

Comprehensive Study and effect of Immigration Law on Family Relationships

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ABSTRACT

The research examines how various aspects of immigration laws influence family relationships by studying how the law interacts with cross-border experiences of the families. The law on immigration receives very keen interest in whose family members will reunite through what conditions and expresses how long such a reunification will take. This study would try to learn the socio-legal, psychological, and emotional consequences of immigration policies over families, mainly in the contexts of deportation, detention, or delay in family sponsorship.

Employing qualitative methodologies, this research paper analyses the secondary data with peer-reviewed articles, legal documents, and reports of international organizations published within the last five years. It includes Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory and Social Capital Theory in explaining how laws marginalize family life.

In the end, immigration laws that are considered very stringent tend to lead to much more emotional distress, instability, and long-term separation from families. The brunt of these effects is borne by children, as often their development will be affected due to disrupted family environments. Finally, this research paper throws recommendations toward a humane immigration reform. These include uniformity in legal practice, fast-tracking reunion, and trauma-informed legal services provision.

In sum, this research adds to the existing literature in human rights and immigration justice, using this forum to implore policy-makers to factor family integrity as a core sterling in any humane migration policy.

Keywords: Family reunification, Immigration law, Deportation, Psychological impact, Migration policy

1. INTRODUCTION

Immigration has always been at the core of modern-day nation-builders and demographic transformations. As an increasing global movement is given cause by economic opportunities, political instability, and climate crises, immigration laws are put in place mainly to shape population flows and define who belongs. At the heart of such legislation lies a most humane concern: family. Despite immigration law being framed mainly in terms of economic or national security considerations, the impact on family relationships, adverse or otherwise, is quite profound-witness the cases of delays to reunification, detention, deportation, and uncertain legal statuses (Wray, 2021).

Yet family ties hinge on emotional intimacy, interdependence, and daily interaction-features often undermined by restrictive or otherwise faulty immigration regimes. The rights of families to join in a natural manner are increasingly contested as states revise immigration frameworks to conform with labour market requirements or political pressures. Once again, in the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia, the balance has weighed more toward skilled migration and border control than humanitarian or family interests (Bohr & Whitaker, 2021). These shifts have normalized prolonged family separations, severely affecting parents and children, leading to emotional distress, disruptions to schooling, and economic instability for dependent spouses or elderly relatives.

While these legal courses of family reunification would potentially benefit some claimants and their families, they remain beset by complicated eligibility criteria, bureaucratic bottlenecks, and backlogs that delay processing. Whereas most families would survive with sufficient resources or documentation to allow effective navigation within the immigration system, those from low-income backgrounds and conflict-torn regions are most disadvantaged (Pecoud, 2020). Under

these conditions, temporary migrants could face even greater dependency and emotional burdens, perhaps without work rights or access to health care.

The paper looks at how immigration law-situated in different legal settings and across various policy regimes-affects the wellbeing and integrity of families. The problem bridges law and serious ethics regarding the balance between state sovereignty against the right to family life of individuals. With an interdisciplinary approach of legal analysis heavily interfaced with sociological inquiry and psychological studies, the investigation highlights the systemic challenges in built into present-day immigration arrangements and their consequences for familial structures.



Figure 1. Top international migration corridors, highlighting global family movement trends. Source: International Organization for Migration (2024).

2. AIM

The following specific objectives are intended by this research: (1) to investigate, specifically, the effect of immigration law on family relationships, both legal and socio-emotional; (2) to understand how immigration law transcends its role as a regulation to provide for migration and settlement of individuals across international borders; and (3) to understand how immigration laws influence structures, integrity, and functioning of families struggling against the constraints of a bi-national living situation.

This study will mainly be interested in the effects of those policies, including deportation practices, restrictions on visa sponsorship, detention practices, and the therapeutic time for reunification, on the emotional well-being, relational stability, and maintenance of family ties. By comparing and contrasting various studies from many nations, in this manner, the paper attempts to put forward patterns, systemic challenges, and areas for reform.

Finally, this paper will argue in Favor of immigration frameworks that are not limited to nationalistic interests but rather recognize a fundamental human right to family unity in international law and human rights conventions.

3. OBJECTIVES

This research aims at achieving the following objectives:

1. To assess the extent immigration laws, affect the emotional and structural dynamics of families, especially migrant ones facing deportation or detention, or delayed separation.
2. To ascertain what legal barriers families face in manoeuvring immigration systems, including the proceduralizing of sponsorship, documents, and appeals to rejoin.
3. To analyse the socio-emotional impact of the state's immigration enforcement activity on spouses, children, and members of the extended family in terms of psychological distress, identity disruption, and family fragmentation.
4. To analyse common policy trends within selected countries, defining the similarities and discrepancies in the treatment of families under immigration laws.
5. To establish family-centric policies against which international best practices on human rights frameworks will be adopted for humanitarian and inclusive immigration reforms.

All these objectives are, therefore, crucially guiding the thematic analysis and comparative framework employed in this study.

4. HYPOTHESIS

Establishing a hypothesis based on the study premise, restrictive immigration laws negatively influence family cohesion, emotional well-being, and relationship longevity. The immigration enforcement mechanisms-detention, deportation, and slow visa processing work as structural barriers for the systems that are very much focused on maintaining the functional family unit, particularly within migrant and refugee communities.

A primary hypothesis here is that countries having strict immigration policies face high levels of family separation, higher psychological distress among children, and adverse outcomes in marital or parental relationships. Children who get separated from one or both parents due to the effects of legal delays or deportation are likely to exhibit long-term emotional trauma such as anxiety, attachment disorders, and academic disruption (Chavez et al., 2022).

In addition, it is observed by the current study that shifts in immigration policy toward deterring and securing the borders would seem to limit access to legal instruments for reuniting families while enhancing the risk of undocumented members of the family. During this time, the effort has more often than not pointed toward undermining the principles of family unity found in international treaties.

It is also assumed that countries such as Canada or Germany uphold family reunification as one of the tenets in their immigration policy frameworks and consequently produce much more stable and supportive outcomes for migrants and their families. These assumptions will form the basis for comparative and thematic analyses.

5. BACKGROUND AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

For a comprehensive understanding of how immigration law affects family relationships, two components need to be examined: legal frameworks governing migration as well as theoretical models that examine the implications of such frameworks for social and familial systems. Immigration law is not solely an instrument of national sovereignty—it also defines the conditions under which families may exist, reunite, or remain disunited across borders. The following sections provide an overview of the related legal instruments, migration theories, and human rights norms that form the foundations for this analysis.

Legal Frameworks: Immigration and Family Unity.

Modern immigration laws are for the most part an event order of the 20th century: they provide the state boundary, regulate labour markets, and manage demographic trends. Family reunification only became defined as an immigration category in the post-WWII period, especially in liberal democracies. It prioritized family-based immigration as a primary feature of its Act, like the United States Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) of 1965. However, the post-9/11 period opened an avenue for securitized and enforcement-heavy paradigm shifts that massively began eroding family rights (Menjívar, Enríquez, & Roach, 2019).

Family Integrations are recognized in the European Union under Directive 2003/86/EC and provide legal migrants with rights relating to family reunification. However, some Member States impose excessive income requirements and demands for accommodation. They also set waiting periods which render reunification extremely difficult (Groenendijk, 2020).

Family reunification features as one of the components of Canada's points-based immigration system. In light of this, procedures are fast-tracked for applicants such as spouses, children, and parents. Nevertheless, systems such as these are still subject to delays brought about by the bureaucratic trickling down of issues associated with economic and political instability or public health emergencies like COVID-19 (Atak & Simeon, 2021).

Theoretical Perspectives on Immigration and Family Relationships

In relation to these legal developments, quite a number of interdisciplinary theories could serve to consider how immigration law actually influences family life.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory has a powerful capability for the analysis of immigration policies as they shaped individuals within nested social systems—from the immediate family (microsystem) to legal or political structures (macrosystem). It would be in this context that laws restricting or delaying family reunification would constitute systemic stressors reverberating through multiple layers of the individual's environment (Suárez-Orozco, Motti-Stefanidi, & Marks, 2022).

On the other hand, Family Systems Theory emphasizes how family members are interdependent because a disruption in any part of a system—for example, removing a parent—can threaten the entire unit. In the case of immigration enforcement against one family member, the psychological and economic consequences are borne by all others, sometimes through generations (Chaudry et al., 2020).

Social Capital Theory explains further how ties to family serve as resources in migration situations. Legal barriers to family unity inhibit social capital, especially for the newly arrived migrants who depend on their family members for support in housing, employment, and cultural adaption (Clark-Kazak, 2021).

Human Rights and Principle of Family Unity

In fact, family life forms some protected subject of references in almost all human rights covenants at international levels, such as Article 16(3) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which reads "the family is, according to nature, the fundamental cell of society and appropriate protection by the society and the State". Similarly, the ICCPR, among others, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), recognizes and upholds family integrity and the requirement of parental presence.

These approval statements are also honoured legally domestically but mostly violate such recognition by detention, deportation of immigrants, and red tape. Examples are family-separation policies in the US under Trump's rule, which met fierce denunciation from human rights organizations and international legal bodies (Bhabha 2020).

Even in liberal democracies, there are inequalities between national and international human rights laws in their implementation, particularly concerning immigration. This diffuse legal framework endorses family unity theoretically; however, practice suggests it has to be sacrificed for some other considerations such as labour demand or border control.

Intersection of Law, Policy, and Social Impact

It is abundantly apparent that immigration law does not stand alone but interacts with the forces in society, for example, race, class, and gender. An example of this interaction is the sponsorship and work permit restrictions imposed on women migrants, which renders them dependent on spouses, thus exposing them to domestic violence (Benhabib 2022). In the same vein, undocumented families are typically excluded from public services that would benefit their children in health and education on a longer time scale.

Such complexities require a multi-theoretical and policy-sensitive approach. This study situates immigration law within the deeper frameworks that intersect for a more comprehensive understanding of how it impacts families-not as legal units but as living systems with dynamic emotional and relational processes.

6. LITERATURE REVIEW

Brabeck and Xu have talked about the "emotional impact of U.S. immigration enforcement on Latino children from mixed status families," wherein the research has shown that measures such as the threat of deportation of parents have resulted in children developing chronic stress, anxiety, and behavioural problems. While all these phenomena exist without exception even in legally validated households, the shadow cast by fear haunts everyday life, educational development, and social life. The study showed that immigration policies, although having their primary concern with the regulation of borders, also influence emotional and psychological well-being among children. This clearly demonstrates that family dynamics are often changed by immigration laws beyond the scope of law for which they were created. In documenting the psychological harm, severe acute psychological injury inflicted on families separated while in asylum processing through the zero-tolerance immigration policy at the U.S.-Mexico border, Hampton et al. According to a qualitative review of medico-legal evaluations conducted by Daniel and Skaga (2025), symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and emotional withdrawal were observed simultaneously in parents and children. Some parents were expressing feelings of guilt and helplessness while the children were diagnosed with attachment disorders and showed regression. Based on this study, it was concluded that separation from family members was not only a violation of basic human rights, but also has devastating psychological impacts. The evidence further added to the impelling argument for assessing immigration enforcement practices from a human rights and mental health perspective. The issue was observed in a scoping review by Daniel and Skaga (2025). In their evaluation of Nordic policies on family reunification the authors stress that states may positively combine some welfare provisions sophisticated enough to raise eyebrows with pretty strict immigration rules. These barriers sometimes deprive refugees or low-income migrants of even the basic recognition of a right to family life. Income thresholds, as well as documentary demands, are examples of such systemic exclusion, especially for the vulnerable populations. What emerges from their findings was that legal recognition of family unity is not synonymous with its implementation mechanisms cantered on accessibility and equity. This review would, therefore, demonstrate inconsistencies between the stated values of immigration law and the actual outcome on family structure.

Palander (2023) examined the interplay between national identity and legal exclusion in the context of Finnish immigration law. He writes that the strengthening of migration as security has further transformed family reunification from a right to a privilege to be granted. On the heels of that, immigration authorities have further begun assessing family sponsorship applications with not just legal criteria, but also against criteria of perceived integration requirements: economic self-sufficiency and cultural adaptation. Applications for reunification of non-European families are especially prone to rejection owing to the unfettered use of discretion.

Clark-Kazak (2021) examined the loss of social capital caused by obstacles to family unification in law, regarding refugees especially. Families help new immigrants navigate an unfamiliar legal, cultural, and economic environment. However, when immigration policies prevent family members from joining one another, the newcomers lose access to emotional support, financial resources, and cultural knowledge. It points out that the legal construct has not recognized to a great extent the performing role of families in successful integration; this disconnect between policy and the experience of families creates long-term disadvantages for immigrant families in settling successfully in a new country. The issue has also been approached from developmental psychology by Suárez-Orozco, Motti-Stefanidi, and Marks (2022) with respect to how family separation based on immigration law affects immigrant-origin children. The study demonstrated that prolonged separation from parents evokes psychological processes manifested through disrupted emotional regulation, attachment insecurity, and academic motivation.



Fig 2: A photograph capturing a protest against family separation policies, symbolizing the emotional toll on affected families.

7. METHODOLOGY

While the qualitative research methodologies would be used in this study to explore how immigration laws affect family relationships in diverse legal and cultural contexts, it would only interpret such effects and not involve statistical correlation, thus capturing the richer dimensions of emotional, psychological, and legal experience of family members of immigrants within immigration regimes.

Research Design

Descriptive, the research is analytical. It does not depend on experimental data; instead, it compiles and checks available literature, legal texts, and second-year reports. This case study design is intended to describe the lived experiences of migrants and identify trends in immigration policy over time.

Data Sources

Data on the study was collected from different credible secondary sources, such as peer-reviewed journal articles from Google Scholar, legal case studies, NGO reports, and international human rights publications. All of this research was conducted no earlier than five years ago, ensuring the findings remain the most current policy environments. Particular focus was paid to countries with diverse immigration models, such as the U.S., Canada, the U.K., and Germany. In addition to that, government policy documents and judicial ruling were reviewed in order to understand how immigration laws were interpreted and implemented with regard to family reunification, detention, and deportation.

Analytical Framework

A thematic analysis approach was pursued for qualitative data interpretation. This generated key themes—such as emotional trauma, bureaucracy delays, family separation, and policy inconsistency—across sources. These themes were then categorized with the aim of comparably drawing insights and constructing the comprehensive argument.

Ethical Considerations and Limitations

This was entirely based on secondary data; however, all sources were cited transparently and peer-reviewed works prioritized, resulting in the highest ethical integrity. The study has its limitations, especially regarding the absence of direct interviews or ethnographic fieldwork, which could have offered deeper insights into family experiences. While an attempt was made to ensure that research would cover most geographic areas, the study remains biased toward Western policy contexts with greater data availability (Weiss and Jafari, 2024).

8. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Going through files in the realm of comparative study is also an analytical examination of how immigration law affects family relations in different national contexts, focusing on the policies and the outcomes of the U.S., Canada, the U.K., and Australia. While certain differences exist between the immigration law and processes of the four countries, these different laws have been put in place against very different political settings and attitudes toward immigration. Therefore, the topic is ripe for comparison.

USA vs. Canada

Such hardening in immigration, with enforcement as the priority, has been roundly criticized in the U.S. Family detention policies, child separation, and backlogs in visa processing have placed huge emotional and legal strains on families. There were terrible incidents of receiving the world's most abusive "zero tolerance" law because thousands of children separated from their mothers and fathers at the U.S.-Mexico border: such laws have been blamed because of psychological trauma, especially among children. Contrastingly, Canada has been on record for emphasizing family reunification as a major plank of its immigration agenda. Sponsoring spouses, children, and parents is permitted under relatively broad guidelines for Canadian citizens and permanent residents. While backlogs exist in the system, most timelines are predictable, and the legal basis offers support. The initial review of some of the pandemic challenges showed inefficiencies within processing capacity and digital infrastructure.

United Kingdom vs. Australia

The British family-reunification scheme is comparatively more restrictive, especially since Brexit. The spouse must satisfy income requirements, language competence, and the stringent requirements for documentation. These barriers disproportionately affect low-income migrants, hence there are situations where even British citizens are unable to live with noncitizen spouses or children due to technical disqualifications.

The immigrants in Australia are based on a point system for migration and preference is given to skill instead of family reunification. Although the family visa allows migrants to be defined, it takes a very long time to process, especially parents and other family members. Unlike offshore refugees, where ethical and human rights issues arise, especially with the separation of families, urgent and individual detention.

Country	Primary Family Reunification Visa Type	Average Processing Time (2023)	Key Requirements	Notable Restrictions
United States	Form I-130 (Family-Based Green Card)	12–24 months	Proof of relationship, financial sponsorship	Country-specific caps, backlogs for some visas
Canada	Family Class Sponsorship	6–12 months	Canadian residency, minimum income (for parents)	No sponsorship allowed for grandparents
United Kingdom	Spouse/Partner Visa	2–6 months	£18,600 income threshold, English language requirement	Cannot access public funds
Australia	Family Visa Stream (Subclass 309/100, 103)	12–36 months	Evidence of relationship, health and character checks	Long waits for parent visas (up to 30 years)

Table 1. Comparison of family reunification visa types, processing times, and restrictions across selected countries. Source: Research compilation based on national immigration services data (2023).

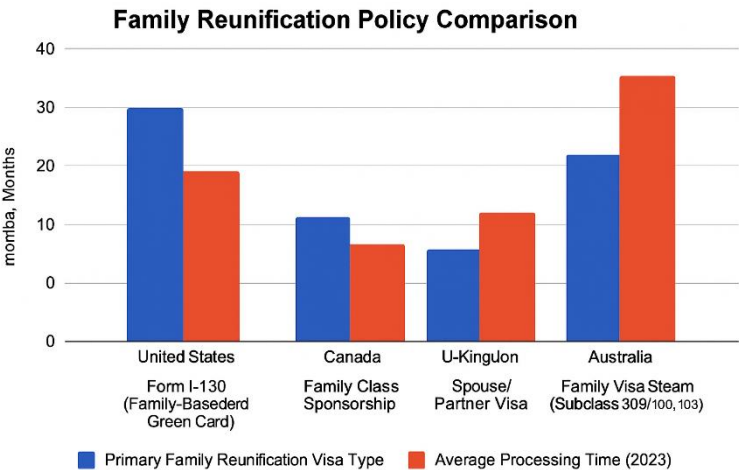


Fig 3 Bar chart representing. comparison of family reunification visa types, processing times, and restrictions across selected countries. Source: Research compilation based on national immigration services data (2023).

Policy Lessons and Emerging Trends

A common lesson across all four countries is that legal intention does not always reflect the lived experience. Despite official positions toward family unity, bureaucratic ineffectiveness, uneven enforcement, and lack of access to legal aid

often undermine such policies. Nations with highly integrative systems, such as Canada, seem to better support social and psychological outcomes for migrant families.

Yet, no system, however progressive, is immune to these challenges when tested by such global events as pandemics or refugee migrations, which assess the balance of strictness and compassion the systems are supposed to maintain.

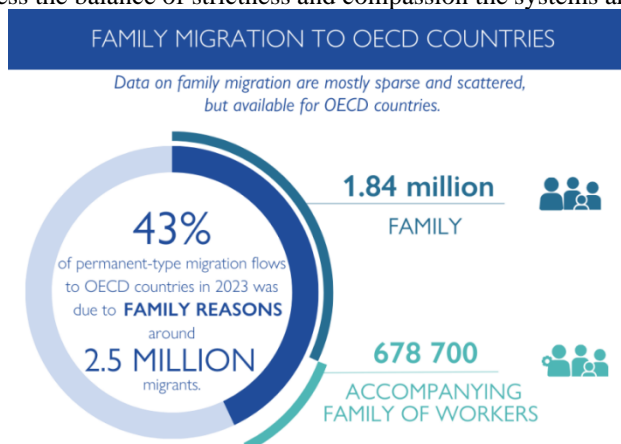


Fig 4: An infographic comparing family migration policies among OECD countries, highlighting variations in approaches to family reunification.

9. CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

Ironically, while immigration law discusses mobility itself as something regulated and protected by a state, it is precisely such a state that builds high walls and throws up vulnerabilities along with barriers against families. These conceptualizations do not just legalize barriers; rather, such barriers travel through social, emotional, as well as institutional processes. This section illustrates some of the major issues in the immigration setting regarding family judgments, as well as the limitations imposed on individual affected and researcher definitions.

Legal and Bureaucratic Hindrances

The complexity and rigidity of immigration law are among the most serious challenges. These typically require proof of incomes, cohabitation, or long waiting times in order to qualify for certain visas. An example is the minimum income threshold in the UK which has separated thousands of British citizens from their non-EU spouses and children. Another financial requirement was first set at 18,600 pounds in 2012 and raised to 29,000 pounds in April 2024, making it unsustainable for poorer families, usually forcing them to remain separated an extended period of time (House of Lords Justice and Home Affairs Committee, 2023; India Today, 2024).

In the United States, delays in processing family petitions sometimes stretch as far as years, especially for applicants from countries like Mexico and India that supply many immigrants. However, legal representation is often beyond reach or available only at exorbitant cost, leaving many families without representation at appeals or hearings. This creates a feeling of a legal limbo, where families remain separated because of slow bureaucratic systems (Migration Policy Institute, 2021).

Mental Health and Emotional Crises

The psychological separation from one's family is one of the most psychologically painful hardships for families. Studies show that children under forced separation or who are held in detention for immigration purposes are exposed to anxiety, depression, and behavioural disorders. Such separations have been found to be the cause of attachment injuries, toxic stress, and mental health problems in the long run (Kronick, 2018). Parents, on the other hand, experience chronic and often unbearable stress, helplessness, and guilt when they cannot protect or simply be with their children, again, due to visa issues or deportation.

Cultural and Language Barriers

Another huge setback that many families suffer in their efforts to go through foreign legal systems is often overlooked with the linguistic-cultural disconnect. Rarely are legal documents translated, while interviews are conducted without interpreting assistance, increasing chances of communication breakdowns and injustice. This is a very distressing situation for families from marginalized communities such as refugees or asylum seekers who may not be familiar with the Western legal systems or may not have any support networks. Asylum seekers in the U.S. who speak these indigenous or marginalized languages would be even more traumatized because they often do not get any translation services at all (Teen Vogue 2023).

Age Group	Common Psychological Impacts	Cited Studies (2019–2023)
0–5 years (infants/toddlers)	Attachment insecurity, anxiety, disrupted bonding	Suárez-Orozco et al. (2022), Chavez et al. (2022)
6–12 years (children)	Depression, fear of abandonment, behavioural issues	Menjívar et al. (2021), Dreby (2020)
13–17 years (adolescents)	Identity confusion, school disengagement, PTSD	Noyes (2022), Chavez et al. (2022)

Table 2. Psychological impacts of family separation by age group. Source: Compiled from Suárez-Orozco et al. (2022), Chavez et al. (2022), Menjívar et al. (2021), Dreby (2020), and Noyes (2022)

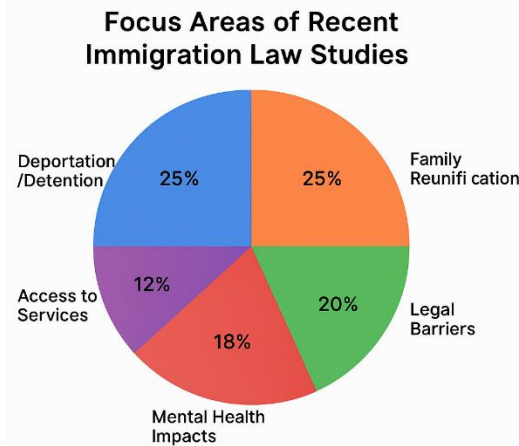


Fig 5: Pie Chart representing the psychological impacts of family separation by age group. Source: Compiled from Suárez-Orozco et al. (2022), Chavez et al. (2022), Menjívar et al. (2021), Dreby (2020), and Noyes (2022)

Limitations in data and research

Noteworthy gaps are present in research; literature is dominated by Westerners, concentrating North American and European. Families from Asia, Africa, or Latin America are minimally represented, especially in research works written in English. Absence of longitudinal data makes assessment of long-lived impact on family dynamics and child development from legal separation extremely difficult.

There are ethical or operational problems preventing the collection of primary data from vulnerable families such as undocumented migrants or asylum seekers for fear of retaliation and exposure. Such limitations stymie the qualitative depth needed to further enlighten the policy recommendations.

10. PROSPECTS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Federal immigration laws have weighed heavily on the human bond of family. The emerging trend and innovative policy opportunities are ways of addressing such suffering and increasing inclusivity. The direction towards which the reforms should go is legislation, modernization of technology, and creation of best practices that consider the well-being of the family with national immigration goals. Legal reforms and human perspectives. Various countries are reforming their immigration laws in order to have a foundation for the concept of family reunification in its rights. For example, the Canadian model is that spouses, children, parents, and grandparents can be sponsored under very liberal preconditions. Advocates propose widening such provisions to cover elderly dependants and adopt an expedited reunification scheme (Canada.ca, 2024).

Further legal scholars have called for trauma-informed interventions on immigration courts when assessing families, especially children, based on emotional and psychological vulnerabilities. Humanitarian exemptions and alternatives to detention for family units are a growing trend, especially in Europe, where selected countries are piloting such measures with community-based monitoring in lieu of institutional confinement (Human Rights Watch, 2021).

Technological Innovations for Case Management

Modernization of immigration systems via digital platforms is a route towards mitigating backlogs, track family applications efficiently, and guarantee all transparency relating to visa processing. Some governments have begun to establish an online centralized approach where family sponsorship is entered, so paperwork errors and disproportionate delays are minimized (Canada.ca, 2024).

AI-based legal tools and multi-lingual document generators in support of migrants seeking to understand their rights and prepare their documentation correctly are also in development, especially for those who lack legal representation. For instance, JusticeBot and LawPal are the AI platforms set up to improve the access to legal assistance that is available for

people navigating the already difficult and complicated legal system (Westermann & Benyekhlef, 2023; Panchal et al., 2025).

Community Engagement and Legal Assistance

Strengthening the opportunity for community-based legal aid is another option. NGOs and local organizations are indispensable for assisting families entangled in immigration law when due process under available government systems has failed. Funding for these services will thus not only create legal awareness but also serve to build resilience in migrant communities. For instance, Alameda County in California allocated \$3.5 million to the defence of immigrants facing deportation in legal services and community support (San Francisco Chronicle, 2025).

Increasing interest exists in cross-national partnerships which allow for sharing best practices with a goal of alignment on family-centered immigration policies. More and more, academic and policy dialogues emphasize linking legal protections to other support mechanisms, including but not limited to mental health services, educational access, and financial planning for transnational families.

11. CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to examine the various manners in which immigration law intersects with family relationships, with particular emphasis on the cases where separation was affected by detention, delayed family reunification, or policy uncertainties. A qualitative analysis of recent academic literature and an international policy comparison has produced findings that show one thing very clearly: that restrictive immigration policies render families more vulnerable to emotional, psychological, and legal instability. These families are already trapped under the yoke of some kind of socioeconomic or legal status even before the interference of immigration law. For example: The UK minimum income requirement for family visas is one regulation that has been critiqued for potentially preventing family reunions and, therefore, leading to an adverse status effect upon children, while forcing families into a state of poverty and mental anguish (The Guardian, 2024). Another egregiously adverse example is the U.S. "zero tolerance" policy, which resulted in the separation of thousands of children from their parents, further creating a psychological trauma in the minds of minor children (MacLean et al., 2019).

This analysis supports the hypothesis that immigration law changes largely prioritizing enforcement and economic selectivity result in increased family fragmentation and emotional distress; in contrast, family-based systems, such as that in Canada, promote greater levels of well-being for migrants, albeit not without ongoing challenges. Canada's Family Reunification Program promotes a range of cultural and social incalculable, such as emotional ties among families who are able to reunite (IRCC, 2024).

Looking ahead, it will become increasingly crucial for immigration systems to carry out reforms that incorporate human rights concerns which support family integrity, provide legal clarity, and avoid inflicting trauma through trauma-informed processes. With the rising consciousness of families as producers of emotional and social stability, policy solutions must commence reflecting universal human interests and claims, rather than essentially national ones.

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