

Developing a mental health programme for refugees based on participatory Action Research: An experience from São Paulo, Brazil

Carmen L. A. de Santana, Francisco Lotufo Neto

The study aimed at developing a mental health programme for/with refugees based on an understanding of the refugees' perceptions about their experiences and psychodynamic aspects.. Data were collected through the combination of techniques as participatory observation, focal groups and deep interviews. A total of 24 focus groups and 12 in-depth interviews were conducted. Data analysis was based on a theoretical model of social representation combined with a psychodynamic perspective. Based on the results, a mental health programme was developed. The results demonstrated the importance of culture and social participation in health care.

Key words: Refugees, participatory action research, qualitative research, immigrants, mental health

1. Introduction

Immigrants are faced with a series of problems after their arrival in a new country, including language difficulties, cultural differences, ethnic, economic and religious discrimination, loss of social relations, broken families and the loss of valuable social roles, identities and occupational positions (Ryan, Leavey, Golden, Blizard, & King, 2006).