

## ABSTRACT

### An Exploration of the Cultural Practices and Beliefs of Childbearing Women in a Rural Village to Assess the Implications for Nursing and Midwifery Education

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This study investigated some of the cultural practices and beliefs among childbearing women during pregnancy and the intrapartum and postpartum periods in a small, rural village in the southern region of Trinidad. The decision-making process engaged in by these women in determining whether or not they were pregnant and their dietary practices were selected as points of focus in the study.

This was an instrumental case study situated within the qualitative paradigm. Eleven women in their first or second trimester of pregnancy participated in the study. Data sources consisted of interviews and documents. The data were analyzed using the grounded theory methodology. Jegede's (1995) theory of collateral learning and Leininger's Theory of Culture Care Diversity and Universality (2002b) were used to further analyse the data.

The women embarked upon a cognitive process of decision-making which included *becoming suspicious, collecting and processing further information, and confirming* their pregnancy. They used indigenous and Western biomedical science knowledge in arriving at their decisions. The decision-making process for the women with a regular period seemed straight forward, as opposed to those with an irregular period, and the informant whose period was not initially missed.

The women regarded food as important for good nutrition, enhancing efficiency of the body processes, maintaining balance, protection of the babies from birthmarks, and healing. However, foods believed to cause a disruption of the body processes were avoided. They had their own views regarding the processes that food goes through in the body. Based on Jegede's (1995) theory, they demonstrated dependent and secured collateral learning. With reference to Leininger's fourth theoretical tenet, some of their practices can be preserved/maintained, accommodated/negotiated, and repatterned/restructured.

The knowledge and insights gained from this small study have implications for issues of cultural competence which should be considered in the development of curricula at the schools of nursing and midwifery, and also in continuing educational programmes for nurses and midwives.

Keywords: Salisha Mohammed; childbearing women; cultural practices; cultural competence, nursing and midwifery education.