Effects of different cultures on child health

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INTRODUCTION

A child is born as a member of a family and society, as well as of a certain culture. Children are affected by cultural, social, and spiritual aspects of the environment they live in (1). The key to have healthy societies is to have healthy children. Child health affects the society’s health in both long and short run and plays a significant role in determining a society’s level of development (2,3). Genetic factors, culture, family structure, education, individual characteristics, nutrition, intrauterine factors, poverty, migration, religion and faith, and globalization are among the factors that affect children’s health and quality of life (3,4). In addition to such factors, children’s health and quality of life are affected also by specifics of the culture they belong to.

Children learn their beliefs, values, capabilities, knowledge and skills from their families and their culture. Furthermore, culture plays an important role in socialization and development of children (5). Cultural background holds a significant place in children’s social and emotional development, as well as improvement of their motor and cognitive skills (6). Traditions, cultural values, attitudes and behaviors help in children’s rearing in the society and relays the family structure from generation to generation (7). Cultural is a comprehensive concept that contains children’s states of health, illness, and well-being. Furthermore, cultural practices of families are directly related to children’s health. Cultural practices affect children’s and families’ conceptions of health, as well as children’s social development, attitudes towards health problems they experience, conception of illness, reaction to illness and therapy (8).

Along with cultural values, concepts of religion and spirituality hold a significant place in lives of the individual and society. Although the terms ‘spirituality’ and ‘religion’ are often used alternately, spirituality is inclusive of the concept of religion. Religion is a factor that affects life style of the society and conception of health and illness. Religious belief of the child and the family may be related to their conceptions of health and illness and religious practices may be employed at treatment. Also, such concepts may affect children’s varying conceptions of health, illness, suffering, coping and recovery (9,10).

Due to cultural differences in individual and society, differences emerge in conception and expression of concepts such as health, illness, and pain. Such differences may cause various problems between healthcare professionals and families. Healthcare professionals are sometimes unable to fully understand feelings and reflections of children. Cultural differences may be one of the reasons to this (11).

With the globalization, cultural diversity is increasing in societies. This brings the necessity of healthcare professionals to become more informed and aware about various beliefs, religions, languages, life experiences, and value systems of individuals. Cultural practices and spiritual beliefs form the basis of life for many people and service providers should have cultural awareness and competence in order to achieve high-quality healthcare services. This is particularly relevant for the period of childhood when life is the most vulnerable (12,13).

OBJECTIVE

It is observed that different cultures have various impacts on children’s health. The aim of this study was to review the evidences based on the literature regarding the effects of different cultures on child health.

METHODODOLOGY

In this brief literature review, by using the keywords ‘child’, ‘culture’, ‘care’, ‘nursing’, ‘health’, and ‘religion and belief’, Google Scholar, Google E-Library, PubMed, SAGE Journals online databases were examined. Accessed books and full-text in Turkish and English articles were reviewed. Criteria for inclusion in the study are as follows: 1) Between years 2000 and 2017; 2) Published in Turkish or English as full text; 3) Accessed through Google Scholar, Google E-Library, PubMed, and SAGE Journals Online databases; 4) Studies that assess different cultures’ impact on children’s health. Forty-four studies and six books accessed were included in the study.

Effects of Culture on Child Health

According to our research, it is determined that factors such as culture, religion-faith, genetic factors, geographical location, level of education,
Religious Beliefs and Healthcare Practices with Impact on Child Health

TABLE 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious Belief</th>
<th>Nutrition</th>
<th>Health Practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buddhism</td>
<td>Avoid overfeeding. Some doctrines are vegetarians. The use of alcohol and drug is inconvenient.</td>
<td>Medical Care&lt;br&gt;Surgeries are frequently avoided. Cleaning is important.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Scientist</td>
<td>Coffee, some tea forms and alcohol use are avoided.</td>
<td>Some drugs and other therapy practices could resist. They accept physical and spiritual treatments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hinduism</td>
<td>There are many food restrictions. Meat and some food consumption forbidden</td>
<td>Acceptance of most medical practice/care&lt;br&gt;Treatments are not rejected. The boys are circumcised.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islamism</td>
<td>Ingestion of pork and pork products and alcohol forbidden</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jehovah’s Witnesses</td>
<td>Tobacco use is prohibited. Less alcohol can be used.</td>
<td>Usually do not use blood or blood components, blood volume boosters can be used when no blood is given.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judaism</td>
<td>Some animals’ meat and vegetables are eaten. Shellfish, pork and predators are forbidden to eat. Dairy products are consumed after a few minutes of eating meat.</td>
<td>The boys are circumcised.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td>The first Wednesday before Easter is forbidden to consume meat.</td>
<td>Sacred oils are used to treat diseases.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to religious beliefs, practices are generally given. Religious beliefs and practices may differ from according to the individuals.
professionals’ failure to fully understand children is a result of cultural values. Cultural practices and spiritual beliefs are of high importance in interactions with families. When their children get sick, they apply to traditional practices because of lack of trust in medical professionals. They usually laugh when they fail to understand something. Some of the families may require their knowledge on childcare from elders of the family. When their children get sick, they apply to traditional practices to protect their children’s health. They usually laugh when they fail to understand something.

Table 2
Health Practices According to Living Region of The Child and Family, Child Family Relations and Ways of Communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationalities</th>
<th>Healthcare Practices</th>
<th>Children and Family Relations</th>
<th>Communication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Africans</td>
<td>Medical practices: Traditional healthcare is prevalent. Traditional practices usually have religious origins and applied with the traditional physician. Religious practices: Prayers are often used for cure and protection against diseases.</td>
<td>Extended families are found and family bonds are strong.</td>
<td>Nonverbal behavior has a significant place. Lengthy eye contact may be seen as an expression of anger.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Medical practices: Acupuncture and acupressure, as well as herbal remedies are widely used modes of treatment.</td>
<td>Extended families are found. Children’s behavior reflects the family’s behavior. Dignity, self-assurance, and self-respect of the individual and family are fairly important.</td>
<td>They do not condone open expressions of sentiments. As a sign of respect, they avoid eye contact.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haitians</td>
<td>Nutrition: Food should be able to keep the balance between cold and hot and heavy and light. Religious practices: Prayers are used and religious symbols may be utilized.</td>
<td>Procreation of the family is important. Child has a secondary place in the family hierarchy.</td>
<td>They usually laugh when they fail to understand something.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>Medical practices: Acupuncture, acupressure, massage, moxibustion, kampo medicine, and herbs are used.</td>
<td>There are strong relations between generations. Children’s behavior reflects the family. Children are important for being the posterity.</td>
<td>They easily express their feelings with facial expressions and hand gestures and they are open to communication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native</td>
<td>Certain diseases are cured with medical methods and certain diseases are cured with traditional methods.</td>
<td>Extended families are found. The elderly are seen as leaders of the family.</td>
<td>Contact is made on a nonverbal basis. Avoiding eye contact is seen as disrespectful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Americans</td>
<td>Religious practices: Prayer, visiting temples, burning candles, and worship are preferred. Nutrition: Hot or cold food is prohibited.</td>
<td>Family bonds are strong. Extended families are found. Children are highly precious and are loved.</td>
<td>Lengthy eye contact is interpreted as being disrespectful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>Medical practices: There are concerns about touching the patient’s head at examination. Traditional practices prevail. Herbal products, acupuncture, and spiritual practices are used.</td>
<td>Family is a respectable institution. Extended families are found. Children are highly precious. Parents expect respect and obedience from their children.</td>
<td>They may hesitate to ask questions and see it as disrespectful. As a sign of respect, they may avoid eye contact with health professionals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Traditional medical practices such as herbal teas and poultice, as well as prayer are used at treatment of patients.</td>
<td>Family is an important structure. Father is seen as the wisdom, power, and self-assurance of the family. Mother is a caregiver and the decision maker in health issues.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
traditional practices that affect the child's health and evaluate them (44-49). Nurses should assess the family's cultural and religious attitudes and should assure that their needs are met properly (13).

CONCLUSION

Different cultures affect children’s health, healthcare practices, and patterns of nutrition, family relations and ways of communication. Nurses should be cautious about the children’s and families’ cultural beliefs and practices’ reflections on the child's health. In this context, the individual should be conceived in spiritual and psychosocial aspects from birth to death and holistic care should be provided. Nurses should use the transcultural nursing model in their care and they should pioneer in improving quality of healthcare by implementing individualized care.

REFERENCES

23. Egri GB, Konak A. Birth traditional beliefs about the end of the period and the application examples from the world and Zeitschrift fur die Welt der Turken. J World of Turks. 2011:143-55.
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