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Effectiveness of a culturally tailored parenting support to Somali born parents on children's mental health - A randomized controlled trial

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Background

The Somali immigrants in Sweden have stressed challenges and obstacles they face in relation to their parenthood in their new home country. They expressed a specific need for cultural sensitive parental support to strengthen the relationship between them and their children. The aim of this study was to evaluate a culturally tailored parenting support program for Somali-born parents and its effectiveness on children's mental health.

Method

The randomized controlled trial was conducted in a city in the middle of Sweden. Somali born parents with children ages 11-16 years, and with self-perceived stress about parenting were included. A total of 120 Somali born parents were randomly allocated either to an intervention group or waiting-list control group. The intervention consisted of culturally sensitive Connect© parenting program with tailored societal information. Parents received 12 weeks (16 hours) of intervention, 1-2 hours each week in smaller groups. The primary outcome was reduction of emotional and behavioral problem using Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL). Analyses was conducted according to intention-to-treat.

Results

Our findings showed a significant difference between children in intervention and in control group in the subscales internalizing, externalizing and total problems score $p = <0.01$ after two months follow-up. A medium effect size 0.62 was detected.

Conclusion: A culturally tailored parenting support program delivered to newly immigrated parents can improve children's emotional and behaviour problems. From a public health perspective it is crucial to reach immigrants to eliminate inequity in health. This culturally tailored parenting intervention contributed to high attendance and low drop-outs of parents.

Main message

This study has so far resulted in improvement of Somali immigrant children's mental health, and provided knowledge on barriers and facilitators of implementing culturally tailored parental support.

