

Euro Mental Health 2019: Reducing risk of mental health problems in mothers served in neonatal intensive care nurseries: nurses' communication skills as a key variable- George H S Singer- California State University

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Abstract

This study examined the levels of maternal stress and efficacy for Spanish- and English-speaking Latina mothers whose infants were in neonatal intensive care. Thirty-two Latina mothers participated in the study. Significant group differences were found between Spanish- and English-speaking Latina mothers. More stress was experienced by Spanish- than English-speaking Latina mothers in communicating with NICU staff, in general and learning about infant caregiving tasks, in particular. Maternal efficacy was not related to stress experienced by these mothers in the NICU. Implications for early interventions and future directions for researcher discussed for Latina mothers and their new born infants with special needs.

DESCRIPTORS: Latina mothers, maternal stress and efficacy, neonatal intensive care The transition to parenting a new born baby is a major life change for many families (Heinicke, 1995). For many first-time parents, pregnancy, along with the initial adjustment to parenthood, is described as a period of crisis. The birth experience may be particularly traumatizing for families if there are unexpected medical complications, including a premature birth that requires an admission to the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) setting (Hughes, McCollum, Sheftel, & Sanchez, 1994). These experiences may pose additional stressors for families whose language and culture are different from those of health care providers. Because Latinos are the largest minority, numbered at 35.3 million in the United States (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2001), and they are an understudied population, there is a strong need to examine their experiences with neonatal intensive care. Latino children are the largest ethnic minority group, comprising 16% of the U.S. population under 18 years of age (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000). The percentage of preterm Latino infants born in the United States in 2002 was 11.6%, followed by 11% for non-Latino Anglopreterm births (National Center for Health Statistics, 2003).

Method

- Research Site
- Participants
- Measures

Parental Stress Scale: Neonatal Intensive Care Unit the Parental Stress Scale: Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (PSS: NICU; Miles, Funk, & Carlson, 1993), a widely used instrument, was selected to measure the construct of parental stress associated with the NICU (Johll, 1997; Miles, Funk, & Kasper, 1991, 1992; Miles et al., 1993; Seidman et al., 1997; Shields-Poe & Pinelli, 1997). The PSS: NICU is a 46-item self-report measure of parental perceptions of stressors from the physical and psychosocial environment of the NICU.

Procedure: Parent recruitment occurred over a 5-month period from August 2002 to January 2003. Mothers were recruited directly in the NICU where neonatal personnel briefly described the study to them. Mothers were asked for their verbal consent for the principal investigator to speak with them about participating in the study. Participants were provided with an oral and written explanation of the research study in their primary language. Of the total number of mothers who were invited to participate, 82% of these mothers agreed to be included in the study. Written human subject consents were obtained from the participants. The mothers who agreed to participate were asked to complete the self-report questionnaires in the NICU on one occasion of their choice. The questionnaires were completed 1 to 16 days prior to discharge, with the mean of 4 days prior to discharge (SD = 3.7). The mothers chose when to complete the questionnaires. Therefore, we were unable to control for the amounts of experience in the NICU environment. However, all of the mothers had at least 5 days of experience with their infants in the NICU before entering the study. The questionnaires took the participants between 30 min to 1 hr to complete.

Results: This study was designed to measure the levels of maternal stress and efficacy associated with Latina mothers' experiences having their babies admitted to the NICU. It was of particular interest to examine if these levels were similar or different between the English- and Spanish-speaking Latina mothers. Potential relations between maternal stress and efficacy were also of interest for the Latina mothers as a group as well as for the two language groups of Latina mothers.

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