Canada is known globally as a multicultural country.

Multiple studies have indicated that Muslim Canadians believe discrimination, based on their religious beliefs, is common.

Muslims account for about 3.2% of the Canadian population, of which 513,380 are women, constituting 3.1% of all women in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2011).

Muslim female students' experiences in educational settings include difficulties in developing relationships with host students, stereotyping, a lack of accommodation, religious identity discrimination, and hate crimes.

Neglecting these challenges could seriously impact their physical, mental, and social well-being, as well as violate the ethics of social work.
Study Purpose

- To understand Muslim female students’ experiences in relation to discrimination, inclusion/exclusion, social justice, and equity in social work programs in Western Canada.
- To explore the meaning that Muslim female students attach to their experiences in social work programs in Western Canada.

Research Questions

- What are the experiences of Muslim female students with regards to discrimination inclusion/exclusion, social justice, and equity in social work programs in Western Canada?
- How do the experiences of Muslim female students in social work programs in Western Canada impact their lives?

Method

- The study used a qualitative descriptive phenomenological design.
- Twelve Muslim female students currently enrolled in or recent graduates (within the past two years) of university social work programs in Western Canada were recruited via convenience sampling methods.
- Semi-structured exploratory interviews were conducted via Zoom between September and November 2020 and the phenomenological approach was used for data analysis.
Findings

Theme 1: "I am a Muslim Woman"

Theme 2: Visible Religious Identity in Educational Settings

Theme 3: Experiences of Social Exclusion in Social Work Programs

Theme 4: Consequences of Exclusion for Muslim Female Students
Conclusion

- Study participants identified experiences of exclusion, stereotyping and discrimination, including the lack of Muslim culture and religion in the social work curriculum.

- Muslim female students faced a number of challenges, including a lack of diversity, a lack of awareness among professors and students, and a lack of accommodation for religious and cultural practices, all of which have a negative impact on the physical and psychological well-being of Muslim female students in social work program in Western Canada.

- These findings could better inform educators and policy makers in designing curriculum and formulating culturally appropriate policies to increase diversity and inclusion.

- Further research is needed to evaluate the knowledge of social work professors and students about equity-deserving groups’ cultures and religions, including Islamic culture and religion. The results of such research could further contribute to developing strategies and re-designing curriculum to promote cultural competency in social work programs in Canada.
Thanks!
Any Questions?
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