

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN INTERVENTION DESIGN TO PROMOTE WELLBEING IN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES IN GUATEMALA: A REALIST-INSPIRED PROCESS EVALUATION

Katherine Pizarro, MSPH
McGill University
Montreal, Quebec

Background: Indigenous communities in Guatemala face high rates of common mental disorders and have limited access to mental health services. Social and structural inequities contribute to psychosocial distress in these communities, and there is a recognized need for participatory, community-based approaches to address them. We piloted one such approach with indigenous communities in Guatemala. Facilitators convened groups of men and women (youth, adults, elders), health workers and traditional healers to map local knowledge on determinants of wellbeing, to participate in monthly deliberative dialogue sessions to prioritize issues and strategies to tackle them, and to implement their chosen strategies. Published research suggests participatory group interventions have a positive impact on mental health outcomes, yet little is known about how participatory engagement achieves impact.

Aims: In a realist-inspired process evaluation, we aimed to describe the mechanisms underpinning the participatory intervention to promote psychosocial wellbeing in indigenous communities in Guatemala.

Methods: We conducted individual interviews with local coordinators (n=3) and participants (32 men, 37 women) after one year of implementation, and analyzed them in conjunction with coordinators' monitoring logs and observation notes from collective evaluation workshops with participants (n=6). The analysis used a combination of inductive and deductive thematic coding.

Results: Participants described intervention features they believed addressed psychosocial wellbeing: a) the dialogue generated social recognition and empowerment for marginalized community members to express themselves, b) regular meetings with peers reduced social isolation, c) reflection on determinants of wellbeing increased critical consciousness and intentions to make lifestyle changes, and d) activities aimed at collective change generated social cohesion. Individual and collective strategies that emerged from group processes addressed additional social determinants of wellbeing, including substance use, family communication, and negative aspects of internet use.

Implications: The participatory dialogue-based approach is promising for addressing key social determinants of wellbeing in indigenous communities.

Full List of Authors

Pizarro, KW; Petzey Quieju, D; Yarcinio López, B; Paiz Bekker, L; LeBel, N; Groleau, D; Cockcroft, A; Andersson, N; Chomat, AM

Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Participants will be able to identify key mechanisms of participatory co-design of interventions that promote psychosocial wellbeing in indigenous communities.
2. Participants will be able to explain the value of realist-inspired process evaluation for understanding participatory group processes.

References

Moore, G. F., Audrey, S., Barker, M., Bond, L., Bonell, C., Hardeman, W., . . . Wight, D. (2015). Process evaluation of complex interventions: Medical Research Council guidance. *BMJ*, 350, h1258.

Van Belle, S., Rifkin, S., & Marchal, B. (2017). The challenge of complexity in evaluating health policies and programs: the case of women's participatory groups to improve antenatal outcomes. *BMC Health Services Research*, 17(1), 1-6.