
Perimenopausal Stress Reactions: The Role of Awareness in the Experience of Symptoms

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Abstract

Perimenopause is a phase of hurdles encountered by all women during their middle age yet experienced differently by each. Multitude factors bestow the experience and manifestation. Awareness is one major factor among those. Being aware about the phase and being rightly informed is highly significant in finding the ways and means to manage the symptoms. The level of awareness among women is a matter of contemplation among researchers. Moreover, assiduous studies are needed to understand the veracity of the information women have. The present study focuses on the significance of awareness on the perimenopausal stress reactions of women during the period. The study is done on 478 women from the districts of Thiruvananthapuram, Ernakulam, and Thrissur. MannWhitney U test was used to analyse the data. SPSS 21 version was used in the analysis. The results revealed a significant difference between women who said they were aware about the period and those who did not.

Keywords: Menopause, perimenopause, awareness, middle age, women

Introduction

Awareness means the perception or knowledge of something. Being rightly informed aids one in satisfactorily and correctly handling any difficult period. Perimenopause is one bout which bombard women with hardships which they were unaware till then. The perimenopausal period has been defined by the World Health Organization as the “years (2-8) preceding menopause and the one-year period after final menses, resulting from the loss of ovarian follicular activity. If a woman goes for 12 months without the monthly cycles, she can be considered to have reached menopause. The years preceding menopause, i.e., the perimenopause or the menopausal transition period, is when the difficulties start. As per studies almost 81.7% women shows perimenopausal symptoms (Du L et al., 2020). These reports reveal the importance of handling these disturbing symptoms.

One way to handle the symptoms is to know it better and find effective ways to manage it. For this, being properly aware about each sign the body shows and effectively bridle those is important. But researchers are still investigating on the accuracy of the information women have about the phase even when they say that they are aware about the period. Just knowing about the period does not serve the purpose. The emphasis should be given to the dependability and veracity of the information.

The study intends on understanding the difference in the perimenopausal stress reactions in women who report that they are aware and those who report they are unaware about the period.

Review

The importance of information on the area has been disseminated by numerous studies. A study by G Nayak (2012) reveals the importance of

creating perimenopausal awareness among women in order to make them efficient in handling the difficulties and increase their quality of life. Another study reports the lack of awareness women had about the period and appraise how the participants lived with it thinking it is because of some other illness without taking necessary steps to manage them (Cinthura & Gowri, 2017). The study by Malik(2008) too supports the findings of the other studies that women lack enough knowledge,regarding menopause and how it can be managed, which is plays a highly significant role in managing the perimenopausal symptoms.

Methodology

Sample

The study was done on 478 perimenopausal women, aged between 45 and 55. The sample was collected using the purposive sampling method from the districts of Thiruvananthapuram, Thrissur, and Ernakulam, of Kerala state.

Exclusion-inclusion criteria: women who were presently going through the perimenopausal period only were selected for the study. Women who had gone through hysterectomy was excluded. Divorcees or widows also were excluded from the study as all these might affect the reliability of the information.

Objective

To understand the difference in the perimenopausal stress reactions in women with and without awareness about the period.

Hypothesis

There is a significant difference in the perimenopausal stress reactions in women with and without awareness about the period.

Result and discussion

Hypothesis Test Summary

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1	The distribution of Total is the same across categories of Awareness about menopause.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	.002	Reject the null hypothesis.
2	The distribution of Psychological symptoms total is the same across categories of Awareness about menopause.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	.001	Reject the null hypothesis.
3	The distribution of Physiological symptoms total is the same across categories of Awareness about menopause.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	.031	Reject the null hypothesis.

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.

Figure 1: Showing the result of the MannWhitney U test

Table 1

Showing the result of the difference between the perimenopausal stress reactions in women with and without awareness about the perimenopausal period

Ranks	Awareness about menopause	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Total	1.00	415	247.22	102595.00
	2.00	63	188.67	11886.00
	Total	478		
Psychological symptoms total	1.00	415	247.45	102692.00
	2.00	63	187.13	11789.00
	Total	478		
Physiological symptoms total	1.00	415	244.81	101598.00
	2.00	63	204.49	12883.00
	Total	478		

Table 2

Showing the test statistics of the analysis

Test Statistics^a	Total	Psychological symptoms total	Physiological symptoms total
Mann-Whitney U	9870.000	9773.000	10867.000
Wilcoxon W	11886.000	11789.000	12883.000
Z	-3.135	-3.230	-2.160
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.001	.031

Women who reported that they are aware about menopause were seen to have a higher score compared to those who said that they are not aware about the period. That is, women who reported to have been informed about the phase has shown a higher level of symptom experience.

This could be because of the wrong information they have got from the social media and other unauthentic sites. A serious lack of knowledge among both men and women regarding menopause and perimenopause have been the major result of several studies (Borker, 2013; Kwak, 2014; Donati et al., 2009). Though there are many who demand that they are aware about the phase, the question of genuine

knowledge from authentic sources remains. One study reported that even though many reported that they are aware about menopause (78.5%) only a very few (15.5%) knew anything about the symptoms and effects of menopause (Nusrat et al 2008). In another study it was seen that in the population they studied 97% of women said that they have heard about menopause, but only 53% knew what it denoted. And again, the majority got the information from newspapers or magazines. Least common source of information was health professionals and the family. This indicates a lack of reliable information got from professionals and experienced family. The western women were seen to have more information compared to others in the study (Pan et al., 2002). Lack of proper

knowledge may lead to negative attitudes and this eventually led to intense symptoms. Numerous studies have proven the relation between negative attitudes toward menopause and increasing severity of symptoms (Ayers, 2010; Olofsson, A. S., & Collins, A. (2000). Many people simply rely on random websites and social media for unreliable information. A study in the menopause journal reported the lack of information in Asian women about menopausal transition and the high need of trustworthy source of information (Shorey et al., 2019). It is important to rely on authentic information from the professionals and experts both to get reliable information, develop a positive and optimistic attitude in order to understand and manage the symptoms well. Only 3% of women were aware of the NICE guidelines but the majority (66%) were interested in learning more. The findings throw light on the importance of being sufficiently aware about the symptomatology, management guidelines and professional advice (Larroy et al., 2019). Studies done in Kerala also calls for the high importance of more research and development of efficient management plan for menopausal symptoms (Kumar & Devi, 2010).

Conclusion

Since 2009, the International Menopause Society (IMS) in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) is celebrating October 18th as the menopause awareness day and October as the menopause awareness month. The menopause awareness week and day are the call for women to understand the phase in depth and take necessary steps to manage it. These were established to make women aware about the importance of right knowledge and necessity of handling the phase efficiently (International Menopause Society [IMS], 2020). These steps taken are indicators of the importance given globally to the transition, its difficulties and need to adapt proper management techniques through right information. Hence, from the results and review the necessity and importance of being rightly aware and getting

information from the authentic source is clearly understood.

"I encourage all women to not let menopause intimidate them, replace fear with knowledge, and break the barrier of silence surrounding menopause," states Karen Giblin.

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