Roles and responsibilities of women in the Pakistani society and their effects on midlife

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Introduction

• Women often experience a number of physiological changes during midlife,
• mainly pre-, peri- and post-menopausal symptoms.
• Culture influence:
• behaviors,
• values and beliefs related to menopause.
• Pakistani women often use:
• modern medicine
• practice mind and body therapies, and
• natural ingredients,
• cultural beliefs and values related to menopause.
• There is limited research in the Pakistani context.

Significance

Knowledge generated through this study, will inform nurses and allied healthcare providers to better care and advocate for Pakistani Muslim women experiencing menopause.

Women had to control their emotions, keep calm and continue working.
Women experienced feelings of blame, guilt and repentance.
Women expressed their frustration with menopausal symptoms that directly affected their personality and work.
Women said that people were least concerned with their experiences.
Women felt that their society was prejudiced towards them, especially when they were not young looking and beautiful anymore.
Women expressed both positive and negative feelings about their work outside of home.

Purpose

To explore Pakistani, urban, Muslim midlife women’s experiences of menopause.

This presentation focuses on the roles and responsibilities of women in the Pakistani society and their effects on midlife, and the cultural understanding of menopause in the Pakistani context.

Methods

• Methodology: Focused ethnography
• Participants: 20 Pakistani, Muslim midlife women
• Sampling: purposive and snowball
• All participants were residents of urban Karachi
• Data collection: in-depth, semi-structured interviews
• Ethical considerations followed
• Data management: Qualitative data management software
• Data analysis: Thematic content analysis

Findings

• Men are the head of their family, primary bread winner and responsible for working outside of home.
• Women mainly responsible for child bearing and child rearing, and taking care of the family.
• If women worked outside of home it was an additional responsibility; and they may or may not get support from the family.
• Most middle and high income families have servants and helpers in their homes.
• Educated working women had high self- and societal expectations.
• It was challenging for midlife women to cope with menopause, gender discrimination and expectations of society.

Conclusions

Women’s beliefs, perceptions and actions were mainly driven by the socio-cultural, religious and familial ties that were strongly ingrained in the Pakistani setting.

References

• I am so busy that I don’t think it mattered to me except just the pain and...the discomfort...There was a time when...the servant was not there, so I would do their work too...then make sure that my parents are well fed.

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