



Engelberg Center for Children and Youth

Intervention Practices Adapted to Arab Society in Israel's Social Service System

Fida Nijim-Ektelat ■ Dalia Ben Rabi ■ Rachel Szabo-Lael

The study was commissioned by 360° - the National Program for Children and Youth at Risk and funded with its assistance

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Rosen, B., Elroy, I. Ecker, N., Ismail, S. and Karakra, A. (2008). *Health Promotion Activities in the Israeli Arab Population: To What Extent Are They Culturally Appropriate and What Can Be Done to Make Them More So?* RR-524-08 (Hebrew).

Nirel, N., Ismail, S. and Taragin, M. (2002). *The Effect of the "Refuah Shlema" Intervention Program for Ethiopian Immigrants on the Care and Health Status of Patients with Asthma and Diabetes*. RR-385-92 (Hebrew).

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Abstract

Background

In their work with individuals and families in various populations, professionals engaged in therapeutic, educational and social work (social workers, psychotherapists, healthcare workers and educators) have to contend with the need to adapt their intervention methods to the specific characteristics and context of the society and culture in which they are working. This is particularly necessary when the characteristics of the society in question differ from their own. However, it has become increasingly acknowledged in recent years that a professional's personal affiliation with the society in which s/he is working is no guarantee that s/he identifies with its concepts and values. This applies particularly in the case of a traditional society, when the professional (even if originally from such a society) received his/her professional training in a framework based on Western values.

The current review focuses on intervention strategies and practices adapted for work with individuals and families in Arab society in Israel, particularly in the social and therapeutic services. The review was commissioned by 360° – the National Program for Children and Youth at Risk as part of its routine work with the Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute.

Goal

The goal of the review was to assemble existing information about the social and cultural characteristics of Arab society that could affect therapeutic interventions and practices, and proposed ways of adapting interventions to meet the society's characteristics and cope with dilemmas, conflicts and difficulties that arise. This, as a basis from which professionals can learn and develop intervention strategies for working with this population. Papers have been written in a few countries about the way professionals in different fields deal with cultural diversity (and particularly with the dilemmas of implementing Western therapeutic approaches in traditional societies) when working with different populations. As noted, in this review, we focused on the Arab population in Israel. The strategies relate mainly to psychology and social work, but they may have implications for other professionals working with children and families – physicians, nurses, and school and preschool teachers – as well as other populations with similar characteristics.

Method

The study is based mainly on literature from Israel and literature about professionals working in Western countries. Most of the material cited in the review was published in the past decade. The search was conducted mainly using the following sources: the Szold Institute databases, ProQuest Central, Index of Hebrew Periodicals, Google Scholar and FindArticles.

The key words used were (in English searches) "socio-cultural and political aspects of social work," "culturally competent practice," and "culturally sensitive intervention," and, in Hebrew, the equivalents of "cultural competence in therapy professions," "Arab population of Israel," "cultural competence strategies," and "cultural sensitivity."

Topics

The review focuses on the characteristics of Arab society in Israel that could affect interventions with individuals and families: Socio-demographic characteristics, cultural and social characteristics, patterns of receiving assistance and service utilization, and other characteristics that affect attitudes towards professionals, expectations of the intervention process, and the intervention process itself. In light of the characteristics identified, the review describes strategies and principles for therapeutic interventions in Arab society: strategies to promote service utilization; strategies that take account of the relationships between the sexes, within the family, and between family and community; and strategies for intervention in cases of abuse and severe neglect.

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