
Experiences and Views of African Australian Consumers on the Role of Spirituality, Religion, and Culture on Mental Health

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Abstract:

This study explored the lived experiences of African Australian consumers and their perspectives on the role of spirituality, religion, and culture in shaping mental health and engagement with mental health services. A qualitative phenomenological design informed by transcultural nursing perspectives was used. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with fifteen African Australian participants aged 18–25 years from diverse African backgrounds, including Zimbabwe (n = 2), Ethiopia (n = 3), South Sudan (n = 5), Somalia (n = 4), and Ghana (n = 1). Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analysed using thematic analysis to identify patterns in participants' experiences and interpretations of mental health within cultural and spiritual contexts. Three interconnected themes were identified: living between two worlds, seeking healing beyond medication and breaking the silence. Participants described migration-related stress, disrupted social networks, and tensions between collectivist cultural expectations and individual identity as contributing to psychological distress. At the same time, spirituality, religious practices, and culturally grounded community networks were identified as important coping resources that fostered resilience and social support. Participants reported mixed experiences with formal mental health services, noting that biomedical approaches often overlooked cultural and spiritual dimensions of wellbeing, while culturally responsive care enhanced trust and engagement. The findings highlight the importance of culturally and spiritually responsive mental health care to improve service engagement and support the wellbeing of African Australian communities.