

Masculinity and Gender-Based Violence Among African Immigrants in Canada. An interview with Dr. Elizabeth Onyango.

PROJECT DETAILS

Timeframe: June 2023-March 2024

Research methods: qualitative
(in-depth interviews)

Participants: 39 interviewees among African immigrants and service providers in immigrant communities in AB, MB, BC, ON, NT, QC, SK

In 2024, University of Alberta Assistant Professor of Public Health Dr. Elizabeth Onyango completed a study funded by Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE) that focused on masculinity and gender-based violence (GBV) in migration contexts.

The study, titled *Alternative Masculinity and Gender-Based Violence Among African Immigrants: Perspectives of Immigrants and Service Providers*, engaged immigrant service providers from various provinces across Canada to understand the relationship between the social construction and reproduction of masculinity and GBV.

As Dr. Onyango explains, "[t]here is limited understanding of the relationship between masculinity and gender-based violence in African immigrant communities. There is also a lack of information on effective strategies for dismantling oppressive masculinity and cultivating alternative masculinity towards fostering more gender equity among African immigrants."

The study identifies the challenges African immigrants confront when they arrive in Canada, such as racial discrimination, systemic barriers to employment, and loss of social connections. "Many African men arrive in Canada expecting to fulfill traditional provider roles, only to find significant obstacles," explains Dr. Onyango. "This not only affects their ability to provide but also impacts their social status and identity, which are closely tied to their conceptualizations of masculinity."

The study underscores the need for culturally sensitive and whole-community approaches to support newcomers. As Dr. Onyango puts it, "Addressing masculinity and gender-based violence within African immigrant communities requires the intentional engagement of men, women, children, and people of diverse sexual orientations" especially those who have been historically excluded from GBV discussions and policy-making processes. Such inclusion could take the

form of new support networks and mentorship programs and professional training for community leaders on GVB and oppressive masculinity.

Overall, Dr. Onyango's study reveals the particular experiences of GBV in newcomer communities across Canada and identifies new policy pathways to build supportive, inclusive communities for all Canadians.