

Geographies of Care

Professionals, Caregivers, and Children's Views of (In)adequate Supervision Across Cultures

BACKGROUND

Lack of supervision is the most frequent type of neglect, and it represents 15% all substantiated maltreatment cases in Canada and 27% in Quebec. Despite its harmful consequences on child development and wellbeing, there is confusion about what constitutes (in)adequate supervision, particularly in the context of growing immigration and cultural diversity. This study aimed to develop a better understanding of caregivers, children, and professionals' views on (in)adequate supervision across diverse cultural and socioeconomic groups in Quebec and the extent to which professionals' assessment of lack of supervision reflects diverse cultural norms. This Research Brief presents preliminary results from this study and will be updated as data are analyzed.

RESULTS

- **Mistrust and lack of community support in host community.** Immigrant caregivers and some children perceived neighbours as unfriendly. Caregivers did not perceive that community members would help with supervising children or that parents would take other families' children to school along with their own children.
- **Misunderstanding of families' practices as neglect.** Immigrant families felt misunderstood regarding their child supervision strategies, particularly older children caring for younger siblings at home. Some caregivers were afraid of being mislabelled as irresponsible caregivers or reported to Youth Protection services by neighbours and community members.
- **Families negotiate child agency by promoting autonomy while ensuring child safety.** Children exercise agency by contributing to their families and keeping themselves safe. Traits of the parent-child relationship, family social and economic supports, and family's views and experiences of authority and safety in the host society influence how agency is negotiated.
- **Diversity of indicators to assess risk in cases of lack of supervision.** All groups mentioned caregiver, child, and context indicators to assess risk in cases of lack of supervision. Families emphasized child and caregiver indicators, whereas professionals mentioned indicators relating to safety planning and possible outcomes. Service providers at times combine personal and professional perspectives in their risk assessments.

TIMEFRAME

May 2015 – March 2020



LOCATION

Montreal, Saint-Jérôme, Trois-Rivières, and Kanehsatà:ke in Quebec, Canada.



PARTICIPANTS

44 caregivers, 59 children (12-17-year-olds), and 67 family-serving professionals in education, health, youth protection and the police.



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LESSONS LEARNED

- ✓ Professionals need to consider the **social, cultural, and economic factors identified by children and parents** when assessing risk and in order to develop culturally responsive supports for childcare and supervision.
- ✓ Training, clinical and administrative support, professional networks, and self-reflection can help providers better **assess context and reconcile their professional and personal experiences** in situations of neglect.
- ✓ Peer-led groups, where immigrant caregivers with experience in the host country can speak with other caregivers, can **help build trust and strengthen community** by providing a safe space to discuss parenting practices.
- ✓ There is a need to **reconsider lack of supervision as a form of maltreatment** and mandatory reporting in these situations.

STUDY DETAILS

A qualitative study was designed to explore the experiences and perspectives on what constitutes (in)adequate childcare and supervision, practices used to support caregivers of children, and criteria used to evaluate risk and safety in the context of different socio-cultural norms.

Information was collected through 23 focus group discussions involving 170 people, including (a) immigrant (Latin-American, Afro-Caribbean, South Asian), Aboriginal, and mainstream francophone Quebecer caregivers and children in family-based care and (b) community leaders and service providers in education, health, youth protection and the police working with ethno-culturally diverse families.

Research design and methods, particularly the sample size, the self-selection of participants, and their aggregation across groups may have hidden cultural variations, especially in relation to Aboriginal populations.

PEER-REVIEWED



Gonzalez, E., & Ruiz-Casares, M. (2021). Negotiating child agency in childcare practices among immigrant families. *Child & Family Social Work*, 1– 11.D.O.I: <https://doi.org/10.1111/cfs.12869>

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