

Emotional Self-Disclosure in Perimenopausal and Menopausal Women: A Comparative Study

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ABSTRACT

During menopausal transition, along with physiological changes, females also tend to go through a number of psychological changes both on a cognitive and an emotional level. The aim of the study was to differentiate between the perimenopausal and menopausal women in terms of how much they open up about their emotions, during the stages. To find out the differences between the two, we selected a total group of 100 individuals (women) on the criteria of age and then they were divided into two groups, perimenopausal and menopausal respectively and the Emotional Self-Disclosure scale was used for the same. Pregnant women and those who underwent hormonal therapy were excluded from the study. The results indicated that there were no significant differences between the two groups and more or less both of them were similar in terms of emotional self-disclosure. Therefore, it was concluded that both the groups are more or less similar in terms of disclosing their emotions and it is not affected by any menopausal transition stage.

Keywords: Menopausal transition, emotional self-disclosure, anxiety, depression

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The end of the menopausal cycle in a woman's life can be as stressful as the beginning of the same. A number of clinical studies have suggested that hormonal changes have direct consequences on the mental health of a woman in such a way that it makes them extremely difficult for them to talk about it or being emotionally vulnerable about such issues. Menopause is that period of time in a females' life when she stops getting her menstrual cycle on a regular basis and eventually it stops. The onset is usually at the age of 40 years but it can vary from individual to individual.

During the same, they undergo a number of changes/manifestations both physiological and psychological and amongst the different stages of menopausal transition these symptoms can occur differently and the intensity can be different. The most prominent are the mental health symptoms such as anxiety, depression, anger, irritability, etc. There is a sense of magnification of such emotions, i.e., they are experiences on a greater level and can be overwhelming. There is also a possibility that all these emotions as well as the psychological manifestations are also correlated with the physiological symptoms that occur as physical health

Gava et al. (2019) studied that during the menopausal transition women have reported going through a number of symptoms both in terms of bodily and psychological states such as discrepancy in terms of sleeping patterns changes in terms of affect and a confused state of mind which has a severe impact on their overall life, being functionally efficient and physiological activeness. In a way, it can be said that

there is an association between the endocrinal changes and the symptoms faced during the menopausal transition as the direct effect is on the quality of life which comprises of all these factors which include neurocognitive manifestation, affect changes and changes in terms of functional abilities.

A number of researches have suggested that mental health of a woman is prominently impacted during the menopausal transition making some of them prone to a number of mental health conditions. Johnson, an Associate Professor of Psychiatry from Harvard Medical School has suggested that Depression and Premenstrual Dysphoric disorder are the most common conditions which are the direct consequences of shifts in hormonal levels during menstrual cycle and during menopausal transition. Although these conditions are not always based on hormonal changes but are influenced to some extent. It has also been stated that females who become susceptible to these conditions during their menopausal transition have also gone through the same in the past during any type of hormonal transition.

There is also an association between menopausal transition and anxiety, but it is quite unclear as the physical manifestations during menopause are also during anxiety and panic attacks such as shortness of breath, hot flush, feeling nausea and being overwhelmed. Simultaneously, health changes observed during menopausal transition can also result in affect and mood variations such as changes in terms of appetite, fluctuations in terms of sleeping patterns and weight changes.

METHODOLOGY

AIM- To compare the emotional self-disclosure in the perimenopausal and the menopausal group.

OBJECTIVE- To find out the differences in the emotional self-disclosure in the perimenopausal and the menopausal group.

HYPOTHESIS- There will be significant differences in terms of emotional self-disclosure in the perimenopausal and the menopausal group.

SAMPLE AND ITS SELECTION- A total of 100 females were selected for the study on the criteria of age, i.e., women who were between 40 to 50 years were placed in the perimenopausal group and women above 50 years of age were placed in the menopausal group (Inclusion)

Exclusion- For the study, women who went through surgeries like Hormonal therapy (HT), pregnant women and who were below the age of 35 years were excluded from the study.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SCALE

Emotional self-disclosure scale- It is one of the most efficient tools for measuring an individual's emotional vulnerability, i.e., whether an individual has discussed about how they are feeling with another person or their counselor. This scale is accurate for making a clinical diagnosis as the questions also talk about anxiety and depression and it can also determine how an individual is feeling in the present scenario. This scale contains a total of forty items centered around emotions and the entire questionnaire is divided into eight subparts as follows-

- Depression
- Happiness
- Jealousy
- Anxiety
- Anger
- Calmness
- Apathy

- Fear

VALIDITY OF THE SCALE- It is a highly valid instrument measuring each and every emotion, i.e., both positive and negative.

REALIABILITY OF THE SCALE- As per the research data, there is a high test-retest reliability and also a prominent internal consistency which was evaluated by Coefficient Alpha.

PROCEDURE- For the study, a total of 100 women were selected, all of them above the age of 40 years and were placed in the groups of perimenopausal women and menopausal women. The data was collected in an offline setting and the scale was distributed in a hard copy among the participants and it took them around 10 to 15 minutes to complete the scale and all of this was done in a period of 2 months. The Emotional Self-Disclosure Scale was given to the participants as per the study requirements. Women who were above the age of 40 years were included in the study and divided into groups, whereas women who had undergone any kind of surgical procedures such as Hormonal therapy (HT) or those who were pregnant were excluded from the study. Eventually, after the data collection we went ahead with the statistical analysis and the discussion part.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS- Since this is a comparative study, t-test was employed to obtain the statistical data and it is as follows-

TABLE 3.1 t-value between both the groups

GROUP	PERIMENOPAUSAL	MENOPAUSAL
Mean	68.84	68.12
SD	35.47	36.96
SED	5.07	5.28
N	50	50
t-value= 0.9218		

Therefore, the t-value is not found to be insignificant at 0.05 level indicating that there is no difference between the two groups.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS- A total sample of 100 women above the age of forty years were selected for the study and simultaneously, divided into two groups, perimenopausal and menopausal. To study and differentiate between the two groups in terms of emotional self-disclosure, t-test was employed as the statistical method and it was found that there are no differences between the two groups, thereby rejecting the hypothesis and the value $0.9218 > 0.05$ indicating that both perimenopausal and menopausal group are more or less same in terms of being emotionally vulnerable. However, in terms of different emotions depression, anxiety and irritability are found to be the most prominent emotions and the least talked about.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION- It is evident through the researches conducted in the past that during the menopausal transition, no matter which stage, women tend to go through a number of psychological changes, both cognitive and emotional and most of them become vulnerable. It cannot be anticipated that emotional difficulties are directly linked to the menopausal transition but to the changes that take place during the

transition such as bodily changes, changes in terms of responsibilities and most of these changes are also magnified if the environment around is not as efficient or supportive and the personal attributes of a woman, whether she is working, physically active or involved in hobbies or any other activities. The resilience of a woman also determines the kind of transition that she will go through as some fair through it easily and some find it extremely difficult. Many psychological theories suggest hormonal changes make a person prone to a number of mental health conditions such as anxiety disorders and mood disorders. The objective of the study was to assess Emotional Self-disclosure in the perimenopausal and menopausal women and to understand whether it differs in both the groups or not. To assess the component of emotional self-disclosure, the Emotional Self-Disclosure scale was used and the participants were divided on the basis of age parameters in the perimenopausal and the menopausal group.

The concept of Emotional self-disclosure talks about to what extent individuals talk about their different emotional states and whether they have discussed about them with their significant others. The scale talked about the eight most experienced emotions and as per the statistical analysis it can be seen that both the groups show no differences in terms of emotional self-disclosure, as both of them show more or less similar results. The reasons for the same could be that whatever emotions are experienced during the menopausal transition are not directly related to the transition but to the changes experienced during the transition. As per the theoretical concepts, in each stage of menopause, more or less the changes experienced, both physical and psychological are very similar, especially in terms of perimenopause and menopause as in the post-menopausal stage changes are not experienced on a very prominent level. Emotional self-disclosure also depends on factors like personal attributes of an individual such as their lifestyle, social environment, whether they are working or non-working and of course, the belief system. It also depends upon the kind of emotional support that is present around them and whether openness and exploration in terms of emotions is acceptable in terms of their culture or not. By a minor difference and per the statistical analysis, it can also be said that menopausal women talk more about their feelings and emotions as compared to perimenopausal women, as the starting point of menopausal transition is always crucial and the manifestations present themselves in a very magnified manner as compared to the other stages and the onset is very subjective to each and every woman.

Therefore, the hypothesis can be rejected on the grounds that there are no significant differences in terms of emotional self-disclosure in the perimenopausal and menopausal group, although more researches are needed to assess some of the major emotions during menopausal transition apart from anxiety and depression.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY/CONCLUSION

On a global level, there are a number of studies centering around the physical and psychological changes that take place during the menopausal transition but what kind of emotions are experienced are still very unclear, especially in the Indian context. However, emotional vulnerabilities can be curbed by, especially during the menopausal transition, having the right emotional support and an understanding about their own emotions and feeling. Familial support can be one of the most efficient factors in terms of helping women managing the menopausal transition well.

APPENDIX.**EMOTIONAL SELF-DISCLOSURE SCALE**

INSTRUCTIONS: Listed below are 40 topics concerned with the types of feelings and emotions that people experience at one time or another in their life. This survey is concerned with the extent to which you have discussed these feelings and emotions with your counselor. Before each item you will notice a single column. For this column you are to indicate how often you have discussed each specific topic with your counselor. To respond, use the following scale to indicate which letter (A, B, C, D, OR E) corresponds to your response

A = I HAVE NOT DISCUSSED

B = I HAVE SLIGHTLY DISCUSSED

C = I HAVE MODERATELY DISCUSSED

D = I HAVE ALMOST FULLY DISCUSSED

E = I HAVE FULLY DISCUSSED

NOTE: The letter that best describes your reaction to each statement is the one which you will darken for that item on the computer scoreable answer sheet. Now, go ahead and respond to the statements, using the answer sheet and a pencil. Be sure to answer every question, even if you are not sure. Also, please be honest in your responses.

1. ___ (#1). Times when you felt depressed.
2. ___ (#2). Times when you felt happy.
3. ___ (#3). Times when you felt jealous.
4. ___ (#4). Times when you felt anxious.
5. ___ (#5). Times when you felt angry.
6. ___ (#6). Times when you felt calm.
7. ___ (#7). Times when you felt apathetic.
8. ___ (#8). Times when you felt afraid.
9. ___ (#9). Times when you felt discouraged.
10. ___ (#10). Times when you felt cheerful.
11. ___ (#11). Times when you felt possessive.
12. ___ (#12). Times when you felt troubled.
13. ___ (#13). Times when you felt infuriated.
14. ___ (#14). Times when you felt quiet.
15. ___ (#15). Times when you felt indifferent.
16. ___ (#16). Times when you felt fearful.
17. ___ (#17). Times when you felt pessimistic.
18. ___ (#18). Times when you felt jocular.
19. ___ (#19). Times when you felt envious.
20. ___ (#20). Times when you felt worried.
21. ___ (#21). Times when you felt irritated.
22. ___ (#22). Times when you felt serene.
23. ___ (#23). Times when you felt numb.
24. ___ (#24). Times when you felt frightened.
25. ___ (#25). Times when you felt sad.
26. ___ (#26). Times when you felt delighted.

27. ___ (#27). Times when you felt suspicious.
28. ___ (#28). Times when you felt uneasy.
29. ___ (#29). Times when you felt hostile.
30. ___ (#30). Times when you felt tranquil.
31. ___ (#31). Times when you felt unfeeling.
32. ___ (#32). Times when you felt scared.
33. ___ (#33). Times when you felt unhappy.
34. ___ (#34). Times when you felt pleased.
35. ___ (#35). Times when you felt resentful.
36. ___ (#36). Times when you felt flustered.
37. ___ (#37). Times when you felt enraged.
38. ___ (#38). Times when you felt relaxed.
39. ___ (#39). Times when you felt detached.
40. ___ (#40). Times when you felt alarmed

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