



CULTURE OR HEALTHCARE SYSTEMS MATTER: AN EXPLORATORY ANALYSIS COMPARING STRESS PERCEPTION AMONG TAIWANESE AND CHINESE-AMERICAN MOTHERS OF PRETERM INFANTS

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BACKGROUND AND STUDY AIM

- Mothers with preterm infants hospitalized in the ICU experience stress-related symptoms such as sleep disturbances and fatigue.
- The culture that we belong to has a significant influence on the types of stressors that we perceive as threatening.
- People belonging to the same ethnic group tend to have similar cultural backgrounds.
- Different healthcare systems may have unique institutional cultures that impact an individual's stress perception.
- The ICU nurse-to-patient ratio is identical in Taiwan and the United States (U.S.). However, visiting hours were limited to twice a day in Taiwan compared to the 24-hour policy in the US.
- The study explored differences in perceived stress and stress-related symptoms among Taiwanese and Chinese-Americans during early postpartum while their infants were in the ICU.

METHODS

- 60 Taiwanese and 30 Chinese-American mothers were recruited from teaching hospitals in Taiwan and the Western U.S.
- Mothers completed questionnaires to measure their perceived stress related to their child's hospitalization, sleep disturbances, total sleep time, and fatigue severity
 - Parental Stressor Scale: Infant Hospitalization (Miles & Brunsem, 1998)
 - General Sleep Disturbance Scale (Lee, 1992; Lee, 2005)
 - Sleep diary includes Lee's Fatigue Scale (Lee, 1992; Tsai et al., 2013)

RESULTS

- Compared to Chinese-American mothers, Taiwanese mothers perceived significantly higher stress levels related to their infant's hospitalization.
- Both groups' mothers experienced compatible distress in parental role alternation, but Taiwanese mothers reported significantly higher stress levels related to their child's appearance and the ICU environment.
- All study participants reported experiencing clinically significant levels of sleep disturbance and fatigue.
- The total sleep time for both groups was less than the recommended 7-8 hours by the National Sleep Foundation.
- Taiwanese mothers slept more than Chinese-American mothers and experienced significantly lower levels of nighttime fatigue.

CONCLUSIONS

- Differences and similarities in maternal stress and stress-related symptoms were found during early postpartum, before infant discharge to home.
- Both groups' mothers share the same ethnicity culture, suggesting differences stem from institutional culture, such as visiting hours and nursing care.
- The visiting policy in Taiwan needs to be re-evaluated to determine its suitability.