

Immigrant, black and racialized people's health

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Learn about the research of Dr. Bukola Salami, Professor at Cumming School of Medicine, University of Calgary, in this particular focus on Immigrant, Black, and Racialized People's Health

Immigrants often arrive in Canada in better health than the Canadian-born population due to pre-arrival health screening. This phenomenon is called the healthy immigrant effect. However, the health of immigrants often declines after a period of time in Canada. Several factors contribute to this health decline, including poor socioeconomic outcomes, healthcare access barriers, and discrimination.

Professor Salami's research program focuses on policies and practices shaping migrant and Black people's health. She has been involved in over 85 funded studies totaling over \$230 million. She has led research projects on topics including African immigrant child health, immigrant mental health, access to healthcare for Black women, access to healthcare for immigrant children, Black youth mental health, the health of internally displaced children, the well-being of temporary foreign workers, COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy among Black Canadians, an environmental scan of equity-seeking organizations in Alberta, culturally appropriate practices for research with Black Canadians, international nurse migration, and parenting practices of African immigrants.

She is one of Canada's most published Black health researchers, with over 120 papers in peer-reviewed journals. In addition, she is highly committed to service, including being a Board member of the Black Opportunity Fund. While there is still much to be done to improve Black and racialized people's health in Canada, Dr. Salami's research program has led to sustainable gains, including:

Improved policy related to Black and Racialized People's Health in Canada

She has provided consultations to policymakers and practitioners at the local, provincial, and national levels. Her policy consultations led to an improved COVID-19 response for Black people in Canada.

She also presented her work to the Standing Committee on Health at the Federal House of Commons in Ottawa. Her presentation on immigrant, Black, and racialized children's health in Canada contributed to policy discussions on child health.

Creation of the first Black mental health clinic in Western Canada

In 2019/2020, she led a research project in collaboration with youths of the Africa Centre on the mental health of Black youths. Her team interviewed 30 Black youths and completed four conversation cafés with 99 youths.

The interviews indicated the pervasiveness of anti-Black racism on Black youth mental health and the barriers related to accessing mental health services, including cost, lack of representation of Black people in mental health service delivery, and the discomfort felt by Black youths when accessing mental health services from locations they do not consider safe spaces.

The last conversation café took youths through imagining an ideal mental health clinic for Black youths. The data were used by Africa Centre and the Alberta Black Therapist Network to create a mental health clinic for Black Canadians in Western Canada, which offers free services delivered by Black mental health professionals.

Founder of Black Youth Mentorship and Leadership Program

In 2020, stemming from the results of her research on African child well-being, she created the first fully interdisciplinary university-based mentorship program for Black youths in Canada. The Black Youth Mentorship and Leadership Program seeks to socially and economically empower Black youths to contribute meaningfully to Canadian society. Youths in the program complete workshops on relevant topics, gain research experience with Black faculty members and allies, and meet weekly with Black mentors in the community.

The program has improved the educational outcomes and community belonging of Black youths and fostered positive cultural identity. The Black Youth Mentorship and Leadership Program has trained around 150 Black high school youths, many of whom are now enrolled in university.

Some successes of the program include Black youths who are currently leaders in their field, two co-authored editorials related to racism, education, and the mental health of Black youths, and resource booklets for Black parents and Black communities in Canada.

The youths also created a campaign at the end of the COVID-19 pandemic to address COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy among youths. In 2023, youths in the program began a vision for an ideal Black youth hub in Calgary and are currently in the process of making it a reality.

Founder of the African Child and Youth Migration Network

She is the founder and lead of the African Child and Youth Migration Network, a network of more than 40 researchers located worldwide. This network develops and mobilizes knowledge to improve policies and practices that contribute to the well-being of African migrant children and youth.

Network members come from Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, the United States, the Netherlands, South Africa, Ghana, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Rwanda, and Sierra Leone. This work has had a significant policy impact.

In 2022, she was one of three finalists for [the SSHRC Impact Awards \(Connections\)](#). The award is given to an individual or a team of six people maximum (including the nominee) whose initiative has engaged the campus and/or broader community. Her work was recognized for generating intellectual, cultural, social, and/or economic impacts.

Much can still be done to address immigrant health and social outcomes in Canada, including creating spaces of belonging for Black youth, addressing systemic racism, infusing anti-racist practice into evaluation metrics, and creating a national mentorship program.

However, Dr. Salami's work has indicated some opportunities to address social and health inequities in Canada. Evidently, her work has led to significant improvements in health policy, health professional practice, and health research innovations in Canada as they relate to immigrant, Black, and racialized populations.

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