MINA
Migration, Nutrition, And Ageing Across The Lifecourse In Bangladeshi Families: A Transnational Perspective

MINA is a three year NDA research project which addresses ageing, migration, and nutrition across two generations of Bangladeshi women. The Bangladeshi population is one of the fastest growing ethnic groups within the UK, and are amongst the most socially disadvantaged. They have poorer self-reported and measured health status indicated by higher rates of disability, centralised obesity and chronic diseases such as type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Older Bangladeshi women are particularly affected as they play a lead role in caretaking for multiple generations within relatively large extended families and many struggle to cope with the complex challenges of ageing, poverty, racism, and social exclusion.

As in the general population, nutrition plays a crucial role in the health status of the Bangladeshi population. Despite this there is no clear understanding of how eating patterns and migration affects this group’s nutritional status and experiences of ageing. Without this information we cannot develop effective culturally tailored interventions. MINA will address these gaps by combining approaches, methods, and expertise not used in previous research to gain an in-depth understanding of Bangladeshi women’s nutritional status, food practices, beliefs and experiences of ageing in the UK and Bangladesh.

The MINA interdisciplinary research team comprises partners from eight disciplines and universities – public health nutrition and exercise (Janice Thompson, Bristol), public health nursing (Joy Merrell, Swansea), biological anthropology (Barry Bogin, Loughborough), health psychology (Petra Meier, Sheffield), ethnobotany (Michael Heinrich, London), environmental and media design (Vanja Garaj, Brunel), migration and social anthropology (Katy Gardner, Sussex), and social gerontology (Christina Victor, Reading).

Additional MINA partners include researchers at the University of Dhaka in Bangladesh, the NGO International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh (ICDDR,B) and local UK Black and minority ethnic (BME) organisations.

Objectives

MINA’s overall aim is to develop processes and products to reduce existing health inequalities and promote healthy, active ageing among Bangladeshi women by gaining a better understanding of their nutritional status, food practices and beliefs, and experiences and perceptions of ageing among this group. The project participants include older women (45+ years old) who migrated from Bangladesh to the UK, younger women (18-35 years old) born to migrants in the UK, and women of the same two age groups living in Bangladesh. The study aim will be achieved through the following objectives to:

1. Understand how migration impacts on nutritional status, food practices, health, and ageing among first and second generation Bangladeshi women living in the UK and among non-migrating women of similar age in Bangladesh.
2. Conduct a secondary analysis of existing UK national survey data to improve our understanding of mechanisms underlying well-documented health inequalities experienced by Bangladeshi women with a focus on nutrition-related behaviours and conditions.
3. Obtain detailed accounts of Bangladeshi women’s migration and biographical experiences to explore the impact on nutritional status, health beliefs, health behaviours and transmission of nutritional knowledge.

4. Understand typical food environments (acquisition, preparation and consumption) and traditional plant food uses, their social and medicinal meanings, and management of home gardens and allotments in the UK and Bangladesh.

5. Develop a multi-media collection (e.g., photographic, video, user-friendly website) of Bangladeshi food-related products including historical stories, interactive cookbook, and a food plant book for use by Bangladeshi families.

6. Showcase the diversity and impact of differing food and living environments on ageing in Bangladeshi communities in the UK and Bangladesh through a traveling photography exhibit.

7. Develop a prototype of integrated, multidisciplinary methods and outputs for researchers, health and social care practitioners, policy makers, and community leaders to examine and promote healthy ageing and nutrition in communities at risk.

These objectives and outputs will be achieved through 4 integrated Work Packages. The figure below shows the Work Packages, their inter-linkages, and the involvement of co-investigators.
WP1: Community Engagement and Conceptual Development (ALL)

WP2: Nutritional Status and Physical Function (Thompson, Bogin)

WP3: Food Ethnobotany and Food Environments (Heinrich, Garaj, Gardner, Thompson)

WP4: Migration, Nutrition and Ageing – health beliefs, health behaviours and health status (Merrell, Meier, Gardner, Victor, Thompson)

Outputs (ALL):
- Trained Bangladeshi researchers
- Increased capacity to promote healthy ageing and reduce health inequalities
- Dissemination of research findings via traditional avenues
- Multi-media products, website, and photo exhibit
- Educational materials for health and social care practitioners

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Policy Impact Statement

NDA project ‘Migration, Nutrition, And Ageing Across The Lifecourse In Bangladeshi Families: A Transnational Perspective (MINA)’

Project MINA will have a range of policy impacts, which vary across the four work packages.

1. **Key policy and/or practice implications of the research**

Policy and practice implications will focus primarily on reducing health disparities and improving the nutritional and health status of ageing Bangladeshi adults. The goal is to use the results of this study to improve access to culturally appropriate foods and food environments, and to inform the development and implementation of culturally sensitive and tailored interventions.

Product development opportunities include:

- Resources (e.g. website and multimedia educational materials) for health and social care practitioners to raise their cultural awareness and improve the care delivered to older people from Bangladeshi communities.
- A multimedia collection (photographic, video, internet) of Bangladeshi food related stories, an interactive video-cookbook of traditional Bangladeshi meals, and a scratch-and-sniff food plant book for use by the Bangladeshi community.
- Providing guidance on the design of food environments to avoid potential negative consequences of migration on nutrition and ageing, which may result in future product design interventions (e.g. in the kitchen environment).
- Providing guidance on the design of care homes for older adult migrants, including information on physical design, social needs, and culturally sensitive treatment of Bangladeshi elders.

2. **Key non-academic user groups that will be targeted**

- Older Bangladeshi women, their relatives and friends
- Bangladeshi community leaders
- Health and social care professionals including Primary Care Trusts, nurses, general practitioners, health and social care support staff
- Educators and trainers of health and social care professionals
- Designers of housing for older people
- Care home proprietors and companies; care home managers and staff
- Care home architects and interior designers
- Local Housing Authorities
- Policy makers and decision leaders