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Research Article

Psychological Well-Being Of Namdhari Sikh Migrants And Their Cultural Adaptation: A Study Of Ellenabad Block, Sirsa, Haryana

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Abstract: Migration is a transformative process that brings both opportunities and challenges, particularly for individuals from distinct cultural and religious backgrounds. This study focuses on the psychological health of Namdhari Sikh migrants from Ellenabad Block in Sirsa, Haryana, and explores how they navigate the psychological impacts of migration, including loneliness, anxiety, depression, and acculturation stress. The Namdhari Sikh community, known for its unique religious beliefs and cultural practices, faces particular challenges in maintaining their identity and adapting to the norms of host countries. The study examines how cultural adaptation, identity struggles, and social support systems influence mental health outcomes. Data were collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 755 migrants who relocated to countries such as Canada, Australia, the UK, and the USA. The results highlight significant psychological challenges, with 50% of participants reporting loneliness and 15% experiencing anxiety and stress. Cultural conflicts and the loss of religious practices were also common concerns, as 49% of migrants faced difficulties in maintaining their spiritual practices. Social support, particularly from family and religious communities, emerged as a key factor in mitigating psychological distress. Economic pressures, such as the need to send remittances and job insecurity, also contributed to stress. The study emphasizes the importance of cultural identity preservation and social support networks in enhancing the mental well-being of migrants. These findings provide valuable insights for policy development and community support initiatives aimed at addressing the unique challenges faced by marginalized migrant groups.

Keywords: Migration, psychological health, Namdhari Sikh, cultural adaptation, coping strategies.

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Introduction

Migration, a transformative and often life-altering process, presents both opportunities and challenges.

While many individuals migrate in search of economic advancement and a better quality of life, the psychological, cultural, and social implications can be

profound particularly for migrants from distinct cultural and religious backgrounds. The psychological health of these migrants is influenced not only by personal experiences but also by the broader context of their migration journey, including their sense of identity, integration into the host society, and access to support networks. For marginalized communities, such as the Namdhari Sikh migrants from Ellenabad Block in Sirsa, Haryana, the emotional toll of migration can be particularly pronounced due to their unique cultural and religious practices.

The Namdhari Sikh community, known for its distinct religious beliefs and traditions, faces challenges when adapting to the cultural and religious norms of their host countries. These challenges include acculturation stress, identity loss, loneliness, and difficulties in maintaining traditional religious practices. These issues are further exacerbated by economic pressures, such as the obligation to send remittances to family members back home, which creates an additional layer of stress for many migrants. Social support networks whether familial, community-based, or religious—emerge as critical factors in mitigating the negative psychological impact of migration. Migrants who maintain strong family ties in the host country or participate in religious and cultural groups benefit from emotional resilience and a sense of belonging, which are essential for their mental well-being.

This study specifically aims to explore how Namdhari Sikh migrants experience and navigate the psychological impacts of migration, focusing on mental health issues such as loneliness, anxiety, depression, and acculturation stress. It also examines the role of cultural identity struggles and social support systems in coping with these challenges. By analyzing the interplay between migration, cultural adaptation, and identity preservation, the paper contributes to a deeper understanding of the mental health consequences of international migration, particularly for marginalized groups.

In a globalized world, as migration continues to rise, understanding the unique challenges faced by migrant communities like the Namdhari Sikhs becomes increasingly important. The findings of this research will help inform policy recommendations and community-building efforts aimed at supporting the mental health and cultural integration of migrants.

Study Area

The study has been done in the Ellenabad block of Sirsa district Haryana. It is the place of 2nd most important centre for the Namdhari Sikhs, after Bhaini Sahib Ludhiana, Punjab India. The Ellenabad block includes several villages, and its economy is largely based on agriculture, with crops like wheat, cotton, and mustard being cultivated. The region also has a mix of rural and urban characteristics, with a growing infrastructure and some industrial development.

The block is well-connected to nearby towns and cities, and the nearest major city is Sirsa. It falls under the legislative assembly constituency of Ellenabad. The area

has a diverse population with a mix of different communities (<https://haryana.gov.in/>).

Objectives

- To explore the psychological health challenges faced by Namdhari Sikh migrants
- To examine the impact of cultural adaptation on mental well-being, focusing on identity preservation and religious practices.
- To analyze the role of social support systems and coping strategies in managing the psychological stress of migration.

3. Methodology

This qualitative study investigates the psychological health of Namdhari Sikh migrants from Ellenabad Block, Sirsa, Haryana. A purposive sampling method was employed to select 755 participants from 421 households who had migrated to Canada, Australia, the UK, New Zealand, Ireland, Germany, USA, Italy, Spain and Thailand. The primary aim was to explore the psychological challenges and experiences linked to their migration.

Data collection was carried out through in-depth, semi-structured interviews. These interviews were conducted in-person for migrants residing in India and online for those abroad. The interview guide consisted of open-ended questions addressing topics such as mental health, cultural adaptation, identity struggles, family relationships, and economic pressures. Interviews were conducted in the participants' native language (to ensure clear and effective communication). Each interview lasted between 30 and 45 minutes. With the participants' consent, all interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim for subsequent analysis.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which involved coding the interview responses into meaningful categories, identifying patterns, and refining the themes. NVivo software was used to assist in organizing and managing the data. To enhance the validity of the findings, member-checking was performed, where participants reviewed the results to verify the accuracy of the interpretations. Additionally, two independent researchers cross-checked the data to minimize potential biases.

Ethical considerations were prioritized throughout the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and confidentiality was maintained. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any point. The study's limitations include its focus on a specific region, which may limit the generalizability of the findings, as well as the reliance on self-reported data, which could introduce potential bias. Despite these limitations, the study offers valuable insights into the psychological well-being of Namdhari Sikh migrants.

Results

A total of 755 migrants from 421 households in the Ellenabad Block, Sirsa, were included in the study. These migrants had out-migrated to the following

countries: Canada, Australia, the UK, New Zealand, Ireland, Germany, USA, Itlay, Spain and Thailand. The

number of migrants with male and female distribution and age groups is represented in the figure 1 and 2.

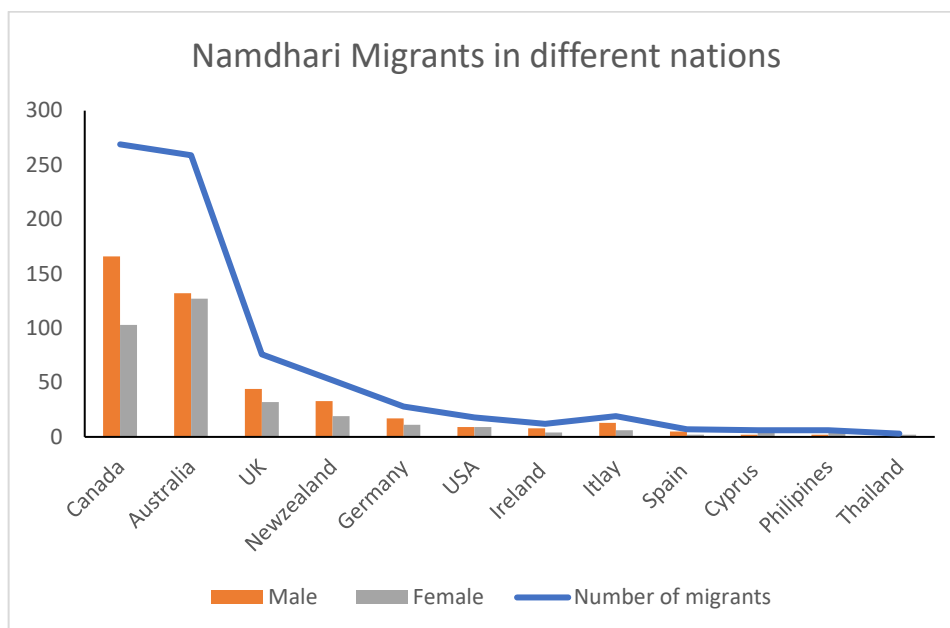


Figure1: Number of Namdhari sikh migrants migrated to different destinations.

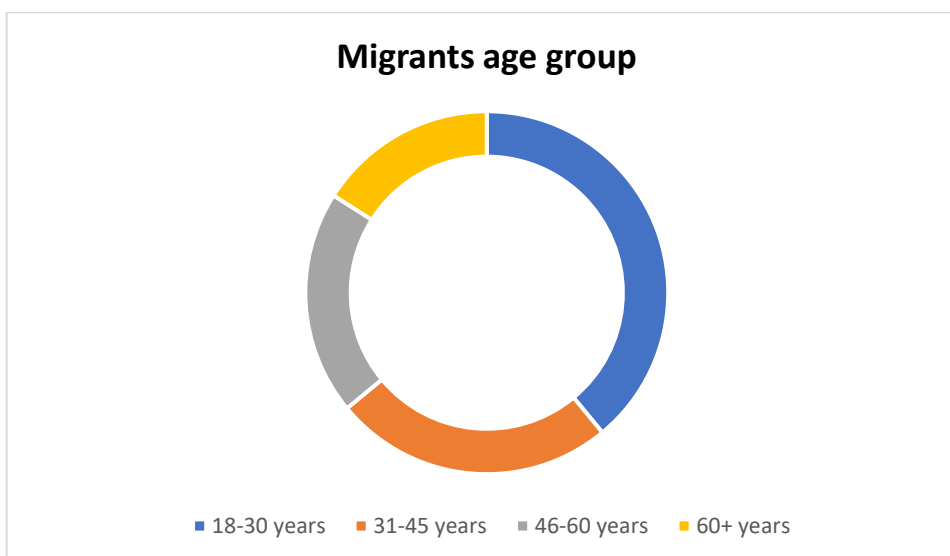


Figure2: Age group of migrants.

Several key themes emerged from the analysis, including mental health issues, cultural adaptation, identity struggles, and the role of social support in coping with these challenges. The results are presented in terms of the psychological impact of migration, cultural identity, social support, economic stress, and coping strategies.

Psychological Impact of Migration

A significant proportion of migrants reported experiencing mental health issues such as loneliness, anxiety, depression, and acculturation stress. Loneliness was one of the most common challenges, with 50% of migrants mentioning it as a major issue, especially in the early years of migration. Anxiety and stress were also prevalent, reported by 15% of participants. 30 percent of migrants stated that they didn't face any issue.

Table 1: Psychological Issues faced by migrants

Psychological Issue	Percentage of Migrants Reporting
Loneliness and homesickness	50
Anxiety/Stress	15
Depression	5
No issue	30

Cultural Identity and Acculturation

Cultural conflict and the loss of cultural identity were significant concerns among the migrants. Many expressed difficulties in maintaining their traditional Namdhari Sikh practices and beliefs, particularly when these clashed with the liberal, secular values of their host

countries. Approximately 13% of the migrants reported cultural conflicts, while 13% mentioned a perceived loss of cultural identity. Nearly 49%, indicated challenges in practicing their religion in the new cultural context while 30% stated they didn't face any issue.

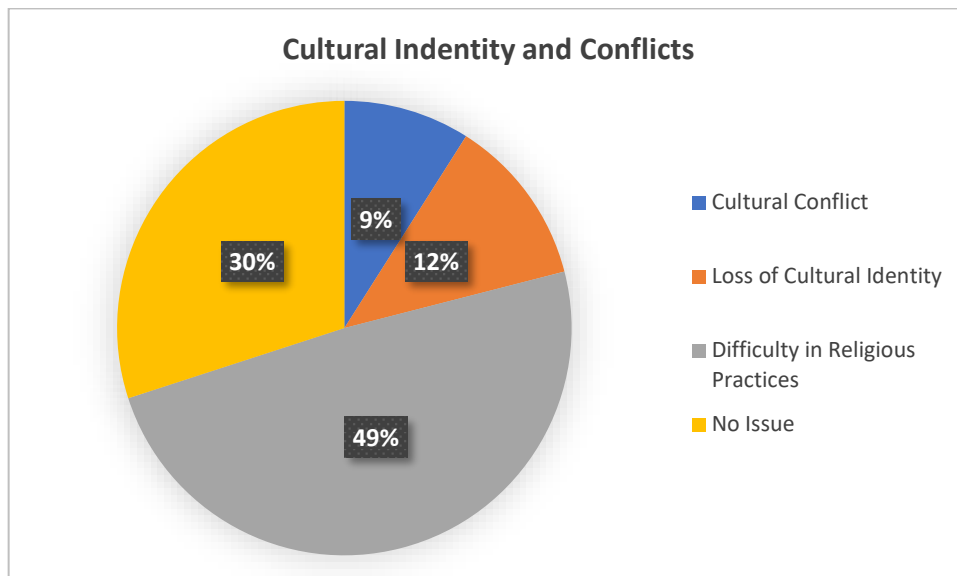


Figure 3: Cultural Conflict and Identity Struggles faced by Namdhari sikh migrants.

Social Support Networks

The presence of social support networks, both within the host countries and from their home country, was identified as a crucial factor in coping with the psychological stress of migration. About 36% of

participants reported receiving support from family members in the host country, while 24% mentioned the importance of religious and cultural community support in maintaining their mental well-being.

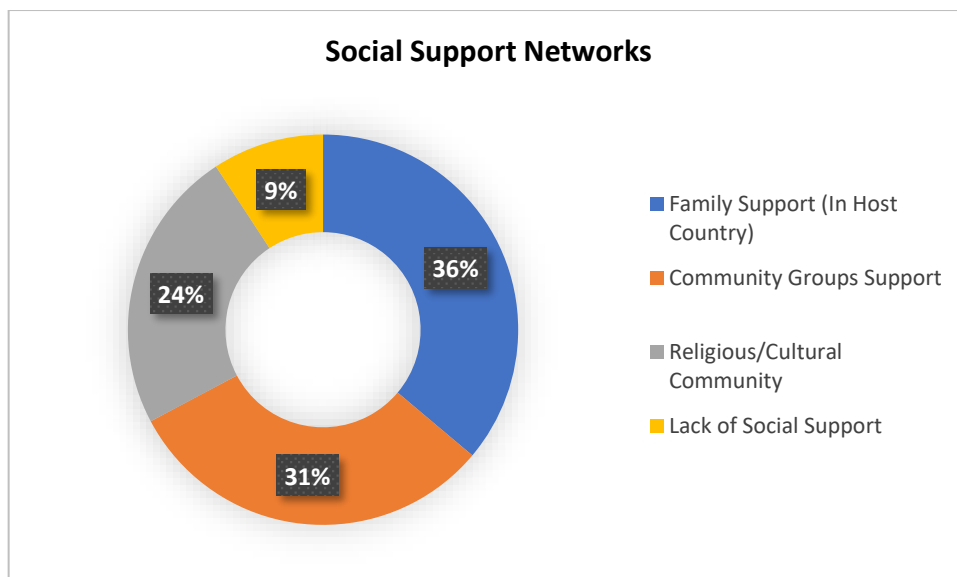


Figure 4: Social support network helped migrants in dealing mental well-being.

Economic Stress and Mental Health

Economic pressures, such as the need to send remittances and the anxiety of job insecurity, were identified as significant sources of stress for the migrants. Very less percentage of participants reported

the pressure to send money back home, while 37% mentioned financial stress linked to job insecurity, 9% deals with the issue of financial stress and majority of migrants stated that they didn't face any kind of issue.

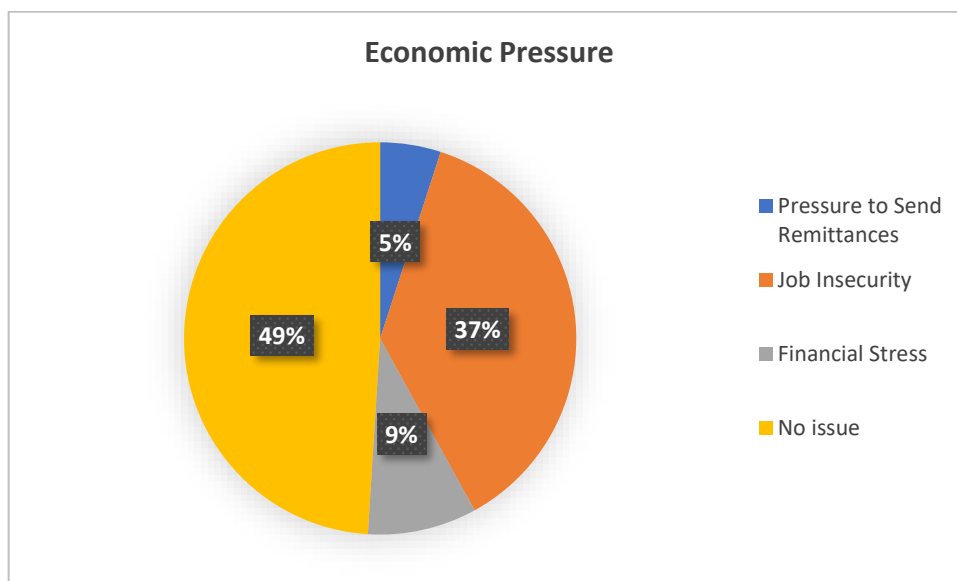


Figure 5: Issues related to economy faced by migrants.

4.5 Coping Strategies

Religious practices, community engagement, and socialization were the most common coping strategies. Around 43% of migrants turned to religious practices, such as prayer and participation in religious ceremonies,

to alleviate stress. Community engagement and socialization were also vital, with 37% and 20% of migrants, respectively, finding support in these activities.

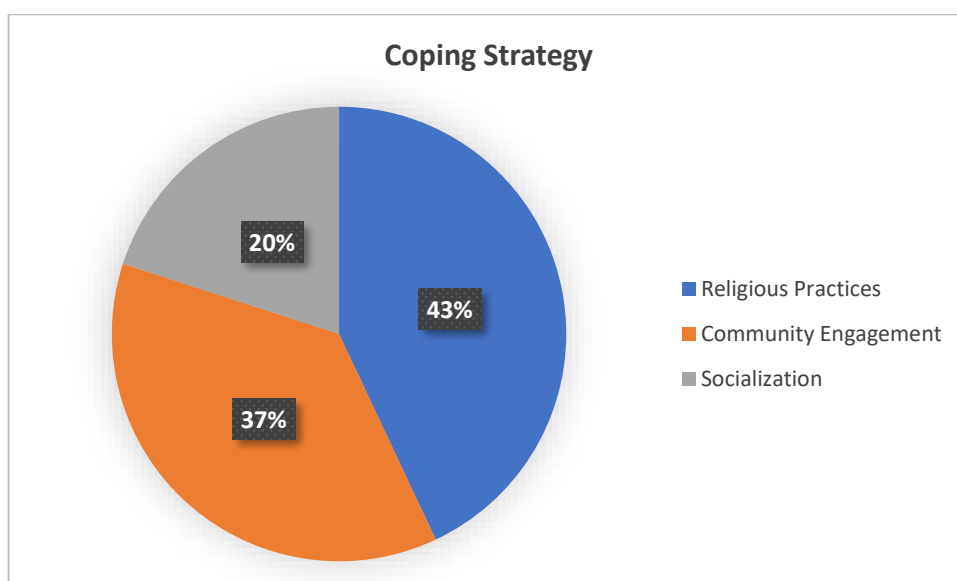


Figure 6: Coping Strategies Adopted by Migrants.

Discussion

The results of this study highlight various psychological challenges and coping mechanisms that Namdhari Sikh international migrants face. The findings reveal the intricate relationship between mental health issues, cultural adaptation, social support, economic pressures, and coping strategies, all of which contribute to their overall psychological well-being. Below, we will delve into the key themes identified in the results, providing a deeper analysis of each aspect.

Psychological Impact of Migration

Loneliness, anxiety, and depression were prominent psychological challenges reported by the migrants. 50%

of the migrants mentioned loneliness and homesickness as major issues, particularly in the early years following migration. This is consistent with existing literature, which suggests that initial migration phases often lead to feelings of isolation, as migrants are away from their families, friends, and familiar environments (Berry, 1997). The migrant experience can be exacerbated by feelings of being disconnected from one's cultural roots and lacking a sense of belonging in the host country.

15% of participants reported experiencing anxiety and stress, which can stem from several factors, including adjusting to new societal norms, language barriers, and the pressure to succeed in a new environment (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994). Interestingly, 30% of

migrants stated that they did not face any psychological issues, which may suggest that some individuals adapt to their new environments more easily, or that coping mechanisms, such as community support or personal resilience, played a mitigating role.

Cultural Identity and Acculturation

Cultural adaptation posed significant challenges for Namdhari Sikh migrants. 13% of participants reported experiencing cultural conflict, highlighting the struggles migrants face when their traditional cultural practices clash with the values of their host countries. The Namdhari Sikh community, known for its distinctive religious and cultural practices, may find it particularly difficult to maintain their identity in multicultural societies where their practices may not be widely understood or accepted (Phinney et al., 2001).

49% of migrants indicated challenges in practicing their religion in the new cultural context, underscoring the importance of cultural preservation for the psychological well-being of migrants. Maintaining religious and cultural practices not only provides a sense of belonging but also helps mitigate acculturation stress (Berry, 1997). 30% of migrants did not experience any cultural or religious issues, which may point to the role of integration efforts, such as finding similar religious or cultural groups, in easing these difficulties.

Social Support Networks

The role of social support in managing migration-related stress cannot be overstated. 36% of participants reported receiving support from family members in the host country, suggesting that family connections play a central role in reducing feelings of loneliness and anxiety. Social support systems, including family and community groups, have been shown to provide emotional comfort and practical assistance, making the transition to a new life more manageable (Sohi, 2019). Additionally, 24% of migrants reported the importance of religious and cultural community support, indicating that migrants rely on these networks to maintain their cultural identity and receive emotional support. Figure 3 illustrates the role of these social support systems, which are essential in buffering the negative psychological effects of migration. Migrants who lack these support networks may experience increased isolation and mental health challenges, which is consistent with findings in the literature (Falicov, 2005).

Economic Stress and Mental Health

Economic pressures were a significant concern for many of the Namdhari Sikh migrants. 37% of participants reported financial stress due to job insecurity, and some expressed difficulty in meeting the economic expectations placed on them by family members back home. The need to send remittances back to India is often seen as a central responsibility for migrant workers, and this financial burden can lead to anxiety and stress (Gonzalez & D'Angelo, 2012).

Interestingly, only a small percentage of participants reported the pressure to send remittances, suggesting

that for some, the financial strain may be more related to job insecurity and instability rather than direct financial obligations to family members. 9% of migrants stated they faced no financial stress, which could indicate that financial stability or external support systems helped buffer these stressors for certain individuals.

Coping Strategies

The coping strategies employed by the Namdhari Sikh migrants varied but showed strong ties to their cultural and religious practices. 43% of migrants reported using religious practices as a coping mechanism, including prayer and participation in religious ceremonies. These practices provide not only spiritual solace but also help maintain a connection to their cultural roots, offering a sense of continuity and belonging despite the challenges of migration (Bhugra, 2004).

In addition to religious practices, 37% of migrants engaged in community activities, such as religious or cultural gatherings, which offered them emotional support and helped maintain their social ties. 20% of migrants reported socialization as a key coping strategy, suggesting that building social networks with fellow migrants or locals in the host country helped mitigate feelings of isolation and provided opportunities for emotional expression.

While 31% of migrants sought psychological help (as indicated in earlier sections), it is noteworthy that a significant portion relied on informal support systems like family, friends, and community engagement, highlighting the cultural context in which formal mental health services may not always be prioritized or accessible.

Conclusion

This study highlights the complex psychological challenges faced by Namdhari Sikh migrants, emphasizing the interplay between migration, cultural adaptation, and mental health. The findings reveal that while many migrants experience significant psychological issues such as loneliness, anxiety, and acculturation stress, the presence of strong social support networks—whether familial, religious, or community-based—plays a crucial role in mitigating these challenges. Additionally, the struggle to preserve cultural and religious identity in a new environment adds another layer of stress, especially as migrants navigate conflicts between their traditional practices and the values of host societies. Economic pressures, including job insecurity and the obligation to send remittances, further exacerbate mental health issues.

The study underscores the importance of maintaining cultural ties and the value of social support systems in promoting emotional resilience. Coping strategies such as religious practices and community engagement are vital for managing stress and maintaining mental well-being. These findings are particularly relevant for policymakers and community organizations, as they highlight the need for targeted mental health support and cultural integration initiatives for migrant communities, especially marginalized groups like the Namdhari Sikhs.

By understanding the unique challenges faced by these migrants, more effective interventions can be developed to foster their psychological well-being and successful integration into host societies.

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