

Women's Mental Health: Resistance and Resilience in Community and Society - Book Review

Nida Mustafa, PhD student

Dalla Lana School of Public Health, University of Toronto, Canada

Research Assistant, Laboratory of Cognitive Neuroscience and Women's Health, University of Toronto, Canada

Research Assistant, Office of Women's Health Research Chair in Mental Health, York University, Canada

nida.mustafa@mail.utoronto.ca

nmustafa@yorku.ca

Khanlou N & Pilkington B. (Editors) (2015). *Women's mental health: Resistance and resilience in community and society. Advances in Mental Health and Addiction* (Series editor: Masood Zanganeh). New York: Springer.
<http://www.springer.com/psychology/health+and+behavior/book/978-3-319-17325-2>

The United Nations emphasizes gender equality and empowerment by promoting "...the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health" for women across the globe (United Nations Women, 1995). The World Health Organization (2015) specifically focuses on women's mental health by promoting and enhancing knowledge, support, and care on issues such as domestic violence, stress, and sexual abuse. Working in partnership with these tremendous efforts is the strength, resistance, and resilience of women themselves around the world.

To better identify the factors that influence the mental health and wellbeing of women, it is essential to understand their social locations and roles through a multidisciplinary and intersectionality lens. *Women's Mental Health: Resistance and Resilience in Community and Society*, edited by Dr. Nazilla Khanlou and Dr. Beryl Pilkington, presents a holistic analysis of women's mental health from individual, community, and systemic levels. With a global focus, this unique text captures the stories, narratives, and experiences of women from across the world, including entries from Canada, India, Iran, Italy, Rwanda, South Korea, Switzerland, and more. Each in-depth chapter focuses on women from a particular region, and explores the intersection of factors that shape their mental health. Authors have identified implications of their work in terms of policy and practice, further promoting a positive future for international women's mental health. Concluding each chapter, a response is also provided by a community figure, practitioner, or key stakeholder, which links research and theory to practice and policy from a new, unique perspective.

The book is divided into six sections, each identifying important challenges, transitions, and successes in women's mental health. Part I focuses on structural and systemic factors that influence the lives of women across the globe, discussing issues such as access to mental health services, concerns in employment opportunities, and violence against women at both social and personal levels. Part II explores social support and the community in relation to women's health. Available support for women is analyzed in terms of mental health, and the factors that lead to the use of such services are also discussed. Resistance and resilience in relation to health and social services are the main focus of Part III. Chapters in this section explore the interaction between women and health care systems, as well as identify the challenges, discrepancies, and future directions in seeking adequate care. Migration, transition, and the process of settlement are key themes in Part IV, and are linked to marginalization and mental health. Policy and program development suggestions are given by authors in this section as a means to reduce the immigration burden on women. Part V focuses on racialization, poverty and mental health with insights from Canada, South Korea, and Switzerland, highlighting the challenges as well as resilience of women across the world. The last section of the book, Part VI, explores rewards and challenges of motherhood in many countries, and identifies issues around pregnancy, loss, and mental health.

For women to attain the highest standard of physical and mental health in any region of the world, it is essential to identify the many intersecting factors that are at play in shaping their experiences. Barriers and challenges at all levels – personal, social, communal, institutional – need to be recognized, understood and addressed holistically in order for such efforts to advance. The accumulation of these topics in the *book Women's Mental Health: Resistance and Resilience in Community and Society* is a positive step in this direction. The innate strength and resilience of every woman is the foundation of this progress.

References:

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. (1995). The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women. Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/health.htm>.

World Health Organization. (2015). Gender and Women's Health. Retrieved from http://www.who.int/mental_health/prevention/genderwomen/en/.