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Exploring the Occupation of Education of Children with Undocumented Immigrant Parents

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Exploring the Occupation of Education of Children with Undocumented Immigrant Parents

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Background

In 2019, over 4 million U.S. residents under 18 reported that they lived in mixed-status families, which included at least one undocumented parent (Abrego, 2019). Many US citizen children who have experienced the detention or deportation of a parent are reportedly experiencing symptoms of "toxic stress" such as depression and anxiety due to the fear that a family member will be deported (Sosa, 2019, p.196). Students' attendance, academic performance, focus, memory, sleep, and behavior are just a few examples of how trauma due to family separation negatively affects students' mental health and engaging in the classroom (Sosa, 2019).

Problem

Further research is needed to better understand the barriers or motivational factors to engagement in school for students with mixed status parents.

Purpose

The capstone project aims to assess the needs of adults who have at least one parent without legal status in various school stages using the Kawa model, focusing on the supports and barriers affecting their occupational engagement.

Methods

Research Design: This research employed a qualitative descriptive approach to examine the supports and barriers to school engagement for students with undocumented immigrant parents to provide a deeper understanding of their lived experiences and the needs of this population.

Sample: Three (n=3) participants were recruited by word of mouth through snowball sampling and personal connections.

Inclusion: The inclusion criteria include females and males between 18 and 35 who come from undocumented immigrant parents or have experienced a parent deportation.

Data Collected:

- Literature Review
- Surveys
- Drawing of Kawa Model
- Informal Conversations with Staff from High School, Colleges, and OT's with similar projects.

Analysis: Dedoose, was used for the survey coding to assist with the data analysis. Following data collection, Braun and Clarke's six-step thematic analysis will be utilized to identify themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Results

Themes	Quotes
Language barrier impacts experience in school <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feelings/Emotions • Social Participation • Not able to ask parents for help 	<p>"Having parents with a different citizenship status definitely influenced my early school years experience. Arriving at a young age with nobody around me knowing or speaking English, I felt alone with nobody to go to when I needed help... Not only did I feel like I didn't fit in because everyone at school would be talking English and I couldn't understand but it also made me feel useless seeing all the other kids around me being able to understand and do their work on their own while I couldn't understand anything" –Participant 2</p>
Perceptions to barriers to education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial Aid • No guidance 	<p>"With my parents being immigrants themselves they sadly couldn't do much to help me since the price was out of our range. For that reason I decided to stop studying for now."- Participant 2</p> <p>"When I graduated high school I was so lost because most kids follow their parents footsteps career wise and I didn't have that. This lead me to regretting my degree because of the lack of guidance." –Participant 3</p>
Shared experiences creates support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comfortable talking to teachers • Staff being relatable • Programs available 	<p>"We have a program called EOP for 1st generation students. Most of our parents were of different citizenship status and I felt comfortable talking to her. She had a similar experience so it was a safe space to talk." –Participant 3</p>

Conclusion

The presence of language comprehension barriers and lack of guidance can significantly impede students' educational progress, leading to difficulties in understanding and completing academic tasks. These challenges can also evoke strong emotions that further hinder students' engagement in their studies.

References

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This project involves human subjects; it has been reviewed by the IRB and deemed exempt from IRB approval.