

UNDERSTANDING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BODY IMAGE AND MENOPAUSE IN SOUTH ASIAN CANADIAN WOMEN

PURPOSE

To qualitatively explore, via individual interviews, the constructs influencing and surrounding body image and menopause experiences in South Asian Canadian women.

PARTICIPANTS



9 South Asian women
(7 Punjabi-Sikh; 2 Indian)



5 from Ontario,
2 from Alberta,
2 from British Columbia



Age range: 49-59 years



3 with high school diploma,
4 with college/bachelor's degree,
2 with master's degree



1 in perimenopause,
8 in postmenopause



- First study to explore body image & menopause experiences in South Asian Canadian women, highlighting the need for the inclusion of South Asian women in this research.
- Themes highlight the intersectionality of gender, race, ethnicity, culture, and menopause status in participants' understanding, perceptions, and behaviours toward body image and menopause experiences.

2 THEMES CONSTRUCTED FROM THE INTERVIEWS

[1]

The push and pull of the South Asian and Western cultures

- Women are faced with crisis of identity, attempting to fit in Western society where they often face racism, & their South Asian-ness is rejected
- Narrow idea of body image (emphasis on weight/thinness, youth)
 - Inability to meet reach Western ideal, especially after menopause/aging
 - Onset of pessimistic views of beauty & health standards
- Gravitation towards Western norms as South Asian practices (i.e., hair routine) were rejected and viewed negatively (i.e., racial incidents)
- South Asian culture further reinforces & worsens these experiences via cultural expectations (i.e., ideas of beauty & health, societal pressure)
 - Leads to cultural conflicts that heightens poorer body image & menopause experiences

[2]

- Journey where the body was viewed as a source of confusion, uncertainty, & not knowing what was happening with their bodies throughout & after the menopause transition
- Cultural shift: Roles & perceptions of South Asian women changes after menopause & aging, emphasizing feelings of disembodiment & disconnect
- Ongoing battle with aging & menopause transition
 - Need to embrace change & accept both as a part of life

Navigating through uncertainty towards acceptance

Overall, findings demonstrate a need for critical examinations of social constructs (i.e., Western ideal, Western views of menopause) that influenced participants' experiences, and indicate a need for the development of culturally-appropriate and community-based interventions and resources.