Mental Health and Human Resilience

Psychiatric sequelae and mental health aftercare experiences of women who had a life threatening event during pregnancy and those with uncomplicated pregnancies: an explorative-descriptive study

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Statement of the Problem: Maternal mortality is a major public health problem with 86% of deaths occurring in developing countries. Recognition of severe complications is important as these can have adverse consequences for women's health physically and mentally. Mental health is a neglected topic and that of women's mental health even more so. Limited attention is paid to these women in the South African public health sector. e purpose of the study was to describe experiences of women with a life-threatening event in pregnancy compared to women with uncomplicated pregnancies, to determine the risk of developing psychiatric complications and the impact of severe obstetric complications on the postpartum mental health.

Methodology: A mixed method study is conducted in a parallel convergent manner. Women were interviewed at four time intervals; a er delivery, six weeks, three months and six months postpartum. e study consisted of a quantitative arm which entailed completion of self-rating questionnaires, relevant psychiatric scales and the WHO disability assessment schedule. e qualitative arm consisted of case studies of 16 purposefully sampled participants from both groups.

Results: 89 participants were enrolled. Psychiatric complications were self-limiting; those with life-threatening complications did not experience post-traumatic stress disorder and women presented with atypical symptoms including somatic, sleep and memory disturbances. Live experiences included, fear of impending death, guilt feelings, loss, fear of rejection and abandonment. A gradual acceptance of their situations, the will to survive and ability to cope in-spite of adversity, a strong belief in god and an unwavering faith was prominent. Women displayed the ability to cope and adapt despitf 16 (i)-4.9 eror