**Developing a Group: Literature Review**

Eliza Ayles and Kestin Tucker

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**Group Population**

The country of Ghana has a population of about 27 million people, where women aged 15-24 years old account for approximately 2.5 million of the total population. In the town of Kumasi, there is a population of 2.6 million and in Accra, there is a population of 2.3 million people altogether (*Ghana Factsheet*). There are many factors that women in Ghana encounter that impact their mental wellbeing in a negative manner. In Ghana there are two types of descent systems: patrilineal and matrilineal. However, a majority of cultures practice patrilineal descent. These societies hold the belief that men hold the power within the homes (Salm & Falola, 2002). It is custom in these cultures for the fathers to leave their wealth and belongings to their sons if they pass away. Due to this custom, since some wives stay in the house, they are left with little to no financial and/or emotional support and no access to family, if their husband passes away (Salm & Falola, 2002). This can impact one’s mental wellbeing drastically, especially if they have no emotional support and are left raising their children with no finances. Typically, sons are left with the worthy items, where women are left with cooking pots and utensils and other household items (Salm & Falola, 2002). There is initiation in Ghana, which occurs after a female has her first menstrual cycle where she is taught skills such as cooking and cleaning and is announced as being ready for a husband. Due to this custom in certain societies, this can impact a young girl’s mind and will lead her to only know how to be dependent on someone else, leading to mental health issues in the future potentially (Salm & Falola, 2002). Childbirth represents a happy marriage and wealth, so if a woman is unable to bear a child, this can lead to a divorce, which can result in women feeling lesser of a person and bringing down their self-esteem.

**Common Issues or Problems**

There is a lack of evidence on mental health in low-income countries, resulting in a lack of knowledge on problems people face around the world. Additionally, since there is not much research, it is unknown the true causes and prevalence of lack of mental health resources and knowledge. The research that is available states that those most at risk are lower socioeconomic, less educated, women (Sipsma et al., 2013). According to Sipsma et al. (2013), on a study done with 9,500 people, 27% of female participants reported experiencing emotional abuse and 5% had experienced physical abuse from within the home within the past 12 months. It was also found that 21.2% of women reported psychological distress.

One study that took place focused on the understanding of women’s mental illness in Ghana. This study consisted of 122 participants through interviews and focus groups. The results of this study show that it is understood that women are more prone to hidden mental disorders, such as depression. Some reasonings that were found for women being more likely to experience hidden depression were: inherent vulnerability, where women are impacted by the genetic make-up; gender disadvantage, where men are viewed as the superior race; and physical abuse (Ofori-Atta et al., 2010). The purpose of the study was to provide others a deeper understanding as to why a woman may be dealing with a mental health crisis.

**Group Intervention**

When providing an intervention to groups there are many different types of support groups, and it is important to realize which type of group should be used depending on the situation. Support groups provide opportunities for individuals to share personal experiences, feelings, coping strategies, and realize they are not alone in coping with mental health. There are different types of support groups although when focusing on women in Ghana there are certain aspects and factors that would make the group most effective. A group of women in Ghana would most likely be most effective by having 15-20 women per group setting. The number of participants is important within the setting and has a big effect on how effective the group will be. The women in the group would be taught what mental health is and go around talking about the different types of mental health. The facilitator would be sure the group stays on track and is benefiting each other. Symptoms of mental health would also be discussed throughout the group setting in order to make women aware of how to look out for different factors.

Although support groups would overall be the most effective for most women experiencing mental health (Cohen & Raja, 2020) there are many strengths and limitations regarding the group intervention. Some strengths of support groups are how it makes women realize they are not alone and that they have other people in their corner. Dealing with mental health issues can make people seem alone or isolated. It also may be hard for individuals to open up about how they are feeling until they are surrounded by others who are experiencing many of the same feelings.

There is currently not lots of research out about the mental health of women in Ghana. The overall research is seem as limited as not many research studies show exactly the topic this literature review is on. There are many opportunities for future research as the number of those experiencing mental health continues to increase year by year (World Health Organization, 2023). Mental health takes a humongous toll on not only the individuals experiencing it but also others around them.

**Strengths and limitations**

Although support groups are seen as the best intervention for Ghanaian women who are experiencing mental health issues there are many strengths and limitations. One strength of support groups are the way the groups show women they are not alone and do not need to feel isolated or different for feeling the things they feel. It is important for women to be able to rely on each other (Cohen & Raja, 2020). Although there are many strengths within support groups there are also limitations such as some women may feel scared to open up in a group setting. It is already hard enough for the women to join a support group so opening up first may be hard. Support groups are best for certain types of women experiencing mental health issues so women experiencing eating disorders could easily fall into a darker hole as they may pick up other negative habits from others and practice them.

**Theoretical Framework**

For the group interventions, the empowerment theory and feminist theory would best fit. The overall goal of the groups is to empower women to understand their problems and needs, while advocating for themselves when possible. The empowerment theory uses interventions which guide people to achieve a sense of control (*Empowerment theory in social work* 2021). This theory helps one to understand their needs and themselves better. This model challenges macro and micro systems which prevent those from getting their needs met (*Empowerment theory in social work* 2021). Whereas the feminist theory focuses directly on role expectations and status and power differences relating to gender (Turner & Maschi, 2015). This theory acknowledges the belief that men are the superior gender over women. These use of these two theories in group intervention will allow women to both better understand the differences they encounter, while also teaching them more about themselves. In support groups, the empowerment theory can be used through each individual as they open up, which can empower other women to do the same.

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