

Challenges, Aspirations and Opportunities of South Asian Young People in Hong Kong and Implications for Citizenship Social Work

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Date : 16 November 2023 (Thursday)
Time : 4:30pm
Zoom Link : <https://cityu.zoom.us/j/96525901115?pwd=MklmOFpiYnl6ZFc5MjhnMzcrNjYUT09>
Meeting ID: 965 2590 1115 Password: 054870
Moderator : Prof. Sylvia Kwok
Language : English

Abstract

Hong Kong accommodates a well-established South Asian community, presently comprising approximately 101,969 residents, equivalent to 1.4% of the total population of 7.4 million. Within this community, numerous young South Asian descents have been born and raised, spanning multiple generations. They are Hong Kong citizens with core citizenship rights. This presentation aims to present the key findings derived from two studies conducted between 2020 and 2022, which specifically delve into the social engagement, citizenship identity, and perspectives regarding staying or leaving Hong Kong among South Asian youth. The studies applied qualitative method and involved a sample size of 44 individuals possessing South Asian heritage.

Findings show that South Asian youth in Hong Kong have developed strong citizenship identity through social engagement. They act as cultural mediators between the mainstream Chinese and South Asian communities in social and professional contexts. However, they encounter challenges in full participation, including limited institutional support for opinion expression, language barriers in job search, social stigmatization, and exclusion. Despite these obstacles, they hesitate to leave due to their hard-earned accomplishments. They fear transitioning from second-class to third-class citizens amid recent sociopolitical changes. They view themselves as valuable assets to Hong Kong, aspiring to contribute meaningfully.

These findings illuminate the value of citizenship social work, a model emphasizing rights, entitlements and protections, and linking behaviors and social phenomena to rights deprivation, supplementing the traditional deficit and strength frameworks in social work. Besides, they bear policy implications. It is paramount not only to reduce barriers faced by South Asian youth, but also acknowledge their worth as contributions to society rather than neglecting their potential talents and rights.

Biography

Kim Kwok is a Visiting Assistant Professor in the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences at City University of Hong Kong. She holds expertise in social work, migration studies, and China studies, having earned her PhD from the University of Vienna. Her research focuses on marginalized populations in modern multicultural societies, such as migrants, individuals with diverse sexual and gender identities, and children with special needs.

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