

Invisible struggles, urgent priorities: mental health of ethnic migrant women and girls in Aotearoa New Zealand

Abstract

Aim: Ethnic communities in Aotearoa New Zealand are rapidly growing and highly diverse. Migration-related experiences are deeply gendered, shaping health and wellbeing in distinct ways. This multi-methods research study aimed to understand the mental health needs of ethnic migrant women and girls, and to highlight opportunities for culturally responsive support by co-designing a research agenda with high-priority research questions.

Methods: In-depth interviews were conducted with 12 key stakeholders and analysed using thematic analysis. Insights informed a subsequent stakeholder consultation workshop, facilitated using a collaborative World Café approach to co-design research priorities.

Results: Interview findings suggest nuanced contextual factors that affect mental health, lack of safe spaces including family networks, reluctance to engage with mental health services, and limited cultural responsiveness. The co-designed research priorities emphasise the importance of participatory approaches and evidence rooted in lived realities to inform services that are meaningful, culturally safe and responsive to ethnic women's needs.

Conclusion: Ethnic women's mental health requires a nuanced culturally responsive approach. Through community engagement and co-design, this study identified unmet needs and set clear research priorities to inform meaningful, evidence-based support and care.