

The Role of Social Influences and Cultural Beliefs on Perceptions of Postpartum Depression among Mexican Origin Mothers in San Diego

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Abstract : The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions first-generation Mexican origin mothers living in San Diego have on postpartum depression (PPD), with a special focus on social influences and cultural beliefs towards those meanings. This study also aimed to examine possible PPD help-seeking behaviors that first-generation Mexican origin mothers can perform. The Health Belief Model (HBM) and Social Ecological Model (SEM) were the guiding theoretical frameworks for this study. Data for this study were collected from three focus groups, four in-depth interviews, and the distribution of an acculturation survey (ARSMA II). There were a total of 15 participants, in which participant's mean age was 45, and the mean age migrated to the United States being 22. Most participants identified as being married, born in Southern or Western Mexico, and with a strong Mexican identity in relation to the ARSMA survey. Participants identified four salient PPD perceptions corresponding to the interpersonal level of SEM. These four main perceptions were: 1) PPD affecting the identity of motherhood; 2) PPD being a natural part of a mother's experience but mitigated by networks; 3) PPD being a U.S. phenomenon due to family and community breakdown; and 4) natural remedies as a preferred PPD treatment. In regard to themes relating to help seeking behaviors, participants identified seven being: 1) seeking help from immediate family members; 2) practicing home remedies; 3) seeking help from a medical professional; 4) obtaining help from a clinic or organization; 5) seeking help from God; 6) participating in PPD support groups; and 7) talking to a friend. It was evident in this study that postpartum depression is not a well discussed topic within the Mexican immigrant population. In relation to the role culture and social influences have on PPD perceptions, most participants shared hearing or learning about PPD from their family members or friends. Participants also stated seeking help from family members if diagnosed with PPD and seeking out home remedies. This study as well provides suggestions to increase the awareness of PPD among the Mexican immigrant community.

Keywords : cultural beliefs, health belief model, Mexican origin mothers, perceptions, postpartum depression social ecological model

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