

Resilience and Perinatal Mental Health

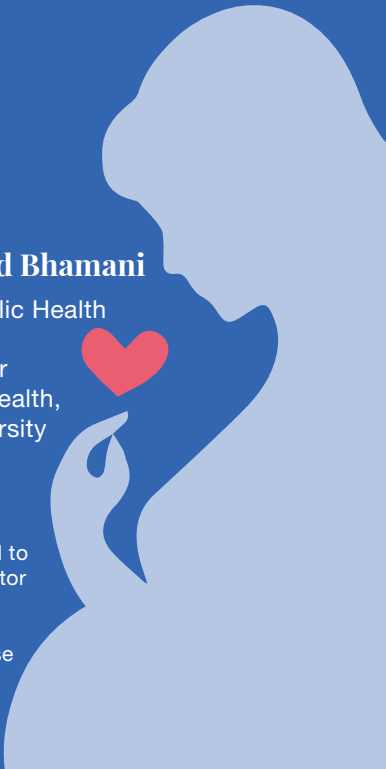
Development and Evaluation of an Intervention

Shireen Shehzad Bhamani

Department of Public Health
and Primary Care,
International Center
for Reproductive Health,
ICRH, Ghent University

Dissertation submitted to
obtain the degree Doctor
of Health Sciences

Academic Year Defense
2023-2024



Summary

Perinatal mental health issues pose a substantial public health challenge with a rising global burden. Its detrimental effects and consequences can have lasting impacts on a mother, child, and subsequently the entire family.

In Pakistan, where poverty, economic instability, illiteracy, gender discrimination, societal pressure, cultural beliefs, stigma, and a lack of social support and awareness can add to the stress of perinatal experiences, resilience-building intervention plays a vital role in promoting perinatal well-being. This can empower women by developing internal strength, capability, and flexibility and their capacity to cope constructively with life adversities.

The objectives of this PhD dissertation allowed us to explore resilience core characteristics, develop, validate, and evaluate a resilience-based intervention to improve pregnant women's resilience and marital harmony and reduce depressive and pregnancy-related anxiety. These were achieved by two-phased intervention research.

The study identified six core components of resilience by interviewing 25 stakeholders: 17 pregnant women and 8 key informants. These include: 1) finding the purpose of life, 2) dealing with emotions, 3) believing in yourself, 4) adopting an optimistic approach, 5) strengthening support and relationship, and 6) internalizing spirituality and humanity. These core competencies then became part of the SM-ART (Safe Motherhood-Accessible Resilience Training) intervention.

Consequently, a two-group Randomized Control Trial design (RCT) was adopted to test the effectiveness of a six-week SM-ART intervention on 200 pregnant women presenting to midwifery-led, Koochi Goth Hospital of Karachi, Pakistan. Post-Intervention findings revealed that mean resilience and depression scores in the intervention group (n=100) were significantly different compared to the control group (n=100) with p-value <0.05.

Findings

The main findings of this study emphasize the use of these core competencies to define the resilience pathway, the availability of readily available SM-ART resource material, and the enhancement of women's resilience and reduction in depressive symptoms following a 6-week SM-ART intervention.

This work recognizes that a non-medical and strength-based positive psychological intervention can enhance resilience scores and reduce depression scores, so it has the potential to decrease the burden of perinatal mental illness in Pakistan.

We recommend that every woman seeking antenatal care be encouraged to take part in this intervention at least once while she is pregnant. Women will have the chance to express their emotions and worries in a secure environment.

Moreover, this should be part of the core curriculum of midwives.

Consequently, including such interventions in public health initiatives, especially in resource-limited countries like Pakistan, may help to improve the mental health of women and promote the development of healthy families.

The resilience training module designed for expectant mothers, through this research project:



The full version of the dissertation can be found at <https://biblio.ugent.be>

Ghent University
Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences
Department of Public Health and Primary Care,
International Center for Reproductive Health-ICRH

PhD Guidance Committee

Supervisors

- Olivier Degomme (Ghent University, Belgium)
- An-Sofie Van Parys (Ghent University, Belgium)
- David Arthur (Bermi Acupuncture & Chinese Medicine Clinic, Bermagui, NSW, Australia & Peking Union Medical College, Beijing, China)

Committee Members

- Nicole Letourneau (University of Calgary, Canada)
- Gail Wagnild (CEO, Resilience Center, USA)

Members of the Examination Committee

Chair

Marie-Anne Vanderhasselt (Ghent University, Belgium)

Committee Members

- Sofie Verhaeghe (Ghent University, Belgium)
- Marleen Temmerman (Ghent University, Belgium and The Aga Khan University, Kenya)
- Gilbert Lemmens (Ghent University, Belgium)
- Zul Merali (Brain and Mind Institute, The Aga Khan University, Kenya and Pakistan)
- Syed Mehboob Shah (United Arab Emirates University, UAEU)
- Panagiota Tryphonopoulos (University of Western, Ontario, Canada)

Doctorate Financing

- The Aga Khan University Faculty Development Award
- The Aga Khan University Research Council
- Queen Elizabeth Scholarship, University of Calgary
- Foundations for Health and Empowerment, F4HE, project, Pakistan - *for publications*.

Brief Curriculum Vitae

Shireen Shehzad Bhamani is a Pakistani citizen who holds a degree in BSc Nursing and a Master in Epidemiology and Biostatistics. Currently, she is an Assistant Professor at The Aga Khan University School of Nursing and Midwifery, Pakistan. Her expertise lie in public health research, education, and practice, focusing on mental health promotion, gender equality, violence prevention, and women empowerment.

A groundbreaking achievement in her career includes the validation of a resilience scale tailored for Pakistani women. With a remarkable record of around 40+ peer-reviewed publications, she has been a recipient of the Queen Elizabeth Scholarship and Ban Ki-moon Center for Global Citizens Mentee. She also secured grants ranging from \$1000 to \$1 million from renowned funders like Department for International Development (DFID), Canadian Institutes for Health Research (CIHR), Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to contribute to public health initiatives.

Contact Information:

Email: bhamanishireen@gmail.com

Phone: (+92) 313 2286295

Twitter, LinkedIn & ResearchGate:

@ShireenShehzadBhamani

ORCID ID: 0000-0002-7776-0281