

What are the social effects of neurodivergence on African migrants in Aotearoa New Zealand?

A novel methodological application of the philosophy of Ubuntu

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What do we know?

- Neurodivergence is **complex** and **controversial**.
- Diversity in neurocognitive functioning is **natural and valuable**.
- The occurrence of neurodivergence is **increasing globally**, though the occurrence is **relatively lower** in low to medium-income countries.



- Aotearoa is '**superdiverse**' - home to more than 200 ethnicities and over 170 spoken languages.
- A noteworthy overlap between the terms 'migrant' and 'ethnic' in Aotearoa = **inconsistent categorisation of ethnic communities**.
- The African subgroup is the **smallest** in the Middle Eastern, Latin American and African ethnic group (~24%).
- **Migration is an intricate public health challenge**.
- The concept of **Indigeneity is complex** depending on the context and lens from which it is explored.

What do we not know?

The lived realities of neurodivergent African migrants

The services utilized by neurodivergent African migrants

The effect of neurodivergence, colonisation, migration, and racism on African migrants

The actual prevalence of neurocognitive conditions in Aotearoa

The impact of migration on Indigeneity

The impact of neurodivergence on participation in society

What did we do?

- **Consulted** Indigenous African migrant communities in Aotearoa.
- Sought a **culturally safe and scientifically sound** approach that met the needs of the community.
- Developed a robust methodology founded on the **philosophy of Ubuntu** and guided by **Te ao Māori values**.



- Distinct paradigms were **philosophically weaved** together
 - **Without limiting** the vastness of African ways of knowing and being.
 - While **recognizing and acknowledging tangata whenua**.
 - And being **scientifically sound and relevant**.
- Data was gathered through **semi-structured interviews** with
 - Six **parents** of neurodivergent children
 - Seven Indigenous African migrant **community leaders**
 - Three Child and Health **specialists**
- Data was analysed using **General Inductive Thematic Analysis**.

What were the key findings?

The lived realities of neurodivergent African migrants and their families are complex

"It's just a constant battle to advocate for him and make sure that his needs are met. And that he's seen, he's heard. And, yeah, it's a nightmare"
A mother describes her experiences of raising a neurodivergent child.

Different people understand and perceive neurodivergence differently

"This is normal behaviour for a child. This is normal; any one of these kids in the society acts this way, so how then is this kid different?"
A parent describes their community's perception of neurodivergence.

Stigma and isolation resulted in the loss of a sense of belonging and participation in society

"I'm finding society is really judgmental. And they look, and they stare, and they make judgments. And that can be difficult at times"
A parent explains their experience with stigma

The health system was complex to navigate, posing a significant barrier to accessing services

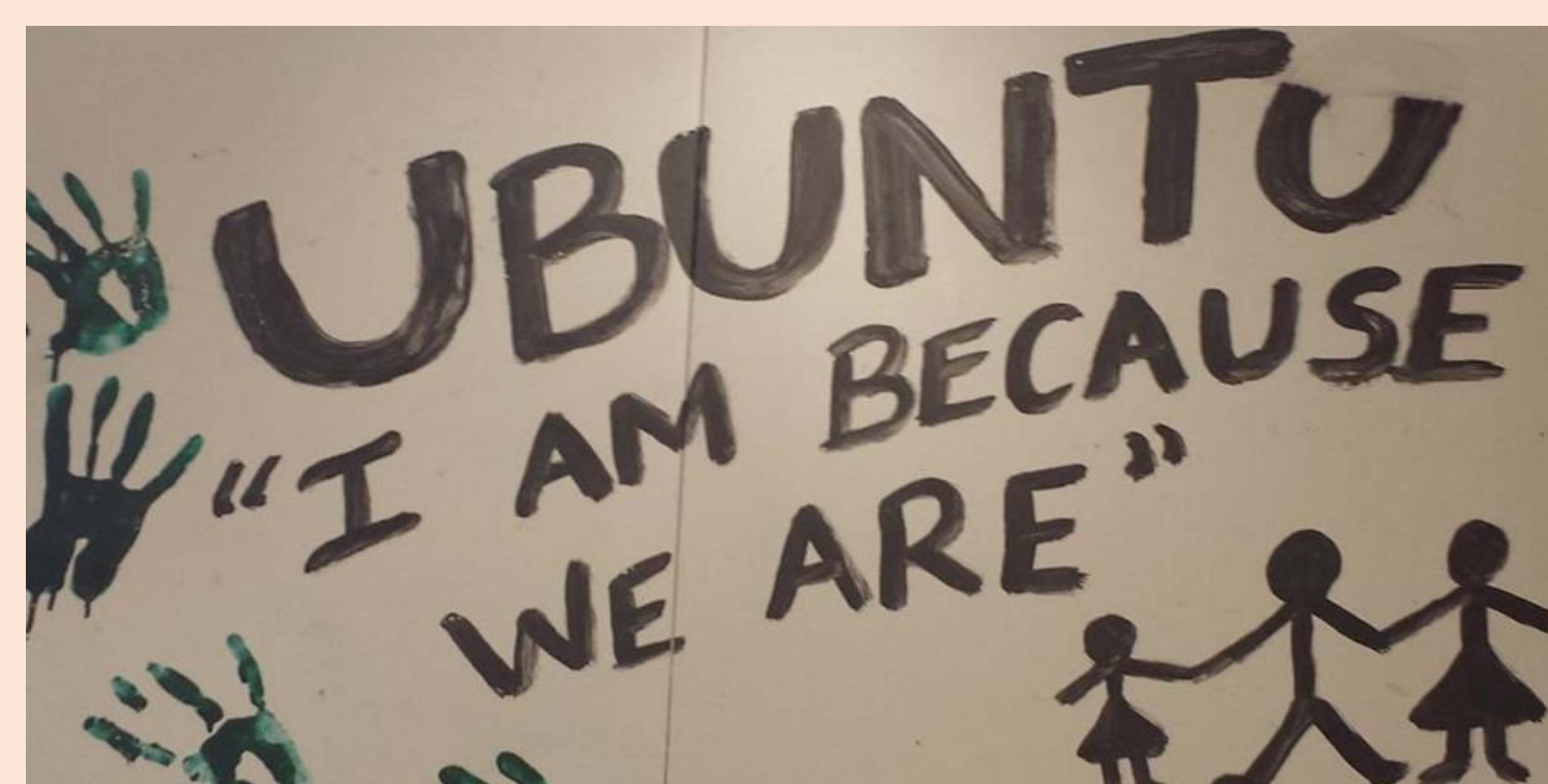
"It's not an easy healthcare system, it's very fragmented, it's very complicated, you have to talk to lots of different organisations, quite piecemeal."
A child specialist explains the health system

Underfunding impacted the availability and accessibility of services

"The whole disability sector is chronically underfunded and, for instance, just accessing speech-language therapy for children who have autism, so they have to go on a waiting list."
A child specialist on the lack of funding

Why does this research matter?

- There is **limited research** on Indigeneity and migrant health.
- Elaborates the essence of **philosophies, knowledges and values** of ethnic migrant populations in research, policy and practice.
- Provides **alternative means to address and prevent social inequities**
- Highlights the relevance of **Te Tiriti** for minority ethnic migrant populations



- Contributes to the **decolonial agenda**
- Informs the development of policies that **embrace multiculturalism**
- Is critical in **optimising service delivery** for neurodivergence & other health services
- Highlights the **need for a coordinated neurodiversity movement in Aotearoa**.

References



Acknowledgements

- I recognise and acknowledge tangata whenua of Aotearoa and mana whenua for Tāmaki Makaurau for hosting me and on whose land I continue to learn, work and thrive. I pay my respects to all Elders, past, present and those who are emerging.
- I acknowledge the participants in this research for their immense contribution to this work.
- I am grateful to the Research Advisory Group and my supervisors for their constant guidance and mentorship.
- My heartfelt thanks go to the Tumuaki and the Te Kupenga Hauora Māori whanau for nurturing my understanding of Te ao Māori, mātauranga Māori and Hauora Māori.
- Finally, a big thank you to my family for funding this research.



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