my expectation was not... below that would be like a drawback."*

Subtheme 3: Housing Expectations

Immigrants had varied housing expectations, with some assuming that securing accommodation would be relatively straightforward. However, they often faced challenges, such as high rental costs or difficulties finding suitable housing upon arrival.

> W1: *"Housing was not so much of a challenge because we were able to get a place we rented while we were in Canada anyway, so I was not even planning to buy until we finally settled... Getting a house to live in? Yeah, the only challenge with housing then, of course, being new in the country…., they will ask you for a guarantor and all those things, but luckily for us, we have a friend who was living in Edmonton where we stayed, so he was able to do that for us, and we didn't have so much challenge about getting a place to stay."*

> W6 *"Housing well, I didn't expect housing to be difficult... However, when we came in, it wasn't as straightforward as we thought it was going to be."*

> W7[0:15:20] *"I thought that's going to be almost automatic, like once I have my money, I'll get a house, but that was not the reality. When you apply for a house, they promise you that you will get it. Some even demand for six (6) months' rent upfront, but before you get there to finalize, they will send you a message that says someone with a better credit history has gotten it. It was kind of depressing for me because I had my money, and this was not what we were told when we were coming. For me, it was kind of hard….and the Airbnb that I was staying in was more like a two-bedroom basement. It was hard. I lost almost $2000 on Uber moving around trying to find a house. I never knew anyone that would tell me about renting a car to move around at that period... For new immigrants that you know that we are coming to Canada for the first time, and we do not have a job, we do not have a credit history, the housing system should be a bit more lenient…at least for the landed immigrants (immigrants with permanent residency).*

> W8 *"In terms of accommodation, also I wasn't looking to having any challenge at all... However, when I got to Canada, it was a different story entirely."*

> W10 *"Housing is a different ball game here...If the owner does not like you or does not feel like he wants you to be around him, it is totally different. You have people telling you to bring three months, some six months upfront. You need to get a guarantor, and for a newcomer, it is hard because you might not know anybody here. So, who will be your guarantor here? I will not lie to you; I was disappointed, and the government did not help…. what we expected as a newcomer with all the guidelines was that it would be easy to get a place, but I was absolutely wrong.*

People tend to live in Airbnb for more than a month and pay more. For me, getting a house as a newcomer is a big work., If you do not actually have someone who is staying here, who could act as a guarantor and would be able to help you out. Even having someone here does not assure you that you will get the house."

The above quotes shed light on the housing expectations and realities experienced by immigrants in Canada. Many immigrants expected to find housing easily; they assumed that having funds and resources would automatically secure them a place to live, as seen in Quotes W7 and W10. However, the reality proved to be different, with some facing challenges in finding suitable accommodation upon arrival in Canada, as seen in Quotes W6 and W8. The participants' initial expectations were that housing arrangements would be straightforward, potentially due to prior research and advice from friends and relatives. However, some encountered difficulties securing housing and faced unexpected hurdles, such as the need for guarantors or encountering issues with rented accommodations, as seen in Quotes W1 and W6.

Despite the challenges, immigrants showed adaptability and resilience in navigating the Canadian housing market and finding suitable living arrangements, sometimes with the help of friends or contacts already established in the country. This underscores the importance of having realistic expectations and being prepared to adjust plans when settling into a new country. Overall, job, income, and housing expectations varied among the individuals interviewed. Job expectations included understanding the need to go through transition jobs and the challenges involved in practicing regulated professions. It is evident that immigrants had a mix of optimistic and informed expectations regarding job opportunities, income levels, and housing conditions in Canada. However, the realities of the Canadian job market, licensing processes, cost of living, and housing availability often differed from their initial expectations. This led many immigrants to adjust their plans, take transitional jobs, and work hard to achieve their career and financial goals.

Theme 6: Reality regarding Job, Income, and Housing for immigrants in Canada

This theme explores the reality the immigrants faced regarding jobs, income, and housing in Canada.
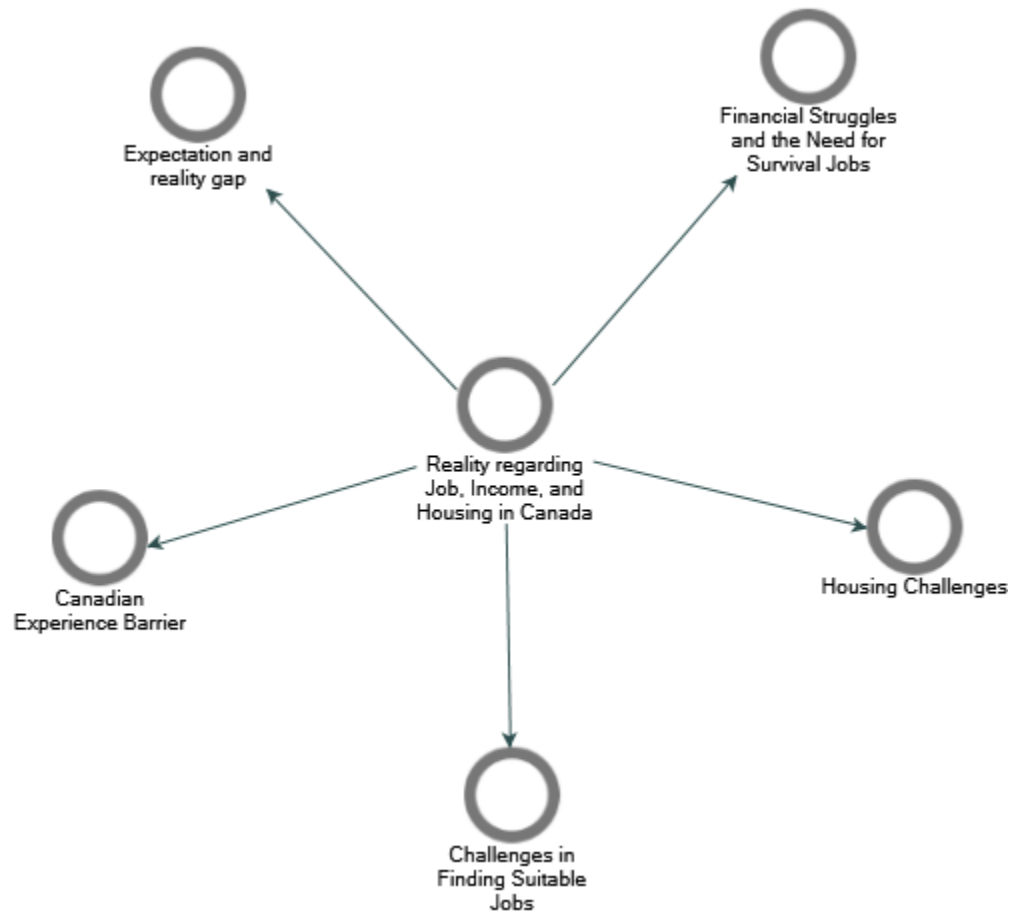
Figure 6: Visualization of participant reality regarding job, income, and housing in Canada

Subtheme 1: Expectation and Reality Gap

From the data analyzed, several immigrants shared their experiences of having expectations that were different from the reality they encountered in Canada. Some had anticipated better job opportunities based on their qualifications and professional status but were surprised to find it difficult to secure suitable positions. The reality of the job market was harsher

than what they had imagined, with more extended job search periods and a lack of recognition for their foreign experience. These disparities between their expectations and their actual experiences regarding job prospects were a common theme among the immigrants' narratives.

W1 [00:19:28]: "The reality when I got on the ground was not really so different from what I had expected... My first job was in a shelter home, which was not what I expected... the first environment where I would work was not what I expected."

W2 [00:20:37]: "I was shocked. It was not what I was expecting... I was expecting to get a job that suits my professional status and experience."

W3 [00:21:53]: "I did not expect to come here and start practicing immediately as a dentist... the challenges were much more than I expected."

W4 [14:10:34]: "It took me five months to get a good job... I had to take on menial jobs... It was quite disappointing... the sense of resentment or feeling like you don't belong is literally there."

W8 [00:10:15]: "That's interesting because it was definitely…, it is safe to say that it's the opposite... it wasn't as smooth as I expected it to be. It wasn't as seamless as I thought it would be."

Subtheme 2: Challenges in Finding Suitable Jobs

The immigrants faced significant challenges in finding suitable jobs in Canada. Many employers tend to disregard their foreign experience and require Canadian experience, making it difficult for them to secure positions that match their qualifications and professional status. The process of finding jobs was often more prolonged and more frustrating than they had anticipated. Additionally, some immigrants had to undergo expensive requalification processes to practice their professions, leading to financial strain. The lack of streamlined support and guidance from the government and a complex job search process added to the difficulties in finding suitable employment for the newcomers.

W2 [00:21:15]: "The reality is that decent jobs are not easy to come by because most of these employers disregard your foreign experience... you need Canadian experience, but how am I going to get the Canadian experience if you don't employ me?"

W3 [00:21:53]: "I did not expect to come here and start practicing immediately as a dentist... I did not realize how expensive it would be to get into the practice."

W4 [14:10:34]: "I thought within one month or two months, I should get a good job, but I tell you it didn't happen the first few months... you find that a lot of immigrants have to work like times two to show capability in the office."

W7 [00:15:29]: "You totally just get a different vibe when you start looking for jobs, and you have so much information, the right ones, the wrong ones... the government, they don't have a streamlined way to follow up with newcomers and guide them adequately."

Subtheme 3: Canadian Experience Barrier

The immigrants faced a significant barrier in finding suitable jobs in Canada due to the requirement for Canadian experience. Many employers tend to prioritize candidates with Canadian work experience over those with foreign work experience, making it challenging for them to secure jobs that match their qualifications and skills. This Canadian experience barrier led to frustration and disappointment as newcomers felt trapped in a catch-22 situation - they needed a job to gain Canadian experience, but they could not get a job without it.

W2 [00:21:15]: "The reality is that decent jobs are not easy to come by because most of these employers disregard your foreign experience... you need Canadian experience, but how am I going to get the Canadian experience if you don't employ me?"

W9 [00:09:02]: "They were asking me for Canadian experience, which I don't have. I do not know what exactly the Canadian experience was for me at that time because I went to interviews even with people I knew I had better qualifications than, and they got the job, but I did not. And I get this feedback, or we need someone with Canadian work experience, and you don't have Canadian experience."

The lack of a streamlined and supportive process for recognizing foreign qualifications and experience further compounded this challenge, leaving many immigrants struggling to break through this barrier and find meaningful employment in Canada.

W7 [00:15:29]: "You totally just get a different vibe when you start looking for jobs, and you have so much information, the right ones, the wrong ones... the government, they don't have a streamlined way to follow up with newcomers and guide them adequately."

Subtheme 4: Housing Difficulties

The immigrants faced significant challenges in finding suitable housing in Canada. One of the major difficulties was the high cost of housing, which was considerably more expensive compared to their home countries. The expenses associated with renting or purchasing a place to live placed a financial burden on newcomers, especially when they did not have stable jobs or income.

> *W4 [14:18:00]: "Housing here, I find, is a lot more expensive compared to back home... So, housing is a big issue here because that's where a lot of your money goes unless somehow you get a very good job."*
>
> *W6 [00:10:59]: "In terms of accommodation, it wasn't the same because I thought we were going to...As I said, we have already seen a particular place that we liked, and we were looking forward to renting. However, when we got there, there were a lot of stories regarding credit scores...they were not ready to give us the place because they were not sure about our job and also because of our income, so it made it a little bit difficult."*
>
> *W7 [00:15:29]: "1 planned to live in Mississauga, and when I got there, the Airbnb, the only one that was available, that I got and at then I had to pay UK currency, that's somewhere close to square one... They said that after two months maximum, we should be able to get a house, but I did not get one after two months.... I think the housing system should be more lenient."*

Additionally, the housing market presented obstacles related to credit history and guarantors, making it challenging for newcomers to secure rental accommodations without a Canadian credit history or support from someone familiar with the system. The lack of support and streamlined guidance from the government further exacerbated the housing difficulties, leaving many newcomers in unstable or less desirable living situations, such as basement apartments or extended stays in bed-and-breakfast hotels or expensive Airbnb rental units, as they struggled to find suitable housing options.

W8 [00:10:15]: "In terms of housing, it is, I think it's still, it suffices to say it's a big problem to date... People tend to live in an Airbnb unit for more than a month and pay more, so for me, getting a house as a newcomer is a big one."

W10 [00:16:54]: "For me, I won't lie to you, I was disappointed because I felt that the government did not help what we expected as newcomers with all the guidelines; it was supposed to be an easy path for a newcomer to be able to get a place."

W7 [00:15:29]: "I think the housing system should be more lenient. You know, if people did not come with papers, but at least for the landed program... They will know you automatically that you got your papers because you cannot get into that program without being educated. Without having a good source of income prior to coming."

W10 [00:16:54]: "For housing, as I said, it's between night and day, it's a different ball game... I will not lie to you; I was disappointed because I felt that the government did not help."

Subtheme 5: Financial Struggles and the Need for Survival Jobs

Many immigrants faced significant financial struggles upon arriving in Canada, which forced them to take on survival jobs to make ends meet. These survival jobs were often menial and did not match the professional qualifications or career expectations of these skilled immigrants. The lack of Canadian experience became a barrier for many immigrants, making it difficult for them to secure jobs that aligned with their skills and expertise. Additionally, the high cost of living and housing further strained their financial situation, leading to the need for immediate income through any available job opportunities. The challenges in finding suitable jobs and affordable housing contributed to the financial hardships experienced by newcomers, making their settlement in Canada more challenging than anticipated.

W2 [00:20:37]: "It wasn't what I was expecting. I was expecting something better so that I could easily get jobs that suit my status... So, it wasn't just any job because any job is available."

W4 [00:10:34]: "Okay, so regarding job, my reality was interesting because it took me five months to get a good job... I had to take on like menial jobs... it was quite disappointing to know that it took me five good months before I got a Project coordinator job."

W6 [00:09:54]: "So, I was able to pick that up and just in between that, I picked up another job... I was juggling between those two jobs at that initial stage, so I'll say the jobs were available. They were not what I wanted, but at least there were jobs that were available for me to do at that time just to survive and to settle the family."

W9 [00:14:59]: "I tried applying for a customer service representative job... They were asking me for Canadian experience, which I do not have. I do not know what exactly the Canadian experience was for me at that time because I go to interview... they said, 'Oh, you don't have Canadian experience.'"

W10 [00:16:54]: " For me, with respect to job, it's not a good one... it can easily make people fall into depression if you're not strong."

Theme 7: Looking for Jobs as Immigrants in Canada

This theme explores the participants' experiences looking for jobs as immigrants in Canada. This is visualized in Figure 7.
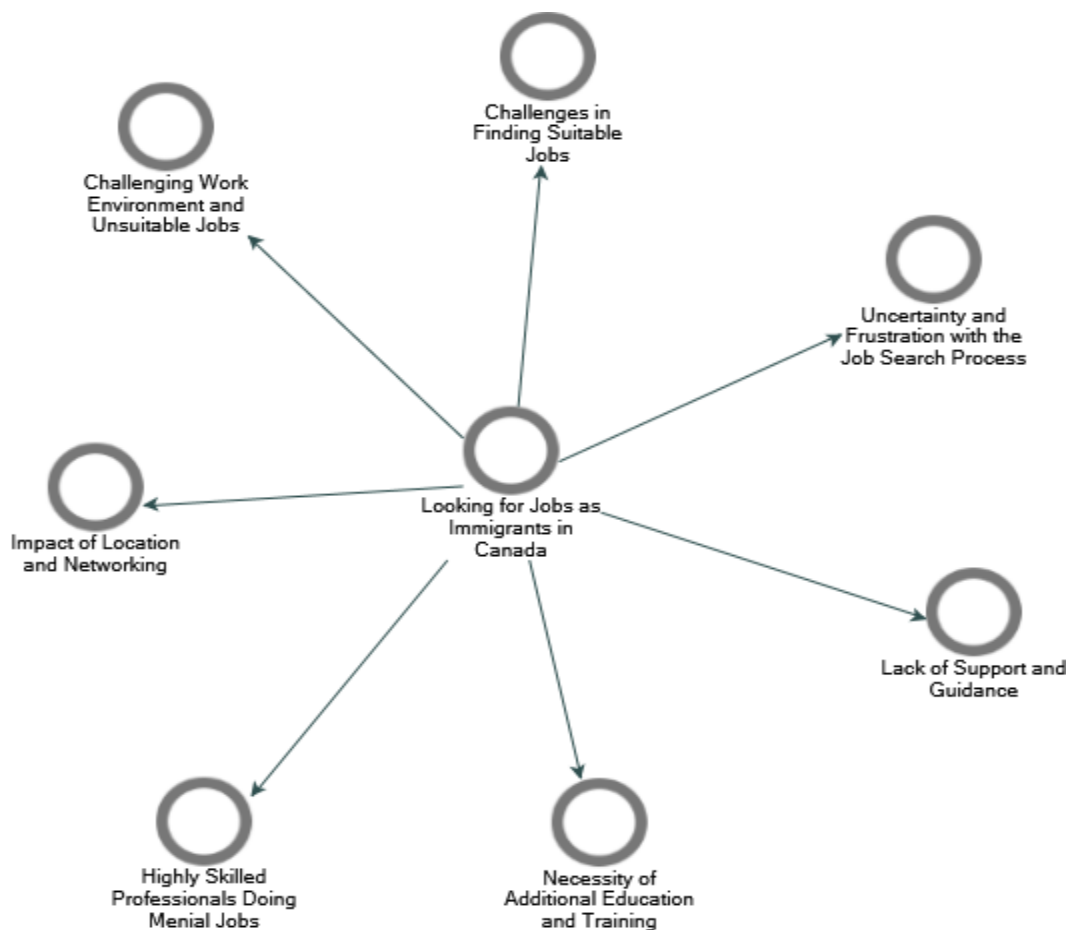

Figure 7:Visualization of the experiences of the participants looking for job as immigrant in Canada.

Subtheme 1: Challenges in Finding Suitable Jobs

This subtheme explores the challenges faced by skilled immigrants in finding suitable jobs in Canada. Some of the participants highlight the difficulties experienced during their job search, including the frustration of submitting applications and not receiving responses from recruiters.

W2 [00:24:29]: "Okay, so when I arrived in Canada, and I started looking for a job, one week passed, I thought, okay. Very soon. Two weeks passed, one month passed, and two months passed. I could not get a job. I see job adverts and look at the job descriptions; it is something that I can do, something I have done. I submit my CV, but sometimes I get a call from the recruiters, and after talking for a while, they ask you about the company that you have worked for. You tell them, and they ask you where the company is. You tell them. And after the interview, you don't hear from them again."

Participants also discuss the struggle to secure jobs matching their qualifications and having to consider different career paths or undertake further education to improve their chances.

W5 [00:39:41]: "So at this time, like I mentioned, I have three different things I was thinking to do. One of them was going back to school, back into mechanical engineering, so that I could have the Canadian qualification and the experience. The second one was nursing, to go into nursing, and the third one was to go into IT. Luckily for me, I have a few friends who have done IT, who had experience, and their experience was a real-time kind of experience. So, they came to Canada they switched to IT. They were getting the job, and it was like, oh, if you can go back to school, do like between eight months to 12-month program, you can get this job also. So, then I just follow suit with their lines."

In certain professions like medicine, the competition for residency positions is particularly intense, and even well-qualified individuals may face extended waiting periods without matching for residency. These are captured in the following statements.

W6 [00:15:15]: "So, working towards that, like I said, I started with customer care service, which was not my line, but at some point, I started looking for a job that will bring me closer to medical practice. So, I got a placement in a doctor's office to work as a physician or a clinical

assistant to that person. But the funny thing about it was that I was doing, or the person made me to do, a lot of jobs that are not within the scope of being a clinical assistant. So, I was more like a cleaner, organizer and all of that in that clinic, which was not very palatable."

W6 [00:17:58]: "Residency is super difficult because there is a lot of competition from Canadian graduates. So, after Canadian graduates, that is people who graduated from Canadian Medical School, then the next set of people is Canadians that graduated maybe in the UK, in the US and in Australia and Republic of Ireland - those are the four recognized institutions, after that one, the next are non-Canadians that graduated from Canadian institutions/universities and Canadians that graduated from universities outside of Canada and the other recognized countries. Then, after that, it will now be international medical graduates or those who graduated from somewhere else, or it will be international graduates who graduated from countries in the US, UK, Ireland, and Australia, and after that, it will now be international graduates from other countries. So, the slot for international graduates can be like two or one in some institutions and that made it extremely difficult to get into practice."

W6 [00:20:42]: "I mean, I have friends, or I know people… they have done all the exams, and they've still been waiting; they have not matched for the residency for years."

From the above, it is sufficient to say that immigrants encounter various hurdles in their pursuit of suitable employment, and the lack of Canadian work experience can be a significant barrier to landing desired jobs. One participant, who had a background in dentistry, faced challenges in securing even dental assistant positions and had to consider alternative job options.

W3 [00:31:56]: "So when I came here, I was still focused on dentistry, so I started applying for jobs like dental assistant because the dental environment is something I was very familiar with; I thought at least I could work as a dental assistant. But I also realized I could not even do that. I was not getting calls. I was applying for those jobs. I was not getting calls from anybody. And then, when you got the calls and had that one-time conversation with them on the phone, they never called back. So, you begin to get the message that, you know, maybe this is not what you should be looking at. Yes, maybe you do not fit the description of what they want, you know, So I had to, like, think outside the box. I had to get a job."

Another participant mentioned attending career fairs and seeking support from immigration agencies in their job search. They found that some agencies were more helpful for professionals like themselves, while others were geared towards individuals seeking entry-level or menial positions.

W4 [00:18:50]: "So what I used to do was to look around for career fairs so, anywhere I see a career fair, I would go for it. But I find sometimes those career fairs, the companies that come, don't meet my desire, at least for me; after some time, I realized that there was not much value going for those career fairs. I was not really getting any offers and things like that. I also kind of

like join immigration agencies, I think; one of them is Breeding. Breeding was okay, but I think Breeding was really tailored towards people who need very menial jobs and are not very qualified and educated and all that. Later on, I found another one called ARIAC. ARIAC, for me, is a bit structured to support professionals, which I am happy about. So, if I had to do it again, I would rather go to ARIAC first instead of Breeding, and I spent a lot of time in Breeding. So, for immigrants, it is a lot of walking about, especially if you do not have the support system to really tell you what to do. Over the years now, there are lots of training sessions or training Institutes that I can recommend to immigrants and say, okay, what do you want to do? If you do not have the certification, train with these people for three months, and you will be properly equipped. I didn't really have anybody telling me that, unfortunately, so it was a lot of rooming around."

The issue of resume bias was also raised, with the suggestion to modify the resume to remove specific country names and focus on the broader region to enhance job prospects.

W4 [0:22:33]: "So, for me, my brother, that's been here came as a student, so he never really understood the struggles of an immigrant because straight out of his master's program, he worked in the school for some time, and then from there, got into the employment space. It is not the same as being an immigrant coming from Nigeria, and all you have are Nigeria, Nigeria, Nigeria, on your resume. I mean, it was in one of the sessions with somebody here that a fellow Nigerian told me oh if you need to get a job, remove Nigeria from your resume. So, there are tips and tricks like that: if you do not have anybody telling you and you are submitting your resume with all of Nigeria and Nigeria, you find out that you are just wasting time you are not getting any job. So, you can still keep the company, but I can just put it like Africa, because whether you like it or not, there's just that bias, right? So, especially if it's an international company like the one I worked for, I can just keep it simple and still maintain that international status without flaunting that it's the Nigerian section or region that you worked for to give you a better chance. So, in terms of the job, it was a lot of jumping around and making mistakes. Well, not making mistakes, I would say, but probably not narrowing down to where you would really get value."

The above subtheme highlights the struggles immigrants face in navigating the job market, often involving trial and error before finding suitable employment opportunities.

Subtheme 2: Challenging Work Environment and Unsuitable Jobs

Some immigrants faced difficult and potentially unsafe work environments, such as homeless shelters, which required them to deal with individuals struggling with substance abuse and other issues. For example, participant W1's first work experience was in a homeless shelter, where they had to deal with individuals struggling with alcohol, drugs, and homelessness. The work environment was challenging, and the people could be abusive and dangerous.

48

W1 [00:21:06]: The participant describes their first work experience in a homeless shelter, dealing with individuals with alcohol and drug problems. The work environment was challenging and potentially dangerous due to dealing with abusive and dangerous people.

Despite the difficulties, the speaker moved on to work in a long-term care home, which they found to be a safer work environment.

"But not long then, I got another job in a care home, which was better, better not in the sense of how much I get paid, but maybe the work environment was safer for me than the homeless shelter. So, it was just the kind of people we were dealing with. So that was the experience then." (W1).

The above subtheme highlights the challenges immigrants face when working in demanding and potentially unsafe environments, such as homeless shelters. The job may involve dealing with people with complex issues, which can be emotionally and physically taxing for the immigrants. In some cases, they may transition to other jobs that offer a safer work environment, even if the pay is not significantly better.

Subtheme 3: Necessity of Additional Education and Training

This subtheme explores the necessity of additional education and training for immigrants seeking employment in Canada. It was uncovered that many immigrants face challenges in finding jobs in their respective fields and are often advised or compelled to pursue further education or training to enhance their qualifications and chances of securing employment.

W5 [00:39:41]: "So at this time, like I mentioned, I have three different things I was thinking to do. One of them was going back to school and go back into mechanical engineering so that I could have the qualifications and the experience. The second one was nursing to go into nursing, and the third one was to go into IT. So luckily for me, I have a few friends who have done IT, who had experience, and their experience was a real-time kind of experience. So, they came to Canada they switched to IT. They were getting the job, and it was like, oh, if you can go back to school, do like between eight months to 12-month program, you can get this job also. So, then I just follow suit with their lines."

Some participants consider switching careers and exploring different educational programs, such as nursing, business analysis, project management or IT, to increase their employability. Additional training is seen as a means to bridge the gap between their qualifications from their home country and the Canadian job market's requirements.

> *W9 [00:14:59]: "No, I wasn't able to get a job in my field, and I was asked to go back to school to be able to secure any job. I have to go back to school either to do social service, PSW, or DSW to be able to get something."*

Moreover, participants recognize the value of continuous learning and updating their skills to adapt to the Canadian work environment and improve their job prospects.

> *W10 [00:22:23]: "OK, When I came to Canada, I knew I wanted to do business analysis. What I did was OK. I am in a new space. How do they work? What are the models or branding of that? So, I had to register and do a training to understand how it is being done here. Because the way I believe I understand it was that it is a different country, and the way they operate in different industries are different… Yes, it is totally different. So, I had to do training and network with people to understand how it works and do the training for like two months, almost three months, to understand the basic thing, how it works."*

Despite these efforts, some individuals still encounter rejections and find it difficult to compete with candidates who may have more local experience or referrals.

> *W10 [00:25:34]: "I received more from rejections, and even some will even try to massage your ego and tell you like they see the skills, they notice everything, they like it, but the competition is high. To be sincere, it is more of rejections than interviews. The ones that might lead to interview will want you to relocate… move to a different province, and at this stage, that won't work for me."*

Subtheme 4: Impact of Location and Networking

This subtheme explores the impact of location and networking on immigrants' job opportunities in Canada. It was uncovered from the data transcribed that individuals with credentials from Canadian institutions may have an advantage in securing jobs, as employers might perceive them to be more familiar with the Canadian work environment and processes.

W10 [00:28:43]: "I think that people with their credentials that are Canadian based tend to get the job because they feel they understand the process already, and for you, who is new, you take some time for you to turn the curve and understand how it works. But like they say, knowledge is one; the moment you know that you have the knowledge, and you understand the way it works. The onboarding process of the organization will help the person to settle in, but it is not like that for all employers. They just sit down and decide what they want to do, and hey. It's their company, so they decide what they want."

On the other hand, some participants observed that having international experience does not guarantee job success, suggesting that employers may have specific preferences or policies for candidate selection.

W10 [00:29:47]: "Well, because people, I will tell you, because from personal interaction, I've seen people who have international experience have worked with companies in the US, and they don't get the job. So, for me, I do not think about his experience. I just think they have their own method. They just have a mindset or a requirement or a policy that is using picking what they pick."

Networking is also considered essential, as participants acknowledge that referrals or personal connections can influence the hiring process. Furthermore, the location plays a role, with some employers showing a preference for candidates residing near the job location.

W10 [00:31:10]: "Yeah, that's what I feel it is now because I feel my thought about rejection was different because I felt oh, I needed certification. Even if you can do it but right now, I felt even people that do not have the certification you have are getting the job. I have seen enough business analysts that do not have certifications and they are getting the job. Then people who have certifications are not getting the job. So, you now wonder what is the basis for selection? So, for me it is a give or take. It just depends on what who they want to pick or something, right. For me, it is still a dilemma, but it does not affect me more now. I think if the job is yours and they really want you or they like you. They just pick you, it's no longer about certifications, experience, and stuff like that."

Despite recognizing these factors, participants remain determined to continue searching for job opportunities within their respective places of residence and actively engaging in networking to enhance their chances of finding suitable employment.

W10 [00:25:34]: "I'm still on the lookout for the ones that will give me that opportunity here in my place of residence."

Subtheme 5: Uncertainty and Frustration with the Job Search Process

This subtheme explores the uncertainty and frustration experienced by immigrants during the job search process in Canada. The statements attributed to the participants illustrate how applicants with relevant skills and experience may still face obstacles, such as being perceived as overqualified or encountering challenges related to finding suitable job positions.

W2 [00:25:16]: "Of course, it has to do with that, because from the conversations about the job, technical skills and all, you can tell. A recruiter once told me that I am overqualified because of the conversations we had. She said I can see that you have experience of this thing, but I can see you are qualified, overqualified because the jobs that meet my status that I applied for, I was not getting them. So, I applied for a junior role, and they told me that I am overqualified for the junior role. That is how I knew that okay from conversations about technical skills or soft skills and all, I know I have them. So, what can be the problem?"

Some participants expressed frustration with the lack of response from potential employers, even after applying through various agencies and platforms. Additionally, the process of securing a job aligned with their professional qualifications can be discouraging, with some immigrants ending up in jobs that do not fully utilize their skills or provide satisfactory financial rewards.

W7 [00:22:15]: "Because I was getting frustrated, driving around and not getting accommodation, not working... After few weeks, I gave it to my wife that I'm give you an ultimatum that in one month, if it doesn't work, we are going back to Africa because I have not resigned..., and they told me that there was these agencies they saw online, but before then, we had these newcomers welcoming program, where they helped us post our CV, and I thought Oh, once I add this that I was going to get the job the next day but all of a sudden, I kept calling them and they were telling me that they have not gotten something..., I have not gotten something for you to do. The ones that they got they want to pay you almost $15 or something like that, you know, and it was a bit frustrating for me and at the end of the day, I went to get this agency...The closest I actually got overall that was good, I had to leave the province of Ontario."

Moreover, the uncertainty and complexity of the licensure and accreditation processes for certain professions, particularly in the medical field, add to the frustration and uncertainty experienced by immigrants seeking suitable employment.

W6 [00:13:01]: "Yeah. So, working towards that, like I said, I started with customer care service which was not my line... but at some point, I started looking for a job that will bring me closer to the medical practice. So, I got like a placement in a doctor's office to work as a physician or a clinical assistant to that person. But the funny thing about it is that I was doing, or the person made me do a lot of jobs that are not within the scope of being a clinical assistant. So, I was more like a cleaner, organizer and all of that in that clinic, which was not very palatable. And of course, because of that, I had to decide to just go, and it was not financially rewarding because it was only paying maybe a dollar or two above the minimum wage, which was not fantastic compared to the kind of job I was doing there."

The participants who had previous experience in the medical field expressed dissatisfaction with the way foreign-trained medical practitioners from outside the countries that Canada recognizes their medical institutions were placed at the lower end of the selection process for medical residency positions, making it near impossible for them to transition into the medical workspace in Canada, irrespective of the skills and years of practice experience.

W6 [00:22:19]: "No, it's slightly different, like I said. Those who trained in Canada are taken into residence first. Then those who train in UK, US, Australia and maybe New Zealand, I think they used to be South Africa on the list that is next. So, it makes it a little easier for them. They have a higher quota system in their admissions, as compared to other international medical graduates that only have maybe one or two, maximum three slots in some schools."

In summary, Nigerian/African skilled immigrants in Canada face challenges in finding suitable jobs, often necessitating additional education and certifications to improve their chances. The job search process can be uncertain and frustrating, and factors like location and networking can also impact job opportunities. The preference for candidates with Canadian work experience and the high competition for residency placement contribute to the difficulties faced by these immigrants seeking employment in their respective fields.

Subtheme 6: Highly Skilled Professionals Doing Menial Jobs

The data transcribed showed that many highly skilled immigrants find themselves working in jobs that are not aligned with their qualifications and expertise, such as driving for rideshare services or taking up menial jobs due to the lack of opportunities in their respective

fields. Participant W2, for instance, shared their experience as a support staff in a community living center, which is not their desired career. They express concern about highly skilled professionals, such as surgeons and physicians, working in menial jobs like driving Uber and taxis due to the lack of suitable opportunities.

> *W2 [00:22:07]: "Right now I'm working as a support staff with one of the community living in Ontario… No, it is not something I want to do. I am happy doing it though it is not something I want to do. So, in the future, I need to do something else, which I am already making plans to do. So, it is not something I want to do for a long time. I am happy doing it in the short term. Yes. It is either I do this, or I go to work in the factory."*

From the above narrative, one could draw out that while the participant appears to be contented with the job for the time being, it is not their desired long-term career path. The participant expresses dissatisfaction with the situation where many skilled professionals, including surgeons and physicians, end up working in menial jobs like driving for Uber and taxis. This issue is acknowledged even at the governmental level, with the Minister of Immigration expressing concern over the trend.

> *W2 [00:23:30]: "Yes, exactly. I even saw it on the news this morning that the Minister of Immigration, Sean Fraser, he even raised it that he has been hearing reports that surgeons and physicians and professionals are coming to Canada and driving Uber and taxis that it does not make sense. So, I do not know what he is going to do about it. Let us see what he has to do in the next few weeks. It is actually something that is very displeasing. Like you are saying that highly skilled professionals are doing menial jobs, yes, that is the reality."*

The above subtheme sheds light on the phenomenon where highly skilled professionals, including medical practitioners, find themselves working in jobs that do not match their qualifications or expertise. Instead of utilizing their skills in their respective fields, they are forced to take up menial jobs, which can be a source of frustration and disappointment for immigrants seeking better career opportunities in Canada.

Subtheme 7: Lack of Support and Guidance

This subtheme 7 explores the lack of support and guidance available to immigrants as they navigate the job market. It was uncovered that immigrants often lack the support and guidance needed to navigate the job search process effectively. Without proper advice on crafting resumes and presenting qualifications, they may face difficulties in getting their foot in the door with potential employers. One participant, for example, expressed the difficulty of finding proper direction without a support system to guide them. They mentioned the existence of training sessions and institutes for immigrants but highlighted their personal struggle to find such resources and information.

> *W4 [14:20:31]: "So, for immigrants, it's a lot of walking about, especially if you don't have the support system to really tell you what to do. Right over the years now, there are lots of training sessions or training Institutes that I can recommend to immigrants and say, okay, train, what do you want to do? If you do not have the certification, train with these people for three months, and it will be properly approved. I didn't really have anybody telling me that, unfortunately, so it was a lot of rooming around."*

Resonating further, the participant compared their experience to that of their brother, who came as a student and transitioned smoothly into the employment space, unlike themselves as an immigrant facing more significant challenges. The lack of guidance was evident, particularly in modifying resumes to minimize bias. This subtheme emphasizes the importance of support structures for immigrants to help them make informed decisions and overcome hurdles in their job search and career development.

> *W4 [14:22:33]: "Yeah, sure, no problem. So, for me, my brother, who has been here, came as a student, so he never really understood the struggles of an immigrant because straight out of his master's program, he worked in the school for some time and then from there, got into the employment space. It is not the same as being an immigrant coming from Nigeria, and all you have are Nigeria, Nigeria, Nigeria, on your resume. I mean, it was in one of the sessions with somebody here that a fellow Nigerian told me oh if you need to get a job, remove Nigeria from your resume. So, there are tips and tricks like that if you don't have anybody telling you and you are submitting your resume with all Nigeria and Nigeria, you find out that you're just wasting time you're not getting any job."*

Overall, the above narratives and summaries shed light on the various challenges immigrants encounter when seeking employment in their first environment in Canada. The difficulties include dealing with challenging work environments, resorting to menial jobs despite having high qualifications, struggling to find suitable job opportunities, and facing a lack of support and guidance during the job search process.

Theme 8: Challenges and Limitations in Pursuing Dentistry in Canada

This theme explores the challenges and limitations some of the participants in the field of dentistry faced practicing the profession in Canada. As shown in Figure 8, it was uncovered immigrants face several challenges, among which include difficult board exams, expensive costs of the board exams, and underrepresentation of Africans in the field, among others.

Figure 8: Visualization of the challenges and limitations in pursuing dentistry in Canada

Subtheme 1: Pathways to Practice Dentistry in Canada

To practice dentistry in Canada, there are two pathways after passing the first board exam. The first option involves going back to a Canadian dental school, joining as a second-year student, and completing the program to become a dentist. The second option is to continue taking the board exams, which are divided into four stages, without returning to dental school.

> *W3 [00:23:24]: "There are two pathways, but both pathways start with writing the first board exam; they call them body exams. So, in the first body exam, the pass mark for that was 75% when I got here at that time, which I did pass. But then after the first board exam, you had the option because, as I said, there are two pathways, so one option would be to go back to school with the result from the first Board exam, you apply to, like, a dental school here in Canada, and you start the program with their second-year students and then just go on and graduates as a dentist. So, it is like you are going back to school and starting from year two (2). Then, the other*

option would be to just go ahead and keep taking the board exams. There are four different stages, so you pass the first stage, you go on to the second stage, the third stage and then the final stage. So, you're not going back to school; you're just taking the exams."

In summary, it is reasonable to assume that the process to become a dentist in Canada involves writing board exams. There are two pathways after passing the first board exam: (1) going back to dental school in Canada, starting from the second year and graduating as a dentist, and (2) continuing to take the board exams without going back to school.

It was uncovered that pursuing the option of going back to dental school in Canada is financially challenging due to the high cost, estimated at around $200,000, which may require taking out a loan.

W3 [00:23:24]: "The problem with that was how expensive it was to go back to school. So, from my research and everything, I realized that I would need about $200,000 to do that, and then I could take alone for that and then, yes, because some people actually did that.".

Equally, it was revealed that the board exams for dentistry in Canada are exceptionally difficult, with a high pass mark of 80%, making it challenging for candidates to pass, even if they score a respectable 75%.

W3 [00:23:24]: "The thing with the exams was they are fashion to be very, very difficult. It is not just being very difficult, the pass mark was set to be very high, like 80%, just to pass those exams. So even if you are scoring 75%, you still have to write the exams again."

Subtheme 2: Limited Career Prospects and Discrimination

Even after obtaining a license, dentistry in Canada has limited career prospects due to a private sector-driven setup. Immigrant dentists may face discrimination as they compete with younger dentists with Canadian connections. Setting up a private practice requires strong community support, which may be challenging for immigrants from regions with less established communities in Canada.

W3 [00:28:29]: "The reality was, it is the set-up of the system, the health care system like it's still a challenge even after getting the license to get like a good dental career. Dentistry is more of private sector driven. So, you have a lot of dentists with their own practice. So, I just felt that discrimination against immigrant dentists would always be there because you are competing against dentists, younger dentists who have passed through this system here, mostly Canadians. They have better connections; I mean, it's just business-like when you're running your private business; it's different from when the government is involved."

The above factors lead to doubts about the feasibility of a successful dental career in the country. These are illuminated in the following narratives:

W3 [00:28:29]: "I just thought it would be very challenging for all those dentists, for you to get a job with dentists like that, like in the private sector. Another option would be to set up your own practice. Now, setting up your own practice, you need contacts. Our community is not a very strong community here in Canada like people, dentists that come from places like India or Pakistan, where they are stronger communities, they're able to do that, like set up their own practice and ask people from their communities patronize their practices."

The limited career prospects for immigrant dentists in Canada are highlighted as a significant challenge in the above narratives. The Canadian healthcare system, particularly in dentistry, presents obstacles to finding good dental career opportunities even after obtaining a dental license. Discrimination against immigrant dentists is perceived as a persisting issue, as they face tough competition from younger Canadian dentists who have already gone through the Canadian system and have better connections within the industry. Private dental practices, where many dentists work, often prioritize local dentists, making it more difficult for immigrant dentists to establish themselves or secure employment. This creates a challenging environment for immigrant dentists seeking successful careers in their profession in Canada.

Subtheme 3: Underrepresentation of African Professionals in the Job Market in Dentistry

The interviewee expresses the belief that the African community is poorly represented in the dentistry sector in Canada. They note that Canada is a diverse country with various communities, but the African community is not well represented in many economic sectors,

including dentistry. The interviewee acknowledges the lack of African dentists in Canada and considers this as a sign of underrepresentation.

W3 [00:33:50]): "And so with regards to dentistry, the African community is not even there like I don't think you would have; I might be wrong, but I've not met an African dentist, and I've lived here since 2014. So that tells you how poorly represented we are in that sector. So, and you know, it is just human nature; people deal with their own kind. People give it different names, discrimination or whatever. But I think people are just comfortable dealing with people they understand. Right? So, I mean, if I am applying for a job as a dental assistant and to an Indian-owned dental clinic and another Indian is applying as a dental assistant, even though both of us are immigrants, they would most likely consider the Indian applicant. So, I started to realize things like that, you know. So, I felt we are very small in that space or maybe not even represented at all. I just felt that was the reason. That was what I looked at. I did not see it more as...., you can say it is discrimination, but I was not looking at it that way. I was just looking at it as, you know, it's business at the end of the day, like, as I said earlier, it's privately driven."

The participant also speculates that people might be more comfortable dealing with individuals from their own cultural backgrounds, leading to potential favoritism in hiring decisions. While they do not explicitly label it as discrimination, they suggest that the lack of representation is due to business dynamics and the private nature of the dental sector in Canada. The interviewee suggests that people often prefer to deal with those they understand and are more comfortable with, which could lead to favoritism towards applicants from similar cultural backgrounds. While not explicitly calling it discrimination, the interviewee acknowledges the influence of familiarity and its impact on job opportunities. The interviewee gives an example of applying for a job as a dental assistant, where they believe that an Indian-owned dental clinic might be more inclined to hire an Indian applicant over another immigrant, even though both candidates are equally qualified immigrants. This familiarity factor may influence the hiring process, potentially leading to certain immigrant groups having better job prospects than others. The interviewee does not explicitly label it as discrimination but attributes it to the natural tendency of people to prefer familiarity.

W3 [00:33:50] "So, and you know, it's just human nature, people deal with their kind. People give it different names, discrimination or whatever. But I think people are just comfortable dealing with people they understand. Right? So, I mean, if I am applying for a job as a dental assistant at an Indian-owned dental clinic and another Indian is applying as a dental assistant, even though both of us are immigrants, they would most likely consider the Indian applicant. So, I started to realize things like that, you know."

Subtheme 4: Challenge of Recognizing Foreign Qualifications

The interviewee faces the challenge of recognition of foreign qualifications. Although qualified as a dentist in Nigeria, the Canadian job market may not recognize the interviewee as qualified for a dental assistant role due to differences in training and certification requirements.

W3 [00:36:04] Quote: "They can also argue that I'm not qualified for that job... those are also things that I had to consider."

Faced with the prospect of obtaining additional training and certifications to work as a dental assistant, the interviewee decides to explore other career options instead. The decision is motivated by the desire to pursue a different career rather than going through the lengthy process of retraining for a role in dentistry.

W3 [00:36:55] Quote: "Instead of... becoming a dental assistant... I would choose another career."

Theme 9: Emotional and Mental Impact of the Canadian Experience

From the other themes, one could deduce that the Canadian experiences of most of the immigrant interviewed have not met their expectations. The research participants detailed challenges ranging from the difficulties they experienced adjusting to life in Canada to their inability to find suitable jobs and housing, which negatively impacted their emotional and mental wellness as recent immigrants to Canada. Given this concern, this theme explores the emotional

and mental effects of the immigrants' Canadian experience. As shown in Figure 9, it was uncovered that some of the participants experienced feelings of disappointment and frustration, while others noted that they struggled in transitioning and adjusting to life in Canada.
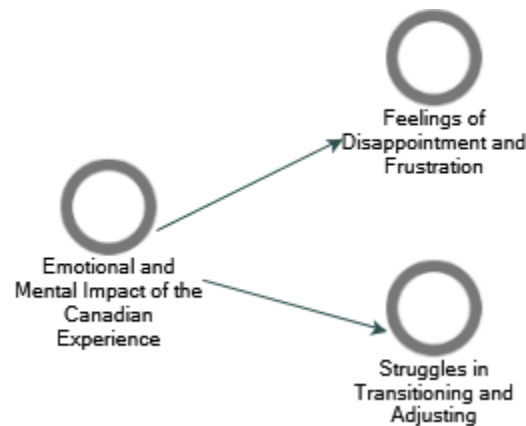

Figure 9: Visualization of the emotional and mental impact of the Canadian experience

Subtheme 1: Feelings of Disappointment and Frustration

From the data transcribed and analyzed, individuals expressed their feelings of disappointment and frustration due to the challenges they faced in finding suitable jobs and recognition for their qualifications in Canada. The realization that their education and skills were not being fully utilized in the new country caused emotional distress.

> *W5 "I felt so bad you know, after studying for so many years back in Nigeria and then getting to a place where you think here you can make use of your certificate then you realised that your certificate is not valued. I felt so bad to be honest with you, it actually affected some part of me."*
>
> *W1: "It's not easy, but as individuals, we react to situations differently. I personally try to…; I want to have a positive outlook on things and be able to control the things I can control. The things I cannot control, I do not bother myself about it. So, how it affected me is in the sense that when I knew that I was not getting what I wanted in Canada, then I had to look somewhere else. So that destabilized my family in a way because we were already settling down in Canada."*

Equally, the uncertainty and difficulties in settling down and finding a path in their chosen professions led to frustration and mental tolls, impacting their well-being and family life.

W1: "So, I think not being able to get into the Canadian system has its toll on you, has its toll on your mental health, has its toll on you physically because it's a lot of stress, it costs a lot of money too, trying to shuttle between two countries while I was in the UK, my family was in Canada, writing the exams."

Additionally, some individuals shared experiences of not being valued or recognized for their qualifications, further contributing to feelings of disappointment and frustration.

W2 "For sure, it affects you. Oh, my God, there are many; I know somebody here that by the time I realized that this person is a pharmacist by profession, from a very good school in Nigeria, University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN). I was surprised; why? Because of the struggle, like you mentioned, regulated environment, because of the struggle to get into the pharmaceutical environment here."

Subtheme 2: Struggles in Transitioning and Adjusting

From the data analyzed, individuals shared their struggles and challenges in transitioning and adjusting to life in Canada. The process of relocating with families, adapting to a new environment, and facing difficulties in finding suitable jobs took a toll on their mental and emotional well-being. The financial burden, pressure from family expectations, and feelings of uncertainty added to the overwhelming nature of their experiences.

W1 "But I knew that based on some of the criteria I have to get in Canada, and I was not getting, I had to look elsewhere, and that was what I did. That was why the option of I think I may need to go to the UK and go and train and come back if I want to. So, it is not easy moving countries, that is the truth. I have done it, and doing it again is not a good experience. It is not something you do for fun. You do it because it is necessary. So, it is not like we are going on vacation. It's, you know, relocating the whole family, children, everything."

Many of the immigrants interviewed highlighted the mental and psychological impact of these struggles, including feelings of depression, frustration, and stress. These are illuminated in the excerpt below.

W2: "Again, it definitely was not a good experience. It was one that was overwhelming, you know, in a negative way. Healthwise, it is quite mentally draining; it is psychologically draining. There is a lot of financial concern during this period. I mentioned earlier that there was a point when I considered or asked myself, did I really do the right thing by migrating to Canada? Was it really the best option?"

W3: "Well, it has affected me in different ways. For me, I have been in practice for a very long time... So, coming into the country and the first thing you are doing is to start receiving phone calls, or you start doing some survival jobs like cleaning, and you know it makes it a little bit difficult. It affects the psychic. I mean, the way people even talk to you, sometimes you feel bad and sad."

W4 "Honestly, it was a bit depressing because it was so depressing... I was really depressed, and I was having a lot of issues with my wife because I was blaming her like I pulled up all my frustration on her. So, to me, it was kind of traumatic for me."

W6 "I mean, this happened almost three years ago, but I still remember this. These were the exact words somebody told me when I got to my first job…, you know, "Here we resume work on time," so, no congratulations or some words like "I'm still happy for you." You know, there is a saying that out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. So, for that person to have said that that is what is in the person's heart about me, that is your thoughts toward me; you think I am either perpetual late, or I am a nonchalant person, you get what I mean?"

W7 "So you see how you start losing your value through people because they think you're not in, you're not in a certain way yet, or you have not met like a certain social cadre, yet you know. So, that's like, I mean, this happened almost three years ago, but I still remember this."

W8 "Yeah, again, it definitely was not a good experience. It was overwhelming in the, you know, in the negative way. Healthwise, it is quite mentally draining; it is psychologically draining. There's a lot of financial concern during this period."

Despite the challenges, some of the immigrants mentioned the resilience they developed while navigating this period of adjustment and the learning experiences that came with it.

W9: "It wasn't a good experience, and I actually went into depression from having to take care of my child alone and going to work... And it was a very horrible experience I would not wish for my enemy. At that point, it was also a learning phase for me because I learned to survive. I learned to be there for my child and to do what I should and what I can to help myself and my child at that point in time."

Overall, the transition and adjustment to a new country and job market were overwhelming, leading to difficulties in family life and strained social relationships. Additionally, the lack of understanding and support from peers and colleagues further

compounded their struggles. Despite these challenges, some individuals persevered and sought

alternative paths to move forward and build their lives in Canada.

Theme 10: Mental Health Distress Due to Job Requirements and Job Search

This theme explores the mental distress of the participants due to job requirements and

job search. It was uncovered that the job search in Canada had a mental impact on many
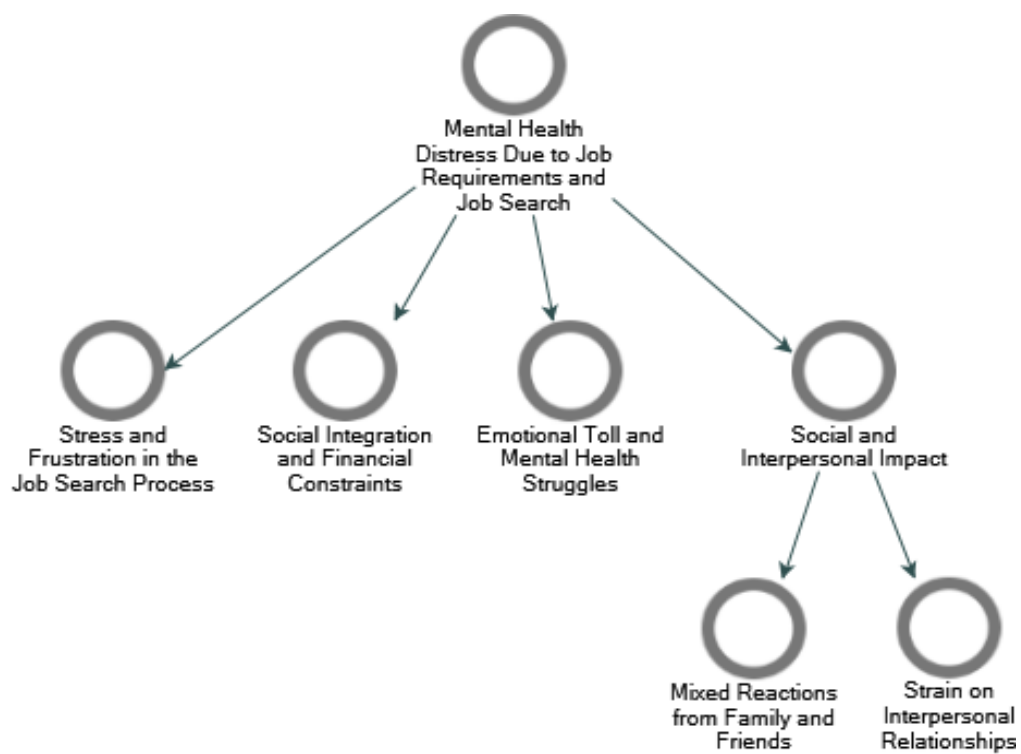
immigrants. These are depicted in Figure 10.

Figure 10: Visualization of mental health distress caused due to job requirements and job search.

Subtheme 1: Stress and Frustration in the Job Search Process

Participant W2 revealed the stress and frustration he experienced during the job search process. The participant mentioned the emotional toll of not receiving timely responses from potential employers after interviews or job applications. The lack of feedback and prolonged waiting periods can lead to feelings of sadness and self-doubt as participants wonder what they might be doing wrong in their job search efforts. The stress and frustration associated with the job search process can significantly impact the mental well-being of individuals, particularly when the search extends for an extended period without any positive outcomes.

> *W2 [00:30:25]: "A lot of times... after the first week not hearing from them, the second week not hearing from them... It just makes you feel sad... What am I doing wrong?"*

Subtheme 2: Social Integration and Financial Constraints

Participant W10 mentioned the financial strain they experience during their job search and how it impacts their mental health. The participant emphasized that the inability to provide for themselves and their families due to unemployment and financial constraints can lead to

increased stress and a higher likelihood of falling into depression. The financial burdens associated with job hunting, including paying for expenses like LinkedIn Premium and phone bills while not having a steady income, add to the mental health challenges the participant faces during this period of uncertainty. The combination of financial strain and job search pressures significantly affects their mental well-being and contributes to a negative emotional state.

> *W10 [00:32:22] "Now you are at the space whereby you can't provide, not that you want to, you can't... mentally, it's easier for you to fall into depression."*

Equally, some participants reveal how financial constraints resulting from unemployment affect their social integration. According to them, the lack of financial resources limits their ability to participate in social activities and events. Participants shared that they were unable to engage in leisure activities, attend parties or gatherings, and explore social opportunities due to financial limitations. As a result, their social lives remain restricted, and they spend more time at home with their families or engaging in low-cost activities. The financial strain acts as a barrier to social engagement and limits opportunities for social interactions and integration within the community.

> *W2 [00:47:38]: "When you don't have a job, you can't even socialize... every penny that comes in, you have to think about how you're spending it... you need money to go out there and meet people... financial constraints, I think that's the major problem for new immigrants."*
>
> *W10 [00:36:17] "For me, socially, it's still the same... Not having any of the finance affects how you integrate in those ways."*

Financial strain is a prominent challenge, leading to stress, frustration, and limited socialization. Participants express the difficulty of job hunting, especially when faced with racial discrimination and the need to adapt to a new job market. They highlight the emotional toll of navigating financial constraints and the impact on their mental health. The lack of job opportunities hinders their ability to integrate and build social networks.

W4 [14:35:53]: "There is so much segregation... racial discrimination... job hunting can be a demeaning process... it drains you emotionally... the fact that you have to swallow your pride..."

Despite these hurdles, they demonstrate resilience and a willingness to explore alternative pathways, seek support from friends and family, and find ways to stay positive and content.

W8 [00:34:43]: "Because I could not get a job, I couldn't network... it's just starting to build from the beginning... the financial part was really challenging."

The responses from various participants highlight the mental health distress experienced during the job search process, which is exacerbated by the financial strain caused by the requirements for job hunting, such as paying for LinkedIn Premium, phone bills, and internet. Participants reported feeling stressed, frustrated, and sad when facing challenges in finding employment and meeting financial obligations. The lack of job opportunities impacted their social lives and caused feelings of depression and bipolar-like emotions. Additionally, the financial constraints affected social integration and limited opportunities for leisure activities, leading to a reduced sense of social engagement. Overall, the combination of job search pressures and financial struggles significantly impacts the mental health and well-being of the individuals involved.

Subtheme 3: Emotional Toll and Mental Health Struggles

Many of the participants faced job searching difficulties, and rejection in the job market added to feelings of frustration and stress. The social environment in Canada, including interactions with colleagues and friends, also impacted the individuals' sense of self-worth and identity. The process of adjusting to a new social environment while dealing with career challenges and family adjustments presented significant emotional and psychological struggles for the individuals interviewed.

W1: "I have known people who have gone into real depression because, at least, I know they have been in Canada for more than ten years trying to get to practice medicine in Canada. It has never worked out. So, when you see somebody was already at a certain level in their career back home doing menial jobs... it takes a toll on your mentally."

W2: "I was really depressed, and I was having a lot of issues with my wife because I was blaming her like I pulled up all my frustration on her. So, to me, it was kind of traumatic for me."

W3 "It affected his mentality. It affected his relationship with members of his family with his wife. He was always depressed and upset because he had practiced medicine for so many years in Pakistan, and then he came here and had to become a security guard."

W4 "So, by the time somebody tells you like that, you'll be wondering, do I continue talking to this person? Do I totally ignore her? Do I not get upset?... this is somebody who just wants to have a nice, cordial relationship or friendship with me. You've known the person for more than ten years, but the person is just literally treating you like her child."

W6 "It has affected them in a couple of ways, too. People would not like to go so physical, but I know, like my parents, they will just be like, you know, you are a doctor; you have to do that. You cannot just be in one place; you have to keep pushing... So, it has put a lot of pressure on them."

W7 "I mean, this happened almost three years ago, but I still remember it. These were the exact words somebody told me when I got to my first job…, you know, "Here we resume work on time," so, no congratulations or nice words like "I'm still happy for you." You know there is a saying that out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. So, for that person to have said that that is what is the person's heart about me, that is the person's thoughts toward me, the person thinks that I am either perpetually late, or I am a nonchalant person you get what I mean?"

From the above, it is reasonable to say that the difficulties faced during the transition into the Canadian workspace had significant emotional and mental health impacts on individuals. Many experienced feelings of depression, frustration, and trauma due to challenges in finding suitable employment or advancing in their careers. The pressure to succeed and support their families back home added to their mental burden. Negative reactions and condescending behavior from friends and acquaintances further exacerbated feelings of self-doubt and isolation. The lack of understanding and support from some individuals or family members back home also contributed to emotional distress.

Subtheme 4: Social and Interpersonal Impact

Additionally, some of the participants narrated the job search struggles experienced in Canada had social and interpersonal impacts on them. Among these impacts include:

- Mixed Reactions from Family and Friends

From the data analyzed, it was uncovered that the reactions from family and friends upon transitioning to Canada were mixed, with some being supportive and understanding, while others expressed disappointment or skepticism. The individuals faced high expectations from their family and community members back home, who anticipated rapid success and financial support. Some had trouble explaining their challenges in Canada, and the pressure to fulfill others' expectations added to the emotional strain of the transition. However, some friends and family members offered encouragement and support, which played a vital role in helping individuals navigate through the difficulties of starting anew in Canada.

> *W2 "So different people have been reacting in different ways. Some have not been happy, some are sad. My family members that I supported financially when I was even in Nigeria; how can I explain to them that when I was in Nigeria, I could send them gifts and money at the end of the year, but now that I am in Canada, I cannot do the same things."*
>
> *W3: "I never had a negative reaction from people back home because I just feel people thought, you know, it's one of those things you have to do when you're new in a country... So, it has added to the social support that I got."*
>
> *W8: "You know, when you leave a developing country like mine, and you are heading for a developed country, the expectation is high... So, overall, it was not a pleasant one. It is one that required a lot of explanation."*
>
> *W9 "It was kind of a rocket science trying to figure out how that will work out. But yes, God did it. I still have some friends that were supportive. I have people that are the reason why I am still here, but friends, some of them helped some of them deserted you even."*

- Strain on Interpersonal Relationships

The challenges of transitioning into the Canadian workspace strained interpersonal relationships, leading to resentment, disrespect, and doubts about one's ability to survive and

succeed. The pressure from family, friends, and community expectations added to the emotional burden and made individuals question their own prospects.

> W1 *"So how it affected me is in the sense that when I know that I wasn't getting what I want in Canada then I have to look somewhere else. So that destabilized my family in a way because we were already settling down in Canada. Kids were already in school. My wife was already working... where it got a bit interesting was after I even got my job. I had already started the job maybe like 3 weeks, or whatever into the job, that was when I opened up and I told her. I said, I just started this job blah blah blah, and I was surprised when she started saying finally, you have got a job! You better hold it well... she knew I was not driving at that time. I did not have a car of course I do not have I am trying to manage my funds, so I was not driving. We did not have a car, so she now said how would you be going from the South to the West?"*

> W2 *"So to me was kind of mentally affected me. I boost up my alcohol drinking at that period. I was a really depressed and I was having a lot of issues with my wife because I was blaming her like I pulled up all my frustration on her. So, to me, it was kind of traumatic for me."*

> W3 *"That was very, very shocking, anyway, because as well, I hadn't worked for several companies. So, I was not sure whether that is the behavior in the world at large, or whether it is peculiar to Canada how somebody will submit resume and will not get a response. They will not get back to you, you will just be left in the dark... Your friends will start looking at you somehow, because some people may have gotten it a little easier."*

> W4 *"So, I find people being a bit resentful, people will be disrespectful to you... because they think maybe you're in the low end of life, they just utterly disrespect you."*

> W5 *"My family wants the best, right? So, and they know what I have done in the past and what I should be able to still do? So, it affects them. It puts a lot of pressure on them."*

> W6 *"Friends are...they keep talking, you keep hearing them saying how is this one going to survive? How is she going to survive especially with the seven-month-old, how is she going to survive, you know? And it wasn't a good experience because when you see people that are supposed to be there to support you emotionally and they are asking you, asking themselves or talking behind you, how is this person going to survive? You start ask yourself question if these people are doubting my survival, am I sure I am going to survive?"*

Despite the strain, some individuals found support and encouragement from a few understanding friends and family members.

> W9 *"Some people were good; some people were supportive. Most people keep telling you oh it is yours to discover... You start asking yourself questions if these people are doubting my survival, am I sure I am going to survive?"*

In summary, the experiences of these individuals highlight the emotional and mental toll of their challenges in finding suitable jobs and recognition for their qualifications in Canada. Feelings of

disappointment, frustration, depression, and anxiety were prevalent, affecting their well-being and self-esteem. The social and interpersonal impact of transitioning into the Canadian workspace had significant effects on individuals' mental health and emotional well-being. The challenges of finding suitable employment and facing negative reactions from friends and acquaintances led to feelings of frustration, depression, and isolation. The high expectations from family and community placed additional pressure on individuals, contributing to emotional distress. However, some individuals found support and encouragement from understanding friends and family members, which helped them navigate through the difficulties of the transition.

Theme 11: Racism and Discrimination in Employment Opportunities

Apart from the difficulties experience in seeking for jobs in Canada, some of the participants revealed that they also face racism and discrimination in employment opportunities. It was uncovered that the immigrants face racial bias in the job interview process, name identity, discrimination in job opportunities and some sort of bias of their educational qualification from their native country. These are captured in Figure 11.
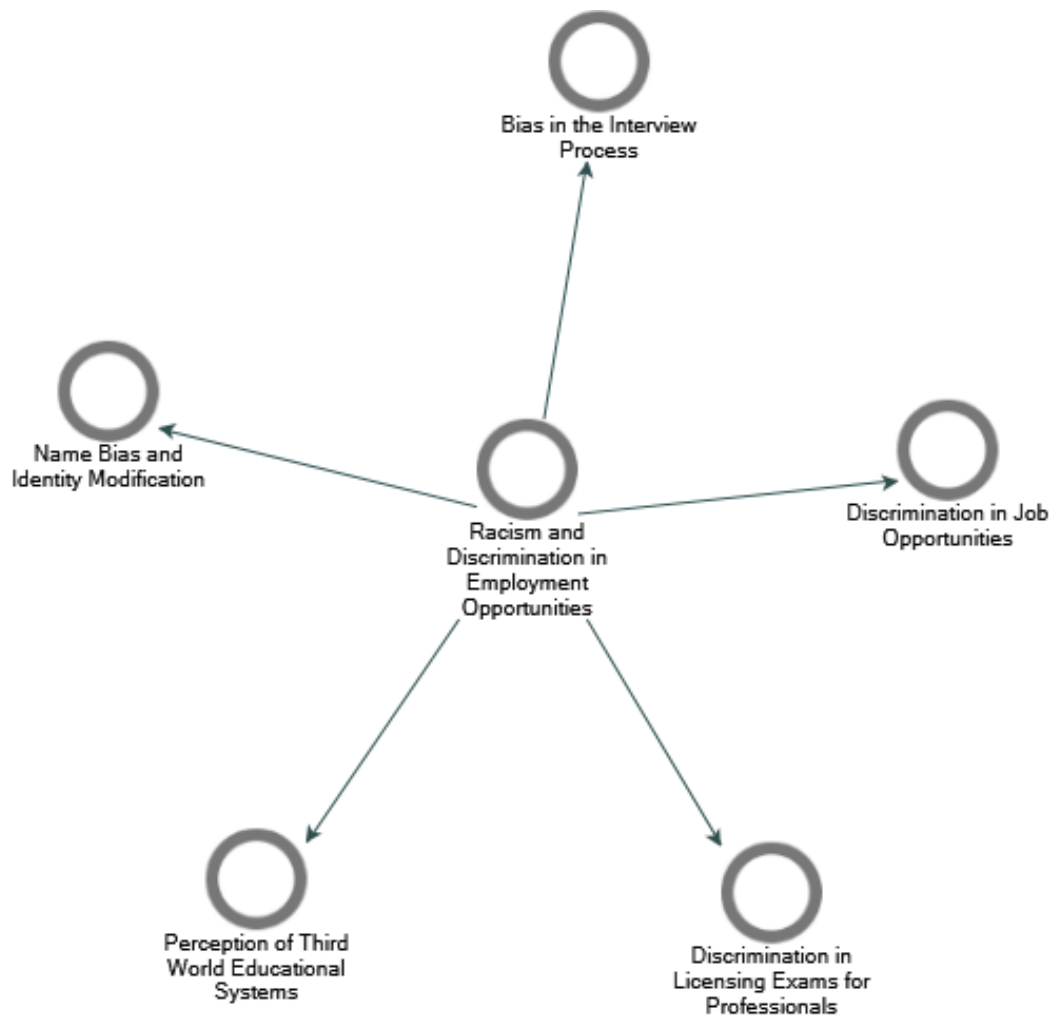
Figure 11: Visualizing racism and discrimination in employment opportunities

Subtheme 1: Bias in the Interview Process

From the interview, participant W4 revealed the experiences of bias and discrimination during the interview process, particularly related to their names and identity. In one instance, during an interview, the participant felt disrespected when the interviewer asked for their name again despite having their resume. This led the participant to question whether this would have happened if they were Caucasian.

W4 [14:24:21]: "I recall a funny interview... the guy... said, 'what's your name again'? You have my resume... You are telling me what is your name again!... You ask yourself if it were a Caucasian, would you say, what is your name again?"

Additionally, participants noticed patterns where they were often called last during training sessions or omitted from introductions in new groups, suggesting potential racial bias. These experiences highlighted the impact of name bias and the perception that they were not treated equally during the interview due to their racial background.

W4 [14:43:59]: "A lot of Times We're Doing trainings... If maybe we're in an online training... I already know they are going to call me last... I just go to the bottom... I know they would have put my name at the bottom most times... Somebody cannot come all the way for an interview... for it to ask me what's my name again."

W4 [14:46:27]: "I can't exactly say whether there was racial bias or not... but what I notice is coming into the office... you just find yourself always been exempted... They will just put you at the bottom, it is as simple as that."

Subtheme 2: Name Bias and Identity Modification

Furthermore, it was uncovered that there was a form of discrimination against the name and identity of some of the immigrants interviewed. The participants shared their experiences of name bias and the pressure to modify their identities to increase their chances of job opportunities. One participant mentioned being advised to use an English name on their resume to make it easier for potential employers, particularly Caucasians, to pronounce their name. This modification aimed to improve the likelihood of their resumes getting through to the next stages of the hiring process.

W4 [14:43:59] "I was told to put an English name to be able to get a job... I had to shorten my name... to help Caucasians pronounce my name and probably increase the probability of my resume passing to the next level... because my native name is difficult to pronounce."

Resonating further, the participant highlighted how their educational background, specifically attending Oxford University, positively impacted their job search, almost becoming

synonymous with their identity. These experiences illustrate the challenges individuals face when their names or backgrounds are perceived as potential barriers in the job market, leading them to adopt measures to mitigate potential bias.

> W4 [14:46:56]: "I keep telling people if I didn't have Oxford University, I don't know what my life would have been like today... it's almost like saying that is my name now."

Subtheme 3: Discrimination in Job Opportunities

Another form of discrimination uncovered from the interview is discrimination in job opportunities. Participant W8 shared the experience of facing discrimination in job opportunities while already being employed. The participant mentioned instances where he felt excluded from certain opportunities despite being qualified and meeting all the criteria. He thus perceived this exclusion as discrimination based on their race, particularly because they were people of color or black workers.

> W8 [00:16:38] "I have felt discrimination while at the job... there were opportunities that came out... I was eligible, qualified by all the criteria... but it's just so obvious that there are a lot of discrimination going on... a discrimination against you because you're a person of colour or because you're black."

The above narrative sheds light on the challenges individuals faces in the workplace when trying to access equal opportunities for career growth and advancement.

Subtheme 4: Perception of Third-World Educational Systems

Participant W3 discussed the perception of third world educational systems and the challenges immigrants face when trying to have their qualifications recognized in countries with more developed educational systems. The participant acknowledged that corruption and

malpractices in some third world countries' education systems have led to a negative perception of their qualifications in more developed countries.

> W3 [01:01:25]: *"Third world countries have to live up to expectations... perception... because of corruption... you can't have an education system that is riddled with a lot of corruption and malpractices and expect that people would recognize that."*

The above perception, according to the participant, has resulted in double standards and additional hurdles for professionals with qualifications from third-world nations when seeking opportunities abroad. The participants emphasized the importance of addressing and improving these perceptions through educational reforms to reduce discrimination and facilitate smoother transitions for professionals from third world countries.

> W3 [01:02:20]: *"There's a lot of double standards... but perception is very important... So, that's what I'm trying to say... see if we can make changes so that we don't have to pass through these hassles when we get to countries like this."*

Subtheme 5: Discrimination in Licensing Exams for Professionals

Additionally, participant W3 elaborated on the challenges African immigrants face in obtaining licenses to practice their professions in countries with different professional bodies and requirements. The participant revealed that the licensing exams for certain professions, such as dentistry and medicine, are often difficult and pose obstacles for professionals coming from various countries, including third world nations. However, the participant stressed that it is not necessarily discrimination against specific countries, but rather stringent requirements imposed by professional bodies that make it challenging for professionals to have their qualifications recognized and obtain licenses.

> W3 [01:05:48]: *"Because I think there's a collaboration between the professional bodies... So, that is what I would say. I would say it is the requirements. The requirements are just ridiculous... it is because the governing bodies, the professional bodies for these courses, they make it so difficult for those professionals to be able to practice..."*

The above narratives shed light on the complex process of obtaining licenses and the need for more transparent and fair assessment systems to avoid discrimination based on nationality or educational background. It was uncovered the licensing exams were not discriminatory nor designed to target African immigrants.

Theme 12: Coping Strategies and Resilience

Given the mental and emotional toll of the participants' experiences in Canada, it was critical to know how they managed to cope. Figure 12 illustrates the coping strategies the immigrants used to navigate the challenging times in Canada.
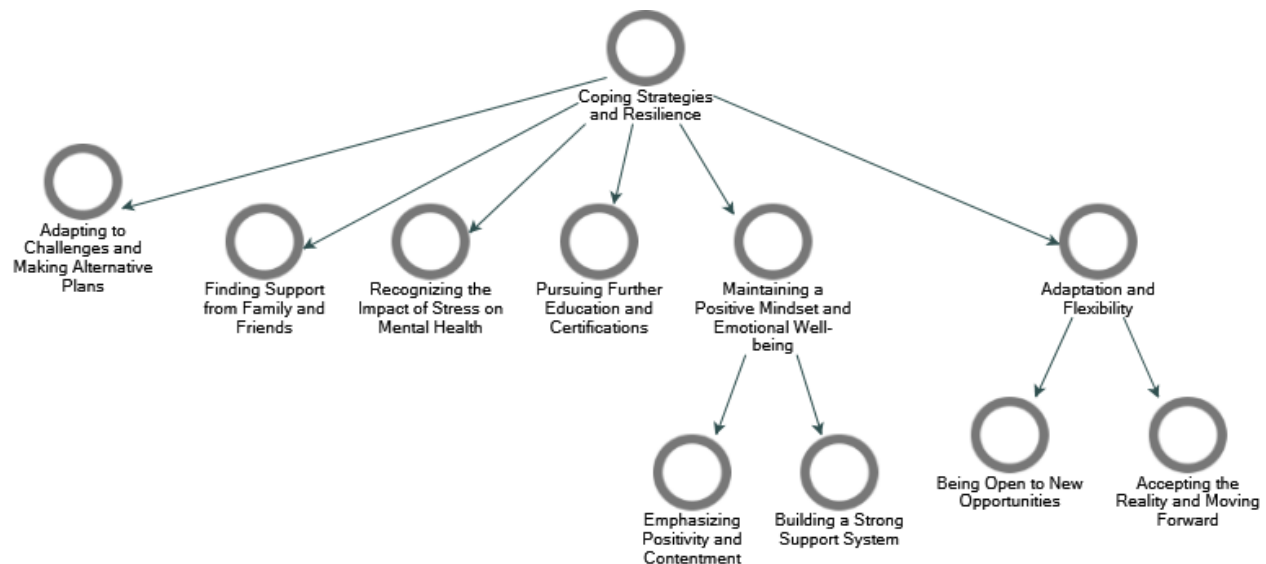
Figure 12: Visualization of the coping strategies and resilience adapted by the participants.

Subtheme 1: Adapting to Challenges and Making Alternative Plans

The participants interviewed shared their ability to adapt to challenges and make alternative plans when faced with obstacles in their migration journey. They emphasized the importance of resilience and the willingness to explore different paths to achieve their goals. These individuals viewed their experiences, both positive and negative, as valuable lessons that shaped their decisions and actions.

W1 [00:40:32] "We are all a summation of all our experiences, good or bad, and you decide what you make out of it... So, for me, it is just a function of, honestly, I can tell you at a point in Canada, I have like plan A, B, C, and of what I would do... So, like I said, when A didn't come true, I moved to plan B and moved on from there."

When their initial plans did not work out as expected, they were quick to devise alternative strategies and move forward with determination.

W6 [00:30:46] "Well, I just think about it as it's just one of those things I mean... I have to keep moving like I said and there are different ways to keep moving. Having alternative pathway is a way of keeping the movement right. So, I tried to do that and that has been my reaction towards it."

W1 [00:50:34]: "If it's not working out one way, then look for another way... try something else, try somewhere else."

For example, one participant realized that dentistry might not be immediately feasible in Canada and decided to move on from that career path.

W3 [00:50:17]: "I had to forget about dentistry. I just had to move on and forget about dentistry."

Another participant with an engineering background chose to identify alternative career options that were more readily accepted in the Canadian job market.

W5 [00:34:52]: "I quickly came up with switching into a different thing... something that is widely acceptable compared to engineering."

For some, past experiences in their home countries prepared them to face the new challenges in Canada, allowing them to cope better and find a way to succeed.

W3 [00:48:04] "I think what was stressful for me was getting used to the whole Canadians system... So, I would say it is more of the life here that was the stress... But again, like I said, I was able to block all that out and just moved on. I will not say stress, I think Nigeria prepared me for whatever I was going to face here. I had seen worst."

The common thread among these participants was the willingness to consider different paths and adapt their career goals to the realities of the Canadian job market, which allowed

them to explore new opportunities and increase their chances of success. Overall, the participants' adaptability and proactive approach enabled them to navigate through the difficulties they encountered during their settlement process in Canada.

Subtheme 2: Finding Support from Family and Friends

The immigrants highlight the importance of finding support from their family and friends during their migration journey. They expressed their concerns about the challenges they faced due to the lack of recognition for their qualifications and work experience from their home countries.

> *W2 [00:38:26]: "I feel the gap, or I think it's not appropriate... I do not think it is right to discriminate employees because of their work experience, because their work experience is not either in Canada, the US, or the UK. I do not think it is right. I don't think it's right to not recognize certificates and qualifications outside of Canada."*

Some participants highlighted the emotional toll of these challenges, leading to feelings of sadness and questioning their decisions to move to Canada. Despite these difficulties, they appreciated the support and encouragement they received from their families, who played a vital role in providing them with the strength to persevere and overcome obstacles.

> *W4 [14:33:21]: "You always be sad, sometimes you will question what you're doing here... It can make you very sad, that is the truth... So, that has its own added pressure as well."*

Additionally, some participants raised their voices about the need for fair treatment of immigrants and the importance of recognizing their credentials and qualifications from their home countries, which they believed would contribute to their successful integration into the Canadian job market.

> *W8 [00:29:04]: "For me while I was coming and then I say, OK, for the West to have evaluated my results then it means the credentials I have back home is the same thing I will have when I get to Canada, so I should be able to get a Canadian job at this point. So, that is shift or that thing*

that you need to get the Canadian experience was not a fair treatment... I think that is not fair on immigrants, the Canadian government have to really do something about it."

W9 [00:23:41]: "For me, I think it is not a fair treatment for immigrants... I see no reason why when the immigrant gets here, you want them to go back and go back to school... so I feel is an unfair treatment for immigrants... the Canadian government have to really do something about it."

Subtheme 3: Recognizing the Impact of Stress on Mental Health

From the transcribed data, many of the participants highlights the recognition of stress's impact on the mental health of immigrants as they navigate challenges in Canada. Participants acknowledged that stress is a common part of the migration experience and shared different coping strategies to handle it. Some participants mentioned the importance of maintaining mental resilience by having alternative plans and continuously moving forward despite the obstacles.

W6 [00:30:46]: "Well, I just think about it as it's just one of those things... I do not let it weigh me down per se, because I try to move forward and try to have alternative plans so that I do not just stay. I have to keep moving... Having alternative pathways is a way of keeping the movement right."

However, others spoke about the overwhelming nature of their struggles, leading to feelings of depression, discouragement, and fear about the future. They emphasized the significance of family support in helping them through these difficult times and promoting mental well-being. Additionally, participants expressed their hope for more equitable treatment of immigrants and recognition of their credentials to alleviate stress and foster successful integration into Canadian society.

W8 [00:27:26]: "For me, it's not what I expected, right... I felt depressed. I felt overwhelmed, I felt discouraged, you know, I was scared of the future for a moment, it was a reverse in every ramification. So, it was really a crazy experience for me."

W8 [00:29:04]: "And that's for my family members... However, I guess my mental stability was more important, so they focus on things that will make me get better, at things that would help me not to give up and to push on until I get to where I want to be."

W9 [00:23:41]: "For me, I think it is not a fair treatment for immigrants... So, I feel it is an unfair treatment for immigrants... I hope that things get better because the experience is not one that is palatable at all."

W10 [00:29:04]: "Well, even though I prepared myself, that is not going to be an easy one mentally, I toughen myself mentally and I've been able to handle the stress, but I'm human... I could just leave where the stress will not make me react negatively or could bring a negative reaction from me. That's what I do."

From the above, the participants emphasize the importance of addressing mental health concerns and the need for a supportive environment for immigrants facing challenging circumstances.

Subtheme 4: Pursuing Further Education and Certifications

In coping with the barriers they faced in their job search and professional integration, some participants found solace in pursuing further education and obtaining additional certifications. They recognized that upgrading their skills and qualifications could enhance their competitiveness in the Canadian job market and open new job opportunities. Several participants mentioned enrolling in mentorship programs and completing various certifications to gain an edge in their respective fields.

W8 [00:30:08] "I did couples of certifications here to kind of give me an edge. I enrolled in mentorship programs... acceleration programs, mentorship programs, certifications were all part of the things that I did to help me navigate through those times."

One participant shared their journey of going back to school to become a Personal Support Worker (PSW) and later pursuing a registered nursing program to meet Canadian standards and secure better prospects for themselves and their family.

W9 [00:26:40] "I went back to school as to run the PSW program. After which I was able to graduate... I had to further go back to school, do my RN program and got a diploma... I'm still in school trying to do my RN program just to meet the standard I had back home and then to be able to get better opportunities for myself and my family."

From the above, it is reasonable to draw out that by investing in continuous learning and acquiring relevant certifications, the interviewed immigrants aimed to improve their chances of success and adapt to the Canadian professional landscape.

Subtheme 5: Maintaining a Positive Mindset and Emotional Well-being

Amid the challenges faced during their job search and professional integration in Canada, some participants highlighted the importance of maintaining a positive mindset and finding contentment in their journey. They acknowledged that having a strong support system, such as family and friends, played a significant role in coping with the barriers they encountered. It was found that by embracing a positive outlook, participants focused on exploring alternative pathways and maintaining a sense of perseverance. For some, engaging in activities they enjoyed, such as listening to music and exercising, contributed to their well-being during the challenging times. They emphasized the significance of remaining happy despite the job search difficulties and regarded contentment as an essential factor in navigating their path toward success in the Canadian job market. These are further elaborated below.

- Building a Strong Support System

Participants recognized the importance of having a strong support system in dealing with the challenges they faced during their journey to find employment in Canada. It was found that family and friends played a significant role in providing emotional support and encouragement, which helped them maintain a positive mindset. Participants mentioned how being surrounded by people who had experienced similar career transitions or had changed careers themselves provided valuable guidance and motivation.

W1 [00:50:34]: "Yeah, I think I have coped well because I have a good support system, that is number one."

W3 [00:50:17]: "Yes, those were the coping strategies and then family was there. I had people that I have made changes like that. I have them around me. Yes. So, all those helped me a lot."

W5 [00:34:52]: "So how did I cope in the past was... luckily, I have family and friends around that have switched from their career, you know? So, this was a time... I have to work at the factory and then still go to school, sometimes go to school in the morning and then I have to do an overnight shift for my job and then still go to school the next day... So, it was not a good it was not an easy experience. But yes, I was able to go past that phase... So, technically, I think acceleration programs, mentorship programs, certifications and all that we are all part of the things that I did to help me you know, navigate through those times."

W10 [00:49:05] "Well, coping with the barriers... the best way our I've been able to cope with the barrier is just having a good family, a good support system to always be there. That is OK. It will happen when I am feeling down. There is someone, someone there to say. OK. It is going to happen... The main thing is showing that what you know, you know them, I can do them. So, as long as you do that, the right job will come. So, for me, that has just have been able to come."

Additionally, they highlighted the significance of seeking mentorship, joining acceleration programs, and obtaining relevant certifications as part of their coping strategies. The collective support from their network enabled them to navigate through difficult times, stay resilient, and work towards their professional goals in Canada.

W4 [14:39:30]: "Handle the stress by applying for more jobs, because I just know that, yeah, I mean the at the end of the day you just need the job, right?... I had to work on myself to understand that in as much as I had a different plan initially expectations, but this is the reality. So, it was important to work on myself so that I do not get swallowed up by the whole, the way the things are playing out... So technically, I think acceleration programs, mentorship programs, certifications and all that were all part of the things that I did to help me navigate through those times."

Subtheme 6: Adaptation and Flexibility

Participants demonstrated a willingness to adapt and be open to exploring alternative paths when facing barriers to their desired professions. These are detailed below.

- Being Open to New Opportunities

From the data transcribed and analyzed, some of the participants acknowledged the challenges they encountered and, in response, embraced the idea of trying different approaches or considering new opportunities. This adaptability allowed them to overcome the disappointment of not finding employment in their preferred fields and led them to discover other areas where they could apply their skills and knowledge. Participants' flexibility in their career choices and their positive mindset about exploring new possibilities were key factors in helping them navigate through the uncertainties of job searching in Canada. They were open to change and willing to learn, which allowed them to progress in their professional journeys and find satisfaction in their careers despite initial setbacks.

W1 [00:50:34] "If it's not working out one way, then look for another way. If you cannot get what you want here, then move to somewhere else... So, if it is not coming forth the way you want it, then try something else, try somewhere else."

W3 [00:50:17]: "At first, I just had to, like, forget about dentistry. It was hard, but I even had to stop telling people that I was a dentist in Nigeria... I had to look at a field that I could apply that knowledge into. Yes. And all those thoughts like that helped me. I had to forget about dentistry. I just had to move on and forget about dentistry. So that was I was able to move on. Right. you were asking how I was able to move on?... Yes, those were the coping strategies and then family was there. I had people that I have made changes like that. I have them around me. Yes. So, all those helped me a lot."

W5 [00:34:52]: "So how did I cope in the past was... luckily, I have family and friends around that have switched from their career, you know? So, this was a time... So technically, I think acceleration programs, mentorship programs, certifications and all that we are all part of the things that I did to help me you know, navigate through those times."

W10 [00:49:05]: "So, for me, that has just have been able to come... The main thing is showing that what you know, you know them, I can do them. So, as long as you do that, the right job will come. So, for me, that has just have been able to come."

- Accepting the Reality and Moving Forward

Participants shared how they embraced the reality of their circumstances and made the necessary adjustments to move forward in their career journeys. They acknowledged the challenges and barriers they faced while seeking employment in their desired fields in Canada.

However, they exhibited resilience and adaptability rather than dwelling on the setbacks. Some participants shifted their focus and explored alternative pathways or fields where their skills and knowledge could be applied effectively. Accepting their new reality allowed them to move forward with determination and positivity. Additionally, participants highlighted the importance of having a strong support system, which contributed to their ability to cope with the barriers and remain optimistic about their future prospects. By staying positive, seeking new opportunities, and building upon their existing skill sets through further education or certifications, they demonstrated the ability to overcome obstacles and find fulfillment in their professional pursuits.

> *W1 [00:50:34]: "Yeah, I think I have coped well because I have a good support system, that is number one. And... It is unfortunate, that I know people have spent ten years in Canada trying to get in the system, but for me, I still have friends I still talk to today that I do not think you need to still wait for so long if you are not getting what you want. So, if it is not coming forth the way you want it, then try something else, try somewhere else. So that's just my own approach."*

> *W3 [00:50:17]: "At first, I just had to, like, forget about dentistry. It was hard, but I even had to stop telling people that I was a dentist in Nigeria... So, and I had to look at a field that I could apply that knowledge into... So that was I was able to move on. Right. You were asking how I was able to move on?... Yes, those were the coping strategies and then family was there. I had people that I have made changes like that. I have them around me. Yes. So, all those helped me a lot."*

> *W4 [14:39:30]: "Handle the stress by applying for more jobs because I just know that, yeah, I mean, at the end of the day, you just need the job, right?... So, saying validating who you are is true in some sense. So, for me, it was just keeping that focus on the job and really, really looking for it hard, and also trying to… I love music so I would listen to music a lot, I love my exercise so, when the weather was getting warmer... and being happy really, because yeah, I didn't have a job, but it wasn't the end of the world so, generally being happy."*

> *W6 [00:31:29]: "By getting an alternative pathway, something that I can do that makes me happy and still brings good income for me... So for me, I had to do some certifications and other courses. I had to go into project management... So, it is still satisfying for me, and also financially, it's rewarding as compared to doing some survival jobs."*

> *W8 [00:30:08]: "Overall speaking, I did quite a lot of things to help me cope with the barrier... So technically, I think acceleration programs, mentorship programs, certifications and all that we are all part of the things that I did to help me, you know, navigate through those times."*

In summary, participants coped with the various barriers by seeking alternative pathways and opportunities, such as exploring different job fields and pursuing further education and certifications. They emphasized the importance of maintaining a positive mindset, relying on a strong support system, and being open to new opportunities while accepting the reality and moving forward in their journey to overcome the challenges they faced as immigrants in Canada.

Theme 13: Optimism and Hope for the Future

Subtheme 1: Positive Outlook on Career Growth and Opportunities

Despite the negative experiences and difficulties in adjusting to life in Canada, some of the participants expressed a positive outlook on their career growth and opportunities in Canada. They believe that by remaining open to new possibilities and continuously moving forward, they can achieve success in their chosen fields. Despite facing challenges and potential biases as immigrants, they hold an optimistic view of the future, emphasizing the abundance of opportunities available. The participants are determined to make the most of their skills and experiences and see the future as promising and full of potential for growth and personal fulfilment. These are summarized in the excerpt below.

> *W3 [00:51:40]: "I live in Ontario. They say it is yours to discover. There are so many opportunities when you decide to like open your eyes towards them. Like I just think moving on makes you more open to opportunities that are before you. So, I see a brighter future. I see a career that I can go as far as I want to. Do whatever I want with it, and yeah, I see the future unfolding with lots of benefits and lots of positive outcomes."*

> *W4 [14:41:29]: "I think the future is very bright... at the end of the day, as a black immigrant, you're expected to put in a lot more than what a typical Caucasian would put in, and even at that, you may not necessarily be applauded or rewarded... So, I see the future being very bright; it is just that, the initial teething phase. Yeah, this is quite a journey."*

W6 [00:33:35]: "I see the future being very bright... It is a field that is also in high demand. What I like so much about it is the fact that you can do so many things with it. So that's why I chose it."

W8 [00:31:53]: "I'm optimistic. I am looking forward to a better future... I'm very optimistic basically."

W10 [00:50:56]: "For me, the future is bright... The door will open, so the future is bright. The future is going to be great. I am someone whose life has shown that I have been able to accomplish things out of the ordinary and Canada will not be different and for me, I am here to be a blessing to Canada. I am here to make life better. So, for me, the future is more than bright, it's just going to be a happy one."

Subtheme 2: Pursuit of Personal and Professional Goals

From the interview transcript, the participants share their determination to pursue their personal and professional goals in Canada. They are committed to continuing their journey in their chosen careers and are willing to invest in further education, certifications, and skills development to achieve their objectives. The participants express their aspirations for career growth and advancement, with some planning to establish their own ventures or reach leadership positions in their respective fields.

W6 [00:33:35]: "I still hold dearly my medical career and practice and journey, which I still will continue to pursue. I plan to write my exam the next exam next year, I mean just to have it if it comes through, then we go that way. If it doesn't, then I just keep doing what I'm doing now and hope to just rise and continue to progress on that path."

W7 [00:33:33]: "I see myself owning my own mental health partner in this country... I want to develop myself... So, I think the future is very bright, it is just that the initial teething phase. Yeah, this is quite a journey."

W8 [00:31:53]: "I'm looking forward to taking up more challenges that will help me continue to grow. I am looking forward to doing more certifications that would help me, you know, build more new skills, acquire more new skills, and exploit new opportunities... I'm very optimistic basically."

W9 [00:29:05]: "My expectations are big, I have put in the work, and I am hoping and praying that it turns out good, it turns out great that everything I put in, I'm able to get good results for me... I feel that the future is bright. I have been able to put in my work and I'm expecting that by the time I finish my RN program, I should be able to get a better job and do something more in line with what I was doing back home, at least in terms of the degree."

From the above narrative, one could draw out that despite facing initial challenges and uncertainties, the interviewed African immigrants hold a positive outlook and are optimistic about their ability to succeed in achieving their goals and aspirations.

Subtheme 3: Career Direction and Aspirations

The participants share their outlook on their future career directions and aspirations in Canada. Despite the challenges they faced in their job search and career transitions, they maintain a positive and optimistic view of the future. Some express the need for change in the Canadian job market, emphasizing the importance of recognizing international qualifications and experiences. Many participants highlight their determination to progress in their chosen fields, pursue further education and certifications, and explore opportunities for growth and career advancement. They see a brighter future in Canada and are willing to adapt, learn, and overcome setbacks to achieve their professional goals. Overall, they view their journey in Canada as a stepping stone towards a fulfilling and successful career path.

> *W2 [00:41:46]: "So I believe with more awareness or more regulation... the idea of Canadian job experience should be banished from the workspace... I believe going forward, something has to be done to remove that clause so that people... can practice here... I see a brighter future."*
>
> *W3 [00:51:40]: "I live in Ontario. They say it is yours to discover... I see a brighter future... I see a career that I can go as far as I want to... I chose nursing because it is very broad... I see the future unfolding with lots of benefits and lots of positive outcome."*
>
> *W4 [14:41:29]: "Well, I think life is a journey... I am very optimistic... I think the future is very bright... this is quite a journey."*
>
> *W5 [00:41:06]: "The future, I just put the past behind me... I see the future being very bright... Canada at the end of the day... you find yourself being happy and relaxed, and all that. So, I think the future is very bright..."*

W6 [00:33:35]: "Well, it looks good... I see a better future... I plan to write my exam the next exam next year... I just keep doing what I'm doing now and hope to just rise and continue to progress on that path."

W7 [00:33:33]: "I'm optimistic... I see myself owning my own mental health partner in this country... I feel there is an opportunity to go there... I want to remain on this line... my end goal is to have my own mental hospital."

W8 [00:31:53]: "I'm optimistic... I am looking forward to a better future... I'm very optimistic basically."

W9 [00:29:05]: "For me, the future is bright... I feel that the future is bright... I'm expecting that by the time I finish my RN program, I should be able to get a better job and do something more in line with what I was doing back home."

W10 [00:50:56]: "For me, the future is bright... I am here to be a blessing to Canada. I'm here to make life better... the future is more than bright; it's just going to be a happy one."

In summary, it can be gathered from above theme that the participants expressed optimism and hope for their future career prospects in Canada. They believe in the potential for growth and opportunities in their respective fields. They acknowledge that there might be challenges and initial setbacks, but they remain determined to pursue their goals and aspirations. Some participants shared their plans for personal development and career advancement, including obtaining further certifications and qualifications to enhance their professional skills. Despite the obstacles they have faced, they continue to work hard, adapt to the Canadian landscape, and remain positive about what lies ahead.

Theme 14: Recommendation for change for immigrants in Canada

This theme explores the recommendations provided by the participants to support African immigrants transitioning in Canada. These are discussed under the subthemes below.

Subtheme 1: Disconnect between Government Statistics and Medical Association

Participant (W1) points out the disconnect between the government's reported statistics on occupation shortages, specifically regarding the shortage of doctors, and the reality in the

medical association in Canada. He questioned whether the reported shortage truly translates to a

willingness by the medical association to accept foreign-trained doctors.

W1 [00:53:30] - "I think if there's any recommendation, I'll want to say is that I think there's a big disconnect between the statistics or the reality that the Citizenship and Immigration Canada looks at when they say that there is a shortage in an occupation and the reality in the medical association in Canada. So, people will be saying, oh, we do not have doctors, we are in short of doctors and everything, but does it really translate to the medical association? Do they really want the people in? I cannot answer that question for them. So that is that."

He further suggests that there is a need to bridge the gap between the government's

reported data and the actual situation within the medical profession in Canada to improve

opportunities for qualified immigrant doctors.

W1 [00:53:30] - "I think there's a disconnect between government and the medical association or the medical body, which can be worked on and see why is it that we have so many doctors who came from abroad qualified. I've met so many."

The participant highlights meeting highly skilled doctors from different countries who are

frustrated because they cannot get into the Canadian medical system.

W1 [00:53:30] - "I've met plastic surgeons when I was in Canada preparing for exams. I have met orthopedic surgeons, highly skilled people from all over the world that they are so frustrated that they cannot get into the system. These are highly skilled people that can't get into the system."

Subtheme 2: Fairness and Equitable Opportunities for Immigrants in the Job Market:

Participant (W2) advocates for fair and equitable opportunities for immigrants in the job

market. The participant expresses the need for employers to stop discriminating against

candidates based on their work experiences outside Canada and instead focus solely on their

skills and qualifications for regular jobs.

W2 [00:46:19] - "My recommendations are first employers should stop discriminating. I do not know how the regulatory bodies can do that but if they can make employers to stop discriminating against work experiences that are not in Canada and remove that clause of a Canadian work

experience. Employees or Applicants should be judged solely on their skills instead of whether they have worked in Canada or not. That is for regular jobs."

For professional and regulated jobs, the above participant suggests introducing shorter and more targeted qualification courses, such as a six-month course, followed by an exam, rather than having lengthy and cumbersome processes that can hinder immigrants from practicing their professions.

W2 [00:46:19] - "Then for professional jobs or regulated jobs, I believe a shorter time in terms of qualification should be introduced. It can be like a course, maybe like a six month course, for example if you are a doctor, you have to take this six months course to understand how we work here in Canada, then probably write an exam after that six month course and get to practice instead of writing exams for a space of over two years just to get into practice for something that you have done for years."

Resonating further, the participant points out that while there are programs to help immigrants transition, most of these programs are not directly connected to employment and do not address the discrimination newcomers face during job interviews and applications.

W2 [00:47:59] - "Yes. I believe that there are some programs that help new immigrants transition. But most of these programs are not directly involved with employment. So, what they basically do is to tell you how to go for interviews. But going for interviews does not remove the fact that you will be discriminated against."

Subtheme 3: Challenges with Licensing Exams and Accreditation:

Many participants expressed their frustrations and challenges with licensing exams and accreditation processes for their professions. Several participants highlighted the high costs and strict requirements associated with licensing exams, which make it difficult for newcomers to get licensed in their fields. The participants emphasize the need for changes in pass marks, suggesting that the exams should be easier to pass to provide a fairer opportunity for immigrants.

W3 [00:53:48] - "The board exams, they are ridiculous. They are expensive for someone who just got here, spending so much money writing an exam, and then you have to sit down and study; you cannot work while you are studying. So, the exams are expensive."

W3 [00:53:48] - "The expectations, like every Canadian university, 60% is the pass mark. So why are you making it 80%? For passing marks for board exams. It shouldn't be 80%, It should be 60%."

W5 [00:47:14] - "I'm going to say they're relevant, but maybe they should make it easier to write to pass rather than making it hard to pass."

There are also concerns about conflict of interest in the exam processes, where those who have already been licensed in Canada are involved in determining how immigrant professionals will practice.

W3 [00:53:48] - "I think there's a lot of conflict of interest, the dentists here being the ones to determine how the immigrant dentists that come in here will practice. So, it's not fair."

In addition to the licensing exams, there were discussions about the recognition of foreign degrees and accreditation from other countries.

W4 [14:49:33] - "I don't know hmm. I do not know the recommendation I have because the systemic bias is real."

W5 [00:47:57] - "Yeah, I think there's a lot of things the government can do. The government can have subsidies; I mean granting student subsidies in the exam cost, getting writing materials and the exam costs, making it cheaper to write the exams."

W6 [00:35:14] - "Well, I think the system has to change a little bit, the strictness and all of that, because we also, as international medical graduates, are satisfied doctors."

W6 [00:35:14] - "So, I feel they should do much better. You know the colleges should be a little bit lenient about... or open more spaces for international medical graduates to come into the system."

There is a call for more streamlined and refined structures to support immigrants in the process of licensing and accreditation, ensuring fair and equitable opportunities for highly skilled newcomers to contribute to the Canadian workforce.

W8 [00:33:42] - "For me, I think I wouldn't deny the fact that Canada as a country is doing so much to help people, immigrants, to settle in. However, I think we need more to refine the structure."

W10 [00:51:49] - "There should be like a pipeline whereby people are linked with jobs. Even if you cannot start with that desired job that you want, there is a link. There should be a system, like a Ministry of Labor, where a labour organization can tell people as you're coming in, if they know, Oh, we have 30 people coming in, and they know the date the moment they come, there's someone following up, giving them options of things they can do that the basic needs that they need while they are looking for that job they have it."

Some participants mention the lack of accreditation for degrees obtained in their home countries, creating obstacles for them to practice their professions in Canada.

W7 [00:36:30] - "you know, before they say anything, they want to see you own a degree, why can't they have an accreditation in Nigeria? Why can't Nigeria have accreditation with Canada? Well, I blame the two governments or countries. I can tell you that in Nigeria, we have very good/strong telecommunication, but they said on a degree-wise we don't have accreditation in Nigeria, and as such, they can't honour it."

Subtheme 4: Addressing Discrimination and Racial Bias:

This subtheme revolves around the issue of addressing discrimination and racial bias experienced by immigrants in Canada. Participants share their concerns about racial discrimination both within the workplace and from clients or customers. Participant W2, for example, highlights the need for public awareness campaigns about racial discrimination to acknowledge and address its existence.

W2 [00:05:12] - "The other thing I think they can do is to do more public awareness about racial discrimination, that kind of stuff. Yeah, just to let people know that this thing is real."

Additionally, the participant suggests creating support systems, forums, or groups where individuals can openly discuss their experiences and feelings related to discrimination.

W2 [00:05:48] - "Yeah, I think they should create more like maybe like a support system or maybe like a group or forum where people can actually talk about their experience and how they feel about it."

There were calls for more significant support from professional bodies or colleges to handle issues of discrimination in the workplace.

W3 [00:12:05] - "I guess I'd like to see more support from the college in dealing with these kinds of issues and more of an open conversation about it."

Participants mentioned the importance of open conversations about racial bias to foster a more inclusive environment. Some participants expressed a desire for better representation of diverse races in various work settings to ensure minorities have a voice and equal opportunities.

W7 [00:35:26] - "I also think they could get like places where they have an equal number of people from different races. So, that the minorities would actually have a voice."

Moreover, the discussions touch on discriminatory practices, such as favoritism, where individuals from particular ethnic backgrounds are given preferential treatment in job opportunities.

W7 [00:36:40] - "Actually, you know what? I noticed that in my line of work, they always, I don't want to use the word favoritism, but they're more disposed to giving the better jobs to their own, people from their own country, yeah."

Participants also raise concerns about racist comments or jokes made by coworkers and emphasize the importance of practical action, such as including anti-discrimination education in curricula or workplace training.

W9 [00:50:14] - "I mean even if, let's say it's not about like the authority figure or the manager, even if you have like coworkers who are discriminatory, you know just make racist comments and jokes about you, or just because you are different."

W9 [00:51:07] - "Yeah, they should take practical action about these, maybe just include it in their curriculum or just as a lecture or something."

There are reservations about the effectiveness of reporting racial attacks or abuses to the authorities, with participants questioning the seriousness with which such incidents are addressed.

W11 [00:55:12] - "There are times when you hear cases of racial attacks, racial abuse, but there's no proper channel to address these things."

W11 [00:55:30] - "And when you think about okay, you are reporting to a police officer, what will they even do about it? Will they address it as a serious thing?"

Overall, the above narratives underscore the need for concerted efforts to combat discrimination and racial bias, promoting a more inclusive and welcoming environment for all immigrants in Canada.

Subtheme 5: Need for a Structured and Supportive Settlement Process:

This sub-theme focuses on the necessity of having a structured and supportive settlement process for newcomers to Canada. Participants expressed feelings of being lost and lacking guidance upon their arrival, emphasizing the need for assistance and support during the settlement phase. Some participants highlighted the importance of having a centralized information hub where newcomers can access all the necessary information about living in Canada, including finding resources and support services.

> *W1 [00:01:22] - "I feel like when I first came, I was kind of lost, you know, I didn't know where to get help or support."*
>
> *W1 [00:01:55] - "I think it would have been nice to have somebody to help me navigate that process."*
>
> *W3 [00:09:48] - "There should be a better way to have a more structured process that supports people who are just coming in, so they know where to go, what to do."*

This central hub could streamline the settlement process and make it easier for immigrants to navigate various aspects of their new lives.

> *W5 [00:20:33] - "The first thing that comes to my mind is having a more centralized information hub. So that people know that when you land in Canada, you know that this is the one place you can go to get all the information you need."*

Mentorship programs are suggested as valuable tools for newcomers to connect with experienced individuals in their field, helping them better understand the Canadian job market

and workplace culture. These programs can offer guidance and advice, which can be instrumental in the immigrants' integration into Canadian society and workforce.

> *W5 [00:20:48] - "I think another thing that would be good is some mentorship programs, where newcomers can connect with people in their field."*

Pre-arrival information sessions or online modules are proposed as a way to prepare immigrants even before they arrive in Canada.

> *W8 [00:42:03] - "One thing that I think would be useful is if, like, even before people come to Canada, they're able to access online information sessions or modules that are available to them."*

These modules could cover essential topics such as finding accommodation, job hunting, Canadian workplace culture, and other aspects of daily life.

> *W8 [00:42:26] - "And these modules could cover things like, you know, finding a place to live, how to look for jobs, how to apply for jobs, Canadian workplace culture, weather, that kind of stuff."*

Additionally, participants suggest the concept of a community liaison officer or similar roles, whose responsibility would be to keep track of immigrants and offer periodic check-ins to ensure their settlement process is going smoothly.

> *W10 [00:48:17] - "I mean, another thing that just came to my mind is, like, some sort of, like, community liaison officer or something like that."*

This personalized approach could provide immigrants with additional support and resources tailored to their specific needs.

> *W10 [00:48:26] - "Who can actually keep track of, you know, who is immigrating to where, and they can just check-in, even if it's an email, or if it's a phone call or something like that."*

The above subtheme underscores the significance of having a well-structured and supportive settlement process that addresses the diverse needs of newcomers, easing their transition into Canadian society and enhancing their chances of successful integration.

Summary and conclusion

The interviews with highly skilled Nigerian/African immigrants who immigrated to Canada through the economic class immigration program reveal a rich tapestry of experiences, challenges, and hopes for the future. The participants shared their journeys of transitioning to a new country, navigating the complexities of the Canadian job market, and seeking opportunities for personal and professional growth. Despite facing various obstacles, the participants display remarkable resilience, optimism, and determination to succeed.

One prominent theme that emerged is the participants' optimism and hope for the future. They view Canada as a land of opportunities and believe that by remaining open-minded and continuously moving forward, they can achieve success in their chosen fields. Many express a positive outlook on their career growth and aspirations, emphasizing the potential for personal fulfillment and contribution to Canadian society.

The participants' recommendations for change shed light on areas that need improvement to support immigrants' successful integration into Canadian society. There is a call for bridging the gap between government-reported statistics on occupation shortages and the reality within professional associations, particularly concerning opportunities for foreign-trained medical professionals. Participants advocate for fair and equitable opportunities in the job market, suggesting the elimination of discriminatory practices based on work experience gained outside Canada. They propose introducing shorter and targeted qualification courses for regulated professions to streamline the licensing process for immigrants.

Challenges with licensing exams and accreditation processes are also highlighted, with participants urging for fairer pass marks and more significant support in recognizing foreign

degrees. Addressing discrimination and racial bias is a key concern, with participants calling for public awareness campaigns, support systems, and better representation of diverse races in workplaces.

Additionally, the need for a structured and supportive settlement process for newcomers is emphasized. Participants express the importance of centralizing information hubs, mentorship programs, and pre-arrival information sessions to facilitate a smoother immigrant transition into Canadian society. Community liaison officers are proposed to provide personalized support and periodic check-ins with newcomers.

Conclusion

The experiences and perspectives of African immigrants in Canada highlight the resilience, determination, and hope that many newcomers bring to the country. Despite facing challenges and uncertainties in their transitions, the participants display a positive outlook on their career prospects and the future, envisioning a land of opportunities where they can grow, contribute, and achieve personal fulfillment. Their recommendations for change provide valuable insights into areas that require attention and improvement. Bridging the gap between government-reported statistics and professional associations, promoting fair and equitable opportunities in the job market, and addressing challenges with licensing exams and accreditation processes are crucial to creating a more inclusive and supportive environment for immigrants.

Moreover, combating discrimination and racial bias is an essential aspect of fostering an inclusive society, and the participants' suggestions for public awareness campaigns, support systems, and increased representation aim to achieve this goal. The call for a structured and

supportive settlement process underscores the need for comprehensive support services that ease newcomers' integration into Canadian society. The settlement process can become more streamlined and personalized by offering centralized information hubs, mentorship programs, and pre-arrival information sessions, enabling immigrants to adapt more effectively to their new lives.

In conclusion, the experiences and recommendations of Nigerian/African skilled immigrants in Canada highlight the importance of embracing diversity, addressing systemic challenges, and working collaboratively to create a welcoming and inclusive society for all newcomers. By heeding their voices and implementing positive change, Canada can continue to be a land of opportunity and hope for immigrants seeking a better future.

5.0   Reflections on the Data Analysis

The analysis of the transcripts of the various interviews conducted to gather data for this research work revealed interesting findings that were categorized into different themes and subthemes, as captured in the previous chapter. Reflections on these themes and subthemes will be discussed under three (3) major groups to address the fundamental research question: "How do Canadian job requirements and recruitment practices discriminate against Nigerian and African professionals and put them in a disadvantageous position, causing depression and mental health distress as they transition to the Canadian workspace?". The three major groups are (1) Reasons for highly skilled Nigerian/African professionals immigrating to Canada, their housing expectations and reality in Canada, (2) The Canadian Workspace and the socioeconomic integration of highly skilled Nigeria/African professionals in Canada, and (3) mental health impact of Canadian job requirements and recruitment practices on highly skilled Nigerian/African Professionals.

5.1   Reasons for highly skilled Nigerian/African professionals immigrating to Canada, their housing expectations and reality in Canada.

The participants of this research are highly skilled economic immigrants from Nigeria/Africa who recently (within the past ten years) migrated to Canada through Canada's economic class immigration program (Federal Skilled Worker or Express Entry Program) and are at various stages in their efforts to integrate both economically and socially into the Canadian society and fully realize their reasons for immigrating to Canada. As economic immigrants, their reasons for immigrating to Canada are consistent with the general information that is known about economic immigrants from other parts of the world and well documented in different scholarly writings. As pointed out by Portes (2019), immigrants (including economic immigrants) usually take advantage of the opportunity to move, believing that by immigrating to a different country, they will be better off economically, socially, and otherwise in the new country and that the benefits they will derive by immigrating will sufficiently outweigh the economic, social and broader costs of moving. The underlying belief that by migrating to Canada, they will generally be better off was well expressed by the participants of the research and as such, their reasons for immigrating were guided by these beliefs and the desire for a better life for themselves and their immediate family members.

One prominent reason for the mobility of skilled labor among economic immigrants and highlighted by economic theory, is the income differences across countries which is even more significant between developing countries (source of most skilled immigrants) and developed countries (destination for economic immigrants) as seen in the difference in the GDP levels of the source and host countries (Kerr & Kerr, 2011). This reason reinforced the key theoretical framework for examining human capital flows that date back to John Hicks (1932), who emphasized that "differences in net economic advantages, chiefly differences in wages, are the

main causes of migration." (Kerr et al., 2016). The wage difference between skilled migrant source countries and receiving countries is significant enough to create an income incentive to migrate for skilled professionals driven by the fact that the income of skilled professionals in developing countries (Nigeria inclusive) is generally poor and hardly enough to meet the basic needs of families. It represents the leading cause of skilled immigration from Nigeria, where the minimum wage is less than $50 per month (Oguchi, 2020). The impact of income on immigration decisions was well articulated by Participant W3, as shown in the quote below:

> W3 "The economic benefits were not there. It is just because I was in private practice, but even in public practice, the pay was not fantastic... it just did not make sense. I mean, it was easy for me to cope because I was single. But then, I do not think that is the kind of income you can sustain a family. And that was one of the reasons why I sought to leave.... the income wasn't just good."

Another reason cited by the research participants that influenced their decisions to immigrate is the prospect of career advancement and the opportunities for career growth. In line with this reason, Beaverstock (2012) noted that the strong growth in the different sectors of the economy of developed countries in the past three decades has made the migration of highly skilled professionals across the globe necessary, especially in areas where there are shortages in skilled and talented professionals. Most skilled economic immigrants are usually from low- to medium-income countries (Bailey and Mulder, 2017). Hence, the sustenance of the growth of developed countries (Canada inclusive) depends on the continuous inflow of skilled professionals and the successful integration of these skilled immigrants into the workforce in a manner that facilitates access to the right talent by companies at the right time (Hopkins and Levy, 2012 & Bailey, and Mulder, 2017). The integration of skilled immigrants from developing countries into the workforce of advanced economies results in their exposure to advanced and modern technologies, trainings, and improved production/process flows, creating more

opportunities for career growth and advancement. This reason is best expressed in the below quote from participant W2:

> W2: "...practicing here would expose me to more modern technologies, more modern drugs, and more opportunities to expand my knowledge and field of practice."

The other reasons cited by the research participants for their decision to immigrate are looking for a better environment to live and raise their family, security challenges in their home country (Nigeria), to avoid hardship and oppression, and recommendations by friends and family members. Irrespective of their reasons for immigrating, the decision framework for their migration destination and choice of Canada as the destination was influenced mainly by the perceived ease and structure of Canada's immigration policy that provided clear immigration pathways that they could follow to immigrate. Participant W5 revealed this positive side of Canada's approach to attracting skilled workers as a reason for choosing Canada as the immigration destination in the below quote:

> W5 [00:05:05]: "Looking at the options, so the one that, as you know, the easiest way to migrate at that time was Canada, and that was why, you know, I decided to apply to Canada express entry."

The ease of the Canadian immigration process, together with the expectation of the research participants to have an easy pathway to quickly settle and become fully integrated into the Canadian society after immigrating to Canada, is consistent with the general belief that the settlement and integration of skilled immigrants into the Canadian society is relatively easy and that they become successful after a short transition period (Kaushik and Drolet, 2018). The expectation by the research participants to have a moderately easy settlement and integration pathway in Canada was partly influenced by their perception and understanding of how the settlement process in their home country (Nigeria) works and their belief that it would be done in

a comparable manner in Canada. For instance, in Nigeria, a person can secure an accommodation simply by demonstrating that the money to pay for the accommodation is available and payment can be made immediately after it is requested, unlike in Canada, where having the money to pay for an accommodation does not necessarily guarantee you the accommodation. Other factors like credit history/score, employment status, availability of a guarantor, and disposition of the landlord or rental agency play a significant role in determining if an immigrant can secure an accommodation and the type of accommodation that can be secured. The research participants expressed these challenges to securing housing in Canada in the below quotes:

> W6 "Housing well, I didn't expect housing to be difficult... However, it wasn't as straightforward as we thought it would be when we came in."
>
> W8 "In terms of accommodation, also I wasn't looking to having any challenge at all... However, when I got to Canada, it was a different story entirely."
>
> W10 "Housing is a different ball game here... you might have the money, you will see the house, but they won't give you if the owner doesn't like you."

Unfortunately, The Canadian housing market is mainly private sector driven. As such, newly arrived immigrants face significant levels of housing discrimination guided by the pre-rental screening requirements presented by homeowners and rental agencies. For instance, the demand that newly arrived economic immigrants show proof of their credit history/score along with their rental application significantly raises the prospect of their rental application being rejected since they cannot obtain a credit history/score on arrival because the process of getting one depends on the immigrant's financial performance and history on accessed credit facility in Canada. Also, other pre-rental screening factors like employment status and income place significant hurdles in the ability of newcomers to access suitable accommodation. As a result, their initial access to suitable housing is solely based on the discretion of the landlord/rental agency. Studies have shown that black people, newcomers, and racialized minority groups are

more likely to be discriminated against during the pre-rental screening process. As such, newly arrived Nigerian/African economic immigrants have dire outcomes or realities in their initial settlement phase, contrary to their settlement expectations before immigrating to Canada.

The "unfriendly" and capitalistic nature of the Canadian housing market and lack of direct government support in assisting newcomers secure decent accommodation presents a challenging reality that forces skilled economic immigrants to settle for substandard accommodation, pay more for Airbnb rental unit or hotel accommodation, and directly impact (delay) their ability to settle and integrate into the mainstream Canadian society effectively. The delay in securing suitable accommodation also affects the ability of economic immigrants to fully engage in the Canadian workspace and utilize available resources in their search for suitable employment opportunities.

> W8 [00:10:15]: "In terms of housing, it is, I think it's still, it suffices to say it's a big problem to date... People tend to live in Airbnb for more than a month and pay more, so for me, getting a house as a newcomer is a big one."

> W10 [00:16:54]: "For me, I won't lie to you, I was disappointed because I felt that the government did not help what we expected as newcomers with all the guidelines; it was supposed to be an easy path for a newcomer to be able to get a place."

5.2   The Canadian Workspace and the socioeconomic integration of highly skilled Nigerian/African professionals in Canada

Highly skilled Nigerian/African professionals who have immigrated to Canada place integration into the Canadian workspace as a key priority in their resettlement plan. They start engaging the Canadian labor market immediately after they land in the country, as noted by the research participants. Prior to immigrating to Canada and as part of the requirement for the Canadian economic class immigration program (Federal Skilled Worker or Express Entry), skilled professionals from Nigeria/Africa perform an evaluation of their academic credentials to

ascertain the equivalency of their credentials to that of the Canadian educational system, and armed with the knowledge that their credentials are equivalent to that of Canada, they sort to access employment opportunities and complete licensing requirements in the Canadian workspace using their foreign acquired credentials on arrival in Canada, with the expectation that they can transition into the Canadian workspace and gain employment in their areas of specialization using their foreign acquired credentials, and subsequently improve on their socioeconomic status in Canada (Aycan & Berry, 1996; Buzdugan & Halli, 2009; Eguakun, 2020; Zietsma, 2010; Teelucksingh & Galabuzi, 2005).

In their attempts to integrate into the Canadian workspace, the research participants reported significant challenges such as credential discounting, skills devaluation, requests for Canadian work experience, recruiter biases and discrimination, that limited their ability to access available employment that matches their skills and job expectation prior to immigrating to Canada. The challenges reported by these skilled African professionals are similar to those that have been reported by other racialized and minority economic immigrants from other developing countries as captured by different scholarly writings (Buzdugan and Halli, 2009; DeSilva, 1997; Pendakur, 2000; Li, 2001), and forces them to either accept entry/lower level jobs that they are overqualified or over-skilled for but related to their field of expertise or low paying precarious jobs that are unrelated to their expertise as they transition to the Canadian workspace (Eguakun, 2020; Dietz, Joshi, Esses, Hamilton & Gabarrot, 2014; Zietsma, 2010; Teelucksingh & Galabuzi, 2005Dietz, et al., 2014).

The devaluation of the credentials of skilled immigrants obtained from institutions of developing countries or "non-preferred" source countries is notably more severe for professionals that require licensing from professional bodies to practice their profession in

Canada, as they are made to go through discriminatory and demanding licensing processes that have been designed to "prevent" them from transition into the Canadian workspace (add references). As noted by the research participants, skilled immigrants in regulated professions are made to write multiple time-restricted licensing qualification and/or entry exams with extremely high cutoffs (above 80% in some cases) for the pass mark – which is sometimes set at a level above the requirements for Canadian trained professionals. For skilled immigrants in the medical field, especially medical doctors and physicians, aside from passing the multiple licensing exams, they are equally made to compete for an extremely limited number of residency positions where they are discriminately placed at the lowest hierarchy to get into residency placement. The processes of licensing and residence placement for foreign-trained medical doctors and physicians in Canada, from the research, were found to be extremely discriminatory, prioritizing those with credentials from Canadian institutions and preferred countries over those from non-preferred countries instead of focusing on skills and competency level and equaling the playing field for all trained professionals in Canada. This discriminatory practice is arguably connected to the remarkably high number of foreign-trained medical professionals unable to transition into the medical profession in Canada and subsequently caught up in precariously low-paying professions or driving taxis/Uber in Canada.

In this research, the licensing process for regulated professions in Canada was found to account for the significant level of delay experienced by economic immigrants (Nigerian/African trained professional inclusive) in transitioning into their expected/dream profession prior to immigrating to Canada and presented a substantial hurdle in their socioeconomic integration in Canada. The research participants pointed out that it will take a minimum of two (2) years for them to complete the licensing requirements for their profession, citing challenges like the

frequency of the qualification/licensing examinations, writing of multiple examinations, delay in getting residency placement, difficulty preparing for the licensing examinations while having to work to meet their daily survival necessities and bills, difficulty getting mentorship/supervisor, lack of fund to enroll for the multiple licensing exams et cetera. For non-regulated professions, foreign-trained professionals are discriminated against and prevented from accessing their expected/dream profession in the Canadian workspace mainly by the demand for Canadian work experience by potential recruiters or employers and the devaluation of their foreign work experience and qualifications. This subsequently forces the research participants (economic immigrants) to seek additional Canadian trainings, certifications, or education to bridge the gap. The demand for Canadian work experience from newly arrived highly skilled economic immigrants is an extremely unfair recruitment practice in the Canadian workspace that creates a catch-22 situation where skilled newcomers need a job in Canada to get Canadian experience but cannot get a job that matches their skill levels because of lack of Canadian work experience. The dilemma of recruiters/employers demanding for Canadian work experience from newcomers for them to access suitable employment was expressed by some of the research participants in the below quote:

> W9 [00:09:02]: "They were asking me for Canadian experience, which I don't have. I do not know what exactly the Canadian experience was for me at that time because I go to interview even with people. I knew I had better qualifications than them, and they got the job, but I did not. And I get this feedback… we need someone with Canadian experience, and you don't have Canadian experience."

> W4 [00:15:25]: "So the best thing most times is to gain some experience at least. Now you have the Canadian experience because that is something else I found was very interesting. Immigrants will come, and you are looking for jobs. You cannot get jobs because you do not have Canadian experience. But you need the first job to give you the Canadian experience. Where am I to gain the Canadian experience? Am I meant to get the Canadian experience from Nigeria? No. So that struggle to get the Canadian experience is what makes immigrants to really stoop, very low to take things that are way below their experience level, and you know."

Interestingly, the experience of the research participants in their attempt to access highly skilled job opportunities in the Canadian labor market has been collaborated by studies in the United States that show that black African immigrants face increased vulnerability and are more likely to experience skill discounting, underemployment, discrimination, and lower-income irrespective of their high human capital and labor participation (Batalova et al., 2016; Borch and Corra, 2010; Showers, 2015; Zong and Batalova, 2015). The research participants described perceived experience of racism and race-related discrimination by recruiters/employers during job recruitment processes and interviews. They expressed the need for them to "whiten" their curriculum vitae to improve their chances of being called for job interviews, which highlights the presence and persistence of racism in the Canadian workspace despite the increasing attention that is being placed on it (Andiappan, Crestohl & Singh, 1989; Al-waqfi & Jain, 2018).

> W4 [00:35:53]: "There is so much segregation... racial discrimination... job hunting can be a demeaning process... it drains you emotionally... the fact that you have to swallow your pride..."

This race-based systemic exclusion and discrimination of skilled Nigerian/African professionals in the Canadian labor market can lead to a loss of skills, social status and professional identity and prevent them from completely integrating into the society by excluding them from well-paying skilled jobs and broaden the socioeconomic inequality by keeping them in poverty (Aycan & Berry, 1996; Grant & Nadin, 2007; Teelucksingh & Galabuzi, 2005). Racial discrimination has been identified as possibly responsible for part of the difference in the achievements of African professionals and visible minority groups compared to Caucasians in the Canadian labor market and represents a major barrier to the advancement of economic immigrants (Al-Waqfi & Jain, 2018). In the labor market, the disparity between the employment rate of minority members and native white workers is significant and persistent, with white workers more than twice as likely to gain employment than black workers in the United States

and Canada (Al-waqfi & Jain, 2018; Austin, 2013; Quillian et al., 2019). The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2015) noted that the unemployment rates were two times higher among native-born children of immigrants (aged 15 – 34) when compared with those of their peers from Caucasian majority group in leading European countries like Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom, showing that racial and/or ethnic discrimination and inequalities in employment is a prevalent characteristic of modern/develop societies.

Scholars from different fields, such as sociology, economics, organization behavior and social psychology, have examined and formulated theories to explain the causes and consequences of racial discrimination in the workspace, and one of the reasons put forward by scholars was that racial discrimination in employment was a result of preconceived ideas (prejudice) or "taste for discrimination" on the part of licensing bodies, recruiters and/or employers regarding what the skilled workforce should look like and thereby resulting in the "whitening" of the Canadian workspace as emphasized by critical race theorists (Becker, 1957; Al-Waqfi & Jain, 2018). Critical race theory has been used as a theoretical framework through which issues of race, racialization and subordination in diverse fields can be explored and, in this context, can be used to argue that the racial discrimination experienced by skilled Nigerian/African professionals and other racialized minorities in the Canadian workforce is an attempt by the majority Caucasian population (recruiters, employers and licensing bodies) to maintain their hegemony in the Canadian society, resulting in both structural and institutional racism (Romero, 2008 & Lawrence and Hylton, 2022). The effect of "whiteness" as a social construction and a tool in social segregation in the Canadian workspace is partly reflected in the reliance of employers on current (mostly Caucasian employees) employees to fill employment

opportunities through network referrals. Studies have shown that referrals by current employees play an outsize role in the Canadian workspace, and an enormous number of jobs are filled through employee referrals, which can produce segregation in employment opportunities, placing Nigerian/African professionals and minority economic immigrants at the lower hierarchy to access skilled employment opportunities filled based on referrals (Romero, 2008).

Access to employment opportunities and jobs has historically been used to differentiate people into racial classes and subjugate minority groups and black workers. For instance, before the abolition of slave trade and slavery, tedious and demeaning (farm) jobs were assigned to enslaved people (black workers and/or minority groups) while white workers were assigned to more prestigious roles such as supervisor (Sharpe, 2016). It can be argued that this type of job segregation and discrimination still persists in the Canadian labor market and workspace, and highly skilled black workers and minority economic immigrants without Canadian credentials and/or work experience are subtly relegated to tedious and low-income factory labor or other precarious jobs irrespective of their foreign skills, credentials and high capital net worth, while white workers and skilled professionals that fit the prevalent societal perception of what the skilled workforce should look like gets employed in more prestigious job position (Andiappan et al., 1989). Sadly, the view that the Canadian workspace has a perceived preconception of the "color or race" or the "kind of immigrants" that should dominate certain skilled workforce spaces and job positions is shared by many skilled Nigerian/African professionals in Canada and was expressed by some of the research participants as shown in the below quotes:

> *W3 [00:58:03]: "In Canada, they like a setting kind of, I might be wrong, but that is the perception we all get. They prefer a certain kind of immigrant. Yes. And the African immigrant is at the bottom of the table. That is just the truth. People might not want to hear it, but that is the way it is. And virtually, that is the way it is all over the world."*

The notion that race plays a critical role in access to skilled jobs in the Canadian workspace gives credence to the argument by critical race scholars that the prevalence of racial discrimination in the Canadian labor market and society is designed to strengthen and maintain the dominance of Caucasians in all spheres of the society and intersect with the ability of skilled economic immigrants to fully integrate and participate in the socioeconomic structuring of the Canadian society (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Syed & Hill, 2011). Another reason for the continuous presence of racial discrimination in employment opportunities in the Canadian workspace is the general belief by employers and recruiters that black skilled immigrants and/or minority groups lack or possess low-quality "human capital" such as training, education and experience because their foreign skills, credentials and experiences were obtained from developing countries and/or non-recognized institution where the employers and recruiters lack the ability to verify them, and as such job applications from Nigerian/African professionals with credentials solely from their home country and no additional education/qualifications from Canada or other (developed) countries with recognized educational system are overlooked/skipped during recruitment processes, and they are consequently locked in low income and low-level jobs (Aycan & Berry, 1996; Grant & Nadin, 2007; Teelucksingh & Galabuzi, 2005). To overcome this hurdle, skilled African immigrants are forced to either retrain, enroll in Canadian schools to obtain Canadian credentials to augment their foreign credentials and, when opportune, accept lower/entry-level jobs in their field of specialization where they hope to grow after proving their human capital worth (Kaushik & Drolet, 2018). The importance of having a Canadian credential or a credential from a recognized institution in a developed country was well captured by one of the research participants, as expressed in the quote below. It also helps overcome the challenge of the need for Canadian work experience.

W4 [00:46:56]: "My Oxford University has just been a game changer. And funny enough, I keep telling people I know that Oxford was a big and a good school, but I did not think it would do what it is doing for me today. I am telling you. I keep telling people if I did not have Oxford University, I do not know what my life would have been like today. Because I have had a job where the recruiter gave me the job, he just called me and said did you really go to Oxford? I said yes; he said OKAY, we are giving you the job; there was no interview. And even in organizations these days, a lot of times after I get the job, they want to introduce me, that is the first thing they are using to introducing me, is almost like saying that is my name now."

The extent to which racial discrimination in employment in Canada influences the job opportunities of skilled Nigerians/African immigrants is debatable, and the reasons for their inability to secure jobs that match their level of skill can be attributed to several factors such as prejudice, the nature of the social and formal interactions between potential recruiters/employers (discriminator) and applicants (recipient) during job interviews, and the environment of the interaction (Al-waqfi & Jain, 2018; Quillian et al., 2019). Irrespective of the reasons behind the inability of skilled Nigerian/African professionals to transition into the Canadian workspace by gaining desired employment and quickly integrate both socially and economically into the Canadian society as they expected before immigrating to the country, their failure to access desired employment in the Canadian labor market places an enormous burden on them and produces socioeconomic consequences that negatively impact their mental health and wellbeing (Kaushik & Drolet, 2018).

5.3 Mental health impact of Canadian job requirements and recruitment practices on highly skilled Nigerian/African Professionals

The racial inequality in the access to employment opportunities in the Canadian workspace resulting from job requirements and recruitment practices that encourages and/or produces race-based systemic exclusion and discrimination of Nigerian/African professionals and other ethnic/visible minority skilled immigrant groups in the Canadian labor market results in social disablement that causes depression and mental health distresses as noted by the research

participants and collaborated by other researchers and studies (Basran & Zong, 1998; Buzdugan & Halli, 2009; Chen, Smith, & Mustard, 2010; Subedi & Rosenberg, 2016). The different accounts by the research participants of how the job requirements and recruitment practices in the Canadian labor market discriminate and devalue their foreign credentials and work experiences, and the subsequently disabling effects it had on their ability to easily transition into the Canadian workspace, and socioeconomically integrate into the Canadian society is in line with the disablement that results from systemic and socioeconomic exclusion of an individual or group expressed in the social disability model of critical disability theory. According to the social disability model, a person or group in a society can be disabled by the material conditions (such as poor job prospects, isolated families, discrimination, racism, et cetera) existing in the society; therefore, disability is not simply the result of one's physical or health condition but the outcome of the socioeconomic or psychological barriers/limitations the society places on an individual or group (Erevelles & Minear, 2010). Hence, the inability of Nigerian/African professionals to secure commensurable job positions due to racism and discriminatory practices in Canadian job requirements and recruitment processes produces disablement in the group.

Critical disability scholars have framed disability as a socially constructed class that derives its meaning and social significance from cultural, economic, historical, and political structures that define social life (Erevelles & Minear, 2010). Consequently, both race (racism) and disability are social constructs and the outcome of cultural rules on what bodies should be or do and components of most social differences (Garland-Thomson, 1997; Baynton, 2006; James and Wu, 2003) and have been theorized as relational concepts that are formed relationally to each other, rather than in isolation (Haney, 2007) such that Caucasians enjoy privileges connected to the subordination of people of color (Harris, 1997), as seen in the Canadian

workspace where white workers are more preferred for certain skilled job positions and black workers (Nigerian/African professionals inclusive) and minority groups experience significant level of socioeconomic exclusions in the Canadian society due to the type of jobs (low level or precarious jobs) that they can access in Canada.

The socioeconomic exclusion of skilled Nigerian/African professionals in the Canadian workspace is a source of psychological distress and is an important social determinant of mental health that contributes to increased signs of depression and anxiety distress among African immigrants (Sherinah et al., 2021; Akinsulure-Smith, 2017; Sellers et al., 2006; Venters et al., 2011), and studies have indicated that black people are the most disadvantage group facing continuously elevated levels of negative racial and ethnic stereotyping that results in socioeconomic exclusion (Priest et al., 2018; Williams et al., 2019). Stress has been established as a major risk factor for different physical and mental sicknesses (Health Canada, 2008), and Nigerian/African skilled immigrants experience multiple psychological stressors in their attempts to settle and integrate into the Canadian society. The stressors are directly related to factors that can lead to socioeconomic exclusions, such as challenges in gaining meaningful employment that matches their skill level, securing decent accommodation, decrease in socioeconomic status, separation and/or inability to adequately support their family and friends, and/or lack of socioeconomic support (Chadwick & Collins, 2015; Kaushik & Drolet, 2018) as noted by the research participants. The ease or speed at which skilled African immigrants can settle and integrate into the Canadian society plays a significant role in determining the extent to which their physical and mental health are affected by the stressors that they experienced after relocating to Canada, and skilled immigrants that are satisfied with socioeconomic transition into

the Canadian society are less likely to experience decline in the physical and mental health (Kaushik & Drolet, 2018).

Studies have shown that access to suitable employment and income, acculturation (including labor market and workplace) and socioeconomic position, and race and ethnicity especially racism and discrimination, are important societal factors that contribute to the social determinants of health of (skilled) immigrants (Davies, 2019; Kaushik & Drolet, 2018; Akinsulure-Smith, 2017; Eguakun, 2020). As noted in the previous section of this paper, skilled Nigerian/African immigrants experienced a substantial number of barriers in the Canadian job requirements and recruitment practices that often limit them to low-level jobs that underutilize their skills and education or prolong their ability to seek employment that matches their skill levels. The underemployment or unemployment of skilled immigrants in the Canadian workspace negatively impacts their mental and general health. The participants in this research reported being depressed, frustrated, sad, dejected, and having increased levels of anxiety and occasionally showed signs of having bipolar disorder (although not medically diagnosed) as they worked to meet the job requirements and overcome the barriers preventing them from transitioning into the Canadian workspace. The experiences of the research participants are equally collaborated by similar accounts of skilled immigrants that participated in the longitudinal survey performed by Chen et al. (2010), where skilled immigrants who are engaged in employments that they are overqualified for reported decline in their mental health and persistent feelings of sadness, depression, or loneliness. The study established a direct connection between the mental health of immigrants, their employment status and their unrealized expectations in Canada and shows employment as an important social determinant of health.

The effects of poor mental health can range from low morale/self-esteem, decreased productivity, lack of interest in jobs or higher absenteeism rates, and short/long-term disabilities (Kaushik & Drolet, 2018) but interestingly, despite the challenges the research participants faced while trying to transition and integrate into the Canadian society and the mental health difficulty they experienced from the process, all the research participants (except for one research participant) when asked about how they see their future unfolding in Canada were very optimistic about it and expressed satisfaction and happiness that they immigrated to Canada and left their home country when they did. All the participants see Canada as a great country to immigrate to and expressed excitement and willingness to explore the possibilities and opportunities that Canada presents. However, it is worth noting that the sense of satisfaction, happiness, optimism, and excitement expressed by the participants can be partly tied to the fact that they see Canada as a better and more secure country with more economic opportunities for them and their immediate family when compared to their home country, which was part of the reasons they immigrated to Canada.

It is worth noting that the experiences of the research participants in their attempt to transition into the Canadian workspace were similar, irrespective of their gender or area of expertise. The analyses of the transcripts of the research participants did not present a situation where intersectionality as a theoretical framework could be used to reflect on the challenges that the research participants experienced while attempting to transition into the Canadian workspace. Due to the apparent lack of differences in the experiences of the male and female research participants, using intersectionality as a theoretical framework to examine the challenges faced by skilled Nigerian/African immigrants in this current research work became irrelevant. Intersectionality, as an analytical framework, can be used to examine how different aspects of a

person's social and political identities combine to produce diverse forms of discrimination and privileges (Crenshaw, 1991; Ladesma & Calderon, 2015). Although during the data collection phase of this research work, the research participants were asked questions about how they perceived that the Canadian job requirements and recruitment practices affect different genders, races and skilled immigrants from other countries, their responses were insufficient to drive meaningful analyses on the use of intersectionality as a theoretical framework even though inequalities are products of the intersections of different social locations, power relations, and experiences, and intersectionality as an analytic tool can help to understand the complexity in the social divisions of race, class, (dis)ability, sexuality, or gender at any point in time (Collins & Bilge, 2016).

References

Immigration and Employment

Abu-Laban, Y., and C. Gabriel (2002) Selling Diversity: Immigration, Multiculturalism, Employment Equity, and Globalization. Peterborough. Broadview Press

Al-waqfi, M., & Jain, H. C. (2018, March 15). *Racial inequality in employment in Canada: Empirical analysis and emerging trends*. ResearchGate. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/229559025_Racial_inequality_in_employment_in_Canada_Empirical_analysis_and_emerging_trends

Andiappan, P., Crestohl M., and Singh J. (1989). ''Racial discrimination in employment in Canada.'' Relations Industrielles 44 (4) Autumn: 827–49. https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/23073623.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A0634f4d15aba415f7c5d7e96eb021f00&ab_segments=&origin=&initiator=&acceptTC=1

Austin, Algernon. 2013. "The Unfinished March: An Overview." Economic Policy Institute. http://www.epi.org/publication/unfinished-march-overview/.

Aycan, Z., & Berry, J. W. (1996). Impact of Employment-Related Experiences on Immigrants' Psychological Well-Being and Adaptation to Canada, Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science / Revue canadienne des sciences du comportement, 28(3) 240 251. https://doi.org/10.1037/0008-400X.28.3.240

Bailey, A., & Mulder, C. H. (2017). *Highly skilled migration between the Global North and south: Gender, life courses and Institutions*. Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/1369183X.2017.1314594

Basran, G., and L. Zong (1998) "Devaluation of Credentials as Perceived by Visible Minority Professional Immigrants". Canadian Ethnic Studies 30(3):6-23.

Beaverstock, J. V. (2012). "Highly Skilled International Labour Migration and World Cities: Expatriates, Executives and Entrepreneurs". In International Handbook of Globalisation and World Cities, edited by B. M. Derruder, P. J. Taylor Hoyler, and F. Witlox, 240–249. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar

Becker, Gary S. (1957). The Economics of Discrimination. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1993. Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis with Special Reference to Education, 3rd edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Binggeli, S., Dietz, J., and Krings, F. (2013), 'Immigrants: A Forgotten Minority', *Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, 6, 107-113.

Buzdugan, R., & Halli, S. S. (2009). Labor Market Experiences of Canadian Immigrants with Focus on Foreign Education and Experience. The International Migration Review, 43(2), 366–386. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20681709

Chadwick, K. A., & Collins, P. A. (2015). Examining the relationship between social support availability, urban center size, and self-perceived mental health of recent immigrants to Canada: A mixed-methods analysis. Social Science & Medicine, 128, 220-230.

Chen, C., Smith, P., & Mustard, C. (2010). The prevalence of over-qualification and its association with health status among occupationally active new immigrants to Canada. Ethnicity and Health, 15(6), 601 619. https://doi.org/10.1080/13557858.2010.502591

Creese, G., & Wiebe, B. (2009). "Survival employment": Gender and deskilling among African immigrants in Canada. International Migration, 50(5), 56 - 76. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2435.2009.00531.x

Dietz, J., Joshi, C., Esses, V. M., Hamilton, L. H., & Gabarrot, F. 2015. The skill paradox: Explaining and reducing employment discrimination against skilled immigrants. The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 26(10): 1318-1334

Eguakun, O. (2020). *Underemployment and Adaptation of Skilled Immigrants: Direct and Moderating Effects of Job Satisfaction and Acculturation.* Atrium Library - University of Guelph. Retrieved October 29, 2021, from https://atrium.lib.uoguelph.ca/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10214/17786/Eguakun_Omorowa_202001_MA.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y.

Esses, V.M., Dietz, J., and Bhardwaj, A. (2004), 'Race, Prejudice, and the Evaluation of Immigrant Skills', International Journal of Psychology, 39(5-6), 9-9.

Esses, V.M., Dietz, J., and Bhardwaj, A. (2006), 'The Role of Prejudice in the Discounting of Immigrant Skills,' in *Cultural Psychology of Immigrants*, ed. R. Mahalingam, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum, pp. 113–130.

Fang, T., Samnani, A.-K., Novicevic, M.M., and Bing, M.N. (2013), 'Liability-of-Foreignness Effects on Job Success of Immigrant Job Seekers', *Journal of World Business*, 48, 98-109.

Feldman, D. C., Leana, C. R., & Bolino, M. C. (2002). Underemployment and relative deprivation among re-employed executives. Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 75, 453 471. https://doi.org/10.1348/096317902321119682

Fitzsimmons, S., Baggs, J., & Schuetze, H. (2019). *FIXING THE MIGRANT MISMATCH: WHAT HAPPENS WHEN FIRMS VALUE IMMIGRANTS DIFFERENTLY THAN GOVERNMENTS?* Pathways to Prosperity Canada. Retrieved October 30, 2021, from

http://p2pcanada.ca/library/fixing-the-migrant-mismatch-what-happens-when-firms-value-immigrants-differently-than-governments/.

Grant, P. R., & Nadin, S. (2007). The credentialing problems of foreign trained personnel from Asia and Africa intending to make their home in Canada: A social psychological perspective. Journal of International Migration and Integration, 8(2), 141 162. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-007-0011-2

Guerrero, L., & Rothestein, M. G. (2012). Antecedents of Underemployment: Job Search of Skilled Immigrants in Canada. Applied Psychology, 61(2), 323 346. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1464-0597.2011.00470.x

Guo, S. (2015). The colour of skill: contesting a racialised regime of skill from the experience of recent immigrants in Canada. Studies in Continuing Education, 37(3), 236 250. https://doi.org/10.1080/0158037X.2015.1067766

Hakak, L.T., and Al Ariss, A. (2013), 'Vulnerable Work and International Migrants: A Relational Human Resource Management Perspective', *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 24, 4116-4131.

Hicks, John R. (1932). The Theory of Wages. London: Macmillian.

Hopkins, L., and Levy, C. (2012). Simply the Best? Highly Skilled Migrants and the UK's Knowledge Economy. London: The Work Foundation. www.workfoundation.com/DownloadPublication/Report/315_Simply%20the%20Best%20TWF%20format.pdf.

Hum, D., and Wayne, S. (2004). Economic integration of immigrants to Canada: A short survey. Canadian Journal of Urban Research 13: 46–61.

Kaushik, V., & Drolet, J. (2018). Settlement and Integration Needs of Skilled Immigrants in Canada. Social Sciences, 7(5), 76. MDPI AG. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.3390/socsci7050076

Kerr, S. P., & Kerr, W. R. (2011, January). *Economic impacts of Immigration: A survey*. NATIONAL BUREAU OF ECONOMIC RESEARCH. https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w16736/w16736.pdf

Kerr, S. P., Kerr, W., Ozden, C., & Parsons, C. (2016). *Global talent flows.* Journal of Economic Perspective. https://pubs.aeaweb.org/doi/pdfplus/10.1257/jep.30.4.83

Lawrence, S., & Hylton, K. (2022). *Critical race theory, methodology, and semiotics: The analytical Utility of a "Race" Conscious Approach for Visual Qualitative Research*. SAGE Publications. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/15327086221081829

Lowe, S., and Ortiz, A. (2015). Considering Canada: A Look at the Views of Prospective Skilled Immigrants. New York: World Education Services.

Osaze, E. D. (2017). *The Non-recognition or Devaluation of Foreign Professional Immigrants' Credentials in Canada: The impact on the Receiving Country (Canada) and the Immigrants*. York University Library. Retrieved October 29, 2021, from https://yorkspace.library.yorku.ca/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10315/34314/Osaze_Emmanuel_Dean_2017_MA.pdf?isAllowed=y&sequence=2.

Pendakur, R. (2000) Immigrants and the Labour Force: Policy, Regulation, and Impact. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Portes, J. (2019). *The economics of migration*. SAGE Journals. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1536504219854712

Quillian, L., Heath, A., Pager, D., Midtboen, A. H., Fleischmann, F., & Hexel, O. (2019, June 17). *Do Some Countries Discriminate More than Others? Evidence from 97 Field Experiments of Racial Discrimination in Hiring*. Sociological Science. https://www.sociologicalscience.com/download/vol-6/june/SocSci_v6_467to496.pdf

Reitz, J.G. (2007), 'Immigrant Employment Success in Canada, Part I: Individual and Contextual Causes', *Journal of International Migration and Integration/Revue de l'Integration et de la Migration Internationale*, 8, 11-36.

Salaff, J., Greve, A., and Ping, L.X.L. (2002), 'Paths into the Economy: Structural Barriers and the Job Hunt for Skilled Migrants in Canada', International Journal of Human Resource Management, 13, 450-464.

Subedi, R. P., & Rosenberg, M. W. (2016). High-skilled immigrants - Low-skilled jobs: Challenging everyday health. Canadian Geographer, 60(1), 56 68. https://doi.org/10.1111/cag.12237

Teelucksingh, C., & Galabuzi, G.-E. (2005). *Working Precariously: The impact of race and immigrants' status on employment opportunities and outcomes in Canada*. Centre for Social Justice. Retrieved October 28, 2021, from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/253806938_Working_Precariously_The_impact_of_race_and_immigrants_status_on_employment_opportunities_and_outcomes_in_Canada

Zhang, T., Banerjee, R., & Amarshi, A. (2023). Does Canada's express entry system meet the challenges of the labor market? Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15562948.2022.2133201

Zietsma, D. (2010). Immigrants Working in Regulated Occupations. Perspectives on Labour and Income, 11(75), 13 28.

Theoretical Framework

Ahmed, Sara (2012). On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Baynton, Douglas. "Disability in History." Perspectives 44.9 (2006): 5–7.

Bohman, J. (2005, March 8). *Critical theory*. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Retrieved October 30, 2021, from https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/critical-theory/.

Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. (2015), "More than Prejudice: Restatement, Reflections, and New Directions in Critical Race Theory," *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity,* 1(1).

Bridges, K. M. (2019). Critical race theory: a primer. Foundation Press. St. Paul, MN.

Christina Sharpe (2016). In the Wake: On Blackness and Being. North Carolina. Duke University Press

Collins, P. H., & Bilge, S. (2016). Intersectionality. Cambridge. Polity Press.

DeCuir, J., & Dixson, A. (2004). ''So, when it comes out, they aren't that surprised that it is there'': Using critical race theory as a tool of analysis of race and racism in education. Educational Researcher, 33, 26–31.

Delgado, R. (Ed.). (1995). Critical race theory: The cutting edge. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2001). Critical Race Theory: An introduction. New York: New York University Press.

Delgado, Stefancic, J., & Harris, A. (2017). Critical Race Theory (Third Edition): An Introduction. NYU Press.

Devlin, R. F., & Pothier D. (2006). Critical disability theory essays in philosophy, politics, policy, and law. UBC Press. Vancouver, B.C.

Erevelles, N., & Minear, A. (2010). Unspeakable Offenses: Untangling Race and Disability in Discourses of Intersectionality. Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies, 4(2), 127–145. https://doi.org/10.3828/jlcds.2010.11

Garland-Thomson, Rosemarie. Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring physical disability in American Culture and Literature. New York: Columbia UP, 1997.

Hall, M. C. (2019, September 23). *Critical disability theory*. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Retrieved October 28, 2021, from https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/disability-critical/.

Haney Lopez, Ian. F. "The Social Construction of Race." Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge. Ed. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2007. 163–75.

Harris, Angela. "Race and Essentialism in Feminist Legal Theory." Critical Race Feminism. Ed. Adrien. K. Wing. New York: New York UP, 1997. 11–26.

Haymon, M., & Wang, L. (2021, September 12). *Intersectionality in organizations: Why 'bringing your whole self to work' is not sufficient*. Dalberg. Retrieved October 28, 2021, from https://dalberg.com/our-ideas/intersectionality-in-organizations-why-bringing-your-whole-self-to-work-is-not-sufficient/.

James, Jennifer. C. and Cynthia Wu. "Editors' Introduction: Race, Ethnicity, Disability, and Literature: Intersections and Interventions." MELUS 31.3 (2003): 3–13.

Kerr, S. P., & Kerr, W. R. (2011, January). *Economic Impacts of Immigration: A Survey*. NBER WORKING PAPER SERIES. https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w16736/w16736.pdf

Kimberle, C., Gotanda, N., Peller, G., & Thomas, K. (1995). *Critical Race Theory: The key writings that formed the movement*. ResearchGate. Retrieved October 30, 2021, from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/237264125_Critical_Race_Theory_The_Key_Writings_that_Formed_the_Movement.

Lynn, M., & Dixson, A. D. (2013). Handbook of critical race theory in education. Routledge.

Oguchi, C. B. (2020, February). *Wage policy and industrial relations in Nigeria: A review of the New Minimum Wage*. International Journal of Advanced Studies in Economics and Public Sector Management. http://www.internationalpolicybrief.org/images/2020/MARCH/IJASEPSM/ARTICLE1.pdf

Purdue Writing Lab. (2021). *Critical Race Theory (1970 – Present)*. Purdue Writing Lab. Retrieved October 30, 2021, from https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/subject_specific_writing/writing_in_literature/literary_theory_and_schools_of_criticism/critical_race_theory.html.

Syed, K. T., & Hill, A. (2011). Awakening to white privilege and power in Canada - sage journals. Policy Futures in Education. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.2304/pfie.2011.9.5.608

Thobani, Sunera. (2007). *Exalted Subjects: Studies in the Making of Race and Nation in Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Wallace, T., & Brand, B. R. (2012). Using critical race theory to analyze science teachers culturally responsive practices. *Cultural Studies of Science Education*, *7*(2), 341–374. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11422-012-9380-8

Zamudio, M., Russell, C., Rios, F., & Bridgeman, J. L. (2010). *Critical race theory matters: education and ideology*. Taylor & Francis.

Mental Health Impact

Akinsulure-Smith, A.M. (2017) 'Resilience in the Face of Adversity: African Immigrants' Mental Health Needs and the American Transition', Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies 15(4): 428–48.

Batalova, J., M. Fix and J.D. Bachmeier (2016) 'Untapped Talent: The Costs of Brain Waste among Highly Skilled Immigrants in the United States'. Migration Policy Institute.

Dollard MF, Winefield AH. (2002). Mental health: overemployment, underemployment, unemployment, and healthy jobs. Australian e-journal for the Advancement of Mental Health. 1(3):1 – 26.

Dooley, D., Prause, J., & Ham-Rowbottom, K. A. (2000). Underemployment and Depression: Longitudinal Relationships. Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 41(4), 421–436. https://doi.org/10.2307/2676295

George, U., Thomson, M. S., Chaze, F., & Guruge, S. (2015, October 27). *Immigrant Mental Health, a public health issue: Looking back and moving forward*. International journal of environmental research and public health. Retrieved October 30, 2021, from https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4627052/.

Greening, N. (2019). Phenomenological Research Methodology. *Scientific Research Journal*, *VII*(V). https://doi.org/10.31364/scirj/v7.i5.2019.p0519656

Ho, J., Rogers, G., Anderson, K. (2013) 'African Immigrants: Mental Health Status and Barriers in Professional Mental Health Service Use', in Ho, J. (ed.) Immigrants: Acculturation, Socioeconomic Challenges and Cultural Psychology, pp. 85–112. New York: Nova Science Publisher.

Institute for Work & Health. (2009). *Unemployment and mental health*. Issue Briefing - Institute for Work & Health. Retrieved October 30, 2021, from https://www.iwh.on.ca/summaries/issue-briefing/unemployment-and-mental-health.

Orjiako, O. E. Y., & So, D. (2014). The role of acculturative stress factors on mental health and help-seeking behavior of sub-Saharan African immigrants. International Journal of Culture and Mental Health, 7(3), 315–325.

Priest, N., N. Slopen, S. Woolford, J.T. Philip, D. Singer, A.D. Kauffman, K. Moseley, M. Davis, Y. Ransome, and D. Williams (2018) 'Stereotyping across Intersections of Race and Age: Racial Stereotyping among White Adults Working with Children', PLoS ONE 13(9): e0205614.

Romero, Mary. (2008). Crossing the Immigration and Race Border: A Critical Race Theory Approach to Immigration Studies. Contemporary Justice Review. 11. 23-37. 10.1080/10282580701850371.

Rose, N. (1998). Inventing ourselves: Psychology, power, and personhood. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.

Sangalang, C.C., D. Becerra, F.M. Mitchell, S. Lechuga-Peña, K. Lopez, and I. Kim (2018) 'Trauma, Post Migration Stress, and Mental Health: A Comparative Analysis of Refugees and Immigrants in the United States', Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health 21: 909–19.

Schmitt, M.T., N.R. Branscombe, T. Postmes and A. Garcia (2014) 'The Consequences of Perceived Discrimination for Psychological Well-Being: A Meta-Analytic Review', Psychological Bulletin 140(4): 921–48.

Seller, S.L., Ward, E.C., & David, P. (2006). Dimensions of depression: A qualitative study of wellbeing among black African immigrant women. Qualitative Social Work, 5(1), 45–66.

Sherinah, S., et. al. (2021). Social Exclusion, Mental Health, and Social Well-being among African Immigrants in the United States. International Social Work. SAGE Journals

Showers, F. (2015) 'Being Black, Foreign and Woman: African Immigrant Identities in the United States', Ethnic and Racial Studies 38(10): 1815–30.

Thornicroft, G. (2007). Most people with mental illness are not treated. Lancet, 370(9590), 807-8. Medline:17826153. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(07)61392-0

Venters, H., Adekugbe, O., Massaquoi, J., Nadeau, C., Saul, J., & Gany, F. (2011). Mental health concerns among African immigrants. Journal Of Immigrant & Minority Health, 13(4), 795–797.

Williams, D.R., J.A. Lawrence and B.A. Davis (2019) 'Racism and Health: Evidence and Needed Research', Annual Review of Public Health 40: 105–25.

Appendix

Sample of Research Question

Good day. This interview section is to help me gather relevant information towards my research paper titled "Mental Health Impact of Canadian Job Requirements and Recruitment Practices on Nigerian and African Professionals Transitioning into the Canadian Workspace." In this research, I will be using these interview sections to answer the research question "how do Canadian job requirements and recruitment practices discriminate against Nigerian and African professionals and put them in a disadvantageous position, causing depression and mental health distress as they transition to the Canadian workspace? And I will be focusing on economic immigrants who came to Canada through the Canada Express Entry or other economic immigration program.

Note: The interview section will be for approximately 1 hour and will be recorded for future analysis.

1. How did you decide to come to Canada?

2. Tell me about your educational, occupational experience and life back home prior to coming to Canada?

3. Tell me about your expectations regarding job, income, and housing?

4. Tell me about your reality regarding job, income, and housing?

5. Tell me about what happened when you arrived in Canada and began looking for jobs.

6. How have you reacted to these experiences, and how has it affected you, your family and friends, and your physical, social, and mental health?

7. How have other people reacted to some of the difficulties that you are having or had while transitioning to the Canadian workspace?

8. How do you and others think about some of the stresses you are experiencing/experienced?

9. How have you coped with these barriers?

10. How do you see the future unfolding?

11. What recommendations do you have for change?

Possible Follow-up Questions.

1. Can you tell me how you came to Canada? i.e. Which economic immigration program did you use?

2. What were the eligibility criteria for the immigration program?

3. How long did it take for your immigration application to be completed?

4. What was the level of your education before coming to Canada?

5. Where was your education completed before coming to Canada?

6. What was your profession before coming to Canada?

7. Were you employed in your field of qualification, and for how long before coming to Canada?

8. Were you a member of a professional body, or is your field a regulated one before coming to Canada?

9. Were you satisfied with your work before coming to Canada?

10. Can you briefly explain to me what you do and what your life was like before coming to Canada?

11. Why did you decide to come to Canada?

12. Prior to coming to Canada, did you have any friends or family members staying in Canada?

13. What were your initial thoughts of Canada in general and Canada's workplace in Particular?

14. Did you research about your field of qualification and how to access employment in the field before coming to Canada?

15. If yes to question 13, Can you tell me the information you got while researching about working in your field from outside Canada? Is your field of expertise regulated in Canada?

16. Can you explain the things you need to do to be able to work in Canada in your field of qualification?

17. Did you try to search or apply for work/employment from outside of Canada? If yes, were you successful and what was the experience like?

18. When you came to Canada, did you use any Newcomer program to help you settle and transition into the country? If yes, what was your experience like using the program? Did the program help in any way?

19. Did you search for a job in your area of qualification when you came to Canada?

20. Can you explain your experience in the Canadian labor market?

21. What do you think about how your educational qualification and foreign work experience were assessed by Canadian employers?

22. Did you have help or access to information that is necessary to transition to Canada's workspace?

23. Can you describe your experience trying to access jobs related to your field in the Canadian labor market?