Cultural Beliefs and Family Well-being: A Narrative Review

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A r t i c l e   I n f o

A B S T R A C T

Objective: This review aims to explore the influence of cultural beliefs on family well-being, highlighting how these beliefs impact family dynamics, health behaviors, and support systems across diverse cultures.

Methods and Materials: Utilizing a descriptive narrative review approach, this study systematically searches through databases like PubMed, PsycINFO, Scopus, and Web of Science, focusing on literature from 2000 to 2023. The review integrates studies examining the impact of cultural beliefs on various aspects of family well-being, including mental health, relationships, and parenting practices.

Findings: The synthesis reveals that cultural beliefs deeply influence family well-being, affecting areas such as family dynamics, mental health, parenting practices, and family resilience. The review highlights both the supportive and detrimental effects of these beliefs, demonstrating their critical role in shaping health behaviors and intervention outcomes.

Conclusion: Recognizing and integrating cultural beliefs into healthcare and social support systems is essential for improving family well-being. Future research should aim at longitudinal and culturally specific studies to better understand these complex influences.

Keywords: Cultural beliefs, Family well-being, Narrative review, Mental health, Parenting practices, Family resilience.

1   Introduction

Cultural beliefs play a significant role in shaping family well-being, influencing various aspects of family life, and impacting the provision of healthcare and social support. Understanding the cultural beliefs held by families is crucial for health and social care practitioners to provide culturally congruent care (Choudhry et al., 2017). emphasize the need for additional studies within the United States to explore cultural beliefs through tailored family assessments, highlighting the importance of understanding cultural influences on family management of health conditions such as childhood cancer (Thibodeaux & Deatrick, 2007)le. Similarly, Leung (2017) addresses the unexplored relationships between Chinese cultural beliefs about adversity and family functioning in Chinese families experiencing economic disadvantage in Hong Kong, indicating the need for further research in this area (Leung, 2017). Moreover, Asmal et al. (2011) underscore the impact of culture on family therapy for schizophrenia, emphasizing

the necessity of examining how cultural beliefs affect access to care and treatment outcomes (Asmal et al., 2011).

The literature provides valuable insights into the relationships among cultural family beliefs, family socialization, and adolescent development, as demonstrated by Leung's (2017) study on cultural family beliefs, maternal sacrifice, and adolescent psychological competence in Chinese poor single-mother families (Leung, 2017). Additionally, Delvecchio et al. (2016) explored the self-perception of parental roles, family functioning, and cultural beliefs in Italian parents, shedding light on the interplay between cultural beliefs and family dynamics (Delvecchio et al., 2016). These studies collectively highlight the intricate connections between cultural beliefs and family well-being, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive understanding of cultural influences on family life.

Furthermore, Brittain et al. (2011) examined the relationships between informed decision-making, cultural identity, family support, and beliefs about colorectal cancer screening among African American men and women, underscoring the impact of cultural beliefs on health-related decision-making within families (Brittain et al., 2011). Rolland's (1987) work on family illness paradigms further emphasizes the significance of understanding cultural beliefs in the context of family well-being, advocating for a flexible family approach that considers cultural influences (Rolland, 1987). Dwairy's (2008) study on metaphor psychotherapy with Arab-Muslim clients also highlights the potential for cultural interventions to alter beliefs and promote adaptation within the family context (Rolland, 1987).

Moreover, Mednick et al. (2013) emphasized the profound impact of cultural assumptions and beliefs about the causes of cleft lip and palate on affected individuals and their families, indicating the importance of understanding cultural perspectives in healthcare settings (Mednick et al., 2013). Wong et al. (2004) explored the mental health of Chinese caregivers in Hong Kong, highlighting the complex interplay between family burdens, Chinese health beliefs, and mental health outcomes, underscoring the need to consider cultural beliefs in supporting family caregivers (Wong et al., 2004). Hohashi's (2019) Family Belief Systems Theory further emphasizes the importance of evaluating and addressing family beliefs to promote family well-being (Hohashi, 2019). Sichimba et al. 's (2020) study on cultural beliefs and practices towards mental illness in Zambia provides insights into the impact of cultural beliefs on

caregiving and mental health support within families (Sichimba et al., 2022).

In summary, the literature underscores the critical role of cultural beliefs in shaping family well-being. Understanding and addressing cultural beliefs are essential for providing effective and culturally congruent support to families, particularly in the context of healthcare and social interventions.

2   Methods and Materials

This narrative review systematically identifies, selects, and synthesizes existing research on the impact of cultural beliefs on family well-being, aiming to provide a comprehensive overview of the topic. Our approach is descriptive, focusing on summarizing and explaining the findings of previous studies rather than conducting a thematic analysis or meta-analysis.

2.1   Search Strategy

To ensure a broad and comprehensive collection of relevant literature, we conducted a systematic search across several major electronic databases, including PubMed, PsycINFO, Scopus, and Web of Science. The search was performed using a combination of keywords and phrases related to "cultural beliefs," "family well-being," "family health," "cultural impact," and "family dynamics." We also manually searched reference lists of key articles to identify additional studies not captured through database searching.

The search was limited to articles published in English from 2000 to 2023, focusing on peer-reviewed journal articles to ensure the quality and reliability of the sources reviewed. Grey literature, such as conference proceedings and unpublished theses, was excluded to maintain a focus on peer-reviewed evidence.

2.2   Selection Criteria

Inclusion criteria were developed to select studies that explicitly examined the impact of cultural beliefs on aspects of family well-being, including mental health, relationships, parenting practices, and overall family functioning. Both quantitative and qualitative studies were included to capture a wide range of evidence. Exclusion criteria were applied to studies that did not directly address the impact of cultural beliefs on family well-being or were not conducted within a family context.

2.3   Data Extraction

Data was extracted from each selected study using a standardized data extraction form designed for this review. The form captured essential information about each study, including authors, year of publication, study location, cultural context, study design, sample size, key findings, and conclusions. This structured approach ensured that all relevant data were consistently collected and summarized across studies.

2.4   Synthesis of Literature

Given the descriptive nature of this narrative review, we synthesized the findings of the selected studies narratively. The synthesis focused on describing how cultural beliefs influence family well-being, highlighting key patterns, trends, and findings across the literature. While this review does not employ a thematic analysis, it aims to provide a clear and organized presentation of the literature, organized by cultural belief systems and their observed impacts on different aspects of family well-being.

2.5   Quality Assessment

Although a formal quality assessment is not typically conducted in descriptive narrative reviews, we considered the credibility and relevance of each selected study in the context of our review objectives. Studies were assessed for their contribution to understanding the impact of cultural beliefs on family well-being, with particular attention to study design, sample size, and the robustness of findings.

2.6   Ethical Considerations

As this review synthesizes published data and does not involve primary data collection from human participants, ethical approval was not required. However, all analyzed works were treated with respect for the intellectual property of the original authors, and proper citations and acknowledgments were made in accordance with academic standards.

3   Literature Review

3.1   Cultural Beliefs and Family Dynamics

Cultural beliefs play a significant role in shaping family structures, roles, and dynamics, influencing various aspects of family life and impacting the behaviors and decisions of family members. Mandell & Novak (2005) emphasize the influence of cultural factors on families' treatment decisions for children with autism spectrum disorders, highlighting the impact of cultural beliefs on intervention strategies and responses to children's developmental deviations (Mandell & Novak, 2005). Similarly, Thackeray et al. (2004) stress the importance of understanding cultural influences to develop culturally appropriate programs and policies for diabetes management, underscoring the necessity of considering cultural beliefs in healthcare strategies (Thackeray et al., 2004).

A study on the cultural influence on family management of children with cancer further underscores the significant role of health beliefs and family structure in shaping cultural factors that impact family dynamics (Thibodeaux & Deatrick, 2007). Additionally, further research on Latina mothers' cultural beliefs about children, parental roles, and education highlights the influence of cultural beliefs on parent-child and parent-school relationships, emphasizing the impact of cultural beliefs on family dynamics and educational practices (Durand, 2010).

Moreover, Ifelunni et al. (2022) and Mansour's (2008) studies emphasize the influence of cultural beliefs about gender roles and personal religious beliefs on women's behavior and the shaping of beliefs and practices in science education, respectively. These studies collectively underscore the profound impact of cultural beliefs on family structures, roles, and dynamics, emphasizing the need to consider cultural factors in understanding and addressing family dynamics (Ifelunni et al., 2022; Mansour, 2008).

In addition, A study on the influence of cultural beliefs on stigma, relationships with family, and help-seeking in ethnic communities in London highlights the necessity of considering cultural beliefs in developing interventions and engaging communities around mental health, emphasizing the impact of cultural beliefs on family relationships and mental health support-seeking behaviors (Shefer et al., 2012). Similarly, further research on risk perception and attitudes to miscarriage and congenital anomalies in rural Western Kenya emphasizes the influence of cultural beliefs on stigma and health-seeking behaviors, particularly in the context of congenital anomalies (Dellicour et al., 2013).

In summary, these studies underscore the critical role of cultural beliefs in shaping family structures, roles, and dynamics. Understanding and addressing cultural beliefs are essential for comprehensively understanding and supporting families within diverse cultural contexts.

3.2 Cultural Beliefs and Mental Health

The impact of cultural beliefs on the mental health of family members is a complex and multifaceted issue that requires a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between cultural factors and mental health outcomes. Cultural beliefs can significantly influence the mental health of family members, shaping their attitudes, behaviors, and access to mental health services. Understanding these influences is crucial for developing effective interventions and support systems for diverse cultural groups.

Cultural beliefs play a pivotal role in shaping attitudes towards mental health and mental illness within families. Research by El-Islam El-Islam (2008) highlights the impact of cultural transformation on mental health in Arab Islamic cultures, emphasizing the need to understand the cultural context to provide effective mental health care (El-Islam, 2008). Similarly, Miller et al. (2018) emphasize the negative impact of family separation on refugees' mental health and the need to explore refugees' perspectives on the mental health consequences of family separation (Miller et al., 2018). These studies underscore the importance of considering cultural beliefs and experiences in understanding the mental health impact of family dynamics.

Furthermore, Hansen et al. (2021) and Jang et al. (2009) emphasize the influence of culture on mental health perceptions and attitudes towards mental health services, highlighting the role of cultural misconceptions and stigma in shaping attitudes (Hansen et al., 2021; Jang et al., 2009). Additionally, Yasui et al. (2017) stress the need to integrate culturally specific factors into engagement with mental health services for ethnic minority and immigrant children and families, recognizing the central role of culture in shaping mental health disparities (Yasui et al., 2017).

The impact of cultural beliefs on family members' mental health is further underscored by studies, which highlight the influence of cultural beliefs on mental health services acceptance, mental health literacy, and perceptions of a healthy family within different cultural contexts (Altweck et al., 2015; Endrawes et al., 2007; Martin & Yurkovich, 2013). These studies emphasize the need to consider cultural beliefs in addressing mental health disparities and promoting culturally competent mental health care.

Moreover, the impact of cultural beliefs on mental health is evident in studies which highlight the influence of cultural factors on mental health support-seeking behaviors, mental health service utilization, and attitudes towards mental health services (Bracke et al., 2019; Poudel-Tandukar et al., 2019). These studies underscore the need to address cultural beliefs and stigma in promoting mental health support and service utilization.

Additionally, the impact of cultural beliefs on the mental health of family members is evident in studies focusing on specific cultural groups which highlight the influence of religious and cultural beliefs on attitudes towards mental health services and the perceived effects of migration on mental health within specific cultural communities (Ali et al., 2021; Bauer et al., 2023; Ojurongbe, 2023).

Furthermore, the influence of cultural beliefs on mental health is evident in studies which emphasize the importance of culturally aware mental health interventions, the impact of cultural beliefs on family caregivers' perspectives, and the influence of cultural beliefs on mental health attitudes and experiences (Sichimba et al., 2022; Thomson, 2021; Verity et al., 2021).

In summary, the impact of cultural beliefs on the mental health of family members is a complex and multifaceted issue that requires a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between cultural factors and mental health outcomes. These references collectively underscore the need to consider cultural beliefs in addressing mental health disparities, promoting mental health literacy, and developing culturally competent mental health interventions.

3.3 Cultural Beliefs and Parenting Practices

The influence of cultural norms on parenting styles and practices is a multifaceted and complex phenomenon that requires a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between cultural factors and parenting behaviors. Parenting styles are significantly shaped by cultural norms, which encompass a wide range of beliefs, values, and practices within a given society. Understanding these influences is crucial for comprehensively understanding and supporting families within diverse cultural contexts.

Hoenicka et al. (2022) highlight the relationship between recalled parental bonding and attachment in adulthood, indicating the influence of cultural norms on parenting practices and attachment styles (Hoenicka et al., 2022). Furthermore, Hayek et al. (2021) describe parenting style as a constellation of underlying dimensions influenced by cultural beliefs, particularly responsiveness and demandingness. This highlights the impact of cultural norms on the fundamental dimensions of parenting styles (Hayek et al., 2021). Additionally, Ramírez et al. (2021) interpret their results in the context of their influence on beliefs about

parenting styles, reflecting the influence of cultural norms on the most successful styles for fostering children's and adolescents' psychosocial adjustment (Ramírez et al., 2021).

The impact of cultural norms on parenting styles and practices is further underscored by studies (Aghayeeabianeh & Talebi, 2020; Aldhafri et al., 2020; Curelaru et al., 2020) which highlight the effects of parenting styles on students' self-efficacy beliefs, the influence of parenting styles on the strength of the influence of children on parents, and the statistical significance of parenting styles in determining the influence of children on parents, respectively. These references collectively emphasize the need to consider cultural beliefs in understanding the development and impact of parenting styles.

Moreover, Chen-Bouck et al. (2019) emphasize the influence of collectivism socialization goals and training beliefs on Chinese parenting, highlighting the impact of cultural norms on parenting practices (Chen-Bouck et al., 2019). Similarly, Trifonova (2022) and Choong (2023) highlight the strong correlation between perceived parenting styles and certain communication styles, as well as the impact of parenting styles on the development of adolescent social anxiety, indicating the pervasive influence of cultural norms on parenting behaviors and outcomes (Choong, 2023; Trifonova, 2022).

In summary, the synthesis of these references underscores the critical role of cultural norms in shaping parenting styles and practices. Understanding and addressing cultural beliefs are essential for comprehensively understanding and supporting families within diverse cultural contexts.

3.4 Cultural Beliefs and Family Resilience

Cultural beliefs play a pivotal role in fostering resilience within families, influencing their belief systems, organizational patterns, and communication processes. The interplay between cultural norms and family resilience is evident in various contexts, reflecting the significance of cultural beliefs in promoting adaptive responses to adversity and stressors.

The role of cultural beliefs in fostering family resilience is supported by Lee et al. (2012), who highlight the enhancement of resilience through ethnic family's cultural values and mutual psychological support (Lee et al., 2012). This underscores the influence of cultural norms in providing a supportive context for resilience-building within families.

Furthermore, Retzlaff (2007) emphasizes family belief systems as a core factor for family adaptation and resilience, indicating the central role of cultural beliefs in shaping family resilience processes (Retzlaff, 2007). Similarly, Young et al. (2017) stress the contextual nature of resilience and the variation in its conceptualization across cultural groups, highlighting the influence of cultural norms on resilience frameworks (Young et al., 2017).

The collaborative efforts within families to exhibit resilience through the adaptation and improvement of family beliefs, patterns, and communication are highlighted by Abulaiti et al. (2022), underscoring the active role of cultural beliefs in promoting family resilience (Abulaiti et al., 2022).

Moreover, Xie & Wong (2020) emphasize the cultural sensitivity of resilience, highlighting the role of culture as a resilience component in shaping family perceptions and interactions. This underscores the influence of cultural beliefs on the relational level of resilience within families (Xie & Wong, 2020).

The integral role of family belief systems in family resilience is further supported by Garrison et al. (2022), who suggest additional domains that may comprise family resilience, emphasizing the multifaceted nature of cultural beliefs in shaping family resilience processes (Garrison et al., 2022).

Additionally, Chua et al. (2021) highlight the resilience-supporting transactions within family communities, demonstrating how positive adjustment is supported by cultural beliefs and resilience processes within traditional African contexts (Chua et al., 2021). This underscores the role of cultural beliefs in promoting resilience within specific cultural communities.

Furthermore, the references by Choudhry et al. (2017) and Isaacs et al. (2017) emphasize the importance of taking indigenous beliefs into account in understanding well-being and resilience, indicating that cultural beliefs play a crucial role in shaping resilience processes within indigenous communities (Choudhry et al., 2017; Isaacs et al., 2017). This suggests that the impact of cultural beliefs on family well-being is influenced by indigenous perspectives and practices, leading to variations in the promotion of resilience within indigenous cultural contexts.

In summary, the synthesis of these references underscores the critical role of cultural beliefs in fostering resilience within families. Understanding and addressing cultural beliefs are essential for comprehensively promoting family resilience within diverse cultural contexts.

4   Discussion and Conclusion

The review highlights the profound influence of cultural beliefs on family dynamics, roles, and decision-making. It demonstrates how cultural norms shape the ways families interact, make health decisions, and manage illnesses, suggesting that culturally congruent care is essential for improving family well-being. The diversity in cultural beliefs and their impact on family dynamics necessitates a flexible approach in health care and social support systems, acknowledging and integrating these beliefs into care practices.

The integration of cultural sensitivity into health care and social support services faces challenges due to the broad spectrum of cultural beliefs. The review underscores the need for health care professionals and social workers to possess a deep understanding of cultural diversity to provide effective support. Culturally tailored interventions, informed by a thorough understanding of specific cultural beliefs and practices, emerge as crucial for enhancing family well-being.

The findings call for policies and practices that prioritize cultural competence. There's a clear indication that policy-makers and practitioners must develop and implement family support programs that are not only culturally sensitive but also actively engage with cultural beliefs to be truly effective. Training in cultural competence for health care providers and social workers is identified as a pivotal step towards achieving this goal.

The review identifies significant gaps in the literature, particularly in the empirical exploration of cultural beliefs' impacts on various aspects of family well-being. Future research should aim to fill these gaps with longitudinal and culturally specific studies to better understand and support the diverse needs of families across different cultural contexts.

This narrative review has emphasized the critical role of cultural beliefs in shaping family well-being. It brings to light the complexity of cultural influences and the importance of integrating these beliefs into health care and social support systems for families. The review advocates for a paradigm shift towards more culturally competent care practices, highlighting the need for policies and practices that are responsive to the cultural diversity of families.

The relationship between cultural beliefs and family well-being is intricate and multifaceted, requiring a nuanced approach in research, policy, and practice. As societies become increasingly multicultural, the importance of understanding and integrating cultural beliefs in support of family well-being cannot be overstated. Future efforts should focus on developing culturally sensitive interventions, enhancing cultural competence among professionals, and conducting research that further elucidates the complex interplay between cultural beliefs and family dynamics.

Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this article.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

Acknowledgments

None.

Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

Funding

According to the authors, this article has no financial support.

Ethics Considerations

In conducting this narrative review on the impact of cultural beliefs on family well-being, ethical considerations were paramount to ensure the integrity and respectfulness of our synthesis of the existing literature. We committed to an impartial and transparent approach in the selection, analysis, and synthesis of studies to minimize bias and ensure a comprehensive exploration of the subject matter. Recognizing the sensitivity surrounding cultural beliefs and practices, we endeavored to present our findings with the utmost respect for the diversity and complexity of the communities involved. This included careful avoidance of stereotypes or generalizations that could misrepresent cultural nuances or contribute to the stigmatization of particular groups or individuals. Moreover, in addressing

topics that involve vulnerable populations or sensitive issues, we took extra care to ensure our narrative did not inadvertently perpetuate stigma or harm. Ethical scholarship also guided our citation practices, ensuring that all sources were accurately credited to honor the contributions of previous researchers and uphold the standards of academic integrity.

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