Menopause in a Third World Context: A Transitions Theory Perspective

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Introduction:
Women experience several physiological changes during midlife. These are mainly related to the pre-, peri- and post-menopausal symptoms that have an impact on their physical and psychological well-being, as well as their quality of life (Nisar & Sohoo, 2009). Midlife women from diverse cultures differ in behaviors, values, and beliefs related to their life experiences, and management of menopausal symptoms. Pakistani women tend to use a combination of modern medicine and self-care practices to promote health and prevent disease. There is limited research in the Pakistani context (Anwar, Green, Norris & Bukhari, 2015) of midlife women and their menopause symptoms and strategies used to manage menopause (Baig & Karim, 2006; Nisar & Sohoo, 2010).

Purpose:
The purpose of this study was to explore Pakistani, urban, Muslim midlife women’s experiences of menopause and to acquire a deeper understanding of menopause and associated management strategies. This presentation will discuss the Transitions theory as the most relevant theoretical approach to the study on Pakistani, urban, Muslim midlife women's experiences of menopause.

Methods:
A focused ethnography research design was used. 20 Pakistani, Muslim midlife women were recruited through purposive and snowball sampling in 2017-2018. All participants were residents of urban Karachi. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted. Mandatory ethical considerations were followed in the study. The data were managed using Quirkos qualitative data management software. Thematic content analysis was conducted.

Results:
The Transition theory by Meleis, Sawyer, Im, Schumacher, and Messias (2000) was found most relevant to the study. Menopause is a transition phase of life and cannot be experienced in isolation. The experience is based on multiple factors including, the women’s cultural, religious, familial, and social beliefs and understanding. Menopause has multiple, related and simultaneous patterns of transitions. Menopause is a complex process as it brings about changes in different aspects of women’s life. Women in this study experienced menopause in their own unique ways depending on several factors such as their socio-cultural and religious understanding of menopause; the nature of their work, their work environment and position at work, the level of their physical, mental, emotional and social support system through family, friends, colleagues and significant others; their role change, and their experiential perception associated with menopause. The transition has various important properties i.e. awareness,
engagement, change and difference, time span of transition, and critical points and events. In this study, women’s level of awareness varied based on the degree of freedom of speech or silence they observed related to their menopause experience, their transition time span differed according to the length of time they experienced menopause symptoms. Women’s critical points and events were contingent upon their personal, familial and societal circumstances.

**Conclusion:**
Each woman is unique and so are their experiences. The robust socio-cultural, religious and familial ties that are strongly ingrained in the Pakistani setting influenced Pakistani women’s beliefs, perceptions, and actions. Menopause experiences of Pakistani urban midlife Muslim women were multiple and complex in nature that did not occur in isolation. These were in combination with other developmental, situational, and health/illness transitions.

**Title:**
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**Keywords:**
Transitions theory, developing context and menopause experience

**Abstract Summary:**
This Ph.D. Nursing research aims to explore Pakistani, urban, Muslim midlife women’s experiences of menopause and to acquire a deeper understanding of menopause and associated management strategies. This presentation will discuss the Transitions theory as the most relevant theoretical approach to the study.

**References:**
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