

Perimenopausal Stage: Perception, Benefit and Opinion of Husbands and Wives

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Abstract

Perimenopause or "menopause transition": Can begin eight to 10 years before menopause, when the ovaries gradually produce less estrogen. Females are not expected to discuss about this topic as it is considered taboo in society. The current study is based on the perception of husband's (47-58 years) and wives (40-55 years) regarding perimenopausal stage, regarding perimenopause, signs and symptoms, challenges or difficulties, benefits, experiences and treatments. Aims of the study were: [1] To ascertain perception of Husband's (47-58 years) and Wives (40-55 years) regarding: a) meaning b) physical symptoms c) discussion among couples. [2] To identify benefits of perimenopausal stage as observed by Husband's (47-58 years) and Wives (40-55 years): a) finding sex more physically comfortable. b) feeling relief about not being pregnant and not taking contraceptives c) seeking medical treatment d) remedies for reducing the symptoms. [3] To develop or design a brochure/pamphlet for better understanding and knowledge regarding perimenopausal stage. Research design was exploratory and snowball sampling was implemented with a total sample of 200 participants (100 Husbands and 100 Wives) using a self-constructed tool (5 open and 15 closed ended items). Results revealed, (61%) discuss the changes faced during perimenopausal stage with their spouse while (39%) do not discuss. (42%) Neither agree nor disagree while (3%) Strongly agree finding sex more physically comfortable after perimenopause.

Keywords: Women, husband, perimenopausal, menopausal transition, knowledge and awareness

1. Introduction

Menopause is the time that marks the end of your menstrual cycles. The arduous phase that the individual endures before she reaches menopause is called perimenopause. Although perimenopause can cause some noticeable and uncomfortable changes. It is highly acclaimed when it comes to menstruation, how important spousal support has been. Biological science and Psychology talk about the change that can be brought in when women experience the luxury of having their spouses beside them, especially with emotional support (Bahri et al., 2016). It can be specifically said as a "luxury", as the number of women lacking effective assistance is high (Hassan et al., 2020). Effective management by making healthy lifestyle choices may help ease some symptoms of perimenopause and promote good health as you age.

Need of the Study: (Rationale)

Someone who should be the biggest support, as the one who would be the first to know his spouse is experiencing a difficult phase, is the one who turns a blind eye and deaf ear. A woman may experience various symptoms and changes as a result of this condition, making it a volatile combination. (<https://www.womensweb.in/2023/01/we-need-to-talk-about-menopause-enough-silence-jan23wk2sr/>)

Menopausal transition can affect her physical, emotional, mental and social well-being (WHO, 2022), but her desire to be understood rather than treated emphasizes the need for emotional and social support (Singh et al., 2020). Thus “training menopausal health to husbands can increase women's marital satisfaction in the period of menopausal transition.”

(<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5432462/>)

The objectives of the present study were as follows:

1. To ascertain the perception of Husbands (47-58 Years) and Wives (40-55Years) regarding: a) meaning b) physical symptoms c) discussion among couples.
2. To identify benefits of the perimenopausal stage as observed by Husbands (47-58 years) and Wives (40-55 years): a) finding sex more physically comfortable. b) feeling relief about not being pregnant and not taking contraceptives c) seeking medical treatment d) remedies for reducing the symptoms.
3. To develop or design a brochure/pamphlet for better understanding and knowledge regarding perimenopausal stage.

2. Research Methodology

Research Design: The current research was Exploratory Research to study a relatively unexplored area about perception of husband and wives regarding perimenopause.

Sampling Technique, Sample Size and Sample Characteristics: Snowball and Convenience sampling techniques were employed for selecting participants. The total sample size consisted of 200 participants [100 were husbands (47-58 years) & 100 were wives (40-55 years)]. Majority of the participants were in service (62%) followed by participants being Homemakers (25%). More of the participants were living in nuclear families (56.5%) a quarter of the participants lived in extended family (31%).

Inclusion & Exclusion criteria: The key features of the target population that the investigators will use to answer their research question. In this research it was as follows:

1. Participants between age husbands (47-58 years) & wives (40-55 years) from all religious backgrounds were included.
2. Participants from all income groups were included. Participants who live in any type of family (nuclear, joint, or extended).

Participants from all family backgrounds were included except single-parent families to have an overall perception of husbands regarding perimenopause. Female participants who went under surgical intervention (removal of uterus/ovaries—damaged through chemotherapy) and who had attained menopause were excluded.

Research process and development of tool: The researchers have developed a self-constructed semi-structured questionnaire for the study. The tool was partly self-constructed and partly a standardized tool. The proforma was based on the inclusion as well as exclusion criteria of the study. There were 14 questions in the Proforma (3 open ended 11 closed ended). It was obtained with the age of the perimenopausal women and their husband’s contact, address, educational qualification, religion, occupation, marital status, type of family, work experience. Further converted the questionnaire into a google form please find the google link- <https://forms.gle/t1vXVNGiqAqRhBcEA>

Plan of Analysis: Data was analysed quantitatively wherein frequency and percentages were drawn and tabulated. Total 200 participants (100 husbands and 100 wives) across India, were contacted and the study was conducted from the Indian population.

Results obtained from the 200 participants (100 husbands and 100 wives) have been computed.

3. Results and Discussion

Objective 1: To ascertain the perception of Husbands (47-58 Years) and Wives (40-55 Years) regarding: a) meaning b) physical symptoms c) discussion among couples

Perception of Husbands (47-58 Years) and Wives (40-55 Years) regarding: a) meaning b) physical symptoms c) discussion among couples. (Refer to Table 1, 2, and 3)

Table No. 1

Meaning of the term Perimenopause, according to husbands (47-58 years) [n=100] and wives (40-55 years) [n=100]

Meaning of the term Perimenopause	Husband (n = 100)	Wife (n = 100)	Total (n = 200) f (%)
Making the natural transition to menopause by the body.	62	61	123 (61.5)
Making one’s regular periods suddenly irregular.	20	24	44 (22)
Changing of hormonal level but menstruation still occurs.	21	30	51 (25.5)
Marking the end of the reproductive years.	24	24	48 (24)

***Note:** Multiple responses were obtained

Majority of the participants defined the term Perimenopause as making the natural transition to menopause (61.5%) by the body. Little more than quarter of them stated changing of hormonal level (25.5%) but menstruation still occurs. (Refer to Table 1)

Table No. 2

Physical symptoms experienced during the perimenopausal stage, according to husbands (47-58 years) [n=100] and wives (40-55 years) [n=100]

Physical Symptoms	Husband (n = 100)	Wife (n = 100)	Total (n = 200) f (%)
hot flashes	35	31	66 (33)

muscle and joint pain	54	54	108 (54)
headaches	61	44	105 (52.5)
increased weigh	41	39	80 (40)
numbness and tingling	16	15	31 (15.5)
constipation	17	16	33 (16.5)
increased appetite	8	11	19 (9.5)
breast sensitivity	13	28	41 (20.5)
light-headedness	21	13	34 (17)
vaginal discharge	25	21	46 (23)
dizziness	23	24	47 (23.5)
none of the above	1	3	4 (2)
others: (behavioral changes)	1	1	2 (1)

***Note:** Multiple responses were obtained

The most common physical symptom experienced was ‘muscle and joint pain’ (54%), followed by ‘headaches’ (52.5%) and ‘increased weight’ (40%). Actual number of the participants (2%) mentioned about not experiencing any physical change. (Refer to Table 2)

Table No 3:

Discussion of symptoms of perimenopause among couples, according to husbands (47-58 years) [n=100] and wives (40-55 years) [n=100]

Do you/ does your spouse talk about the changes faced during the perimenopausal stage?	Husband (n = 100)	Wife (n = 100)	Total (n = 200) f (%)
YES	63	59	122 (61)
NO	37	41	78 (39)

Majority of participants responded as YES (61%) they do discuss it with their spouse. A little more than one third of the participants responded as NO (39%) they do not discuss with their spouse about the changes faced during perimenopausal stage. (Refer to Table 3)

Objective 2: To identify benefits of perimenopausal stage as observed by Husband (47-58 years) and Wives (40-55 years): a) finding sex more physically comfortable. b) feeling relief about not being pregnant and not taking contraceptives c) seeking medical treatment d) remedies for reducing the symptoms. (Refer Table 4)

Finding sex more physically comfortable after perimenopausal stage

Little more than one third of the participants selected Neither agree nor disagree (42%) as an option. Actual number of the participants Strongly agree (3%) with the statement. (Refer to Table 4)

Feeling relief about not being pregnant and not taking contraceptives

Little more than a quarter of the participants Agree (27%) and actual number of the participants (4%) Strongly Disagree feeling relief about not being pregnant and not taking contraceptives. (Refer to Table 4)

Seeking medical treatment

Little more than a quarter of the participants Somewhat agree (27.5%) and few of the participants Disagree (17.5%) about if women should seek medical treatment during the perimenopausal stage. (Refer to Table 4)

Remedies for reducing the symptoms of perimenopausal stage

Taking progesterone injection as the remedy for reducing the symptoms of perimenopause, more than a quarter of the participants mentioned Disagree (36%). Surprisingly, (10.5%) of participants Somewhat agree. (Refer to Table 4)

Table No 4:

Impact of perimenopausal stage on an individual, according to husbands (47-58 years) [n=100] and wives (40-55 years) [n=100]

Impact of perimenopausal stage on an individual	Sub category	Husband (n = 100)	Wife (n = 100)	Total (n = 200) f (%)
Do you/ does your spouse find sex more physically comfortable after perimenopause.	Strongly disagree	7	1	8 (4)
	Disagree	19	15	34 (17)
	Somewhat disagree	12	9	21 (10.5)
	Neither agree nor disagree	36	48	84 (42)
	Somewhat agree	13	15	28 (16)
	Agree	9	10	19 (9.5)
Do you/ does your spouse feel relief to no longer have to worry about pregnancy or contraception.	Strongly agree	4	2	6 (3)
	Strongly disagree	4	4	8 (4)
	Disagree	10	11	21 (10.5)
	Somewhat disagree	7	4	11 (5.5)
	Neither agree nor disagree	19	24	43 (21.5)
	Somewhat agree	21	21	42 (21)
	Agree	27	27	54 (27)
Should Women seek medical treatment for perimenopause.	Strongly agree	12	9	21 (10.5)
	Strongly disagree	9	5	14 (7)
	Disagree	18	17	35 (17.5)
	Somewhat disagree	4	5	9 (4.5)
	Neither agree nor disagree	23	13	36 (18)
	Somewhat agree	21	34	55 (27.5)
	Agree	22	25	47 (23.5)
You/ your spouse think taking progesterone injection is the remedy for reducing the	Strongly agree	3	1	4 (2)
	Strongly disagree	18	12	30 (15)
	Disagree	34	38	72 (36)
	Somewhat disagree	-	6	6 (3)

symptoms of perimenopausal.	Neither agree nor disagree	34	31	65 (32.5)
	Somewhat agree	11	10	21 (10.5)
	Agree	2	3	5 (2.5)
	Strongly agree	1	-	1 (0.5)

Objective 3: To develop or design a brochure/pamphlet regarding preparing husbands and wives for better understanding regarding the perimenopausal stage.

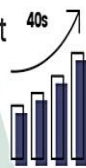
Living Well In Transition from Perimenopausal to Menopausal Stage

What is perimenopause?

A woman's body is beginning to transition to menopause. Menopause is the end of a woman's reproductive years.



Most women go through perimenopause in their early to mid-40's. Sometimes it can start earlier.



The average duration of perimenopause is 3-4 years but it can be as little as a few months to up to a decade.

Stages of Menopause

1. Premenopause

- No menopausal symptom
- Still have periods



2. Perimenopause

- Meaning "around or near menopause"
- Symptoms of hormonal changes
- Can still become pregnant
- Usually last up to 4 years



3. Menopause

- No period for 12 consecutive months
- Ovaries stop producing eggs
- Average age 51







4. Postmenopause

- Over 1 year since last period
- Will remain in this stage for rest of life



Signs & Symptoms

- Hot flashes: Sudden feeling of warmth in upper body 
- Trouble sleeping: This may be due to hormonal fluctuations
- Erratic uterine bleeding: Hormonal fluctuations may cause heavier or lighter bleeding. 
- Mood changes: Hormonal changes can cause anxiety and irritability. 
- Brain fogs: Women experience short-term memory problems and trouble concentrating. 

Menopause Myths!!

1. MENOPAUSE ALWAYS BEGINS AT AGE OF 50 ✗

- Average age of menopause is 51 years, a woman can go through menopause as early as 30s or as late as 60s.



2. WEIGHT GAIN IS ALWAYS A PART OF MENOPAUSE ✗

- The less estrogen, more likely is fat accumulation around the hips and thighs.



3. SURGICAL AND NATURAL MENOPAUSE ARE THE SAME ✗

- Surgical interventions involve immediate and marked changes with severe and frequent hot flashes. Natural menopause is where symptoms come and go and are less severe.



4. MENOPAUSE HAS ONLY PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS ✗

- Estrogen receptors in the brain affect brain's neurotransmitters, resulting in mental and emotional symptoms.



Natural Ways to feel Better During Perimenopause

1. Eat a healthy, plant-based diet along with some meat.

Just eat mostly vegetables and fruits.



2. Drink plenty of water will help your body function properly.



3. Try some natural sleep and relaxation remedies such as body massage, listening to instrumental music.



4. Take time for hobbies and interest you enjoy.



5. Exercise daily. Can be as simple as taking a walk.



6. Spend time with people and pets you love.



7. Try yoga and meditation to relax and unwind.



8. Supplement with some herbal remedies can be taken after checking with concerned professionals.



9. Get plenty of vitamin D, both from spending some time outside each day and supplementing if necessary.



10. Keep a Journal. Writing about your day and your feelings can help you process your emotions and relieve stress.



Couples Hack

LET'S GOOGLE

- Whether you're the one facing perimenopause or your partner, it is important to learn about it in detail through your doctor or through verified resources available online.



TEAM EFFORT

- Support your loved one's health. Getting started on any exercise plan together is easier; offer to take nightly walks and making it a healthy ritual.
- It is better to share the experience of a controlled diet together with your partner than doing it alone.



SHARING IS CARING

Husbands can encourage their partner to talk and share her problems assuring that you both will solve it together.



MORE HANDS

- It is important to communicate with your child/children, so that they can be considerate of future situations.



Communication decoded



- Use "I" statements, rather than 'you' statements having discussion. Explain how you feel—rather than what your partner is or is not doing—and what your aims are.
- Keeping your sense of humor can remind your loved one that your relationship can still be fun.
- If your partner looks attractive, say so. Remind them what qualities drew you still holding you-together as a couple.



INTIMACY TIPS

- Focus for a while on staying physically close rather than making sexual intercourse the hard and fast rule.
- Ask what makes your partner feel good and offer to do it. Be it a simple foot rub or shoulder massage; keeping you both connected.



A word from researcher!



If you are unable to cope, do not hesitate to seek couples counselling. There is no shame in working with a therapist who can provide you with tools to mend your relationship.

Discussion

The review of literature states the term 'Perimenopause' as period immediately before the menopause when the biological features of approaching menopause commence making periods less frequent and by the age of 50 marking the end of potential fertility (<https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/41841>). Similarly, the current study showed majority of the participants (61.5%) indicated as natural transition to menopause by the body. Little more than quarter of the participants stated changing of hormonal levels (25.5%) and marking the end of the reproductive years (24%) as well as making periods irregular (22%). The review of literature states (n=199) the major menopausal symptoms faced n(%) such as aching in muscles and joints 136 (68.3%), hot flushes 76 (38.2%) and weight gain 46 (23.1%) (https://doi.org/10.4103/jmh.JMH_88_19). Similarly, in the current study(n=200) it is shown 'muscle and joint pain' 108 (54%) followed by 'headaches' 105 (52.5%) and 'increased weight' 80 (40%). But the symptom of hot flashes was less indicated.

The current research indicates (63%) of male participants discuss the difficulties faced during the menopausal transition contradicting the literature (n=34), 29 participants reported that they are not aware of the perimenopausal period and the difficulties faced during the menopausal transition. (<https://doi.org/10.29038/eejpl.2021.8.1.nai>)

The literate examined sexual practices and function of midlife women by ethnicity and menopausal status. (79%) had engaged in sex with a partner in the last 6 months, and they considered sex to be very important. Perimenopause status was associated only with higher frequencies of masturbation and pain during intercourse. (DOI:

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/citedby/10.1080/00224490309552191?scroll=top&needAccess=true>)

But our current study informed little more than one third of the participants Neither agree nor disagree (42%) about finding sex more physically comfortable after perimenopause.

According to literature, many women (60%) reported seeking health care for their menopausal symptoms. To reduce these symptoms women have tried alternative treatment as well as hormone therapies, yet many women did not get complete relief of specific symptom (DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.maturitas.2007.09.006>). Similarly, the current study indicated little more than a quarter of the participants Somewhat agree (27.5%) with seeking medical treatment for perimenopause.

The review of literature reveals estrogen plus progestin (in women with a uterus) is the most widely studied and most effective treatment option for relief of menopause-associated VMS. Non-hormonal therapies, such as selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors, serotonin-norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors, gabapentin, and clonidine, may be appropriate alternatives in women who cannot or will not use HRT for VMS relief, such as those with a history of or at risk for breast cancer (<https://doi.org/10.18553/jmcp.2008.14.S6-A.14>). According to the current study a little less than a quarter of the participants selected Neither agree nor disagree (24.5%) about taking treatment such as progesterone injection for reducing symptoms.

Contribution of the study

1. The researchers have developed a brochure and guidelines to increase knowledge of the perimenopausal stage.
2. It contributed to initiating discussions among couples.
3. It was a reminder for all wives to take care of themselves.

4. One of the most important contributions of the research was to develop awareness among husbands and wives regarding the perimenopausal stage.
5. This study also helps other researchers who choose to research further in this area.

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