

Knowledge and Attitude of Females Regarding Menopause

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Abstract

Objectives: To assess the knowledge and attitudes of females aged 45-55 regarding menopause.

Methodology: This descriptive, cross-sectional study was conducted at Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Bahawal Victoria Hospital, Bahawalpur from 1st January 2021 to 31st December 2021. Women presenting to the gynecology department with post-menopausal symptoms, including hot flashes, insomnia, weight gain, mastodynia, and headache, menopause duration greater than 1 year, age between 45-55 years and parity ranging from 1-5 were included. Women were interviewed using a questionnaire aimed at comprehensively assessing participants' comprehension and feelings towards menopause.

Results: The average age was 50.84 years. Knowledge assessment revealed that 11.30% had poor knowledge, 46.89% had moderate knowledge, and 41.81% had good knowledge. Regarding attitudes, 79.66% held a positive attitude, while 20.34% had a negative attitude toward menopause. Knowledge of the women regarding menopause among women was statistically significant according to education (p=0.001).

Conclusion: This study revealed that the majority of women possessed average to good knowledge and exhibited a positive attitude towards menopause. However significant correlation was observed between women's knowledge of menopause and their educational level.

Keywords: Menopause, knowledge, attitude, positive.

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Introduction

Menopause, as defined, represents a woman's final menstrual cycle, marking both the end of fertility and the cessation of menstruation. The medical diagnosis of menopause occurs following 12 consecutive months of amenorrhea.¹ This transitional phase is marked by a diverse array of symptoms, encompassing alterations in regular, predictable menstruation patterns, as well as distressing vasomotor and urogenital issues such as vaginal dryness and dyspareunia, alongside disturbances in sleep patterns and mood. Hormonal shifts and accompanying clinical manifestations unfold gradually over a span termed the climacteric or perimenopause. However, it is increasingly referred to as the menopausal transition (MT).^{1,2} Remarkably, the MT commences several years before the actual onset of menopause. On average, menopause typically occurs at

the age of 51 years. Preceding menopause, women often grapple with irregular menstrual cycles, while post-menopause, they may confront hot flashes, dry skin, vaginal dryness, and a host of emotional and physical symptoms.³ Attitudes and knowledge about menopause tend to vary among women, influenced by factors such as age, parity, education, hormonal status, as well as cultural, economic, and geographical backgrounds.⁴

One of the most profound hormonal changes during menopause is the precipitous decline in circulating estradiol, a decline that spans over four years. This reduction commences two years before the final menstrual period and stabilizes approximately two years after this period.^{1,2} Following the depletion of functioning follicles, a substantial portion of postmenopausal estrogen is sourced from the ovarian stromal and adrenal secretion of androstenedione, which is subsequently converted to estrogen in the peripheral

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circulation. The menopausal transition (MT) represents a phase marked by physiological shifts in responsiveness to gonadotropins and their secretions, characterized by wide fluctuations in hormonal levels. Women undergoing this transition often experience a spectrum of symptoms, including hot flashes or flushes, insomnia, weight gain and bloating, mood fluctuations, irregular menstrual cycles, mastodynia (breast pain), depression and headache. It is crucial to note that the duration over which these symptoms manifest varies considerably. They may commence up to six years before the final menstrual period and persist for varying durations after it.⁴

As women advance through the postmenopausal years, along with a decreasing ovarian response to gonadotropins, the accompanying emotional symptoms of menopause also diminish. Some women possess comprehensive knowledge about these symptoms and are well-prepared, while others face difficulties due to a lack of awareness, resulting in unexpected challenges.^{4,5} Recognizing the menopausal transition and translating it into practical information holds significant importance. A study carried out in Botswana emphasizes the crucial role of gynecologists and midwives in imparting knowledge about the menopausal transition to all women.⁶ There are apparent disparities in menopausal attitudes linked to educational backgrounds, with uneducated women demonstrating more favorable attitudes than their educated counterparts.⁷ Similarly, significant distinctions exist in menopausal symptoms and attitudes across different menopausal statuses. Pre-menopausal women experience the most pronounced menopausal symptoms, while postmenopausal women tend to exhibit more positive attitudes compared to pre and perimenopausal women.⁷

Study conducted in Turkey revealed that 90.7% of surveyed women perceive menopause as the "end of youth," 85.8% view it as the "beginning of aging," and a striking 97.6% see it as the "end of fertility".⁸ Another study found that 68.51% of women experience hot flashes and excessive sweating, 37.7% grapple with vaginal dryness, and 30.7% encounter sexual problems. Concerning knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to menopause, 57.5% recognize that menopause involves the cessation of menstruation, while 47.9% underestimate the physical and psychological effects of menopause.⁹ In a study conducted by Malik et al¹⁰, it was revealed that 97% of women were familiar with the concept of menopause, and 29.4% were aware of its

associated symptoms. Moreover, the majority of respondents held positive attitudes (47%) toward menopause. Meanwhile, Nusrat et al¹¹ found that only 15.8% of women possessed knowledge about the effects and symptoms of menopause. However, 78.79% considered menopause a natural process, whereas 21.2% perceived it as a disease. Notably, 83.42% of women welcomed the cessation of menses and had no desire to resume menstruation, while 16.57% expressed a desire to have menses again. In a study conducted by Noroozi et al,¹² the findings indicated that 8% of the subjects had limited knowledge, 68% exhibited a moderate level of knowledge, and 38.5% demonstrated a good level of knowledge concerning menopause. Furthermore, the study revealed that 81.5% of women displayed a positive attitude toward menopause, while the remaining 18.5% held a negative attitude. The primary aim of this study was to assess women's knowledge and attitudes regarding menopause. It's noteworthy that the existing literature has presented conflicting findings, even within local studies. Therefore, based on the outcomes of this research, there is potential for organizing public awareness programs at both regional and national levels. These initiatives could focus on educating women about the changes associated with menopause through informative training and guidance. The goal is to empower women to lead active, healthy lives by enhancing their knowledge and fostering a more positive attitude toward the menopausal phase.

Methodology

This descriptive, cross-sectional study was conducted at Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Bahawal Victoria Hospital, Bahawalpur from 1st January 2021 to 31st December 2021 and a total of 177 females with menopause were enrolled. All women presenting to the gynecology department with post-menopausal symptoms, including hot flushes, insomnia, weight gain, mastodynia, and headache, menopause duration greater than 1 year, age between 45-55 years and parity ranging from 1-5 were included. The females have history of gynecological malignancy, psychological illness, thyroid disorder (TSH>5mIU/L) were excluded.

Following obtaining informed consent and providing an explanation of the study's purpose, women were interviewed using a questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed utilizing existing literature and validated instruments pertaining to knowledge and attitude regarding menopause. It comprised multiple-choice

questions, Likert scales, and open-ended questions aimed at comprehensively assessing participants' comprehension and feelings towards menopause. Knowledge about menopause was defined as to understanding of the physiological changes, symptoms, management strategies, and associated health risks during the menopausal transition. Attitude towards menopause reflects participants' perceptions, beliefs, and emotional responses towards the menopausal phase, including their feelings about aging, self-perception, and willingness to seek support or information. All data were entered and analyzed using SPSS-26.

Results

The mean age of the women was 50.84±3.03 years. Majority of the patients 96 (54.24%) were between 51 to 55 years of age. Education levels varied, with the highest proportion having a Metric education (27.1%), followed by Primary (23.2%), Graduate (17.5%), Secondary (14.1%), and Illiterate (18.1%). In terms of socioeconomic status, the majority were Middle-class (48.6%), followed by Poor (30.5%) and Upper-class (20.9%). Menopause duration was split, with 42.4% experiencing it for less than 5 years and 57.6% for more than 5 years. Table I

There were 20 (11.30%) of the subjects with poor knowledge, 83 (46.89%) with moderate knowledge and 74 (41.81%) with good knowledge. One hundred and forty-one (79.66%) of the women showed a positive attitude and remaining 36 (20.34%) were with negative attitude towards menopause. Figure 1

Knowledge of the women regarding menopause among women was statistically significant according to education (p=0.001), while attitude of the women regarding menopause among women

was statistically insignificant according to their educational level (p=0.552). Table II

Table I: Statistical analysis of women's demographic characteristics (n=177)

Variables	N	%	
Age groups	45-50	81	45.76%
	51-55	96	54.24%
	Total	177	100.0%
Educational status	Illiterate	32	18.1%
	Primary	41	23.2%
	Metric	48	27.1%
	Secondary	25	14.1%
	Graduate	31	17.5%
Socioeconomic status	Poor	54	30.5%
	Middle	86	48.6%
	Upper	37	20.9%
Duration of menopause	≤ 5 years	75	42.4%
	> 5 years	102	57.6%

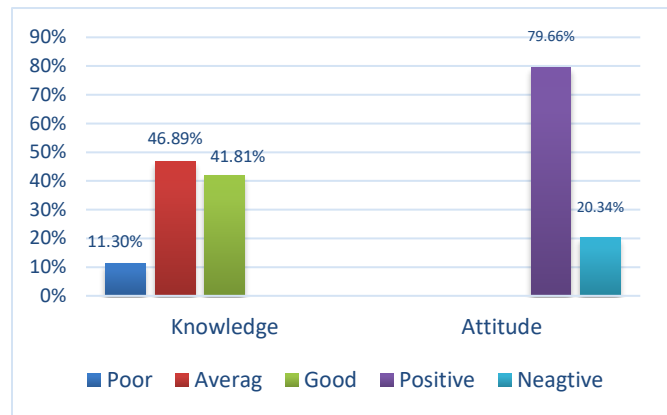


Figure 1. Distribution of Knowledge and Attitude Towards Menopause Among Participants.

Discussion

As women journey through life, they approach a stage where they encounter menopause – the cessation of menstruation due to reduced estrogen production. This process can extend over 2 to 15 years and typically occurs between the ages of 40 and 60. Menopause is not a uniform experience; instead, it encompasses different stages. Women can be categorized as premenstrual, maintaining

Table II: Knowledge and attitude of women according to education (n=177)

Variables		Educational status					p-value
		Illiterate	Primary	Metric	Secondary	Graduate	
Knowledge regarding menopause	Poor	7	5	4	3	1	0.001
		4.0%	2.8%	2.3%	1.7%	0.6%	
	Average	21	31	24	12	10	
		11.9%	17.5%	13.6%	6.8%	5.6%	
	Good	4	5	20	10	20	
		2.3%	2.8%	11.3%	5.6%	11.3%	
Attitude of patient	Positive	24	30	39	18	27	0.552
		13.6%	16.9%	22.0%	10.2%	15.3%	
	Negative	8	11	9	7	4	
		4.5%	6.2%	5.1%	4.0%	2.3%	

regular cycles with minimal symptoms, perimenstrual, marked by irregular cycles and some accompanying symptoms, or postmenstrual, marked by the absence of menstruation for at least 12 months along with the emergence of menopausal symptoms. Menopause ushers in a range of physical, psychological, emotional, and physiological symptoms. These include hot flashes, night sweats, cognitive challenges, fluctuations in weight, mood disturbances, urinary incontinence, vaginal dryness, and a decline in bone mineral density. Some of these symptoms have proven to be disruptive enough to significantly impact women's daily lives, compelling them to seek medical intervention.¹³⁻¹⁵ Understanding women's attitudes and expectations regarding menopause is crucial for healthcare providers to offer optimal support and information tailored to each woman's unique experience. Recent findings indicating greater risks associated with hormone therapy have added complexity to the situation, making it vital for healthcare providers to comprehend women's beliefs and attitudes regarding menopause and hormone therapy.

Furthermore, women's perceptions of menopause vary depending on their menopausal status and the symptoms they encounter during their transition.^{16,17} A Swedish study¹⁸ revealed a disparity between women's actual beliefs and attitudes and their doctors' perceptions. Given these considerations, our study aimed to assess the knowledge and attitude of women regarding menopause. Our findings demonstrate that 11.30% of the subjects possessed poor knowledge, 46.89% had moderate knowledge, and 41.81% exhibited good knowledge. Moreover, our study revealed that 79.66% of the women had a positive attitude, while 20.34% held a negative attitude toward menopause.¹⁰⁻¹³ In a recent study on Latin American women in Ecuador aged 40 or older, the majority perceived menopause as a positive event. They viewed it as the definitive cessation of female fertility, although not all correctly defined menopause as the permanent cessation of menstruation. Furthermore, many expressed a desire for more information on menopause through educational sessions.^{18,19} Another study on menopausal women in Alexandria indicated that nearly 40% of the participants had prior knowledge of menopausal symptoms.^{20,21} Additional research

from Bahrain²¹ found that divorced and widowed women tended to have a more positive attitude toward menopause, likely because they no longer had to concern themselves with their spouses' views on the matter. Furthermore, wives often expressed more positive attitudes toward menopause than their husbands. Like this study Shahzad D et al²² observed that the education emerged as the predominant factor influencing superior knowledge or attitudes.

In the study by Kausar F et al²³ reported that majority of women lacked literacy and were unaware of menopausal symptoms and there exists a direct correlation between knowledge and education in comprehending the situation. Our study emphasizes the need for public awareness programs, both regionally and nationally, to educate women about the changes associated with menopause. This educational training and guidance can empower women to lead active, healthy lives, enhancing their knowledge and improving their attitudes toward menopause.^{10-12,24}

Conclusion

This study revealed that the majority of women possessed average to good knowledge and exhibited a positive attitude towards menopause. However, it also noted a significant link between women's knowledge of menopause and their level of education. Based on these results, we strongly recommend the implementation of public awareness programs at both regional and national levels. These initiatives should focus on educating women about the changes associated with menopause through comprehensive training and guidance. Such efforts are crucial for enabling women to lead active and healthy lives while simultaneously enhancing their knowledge and fostering a more positive attitude towards menopause.

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