

Parenting and child adjustment in immigrant and refugee children: A systematic review

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Introduction

According to the UN High Commission for Refugees, there are approximately 11 million refugees in the world, and this number keeps increasing. Canada and Australia are among the top three resettlement countries in the world, which is reflected in the fact that 1 in 5 Canadians and 1 in 4 Australians originated from another country. These statistics highlight the prominence of international migration and a greater need to support these populations. This review investigates studies that have examined: 1) immigrant and refugee children's adjustment (emotional problems, behaviour, and academic achievement); 2) parental adjustment (depression, anxiety, or PTSD); and 3) styles of parenting and the parent-child relationship. This is a growing area of research that has not yet been summarized in a systematic review. As part of a Canadian team, in collaboration with an Australian team, we reviewed the research in this area. This review seeks to provide a better understanding of family adjustment within the immigrant and refugee context to inform the development of parent support programs.

Methodology

A systematic search was conducted in PsycInfo, Medline (PubMed), Embase, Cinahl, Cochrane, Scopus, and Web of Science. The systematic review was limited by only including English journal articles that have been published since 1994, so exclusively articles published within the last 20 years would be incorporated. There were 3 levels of search criteria: newcomer, families, and adjustment.

Requirements of each level:

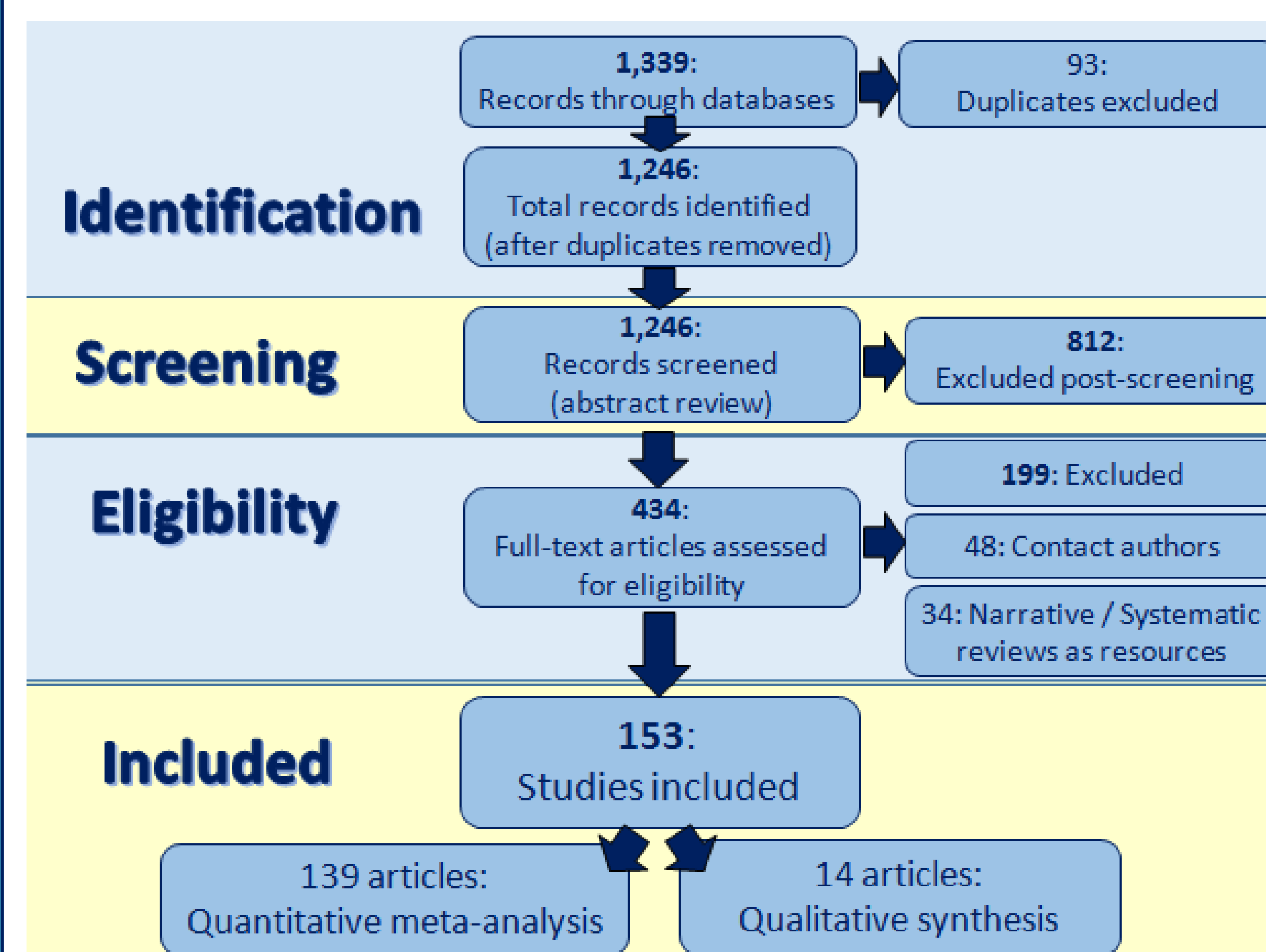
Level 1: Newcomer- must have immigrated into host country within 10 years

Level 2: Families- children sample must have a mean age under 18 years old and parents must be immigrating together with their children

Level 3: Adjustment- emotional problems, behaviour problems, PTSD, self-esteem, school performance, bullying, or aggression

Results

Prisma flowchart for PsycInfo, Medline (Pubmed), Embase, Cinahl, and Cochrane:



A primary review of the titles and abstracts of Scopus revealed that:

- 170 results needed to be reviewed further
- 2 abstracts were missing and
- 962 were excluded

A primary review of the titles and abstracts of Web of Science revealed that:

- 281 results needed to be reviewed further
- 38 abstracts were missing and
- 667 were excluded

Conclusion

Our search yielded many articles to examine. Approximately one in ten articles met our criteria, so we have identified a large number of studies addressing the issue of family adjustment. We have identified 153 articles to be analyzed, 34 articles to be used as resources, and 490 articles that may be included in the study but need to be reviewed further. From this large wealth of articles, we will have a thorough understanding of recent research conducted on immigrant and refugee family adjustment. In reviewing the articles, it was essential to have a clear coding manual, as this reduced ambiguity. The importance of having a team was highlighted when resolving questions about coding and clarifying coding rules. The studies included populations from a wide range of countries in South America, the Former Soviet Union, the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. In addition to having a diverse background, immigrants and refugees were also adjusting to life in a variety of host countries from North America, Australia, Europe, and Israel. We found that the majority of the articles were quantitative rather than qualitative and focused on immigrant populations. A very small number of articles examined interventions in this population, indicating an area for further research.

Next Steps:

- Review the articles from Scopus and Web of Science for inclusion in the study
- Calculate inter-rater reliability between the Canadian and Australian teams
- Conduct a meta-analysis of quantitative articles
- Prepare a synthesis of qualitative studies
- Examine whether patterns are affected by child age, gender, country of origin, and host country

Level 1: Newcomer

Immigrant,
Refugee,
Asylum-
seeker,
Displaced
persons

Level 2: Families

Child, Youth,
Adolescent

Parent,
Families

Level 3: Adjustment

Adjustment

Adaptation

Well-being

Mental Health

Parental
Psychopathology

Parenting

Parent-Child
Relationship

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