

Views of Middle-Aged Women in Malaysia towards Menopause: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract : Introduction: Old age is commonly link with menopause among women. The main purpose of this study is to explore the views of middle-aged women and its association with menopause. Methods: Qualitative interviews in the form of focus group discussions (FGD) were conducted among women aged between 35 and 59 years old living in urban localities in two different states in Malaysia. Selection of respondents were conducted using the maximum variation sampling, focussing on five age categories which are between 35 to 39, 40 to 44, 45 to 49, 50 to 54 and 55 to 59 years old. Each FGD involved 5 to 7 respondents and lasted for 1 to 2 hours each. The content of the interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim after each interview before the next focus group discussion is conducted. Field notes of reflexive observations were recorded by the rapporteur. Individual transcripts were analysed using standard methods of qualitative thematic analysis. The material was read through twice and later coded. The codes were further collapsed into several key themes related to perceptions towards menopause among the respondents. Results: A total number of 36 middle-aged women were consented for the interviews. The contents of the interviews revealed that younger women tend to associate menopause with being old, which were dominated by the younger aged categories of less than 50 years old. Majority of the respondents linked menopause with end of woman's reproductive capacity or inability to give birth, lethargic or endless feeling of tiredness and insomnia, emotional instability or having more sensitive feelings and also the beginning of many health problems such as osteoarthritis which they perceived very synonyms with being old. Conclusion: The findings of this study indirectly reflect the negative views towards menopause among the middle-aged women in Malaysia. Being residents in the urban areas equipped with advanced technology and health information, do not exclude them from having negative views about menopause. However, this is a qualitative study which only focussing on age ranges, regardless of their socioeconomic and demographic background, which make further studies on related issues are necessities. The fact that it was a qualitative interview, the findings could not be generalised and only specific to the targeted population.

Keywords : Menopause, Middle-aged women, old, Malaysia

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