

The Use of Cross-cultural Approaches (CCAs) in Psychotherapy in Addressing Mental Health Issues Amongst Women of Ethnic Minority

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Abstract : Mental health disparities among women from diverse ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds remain a pressing concern, particularly as current psychotherapeutic models often fail to address the unique challenges these groups face. This is of particular concern since epidemiological studies across various countries and cultures consistently demonstrate higher prevalence rates of common mental disorders amongst these groups of women because of a lack of access to culturally oriented psychotherapeutic services. This literature review aims to examine how CCAs in psychotherapy can address the specific ethnic, cultural, and religious challenges women encounter in accessing mental health care. A search of relevant articles was conducted through PsycARTICLES and PubMed databases, using terms such as 'mental health', 'women', 'culture', and 'ethnic minorities'. Supplementary searches on Google Scholar were also performed to capture literature not covered by traditional databases. While the importance of cross-cultural approaches in psychotherapy has become more apparent because people from diverse ethnic backgrounds inevitably perceive the world through different lenses, influencing their interpretations of human behavior and norms, there is a notable gap in the literature in understanding the influences of using of CCAs in psychotherapy amongst women of an ethnic minority. This gap not only reflects a poor understanding of the complex stressors faced by these women—such as familial, communal, and societal expectations—but also highlights the lack of support and culturally adapted interventions available to them. Even though scholars have posited that aligning treatment approaches with patients' cultural backgrounds is important to enhance therapeutic effectiveness, and the acknowledgment of culture is crucial in psychotherapy theory and practice. As well as the increasing global focus on psychotherapy applications that integrate non-Western practices, such as spiritual healing and community-based interventions, the adaptation of these approaches in mainstream mental health care has remained limited. This review found that the expectations and experiences of ethnic minority women were heavily influenced by family and community pressures. However, there were limited evidence-based, culturally oriented psychotherapeutic interventions tailored to ethnic minority women. This gap extends to inadequate representation of minority groups in clinical research, as well as a lack of culturally validated mental health outcome measures. Furthermore, studies have shown that psychotherapeutic models have largely been Western-oriented and Euro-centric because of socially constructed hierarchies. The origin of psychology from the Western world has predominantly reflected Western cultural traditions, shaped by historical, linguistic, and sociopolitical influences. These factors have led to a lack of recognition of therapeutic approaches from minority ethnic groups and the biases that emanate from hegemonic cultural beliefs and power dynamics influence the decisions about which psychotherapeutic modalities to integrate and practice. Therefore, this plethora of factors adds to the challenges women from ethnically and culturally diverse backgrounds face in accessing mental health services at the individual, familial, community, and societal levels. In conclusion, a cross-cultural approach is urgently needed within psychotherapy to address these challenges, ensuring that treatment frameworks are both culturally sensitive and gender responsive. Only by considering the lived experiences of minority women, particularly in relation to their cultural and religious contexts, can mental health services provide the appropriate care necessary to support their well-being.

Keywords : mental health, women, culture, ethnicity

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