

Culture and mourning: perinatal loss in a transcultural perspective

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Introduction – Perinatal death is a complex loss experience to grieve, because of its characteristics that make it a paradoxical, traumatic and socially denied event. The paper proposes a transcultural reading of it. The hypothesis is that the difference between collectivist and individualist societies can influence the mourning experience both at the individual level, in subjective experience and in family relations, and at the collective level, in terms of relations with the community of belonging.

Methods – On the basis of a literature analysis, integrated with the clinical experience, the work questions the possibility of both preventing the development of psychopathology and promoting the well-being of women who have suffered perinatal loss by taking into account their cultural background.

Results – Starting from the distinction between collectivist and individualistic societies, the theories on socio-cultural factors that influence the construction of a Self-Construal respectively interdependent or independent have been considered. In the first case the woman is more like to experience feelings of shame, while in the second case she tends to experience feelings of guilt.

Conclusions – Perinatal loss is an event whose meaning and consequences change considerably from culture to culture. In this age marked by large migratory flows, it is desirable to consider the cultural differences to better understand how women give meaning to the event. This aspect can be useful to adequately approach their experience in order to bring support in a personalized and effective way thus increasing the possibility of overcoming mourning without it becoming traumatic.