working with African families and young people.

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Outline

• Understanding pre-migration and post-migration experiences.
• Reasons for migration.
• Common issues for the African Youth in Australia.
• Key Settlement challenges for families and individuals.
• Family Values and Structure.
• Practical Strategies for working with African Families.
• Perception about mental health and other beliefs.
• Questions and discussions.
Understanding pre-migration and post-migration experiences

- War and conflict
- Experience of torture, trauma, dislocation, loss, guilt
- Separation & loss of families, personal belongings and status
- Significant long period in refugee camps
- Some youth were born and raised in refugee camps
- Profound and long term impact on physical and psychological health
- Post traumatic stress disorder
- Poverty
Reasons for migration

• Fear of persecution and discrimination of ethnic, religious, political conviction because of minorities.
• Unrest Civil war.
• Safety and better life for family.
• Family reunion and education opportunities.
Common issues for the African Youth in Australia

- Gaps in schooling due to displacement & overstaying in refugee camps
- Changes from one national education system to another
- Cultural changes and cultural conflicts
- Peer pressure, self esteem issues, substance abuse
- Responsibilities in family e.g. caring for siblings
- Unrealistic education expectation by parents
- Lack of confident and communication skills
- Transport/vehicle access, driving issues
Issues of African Youth in Australia (Cont).

- Unrealistic education expectation by parents.
- Discipline at school vs. discipline at home e.g. Corporal punishment is the normal way of chastising a child. Older children can discipline younger ones.
- Children are expected to behave in a quiet, respectful way around adults and in public.
- Behaviour problems in children and adults are brought to elders for discussion, counselling & discipline.
Issues of African Youth in Australia (Cont).

• Lack of role models, particularly male, for youth has led to attitude and behavioural issues.

• Access issues: Lack of homework support; Lack of home computer access; Lack of home study space (overcrowding)
Key Settlement challenges for families and individuals.

- Social isolation: due to language/cultural barriers, lack of services to accommodate the needs and lack of extended family.

- Housing: difficulty accessing public or private accommodation due to large families, low income, no rental history and discrimination in the private rental market.

- Immigration issues: pressure to financially support family members in home country and sponsorship.
Key Settlement challenges for families and individuals (Cont).

• Communication, language barriers-English language skills

• Unfamiliarity with Australian systems & services and lack of knowledge of available services in the community.

• Fear of discrimination or unwelcoming attitude.

• Unemployment or underemployment.

• Loss of professional status: highly qualified professionals who struggle with obtaining recognition for their qualifications.
Key Settlement challenges for families and individuals (Cont).

• Culture shock.

• Grief, loss & frustration, concern for family back home.

• Trauma, post traumatic stress.

• Multiple health issues (physical, mental, emotional).

• Cultural maintenance –lack of African activities for youth to enhance African identity
Family Values and Structure

- Elders in Family are responsible for teaching young generation with cultural and moral issues.
- All elders addressed as ‘auntie’ & ‘uncle’ regardless of blood relationships.
- Elders consulted and play strong part in resolving disputes, both in immediate family and broader community.
- Privacy and individualism is not the expectation.
- Extended family members often help with rearing of children.
Practical Strategies for working with African Families.

• Meet-and-greet process to break barrier and other negative perception.
• Make an effort to learn something unique about each young person or family.
• Display positive nonverbal behaviours e.g., inviting facial expressions, eye contact, posture, hand gestures, physical distance) to ensure you appear approachable.
• Involve the whole family.
• Work in partnership to achieve a holistic approach.
• Avoid stereotypes and preconceived assumptions.
Practical Strategies for working with African Families (Cont.)

• Be mindful of making the person ‘fit’ the system, consider a flexible & outreach model of health care

• Consider alternative strategies wherever possible

• Seek guidance from qualified cultural oriented person e.g. spiritual leaders/ community leaders or elders.

• Other therapeutic methods e.g. natural medicine
Practical Strategies for working with African Families

• Be flexible to delivery service
• Show passion & commitment
• Be Community minding.
• Prepare yourself about traditional ways of engaging with communities e.g. visits, talking, spending time together.
• Be culturally Sensitive.
Perception about mental health and other beliefs

- Stigma and taboo
- Lack of understanding of mental disorders – Supernatural beliefs (e.g. spirit possession)
- Mental, physical, & social/family/community aspects
- Be aware of Western health practices/beliefs vs. other health practice beliefs
- Traditional medicines, spiritual healing and Quran readings preferred treatments
Questions and discussions
References


