
PERINATAL MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM FOR SUDANESE WOMEN

Project headed by ISHAR Multicultural Centre for Women
Presented by
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BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

- ❑ Funding
 - ❑ The target group -Sudanese Women

 - ❑ **AIM OF PROJECT**
 - ❑ Develop and deliver an intervention program
 - ❑ Focus on assessment and management of women experiencing perinatal mental health issues
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Overview of the Project

- Pre Intervention evaluation/ data collection
 - Intervention
 - Post intervention evaluation
 - 4 months post treatment intervention
 - Exploratory
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INDIVIDUAL SESSIONS

Key Findings:

- High levels of stress and fatigue
 - Confusion and misinterpretation
 - Quiet and withdrawn
 - Strong sense of loss and need to reconnect with their home, family, and community
 - Loneliness
 - Lack of support from spouse and/ or community
 - All would be suffering from some level of depression
 - Strong feelings of despair and isolation
 - Relied on their religious beliefs for strength and in coping with their every day struggles
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GROUP SESSIONS: THE INTERVENTION STAGE

Key Areas addressed:

- Recognition of symptoms of depression and accessing help
 - Management of triggers of anxiety, frustration, and despair – symptoms of depression
 - Health and diet
 - Management of children
 - Working with relationships
 - Exploring workable strategies that could help them with immediate problems such as housing, accessing doctors, child care and schemes offered through Centrelink.
 - Working towards a “community group support” system
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CONCERNS RAISED

- Language and misunderstandings
 - Discrimination and isolation
 - Lack of understanding of their needs and cultural practices
 - Lack of support from both the health providers and community
 - Lack of knowledge and information on the available resources
 - Driving, Housing, Childcare, Child birth experiences and practices
 - Domestic violence
 - Discrimination and harassment
 - Feelings of loss without elders and family
 - Few social celebrations and community get-togethers
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GROUP DYNAMICS

- Important to build a sense of community
 - Sharing was both a joyous and sad experience
 - Although from different backgrounds, a sense of connectedness and support for each other
 - Looked forward to the sessions
 - One of the women took a community leader role and everyone looked up to her. They identified with her and respected her feedback. They always seemed to agree with her.
 - Lacked internal coordination such as getting to ISHAR, managing children – All had to be managed by Jan
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POST INTERVENTION

Feedback:

- More confident in verbalizing sadness, hardships, anger, frustrations, etc
 - Enhanced readiness to expect and access information related to their well-being
 - All confirmed the laughter and mood uplift they felt from the Tuesday sessions
 - Enhanced motivation to work towards bettering their lives
 - Taking some action in working towards achieving outcomes such as going to Centrelink and asking for relevant information, taking stronger steps in working with their husbands, taking care of their health.
 - Concerted efforts to look good
 - Sad to see the program end
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POST 4 MONTHS

- Feedback
 - Limited information because only 2 women participated.
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RECOMMENDATIONS

Recognition of cultural differences such as:

- Concept of time
 - Dependency vs. community support
 - Finances – gender roles
 - Role of “God” in their daily lives
 - Passivity
 - Collectivistic vs. Individualistic
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Other important considerations

- Importance of opportunities to socialise
 - Collaboration within service providers and easing accessibility
 - Development of culturally appropriate assessment tools
 - Service providers' and facilitators' ability and adaptability to change and adjust
 - Sources of information – Effective methods include providing information verbally and in a group situation
 - Addressing immediate concerns such as child care, health, housing, and driving.
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- Addressing domestic violence from a culturally sensitive perspective
 - Avoid abandonment
 - “limitations” of programs such as this – funding supported - raises hope but can cause disappointment and mistrust
 - Education for both man and women with issues such as legal rights, raising children, employment, etc.
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*“Coming together is a beginning,
staying together is progress, and
working together is success.”*

Thank You