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Exploring and understanding how young males in Pakistan coped with the psychological effects that occurred in relation to pubertyNooreen Asif Shivji¹, Joanne Lymn¹, Oonagh Meade¹ and Kim Watts²¹University of Nottingham, UK²King's College London, UK

Statement of the Problem: Adolescents' experience of the transition through puberty can have long term impacts on their overall mental and physical health in adulthood. While there is research reported in the literature around the experience of young females, the experience of young males has been largely unreported. It could be argued that their experience in predominantly patriarchal cultures, such as Pakistan, is particularly important.

Aim: This study aimed to explore the puberty experiences of young males aged 18-21 years, and its effect on their physical and mental health.

Methodology & Theoretical Orientation: A qualitative study was conducted with 22 young Pakistani males, aged 18-21 years, using semi-structured interviews between September 2014 and August 2015. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and data analyzed thematically.

Findings: The young men in this study were found to be anxious during puberty which was often the result of being unprepared and uninformed about puberty. Participants' experiences were frequently defined by feelings of shame, embarrassment and guilt due to being self-conscious about puberty changes, and this led to isolation and depression in a number of participants. While participants accepted puberty as a normal process of development, receiving social support from peer groups, and adapting self-coping mechanisms appeared to facilitate participants in order to survive with the psychological impacts during puberty.

Conclusion & Significance: Puberty seems to be a challenging phase of life for young men and brings various psychological effects, particularly when participants lacked information on puberty and are therefore unprepared to manage its changes. This paper highlights how participants coped with those psychological effects and lived a normal adult life. It has been suggested that the future development of health promotion programs around puberty could improve young males' experiences, and may therefore impact positively on their long-term health and well-being.

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