GEARING TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE INDIGENOUS ELDERLY QUALITY OF LIFE: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Indigenous elderly is one of the most medically underserved groups and are often left out, which resulted in significant health disparities. Besides, research on the indigenous elderly health and wellbeing is somewhat limited despite the world slogan of health equity for social sustainability. Hence, having to assess the health status of the group will make a balanced effort for improving their overall quality of life. This paper aims to evaluate and synthesise the indigenous elderly health and wellbeing by using the systematic review of Scopus-indexed publications, published from 2003 to November 2020. Ninety-three articles served as the initial data, but only 22 articles were eligible to be used for the analyses of 1) perception and beliefs on health behaviour, 2) physical and mental health practices, 3) impactful studies and 4) implications of the studies towards policy and healthcare delivery. The findings revealed developed countries like the USA, Canada, and New Zealand have placed greater efforts in voicing out the group needs. Suggestions for future research are to focus on intervention programs and improvement of the healthcare policy development for the indigenous elderly ease of access to healthcare, fundamental for reducing the social gaps.

Keywords: *Indigenous Elderly, Indigenous and Aboriginal Group, Health and Wellbeing for Sustainable Development, Quality of Life, Healthcare and Wellbeing, Sustainable Development Goals*

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

1. The findings of the SLR reported that developed countries like the USA, Canada and New Zealand have placed more significant efforts in voicing out the indigenous elderly needs.
2. The findings focus on the 1) perception and beliefs on health behaviour, 2) physical and mental health practices, 3) impactful studies and 4) implications of the studies towards policy and healthcare delivery.
3. The understanding of successful ageing in elderly indigenous people should be more inclusive. Research, policy, and practice that is more inclusive of indigenous peoples need to be further refined and well established.

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Research Objectives

The United Nation has also placed health and wellbeing as one of the goals for the sustainable development (SDG 2030) that aims to ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages (Sustainable Development Goals, 2020). As the world community is segmented and labelled based on specific profiling such as underprivileged, disadvantaged, disability, deprived, vulnerable and marginalised (United Nations, 2020), having to assess the health status of the indigenous group will make a balanced effort for improving the overall quality of life of the humanity. As the indigenous populations have poorer health outcomes compared to the non-indigenous counterparts, and they are often left out from the mainstream health services (Harfield et al, 2018) either voluntarily, or because of the provision of accessibility, it is of the interest of the research to understand how the indigenous take care of the health, with a specific focus to the elderly. Hence, our

intent is to explore how such practices and support implicate policies development on the indigenous community social and wellbeing development in accordance to the SDG2030. The main objective of this study to assess and synthesize articles related to indigenous elderly health and wellbeing using systematic literature review (SLR). The SLR aims to provide answers for the following research questions:

1. What are the perception and beliefs of the indigenous elderly on health and wellbeing?
2. How do the indigenous elderly take care of physical and mental health?
3. How do the studies shape the trend in healthcare literature?
4. How do the studies implicate policy development on the indigenous community social and wellbeing development in accordance with the SDG2030?

Methodology

There are a few strategies that can be adopted in conducting the SLR. The first strategy in the identification of the relevant literature is to develop a search string that will be used in the search. The primary literature in this study considers articles that are published from 2003 till November 2020, as the idea of the topic has been explored since 2003. At the beginning 1,385 articles were selected from the primary online Scopus database by using two keywords of indigenous people and health behaviour. Then, an elderly keyword was added to the string, giving a total of 93 articles matched. In the initial selection stage process, all the articles extracted had to go through a screening process. Screening involves looking at the title and abstract to identify relevant articles. Each paper that was retrieved from the database went through the reading process on i) title, ii) abstract and keywords, and iii) full text. Nevertheless, the last stage of the selection involved the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The results were then compared by experts in the field. For any disagreement and discrepancies, further dicussion was conducted. Then, an item that fulfilled the minimum requirement for the inclusion was selected. Articles were then reviewed, and the decision to either include or remove the article for the analysis was made.

Results

A total of twenty-two articles were identified for review using the primary inclusion and exclusion criteria. Most of the study were using survey or interview as a mean of data collection. Source title, document type, research design, study setting were noted for each of these studies. The findings revealed developed countries like the USA, Canada, and New Zealand have placed more significant efforts in voicing out the Indigenous elderly needs.

Findings

The findings of this review highlight number of studies explicitly examining health and wellbeing issues related to indigenous elderly. As the indigenous populations have poorer health outcomes compared to the non-indigenous counterparts, understanding determinants of health among indigenous elderly is crucial. There is also a need to develop research, policy, and practice that is more inclusive of Indigenous peoples. Suggestions for

future research are to focus on intervention programs and improvement of the healthcare policy development for the indigenous elderly ease of access to healthcare, fundamental for reducing the social gaps. There are several limitations to this study. First, the included literature was limited to those published in Scopus. Second, the articles were limited to those published in English. Finally, the quality of the publications was not assessed taken into consideration of the validated quality of Scopus-indexed publication.

Acknowledgement

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