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Spiritual Perspectives and Comfort Levels of African American Families and Mental Health Nurses within the Context of Depression

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The purpose of this study was to explore spiritual perspectives and comfort levels of African American families and mental health care nurses within the context of depression. This study aimed to support the idea of testing Figueroa's (2008a) theoretical framework designed to increase comfort levels of nurses striving to incorporate spirituality within their practice - and to assist in endorsing a culturally sensitive treatment option for African American families within the context of depression.

The participants consisted of mental health nurses ($N = 30$) between the ages of 29 and 68 years, and 30 African American families ($N = 63$) with members between the ages of 17 and 85 years. The nurses reported working with individuals who had an Axis I diagnosis of clinical depression. The families included members who self-reported an Axis I diagnosis of clinical depression and no other mental illnesses. All participants lived in the Hampton Roads, Virginia, area at the time of the study. A descriptive statistical quantitative design and Colaizzi's (1978) phenomenological qualitative method were used. All participants' spiritual perspectives were measured by Reed's (1986) spiritual perspective scale (SPS), and comfort levels were measured by Figueroa and Baker's (2009) spiritual comfort level indicator (SCLI).

Findings indicate the families and nurses had high scores on the SPS. However, the families scored significantly higher on the SCLI. Implications for nursing practice and research include using the Figueroa's theoretical framework to help increase comfort levels of nurses incorporating spirituality into their practice.

Biography:

Dr. Figueroa has over 20 years' experience in nursing academia, research and clinical management. She earned her BS in Nursing from Long Island University; MSN specializing in community Psychiatric/Mental Health Nursing and PhD from Hampton University, emphases: Family Research. She has published and presented on topics of spirituality as it relates to providing healthcare. Dr. Figueroa has traveled to Africa serving on the First Baptist Church Health Ministry's - Benin Africa Project, to help initiate a medical facility in 2008. Dr. Figueroa is currently serving as an Assistant Professor at Norfolk State University's Department of Nursing and Allied Health.