Teaching Students and Nurses
Evidence-based Recommendations of
Culturally Sensitive Perinatal Care for
Somali Immigrant Women

Bernita Missal, PhD, RN
Connie Clark, PhD, RN
Bethel University
Objectives:

1. The learner will be able to examine the evidence related to culturally sensitive care for Somali immigrant new mothers.

2. The learner will be able to integrate recommendations for culturally sensitive care for Somali immigrant new mothers into nursing and patient education.
Somalia: History

- **1960**: Somalia becomes independent from Britain and Italy.
- **1969**: Dictatorial socialist state with persecution, torture, and jailing of opponents.

Central government and infrastructure destroyed.

Somalia: Refugees & Diaspora

- Est. 300,000 Somalis died during the war
  (United Nations (UN), n.d.)
- Over 1 million refugees
  (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2013).
- Somalia - 3rd largest number of refugees in the world
  (UNHCR, 2013).


“Discover, document, know, and explain the interdependence of care and culture phenomena with differences and similarities between and among cultures” (Leininger & McFarland, 2006, p.4).

Purpose of Study

To explore Somali immigrant new mothers’ experience of childbirth in Minnesota

Design

- Qualitative research
- Twelve female participants
- In-depth individual interviews
- Semi-structured open-ended questions

Data Collection

- Collaborated with Somali women community leaders
- Snowball sampling technique
- Interviews at varied locations

Evidence for Culturally Sensitive Care to Somali Immigrant New Mothers

1) Family’s & friends’ support
2) Cultural & religious practices
3) Relationships with nurses
4) Views on Cesarean section
5) Postpartum blues/depression

Family

• Loss of mother’s help & advice
• Loss of traditional family support

“Don’t have a family here. Think about family and get sad.”

Retrieved from madaale.com
Husband’s Support

Different from Somalia:
• Husband’s presence in the delivery room.
• Husband’s extensive help with household tasks.

“Culturally, boys don’t cook. He washed, cleaned the house, vacuumed.”

Extended Family and Friends’ Support

- Any available family member or friend helped.

“Sister-in-law lived with me for two years”.

“If you are Somali, you are friends.”

Cultural & Religious Practices

- Traditional foods
- 40-day postpartum period
- Prayer at the time of birth

Traditional Foods

- Food brought by family & friends to the hospital: oatmeal & tea – for breast milk.

- Traditionally Somali women eat during labor.


“‘No, I am going to eat hospital food’, and she [friend] was like: ‘No, you are a new mother and you are going to get hungry in the middle of the night.’ “And 4:00 in the morning came and I was so hungry and I had my porridge and I was so grateful.”

“‘She has no energy, how is she supposed to push the baby?’ My mom was really angry.”
40-day Postpartum Period

In Somalia:

• Mother stays at home and only cares for the baby
• Female relatives do all household work

“All that she does is feed the baby and sleep, that’s it.”

“At the end of 40 days:

• Special celebration with the extended family & friends
• Special food and clothes

“In America nobody gets that time. When we got out, we went to Target. That is very strange.”
Prayer at Birth

• Father whispers prayer in baby’s ear

“Prayer for help, for the mother and baby to have a happy face.”
Relationships with Nurses

• Physical care
• Emotional support
• Teaching

“One nurse was the best. She was coming to visit me often. She taught me about the baby and to care for the baby. She was nice. She was talkative.”
Views on Cesarean Section

- Family strongly disapproves
- Avoid going to the hospital
- Aversion towards C/S
- Why is it necessary?
- Commercial interest of physicians
- Punishment
Postpartum Blues/Depression

- Not common in Somalia
- Viewed as a weakness

“You’re by yourself, you’re so tired. You don’t get to rest. My sister had a different experience because her mother-in-law always cooked. The food was not there [for me], that was a big challenge.”

[Husband says]
“What are you doing? My mom had 12 kids, never cried. You’re weak.”
## Recommendations for Staff Nurses

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Husband</th>
<th>Ask woman about his companionship during labor &amp; delivery.</th>
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<td>Include husband in pre- and postnatal teaching.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family &amp; Friends</td>
<td>Ask woman about preferred guests.</td>
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<td>Monitor traffic in the room.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural Aspects</td>
<td>Be aware of loss of social support &amp; 40-day period. Permit food.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Postpartum Depression/Blues</td>
<td>Be aware of its prevalence, denial, and stigma. Educate.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Build Trusting Relationships</td>
<td>Share personal experiences with children; allow time for questions, give rationale</td>
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Recommendation for Nurse Educators

• Teach students to be sensitive to the challenges of being in a second culture
• Teach students about importance of cultural and religious practices
• Teach importance of establishing trusting relationships
• Teach use of community resources
Recommendations for Administrators

• Establish policies that provide for cultural sensitivity
• Provide educational opportunities for interprofessional and ancillary groups
• Partner with community to understand health issues of the Somali community