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AVERTING EDUCATIONAL DISRUPTIONS FOR MIGRANT CHILDREN

Natalie Elisarraraz

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AVERTING EDUCATIONAL DISRUPTIONS
FOR MIGRANT CHILDREN

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Social Work

by
Natalie Elisarraraz

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ABSTRACT

Migrant children entering the United States face unique challenges when being introduced to the country's public education system. Not properly addressing the adversities migrant children and families face and their effective resources and strengths when navigating a new educational system can cause a detrimental delay to their potential academic success. This study sought to investigate the educational disruptions experienced by migrant students. This study also explored the relationship between the unique strengths migrant students possess and their use by school staff to the interventions utilized. This study utilized a qualitative design of primary data collected on the experiences of six Counseling Therapist supporting migrant students in a school district located in Southern California. The findings suggested that educational disruptions experienced by migrant students can be decreased by a further understanding of their social emotional needs, support in language barriers, and an increase in team approaches. Results from this study have implications for social work practice related to advocacy and outreach efforts as well as the collaborative relationship needed to support this population.

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This project could not have been completed without the support of the participating school district that kindly allowed for the valuable contributions of the six interviewed counseling therapists. I would also like to acknowledge the continued support of Jose Gonzalez, counseling therapist supervisor, who advocated for the purpose of this study and made the completion of this project possible.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this research project to my family. Un sentimiento especial de gratitud a mis queridos padres Benjamin y Araceli, por su incondicional amor y apoyo en esta trayectoria. Les agradezco por siempre creer en mi y alimentar mis metas con palabras de ánimo. Esto fue posible gracias a ustedes, los quiero. To my brother Benny who has never left my side during my educational journeys and whose support is very special to me. I also dedicate this research project to my loving fiancé Mathew who has been a constant source of support and encouragement during the challenges of graduate school and life; for always encouraging me to pursue my dreams and to never limit my opportunities.

My love and appreciation for you all can never be quantified.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Problem Formulation

The Migrant Education Program has been implemented by the U.S. Department of education to secure all migrant students the opportunity to reach challenging academic standards, obtainment of a high school diploma (or GED) and aspires to prepare them for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). For this research project, I will refer to migrant children as those whose parent or guardian is a migratory worker and whose family has moved during the past three years. These “moves” can range from movement across school districts, state to state, or country to country for economic necessity (*Migrant Education- U.S. Department of Education, n.d.*).

The latest official data reveals that 78,947 migrant children attend the educational system in the state of California, (*California Department of Education, 2021*) . Migrant students are identified as a clear subset population of immigrant students, and similarly this population of young students arrive directly from other countries/states either alone or with parents, some are American-born children of immigrated parents who arrive to this country with the sole purpose of migrant work.

Migrant education services has a focus on migrant children attaining and maintaining an education in the United States. As their moves accumulate during their time here, migrant students face difficulty in learning as a result of educational disruptions that arise as students move between school systems; while also having the appealing opportunity to work and drop out of school (Granados, 2018). For migrant children, the complexities within the public school system goes beyond academics. Some of these complexities include negotiating vital life domains such as sense of identity, educational aspiration, and sense of efficacy as a student (Skivenes et al., 2015). For example, identity for these children is fundamental to their determination of where they socially position themselves upon their arrival, this is explored specifically through interactions with others in their educational experiences (Devine, 2013) . (Gong et al., 2015), identified that students' confidence and desired academic goals is positively reflected on their performance in school.

A heavy emphasis to educational success has been implemented by the country's department of education for this population, with a minimal consideration to the strengths that can aid in achieving that goal. In the enrollment of migrant children to the public education system, there is an effort to homogenize education for all and lose focus of the child's individuality in learning (Ensor, 2011). One of the most pernicious results of this impediment is applying an overall support service to this population with minimal consideration to their strengths and assets. These qualities can be proactively be utilized to support

them while also benefiting their peers as they encounter a substantial increase of interest in school (Motamedi et al., 2021). Migrant children are exposed to multiple barriers to academic achievement that execute the development of personal strengths through their trajectory of the educational system. Failure to acknowledge these strengths produces struggles to provide adequate linguistic, academic, and socioemotional supports for these students (Motamedi et al., 2021). The intersectionality of social work practice at a therapeutic level and education would support the growth in implementation of migrant student's strengths to their academic journeys.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the research study is to ensure equity in education to the migrant student population by exploring factors that address the unique educational needs of migrant children. This study would provide further focus on the internal and external strengths this population already possess to increase support in the academic setting. Social work at a therapeutic level in the role of education, seeks to support children to fulfill their highest academic potential with the consideration of all factors in their lives. The demands and complexity in the educational role may overlook these factors that may be beneficial to the possibility of a thriving academic journey for the benefit of the migrant student. The findings from this study will highlight the factors that should be encouraged, and interventions needed to support the educational success of migrant children.

Significance of the Project for Social Work Practice

With a further exploration of intersectionality of a migrant student's multi-system life (school, home, family, labor etc), the high standard of equal education set by the country's policies can be potentially met. Due to the demand and complexity of educational staff roles, both educators and educational support services may overlook the possibility of a thriving collaboration for the benefit of migrant students. Results from this study would also contribute to legal responsibilities of public-school systems to fulfill their goal within the Migrant Education Program of providing high standards of education. This study will also contribute beneficial information in relation to the use of the generalist intervention model utilized by social work professionals. The information gathered would directly impact the assessing phase of the generalist intervention process, by further expanding the unique needs that require be met for these migrant children to attain educational success. That is why this study would like to explore the following: What factors decrease educational disruptions for migrant children?

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter will be a comprehensive review of research in relation to the educational disruptions migrant children encounter and their favorable strengths they implement in their journey (social capital, resiliency, and complexities). These factors will be presented in the following subsections that include, the migrant student's unique integration process, favorable complexities, the benefit of social capital and resiliency within their experience. Most importantly, a subsection is also integrated in order to highlight the need of this research to further improve collaborative family-school relationships of migrant students.

Integration Process of Migrant Students

Integration is summarized as an achievement of communal interactions among people of different backgrounds, based on shared rights, responsibilities, and opportunities (Bronstein, 2019) . When discussing migrant children, there needs to be an understanding that integration is uniquely experienced due to their complex background. In relation to the school setting, (Burkholder et al., 2021) supports the unique integration of students and its beneficial outcomes in higher educational achievement, improved race relationships and social stability. The aspects of social relationships and stability contribute to the advancement of integration for migrant children. (Vitus & Jarbly, 2021), made the focal point of their study the requirement of competencies in young migrant children in order to

reach successful social stability/relationships for integration in a new country.

These competencies include support in language skills, information and knowledge about their new society, and active participation in education/employment (Vitus & Jarbly, 2021). Social relationships and stability hold a strong dependency on the competencies migrant children engage in.

The overall well-being of these migrant children must be considered when measuring their participation and competencies. Well-being includes, meaningful everyday life, feeling motivated, recognition, and sense of belonging (Vitus & Jarbly, 2021). The strong promotion to integration in schools also faces barriers beyond the classroom. (Burkholder et al., 2021) conducted research that emphasized the need for action in neighborhoods and school policy to overcome the barriers that negatively impact the beneficial use of integration. Migrant children create their own integration system that adapts to their unique needs and strengths consequently adding value to the overall educational system.

(Bronstein, 2019) suggested that efforts be made to expand on this idea of a personalized integration process by highlighting its broader dimensions of public and private. The public dimension would encompass their social environment, while the private dimension would include the personal situations these migrant children experience (Bronstein, 2019). Findings in this research revealed that factors preexistent in migrants lives hinder integration to a new country (Bronstein, 2019). With this acknowledgement, there needs to be a

further look on how these complex factors can be built upon on to increase migrant children's strengths.

Favorable Complexities. Latino students have continuously demonstrated academic achievement through hard work and dedication regardless of the disparities faced among their home culture and that of the mainstream educational system (Salinas, 2013). Migrant children demonstrate a unique resiliency when in schools, this can give the misconception that the education system is tailored to their cultural needs. On the contrary, these students are utilizing their external resources in order to integrate into the mainstream norm of schools. The desire for attainment of this mainstream norm creates conflict with cultural and socioeconomic realities that these families face such as, language barriers and content knowledge (Salinas, 2013). Many strategies and strengths are utilized by migrant children to overcome the barriers and conflicts faced, there is a use of social capital, resiliency, and their experiences.

Social Capital. The misconception that the educational system provides an equitable educational setting for migrant children is a result of these students utilizing their external resources in order to integrate into the mainstream norm of schools. Student performance in academics can be influenced by factors that extend outside their knowledge. Salinas (2013) elaborates by highlighting that migrant families with younger children face disparities when in need of resources

in new communities and deciding on who they can rely on both professionally and personally.

Social capital is a unique strength that migrant families possess, and which becomes beneficial during these times, as it consists of a set of indispensable resources within their social and family relationships (Herrero, 2018). The development of these resources during trying times result in migrant families accommodating and creating their personalized social capital to face disparities in different systems. The interrelation of migration and social capital solidifies the navigation of systems for this population as it builds encouraging associations with their community and increases social trust (Cheong et al., 2007). Social capital is the result of the resources families gain from relationships they make and networks that they establish within their community (Salinas, 2013).

Building social capital through informal or formal resources alleviates the hesitations that this population may encounter, therefore avoiding any disruptions in their integration process (Cheong et al., 2007). Herrero (2018) suggested in her findings that migrant families rely heavily on interpersonal networks that develop through their migratory journeys and were utilized in replacement of community resources. Social capital as an informal alternative to community resources reduces encounters that migrant families may face of discrimination, which affect their sense of belonging and reduce the trust they have in the civic sphere of the host country, thereby placing at risk their continuous social capital

building process (Cheong et al., 2007). This information would support the efforts in clearing any misunderstandings regarding migrant parents' disinterest in the education system and instead value the contributions migrant family culture hold to create a thriving intersectionality.

Resiliency. Migration is an experience that effects individuals in a unique manner. Resiliency shares that trait with this experience, as it is not easily defined in one specific manner (Valieva, 2016). Upon arriving to a new country, migrant children become members of an environment that promotes adaptation to new social rules, language, and school system. At this specific moment of their trajectory, we can witness these students' reflecting resiliency; an appropriate adaption to a moment of great stress (Valieva, 2016). These adaptative outcomes are reflected among various domains of migrant children's lives and can be utilized as a key determinant of successful integration in the educational system (Caleon & King, 2020).

To further strengthen this beneficial factor, Devine (2013), set out to describe the added value that migrant children bring to the education system through their resilience and unique strengths. This study utilized the qualitative data collected from teachers directly working with migrant children in the classroom. As the first form of instruction, these teachers were able to identify the traits migrant children carried and added to their resilience in the education system. Findings revealed that resilience was illustrated among the migrant students through manners and constant gratitude. In relation to thriving for

academics, the findings demonstrated that migrant children were viewed as very positive and very ambitious. Furthermore, migrant children contributed added value to the classroom environment (Devine, 2013).

Collaborative Relationships and Learning Environment

In limiting educational disruptions, collaborative relationships among families and students play a productive role. However, difficulty in building these relationships is quite common. In order to fulfill the responsibility of providing an equitable educational opportunity for migrant students, collaborations need to be made in order to address all unique needs of clients. Research relation to this collaborative effort reveals the antagonistic family-school relationships that emerge from new situations both the school and migrant population are faced with. This study will have an in-depth observation on these collaborative efforts the educational systems thrive for to further understand migrant students' needs. The following studies reviewed the lack of collaboration with migrant students and families its contributing effect to further understanding the strengths in migrant students' lives and learning environment.

Demographics in school settings have rapidly change in the past years, challenging educators, and supportive services to engage students upon their arrival to an unfamiliar educational environment. Dryden-Peterson (2017) further explored this matter by encouraging an increase in family-school relationships to promote academic, socio-economic, and social and emotional wellbeing.

Interviews were conducted with African immigrant parents, teachers, school administrators, and community leaders. In this way, the study had the ability to identify mechanisms by which relationships are created among families and schools.

Results illustrated a variety of barriers to establishing productive family school relationships due to cultural misunderstanding and struggles for authority with school staff (Dryden-Peterson, 2017). In the consideration of academic, socio-economic, and social and emotional well-being this study family engagement had a significant effect on its attainment. Academically teachers reported immigrant students scoring above average and having some of the highest scores on standardized tests (Dryden-Peterson, 2017). Low access to resources was a significant finding in this study in regard to socio-economic wellbeing as parents reported lack of exposure to support for English as a Second Language classes and housing. In addition teachers confirmed the need for this resource to be overseen due to minimal family-school relationship (Dryden-Peterson, 2017). Feelings of isolation and misunderstanding were shared by students, contributing to the decrease of their overall social and emotional well-being. Limitations to this study included its specificity in sample size; African immigrant families. This places cultural constraints on the application of the identified relationship-building mechanisms for other families that are immigrants, or a subset, in this country.

Migrant children may have the lawful right to education, but “access” does not explicitly mean having physical access to the school, but also being able to access opportunities. Hannah (2018) suggests in her study that inclusion of migrant children in education is explored through curriculum as well as learning environment, both spatially and socially. Six pupils, who were first-or second-generation migrants, were observed and interviewed about their memories of being at a new school. Unique to this study, pictures were also documented to physically illustrate what it was like to go to school as a migrant child.

The results of this study highlighted the value of migrant children learning topics in class that connected with their lives and the importance of their teachers knowing about their student’s home cultures and providing support (Hannah, 2018). Teachers are the representatives in a classroom setting and hold a sense of responsibility of become culturally competent for this population. Limitations to this study resulted in the small sample size. Of the six participants initially interviewed and observed, only three student experiences were discussed due to vast data collection and concern of the research to foreground the understandings and experiences of migrant children as underrepresented voices. The small sample size sets high limitations to the application of the results to a general population.

Theories Guiding Conceptualization

This study will utilize the Strengths-Based Model and Ecological Systems Theory to guide its conceptualization. The Strengths-Based Model, as described

by (Guo & Tsui, 2010), focuses on individuals' strengths that make them resilient in periods of adversity. These strengths should continue to be a focal point when providing services in order to further build upon the strengths of service users. This model provides an on growing space for understanding how migrant children reconstruct their struggles into resiliency. Additionally, The Strengths-Based Model enhances the worker-client relationship required to support migrant families in their needs. Guo and Tsui (2010) further explain that the unequal dyad in the client-worker relationship is transformed into an equal collaborative partnership for problem solving with the application of this framework.

In the journey migrant children partake in arriving to a new country, they encounter various ecological systems. (Paat, 2013) elaborates that their encounters with these ecological systems are likely to be shaped by their culture differences and the diversity in their family settings. The Ecological Systems Theory would best support this study by understanding the ecology of immigrant families, which can result in a culturally competent and strong service delivery. A focus on the interrelationship between family and other ecological systems such as school, neighborhood, and peer networks compose this framework, which as a result would place a migrant child at the center of the Ecological System. The Ecological System consists of subsystems that interact; microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and the chronosystem (working with migrant children). It is crucial to utilize this framework and the structure of subsystems in order to have a better understanding of the interactions that are

beneficial to migrant children. Additionally, (Paat, 2013) suggests that insights from the Ecological Systems Theory promotes a better understanding of the family mechanism affecting migrant children's assimilation journey.

Summary

This study will highlight the relevant factors that contribute to the successful integration of migrant children into the educational system. The educational system has definitive focus on the academics of these children. However, this individualist focus from this entity does not properly support the academic success of students facing complexities outside of the classroom. Migrant children have contributing factors that are beneficial to their integration process such as social capital and their resiliency, that if assessed properly can add immense value to their educational experience. This study seeks to highlight those factors in order to increase the academic success of this population and encourage a collaboration between all entities.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

The study addressed the attention to the educational disruptions faced by migrant children, and further highlight the collaboration strengths and weaknesses among migrant families and the educational system to highlight their unique needs and strengths. This chapter will include individual sections which are composed of the necessary details that assisted in the completion of this study. These sections will discuss the study design, sampling, data collection and instruments used, procedures, protection of human subject, and data analysis.

Study Design

The purpose of this study was to ensure equity in education to the migrant student population by exploring factors that contribute to social work practice and address the unique educational needs and strengths of migrant children. This study is a combined study; descriptive and exploratory. The descriptive method allowed for the holistic understanding to the educational disruptions not addressed in educational settings. The utilization of the exploratory method set the platform to the discovery of insights collected from the conducted interviews and translated to possible interventions to increase the educational success of this population. In the attempt to address the attention on factors contributing to the educational success of migrant children, counseling therapists shared their experiences with migrant students. A qualitative design was accomplished by

their contribution in sharing their experiences and testimonies through interviews. Their experience with migrant children and their efforts to support their approach to the educational system contributed to a solution to the problem being addressed by the study.

The application of a combined research method, exploratory and descriptive, with a qualitative approach is a strength for this study because it gives access to personal experiences from professional participants that are in direct contact with this population. In addition, there is greater insight into the barriers that the educational system may face when tailoring migrant children's educational plan. Past research has highlighted migrant children's experiences in the educational system, this study provided observations of professionals on how to further advance educational success and strengthen family-school relationships to decrease educational disruptions.

Due to the sensitive nature of the population the participants were asked to represent, there was a limitation of withholding of information that was confidential to the migrant student they had encountered. Additionally, there was a limitation to the presentation of this population when conducting the interviews. Migrant students in the school system are considered a subset population of immigrant and refugee students hence making their experiences with these students interchangeable.

Sampling

A non-randomized purposive sample of school counseling therapists that serve migrant children joining the educational system at a School District in Southern California. This school staff also provides mental health services within the district to this population as needed through their Newcomer Program. The county, where this school district resides, has consistently served over two thousand migrant students for the past 5 enrollment years (*Education Data Partnership, 2022*).

Approval from the mental health director of the School District in Southern California was attained to conduct the interviews. A total of 7 participants were interviewed. This non-randomized sample has been selected because of their experience with migrant children and their efforts to support their approach to the educational system and to contribute to a solution to the problem being addressed by the study.

Data Collection and Instruments

To successfully go forward with a qualitative study, individual interviews were performed. Data was collected via live, video and audio recorded zoom interviews. Interviewers were provided with a description and purpose of the study prior to beginning interview. Significant demographic information was collected regarding their job title and years of experience. Researcher conducted individual interviews by addressing their role, experiences, and suggesting to the educational disruptions of migrant children in the educational system. The

interview guide composed for this study contains questions that elicited to the insight of unique needs and challenges faced by migrant student, the nature of the collaborative efforts to support the well-being of the migrant student, and also highlight strategies professionals utilize when facilitating educational success and understanding of the unique needs and strengths these students.

An interview guide was composed with a maximum of six questions. To ensure the validity and reliability of these questions, the researcher reviewed these questions with her research supervisor and research professor. The interview guide was shared with the participating agency's supervisor for approval and confirmation on its relevance to the desired participants. Overall themes that are identified after the interviews will be documented and categorized as "successful integration" and "barriers" of integration as shared by the school social work professionals.

The following questions were part of the individual interviews: In your own words, describe the school's responsibilities in the education of migrant children. What are some communication strategies that you find effective when communicating with migrant children and their families? What experiences or trainings have best prepared you to work with migrant children? What are some ways that integration into the education system is assessed/monitored for migrant students? In your experience, how are the needs different for migrant students in regards to their education? Tell me about your personal experience

working collaboratively with other professionals (child welfare etc.) to support migrant students?

Procedures

To abide by CDC guidelines and regulations, this study was primarily conducted electronically. Purpose and invitation to the study was provided via electronic flyer. This flyer detailed the need for counseling therapist working with migrant children and was distributed via the school district's email. A counseling therapist supervisor will supervise the distribution of the electronic flyers in order to encourage participation from counseling therapist staff. Perspective dates and time slots were organized in secured a google doc, where participants had access to sign up to desired date and time of their convenience. Time slots available for the participants were available during the time of 8 AM to 4:30 PM, to be reflective of the participants work schedule. Available dates for interviews ran in the span of a month to ensure participants flexibility. Conduction of the scheduled interviews were through the zoom platform and were recorded. The scheduled interview link was individually sent to each participant 24 hours prior to their interview. This allowed for any technical difficulties to be addressed or rescheduling to arranged if needed.

Upon the attendance of participants into the zoom platform, they were informed of the recoding of the interview but did not begin until given consent was attained from participant. Participants were assigned a number in order to maintain confidentiality and for organizational purposes. Through confirmation of

their attendance to the scheduled interview, participants to provided consent to researcher. A formal introduction of researcher and study was given at initiation of the interview, and an appreciation for their participation was given. Confidentiality was discussed before the interview questions begin. The session recording was turned on when researcher began to ask the first interview question. In the conclusion of the interview participants were thanked for their time and participation, any questions or concerns were addressed by researcher verbally during that time.

Protection of Human Subjects

Confidentiality of each participant was maintained by assigning a numerical identifier to each upon their interest to interview. In the google doc provided, participants were asked not to provide identifying information. Each participant read and electronically agreed to an informed consent prior to participating in the interview. Participants were reminded that attending to the scheduled interview granted consent to participate in the study. Consent to be recorded during zoom session was acquired at time of interview, verbal consent was collected. The zoom interview recordings were stored on a password secure personal computer, under a locked document folder. Participants were assigned a number stated as “counseling therapist 1” etc. This numerical identifier allowed for the confidentiality of each participant. Personal computer where data will be collected was kept secure under a locked desk. After completion of study, the zoom interview recordings, google doc sign-in sheet, and documentation will be

removed from locked documentation file as well as from personal computer. The study protocol was approved as exempt by the CSUSB IRB.

Data Analysis

The individual interviews conducted were analyzed for reoccurring themes that identified educational disruptions for migrant children and their attributing strengths. To begin, the zoom recordings were viewed by researcher to transcribe the audio into written form to confirm accuracy of the data. During transcription, data was separated by the assigned numerical identifier for each individual participant. Entire interview of each participant was transcribed, including statements/comments that may not be related to study to keep authenticity of interview. Use of audio transcription tool through zoom platform was utilized during interviews, researcher conducted a separate transcription to eliminate any errors or misinformation.

Themes identified in the participants answers were categorized in the following domains: Student's Social Emotional Learning, Language Barrier and Support, and Team Approaches. Statements made by participants were connected to one of the reoccurring themes. The themes identified by researcher were confirmed by careful reading and analysis of transcripts to be ensure themes are related to the study's purpose. Responding statements made by participants were then assigned under their corresponding theme. This information was recorded on an excel document that was previously composed. The excel document was organized with titled cells. The horizontal cells were

categorized with the themes previously mentioned, and vertical cells included the numerical identifier for each participant. Quoted responses from participants were logged next to participants numerical identifier under appropriate theme for that statement.

Summary

The study further examined the educational disruptions of migrant children, with an emphasis in highlighting their unique needs and strengths that can aid their educational success. The study included individual interviews with counseling therapist that contributed not only their valuable time, but also an opportunity of greater insight to the direct work with migrant children in the educational system.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter presents the information attained to further explore the educational disruptions experienced by migrant children. Qualitative data in support of this study was attained from the six interviewed counseling therapist at a school district in Southern California. Beyond the role of counseling therapists, participants play an active role in the school districts Newcomer and Restorative Practices Program, which supports this population. Participants were interviewed in the span of two weeks in January 2022, in a 45-minute time slot of their choice. All participants were bilingual in the Spanish language.

Educational disruptions experienced by migrant students were identified along with interventions utilizing their unique needs and strengths. This identified information was categorized into 3 themes which included: Student's Social Emotional Learning, Language Barrier and Support, and Team Approaches. Each of the presented categories answers to how these "new coming" students face educational disruptions to their successful integration to the school system and how increased support can be implemented.

Presentation of the Findings

Social Emotional Learning

Participants identified their active role in addressing the social emotional needs of migrant children that may create educational disruptions upon their arrival to the school district. These social emotional needs were described by Counseling Therapist 3 as: *“a very traumatic experience moving from one country to another [...] they’re often not arriving to a family home setting, so they struggle with all the emotional components of that”*. The trajectory of their move from one place to another exposes these migrant students to traumatic experiences that much of their peers do not experience. Migrant students do not arrive to a new location emotionally equipped to manage and process these experiences before tackling their academics. Minimal support in this area often minimizes migrant students’ interest in academics. Counseling Therapist 1 elaborated on this matter by stating: *“you can’t just focus on the academics and kind of neglect the social emotional because they’re going through so much [...] there is some adjustment in their lives and they need that support to understand what they’re going through and to learn their coping skills and to start building a support system before they even start thinking about their academics”*. The responsibility the education system has taken upon is that of providing these children with free and appropriate education. Participants collectively agreed that

the schools responsibility is that of providing migrant children access to an education.

As students make their transition to a new educational system (state, country, district), migrant students create a dependency on school faculty to navigate services and academics. Counseling therapists are highlighted as a first point of contact when these students arrive to assess biopsychosocial factors. A critical feature to understand is that counseling therapist and those involved in the educational system for these students have a responsibility to become aware of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and its relation to its academics, regardless of the stigma mental health may carry in the culture of these migrant students. Counseling Therapist 2: *“I feel like they may be hesitant to share what they're dealing with emotionally [...] depending on the culture, it may be frowned upon to share certain things”*. To carry on these emotional struggles can very well illustrate resiliency for the migrant student. Counseling Therapist 2 shared her concern that migrant students may normalize their social emotional struggles to maintain this resiliency that can evolve into an educational disruption.

The educational system can be the bridge in connecting academic success and SEL for migrant students. Culturally, migrant students may not be accustomed to mental health services being accessible in a school setting. As a community entity, the educational system holds a responsibility to remove the stigma of mental health services in school and SEL being incorporated into their curriculum to support their integration. Counseling Therapist 1 contributed to the

exploration of migrant students unique integration process with mentioning: *“what I seen that has worked has been an integration of the academics along with social and emotional learning [...] bringing in like different topics to talk about things that I know that were that were relevant to them [...] And so, we talked about that like how to get help, what are your resources, learning how to cope, and how to adjust their coping skills to what they have at hand right now”*.

Participants suggested that the integration process for these migrant students is overwhelmingly unique and can be supported with appropriate approach skills that incorporate their strengths and cultural traits. A continued well-rounded understanding of migrant student’s outlook on mental health is encouraged to address deficiencies in their educational success and as Counseling Therapist 2 stated, *“help them adapt appropriately”*.

Language Barrier and Support

A migrant student’s unique integration process into the educational system was described an intense emergence into a foreign language. As an important mandatory skill required to further progress in their academic goals, language evidently becomes as one of the most identified educational disruptions for these migrant students. Counseling Therapist 4 explained the correlation among the two: *“Language is a huge challenge when coming into the educational system. Because they're not really understanding what's going on”*. Consequently, she also shares her experiences in witnessing migrant students “falling through the cracks” when this educational disruption is not addressed. In agreement,

Counseling Therapist 3 at the school district in Southern California highlighted the importance of proper communication as crucial in the integration process of these migrant students in order to address their educational success and emotional well-being. Processing and gathering the information in a different language makes the accessibility to resources limited, as summarized by Counseling Therapist 1.

Having this language barrier, also, is a constant challenge as it inhibits social interactions with peers and school staff along with holding back their learning gains in the classroom and in their new environment as a whole. Counseling Therapist 4 shared her personal encounters with language barriers by sharing: “*They're learning what I call like “survival language”, getting through each day, however they're not learning expressive language”*. Language barrier as an educational disruption has been lost in translation when supporting migrant children in the educational setting. A heavy emphasis on conforming to policy has conquered the support in language barrier, leaving unseen language needs identified by the Counseling Therapist addressed.

Counseling Therapists emphasized that the English language in the educational system has overseen migrant students' needs for support in expressing emotional needs and expanding that dialogue in the classroom setting. This language barrier and its complexity has had its repercussions on multiple aspects of their unique integration journey. Counseling Therapist 4 recalled that migrant students have shared that gathering and processing

educational and social emotional information in another language is a significant challenge.

Team Approaches

Counseling Therapist identified an ambition to increase effective collaborations with parents, community, and external providers because of various factors. Understandably, the educational system was not originally created to appropriately address the multitude of educational disruptions these migrant students face. Effective efforts are being made to bring the attention to increasing these team approaches for the interests of migrant students, and further utilizing their social capital as a strength to improve the vacant collaborations. Counseling Therapist 5 shared her failed efforts to increase collaboration with other professionals supporting these migrant students: *“I feel like I'm always wanting to reach out to them to collaborate, to get their input and make sure we're all on the same page”*.

It is common that migrant students are involved with other entities aside from educational. Many of these migrant students have interactions with immigration law, county mental health services, and at times child protective services. Counseling Therapist 5 shared her understanding to their demanding roles and highlights the minimal receptiveness she has experienced in her attempts to collaborate. The poor communication during these efforts to

collaborate do not necessarily define the value in the support of migrant students. A strong sense of moving toward a multidisciplinary team for the migrant student to decrease educational disruptions is desirable. Counseling Therapist 2 described her vision on the application of a team approach: *"It's always been the more people who are involved, the better because then we get a better sense of what is going on and who's doing what, and maybe there's an area that nobody is focusing on and we need to figure out"*. The lack of these effective collaborations also contributed to the educational barrier's migrant children face. There is no shared responsibility as to the areas being neglected for these students. A call for educators, social workers, lawyers, and other professionals to expand their efforts to collaborate with Counseling Therapist is emphasized. Counseling Therapist 5 summarized that the unique needs of migrant children go beyond the classroom setting.

An advantage to this team approaches is the benefit of goal setting for these migrant students, as it further assesses needs and resources, identifying priorities, and leads to a mutually agreed upon strategic plan. The creation of this common goal serves as a catalyst to bringing participants together through the professionals they encounter and their own social capital. Counseling Therapist 6 added that social capital is beneficial to the awareness of resources: *"When families begin to trust speaking to someone at the district, we are able to communicate the resources and that creates awareness for others"*. An increase in the use of the offered resources is also noted as migrant families begin to seek

support in each other to attend these resources and validation is sought from one family to another for the resource. Counseling Therapist 6 emphasizes that this collaboration does not individually create rapport with the migrant family, but with an entire community.

SUMMARY

The findings composed three categories highlighting the reoccurring themes in the factors contributing to the educational disruptions of migrant children. The categories raise a series of interventions that are encouraged to be implemented to decrease educational disruptions. The 3 themes revealed educational disruptions created unconsciously in the educational setting through negligence of other aspects in the integration process. As noted in the theme presented, integration barriers get constructed by the omittance of social emotional awareness, communication, and collaboration.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter will highlight the researcher's interpretation of the results, interventions suggested to decrease the educational disruptions of migrant children, as well as the relationship between migrant student's unique strengths to address their needs. Additionally, this chapter will also discuss limitations of the study, recommendations for social work practice, policy, and recommendations for future research being conducted in this matter. The purpose of the research was to explore factors that address the unique educational needs of migrant children. This study also sought out to provide a further focus on the internal and external strengths this population already possess to utilize as productive interventions to their unique needs. The sample size included six participants serving a school district in Southern California as counseling therapist for this population.

Social Emotional Learning

A key finding was that of Counseling Therapist advocacy to have a considerable focus on the social emotional needs of migrant students. Of the six participants, all confirmed their continued efforts to address migrant student's traumatic experiences, stigma of mental health, and hesitation to communicate their concerns. Participants sustained a consistent awareness to the relevant

relation in the absence of emotional support and migrant's student reluctance to accessing resources on school campus.

An increase in mental health promotion in the academic setting has been evident due to the growing social and emotional struggles students encounter in their daily life. In comparison to resident students in this country, students integrating into the U.S. educational system have no prior knowledge to the cultural norms and/or social and emotional skills adapted in this country (Yeh et al., 2021). As a result, migrant students experience negative emotions that become barriers to their integration process and academic success, these negative emotions can include anxiety, loneliness, lack of motivation, and confidence (Yeh et al., 2021). Access mental health services in the educational setting that already intimidating can be perceived by these students as a risk of exposure to a weakness of character (shame and stigmatization), creating a barrier to seeking professional help for mental illness (Tyson et al., 2015).

Participants further implied there is a clear educational disruption when their social emotional needs are not met. There is indication that their unique strength of resiliency upon their arrival to a new educational setting is diminished when there is not allocation of mental health services in their integration process. While the literature review did not show evidence of this relation, it is generally understood that unmet needs can become chronic barriers in life span.

Language Barriers and Support

Educational policy is responsible for the rigid academic standards migrant students are presented with. Migrant students reassuring form of communication are asked to be set aside so that educational standards are met. All participants highlighted language as a reoccurring educational disruption for these migrant students. The primary result of this educational disruption is a difficulty in communicating effectively with these students beyond their relationship with a Counseling Therapist. Language is the main tool utilized by teachers to deliver the educational lessons to students and encourage students to participate further into the school community (Cassar & Tonna, 2019). Many supportive services do not have the opportunity to aid migrant students in all the encounters in the school setting, making this opportunity to further integrate very difficult. Failure to address this language barrier not only decreases their lack in proficiency in the new language but also encourages the student to remain silent, feel disconnected and disengaged from their peers and classroom (Cassar & Tonna, 2019).

Data revealed that having an increased support in their language barrier would significantly decrease this educational disruption. In recognition, this decrease in language barrier would have an effect to their resiliency and experience of the integration process. When students are presented with the opportunity to explore and articulate language in various ways they are able to discover their abilities, interests, and identities in addition to the academic

linguistics acquired (Cassar & Tonna, 2019). Agreed upon by participants, is the desire for the educational system to provide more extensive language support services to not take away from their strengths.

Team Approaches

Challenges in collaboration efforts were substantially recognized in both the literature review and as a revealed them in the collected data. All Counseling Therapist shared their experience in making numerous attempts to collaborate with other providers and migrant families themselves. These unreciprocated attempts allow for lack of communication and trust to occur among providers and migrant students. A consistent relationship can aid the identification of unique needs and better interpret their goals. Communication is an ongoing challenge when reaching out to participating agencies, regular contact is decisive to setting goals for the student's life both within and outside of the school (Moore, 2005).

The more than two-thousand migrant students enrolling academically for the residing county of this Southern California school district has their distinctive perception of all entities they participate in. Four out of the six Counseling Therapist interviewed shared their concern for migrant family's hesitation and misunderstanding of resources. As challenges arise, migrant families often do not consider support from the student's school. There are various factors that were highlighted such as, fear of legalities, misconception of mental health, and mistrust. A need for a strong relationship to be built among migrant students' social capital and their involved entities was mentioned to validate the services

provided by schools. Keeping this communication as an essential factor to increase collaboration encourages everyone to be committed to the collective mission, the team then is far more likely to survive obstacles without falling apart (Moore, 2005).

Recommendations for Social Work Practice, Policy, and Research

The researcher of this study recommends for future social work programs both academic and professional conduct more research on the outreach efforts being made by school staff to address the unique needs of migrant students. The importance of reciprocated communication and implementation of ongoing services needs to be emphasized and prioritized in the educational field to all staff to prevent overlook of migrant student's unique strengths and needs. Research of this study also recommends the educational system implement a strong emphasis on the utilization of the Strength-Base Model to create the relationship between their unique strengths and the interventions utilized to address their educational disruptions.

In effort to uphold ethical standards with the IRB, the researcher avoided gathering information from migrant student participants who were younger than the age of 18. However, future research would benefit from exploring migrant students personal experience in their navigation and acclimation to a new educational system. This would, as a result, further elaborate on the effectiveness of the current utilized interventions as experienced through these

migrant students. The literature contributed information on primarily on the experiences of professionals and the migrant population as a whole.

Limitations

Limitations in this research study were encountered. The planned population to be researched was not entirely possible. The participants role in providing counseling services to a diverse community included immigrant and migrant children, as well as unaccompanied minors. Migrant children are a subset group of those identified as immigrant children, which resulted in the blurred identification of the population. The sample was only able to share data in relation to all populations mentioned and not exclusively to those of migrant students. This hindered the opportunity to analyze if the educational disruptions were definitively experienced by migrant students and if the effectiveness of the interventions currently utilized were successfully. In perspective, had the research study included data of the ideal population, it would have not exposed the unique needs of that this broader population is in need of. This confirming that the need for further exploration to the unique educational needs of these students goes beyond that of the migrant population

Although this research revealed significant educational disruptions faced by students, there is a need for a more in-depth analysis of their personal experiences. A more exclusive sample where migrant students, rather than professionals, would allow for an opportunity to share their experiences and needs would ensure the data reflects validation to the discrepancies through their

eyes. Having this sample available would also allow for a longitudinal study to be done to further assess the effectiveness of the interventions utilized.

Conclusions

This study was unable to explore the educational disruptions exclusively experienced by migrant children. Migrant children in the educational setting are considered a subset of those identifying and immigrant students, thus fusing the Counseling Therapist experience with both populations. This chapter emphasized the importance of future research with larger sample size focused on only the migrant population to capture more details of the social emotional, language, and team supports that will address their unique needs. In addition, other research may consider variables such as state to state migration and labor participation among migrant students. This study also experienced challenges due to restrictions in relation to COVID-19. Research would have benefited from an additional observational data collection method to analyze the interactions of migrant students with school staff, Counseling Therapist, and peers.

APPENDIX A
INTERVIEW GUIDE

Questions for Counseling Therapists
(Migrant Students in School System)

1. In your own words, describe the school's responsibilities in the education of migrant children.
2. What are some communication strategies that you find effective when communicating with migrant children and their families?
3. What experiences or trainings have best prepared you to work with migrant children?
4. What are some ways that integration into the education system is assessed/monitored for migrant students?
5. In your experience, how are the needs different for migrant students in regards to their education?
6. Tell me about your personal experience working collaboratively with other professionals (child welfare etc) to support migrant students?

Survey Created by Natalie Elisarraraz.

APPENDIX B
INFORMED CONSENT

INFORMED CONSENT

The study in which you are asked to participate is designed to examine the contributing factors that promote educational integration of migrant children. The study is being conducted by Natalie Elisarraraz, a graduate student, under the supervision of Dr. Laurie Smith, Associate Professor in the School of Social Work at California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB). The study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at CSUSB.

PURPOSE: The purpose of the study is to provide a further focus for social work practice on the intersectionality of the child welfare and public education system, primarily to that of the migrant student population.

DESCRIPTION: Participants will be asked of a few questions on their training to serve this population, collaboration techniques, communication skills, and suggestions to improve education integration.

PARTICIPATION: Your participation in the study is totally voluntary. You can refuse to participate in the study or discontinue your participation at any time without any consequences.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Your responses will remain confidential, and data will be reported in group form only.

DURATION: It will take 30 to 45 minutes to complete the interview with researcher.

RISKS: Although not anticipated, there may be some discomfort in answering some of the questions. You are not required to answer and can skip the question or end your participation.

BENEFITS: There will not be any direct benefits to the participants. However, findings from the study will contribute to our knowledge in this area of research.

CONTACT: If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Dr. Barragán at (909) 5373501.

RESULTS: Results of the study can be obtained from the Pfau Library ScholarWorks database (<http://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/>) at California State University, San Bernardino after July 2022.

I agree to have this interview be audio recorded: _____ YES _____ NO

I understand that I must be 18 years of age or older to participate in your study, have read and understand the consent document and agree to participate in your study.

Place an X mark here

Date

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