



Menopause in a rural setting

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ABSTRACT

Menopause is nothing but the complete freedom for a woman from delivering the baby. Women attain menopause at different ages depending upon their health conditions. Menopause has been understood differently in different cultures depending upon its importance and understanding. Women's reproductive life begins with puberty and end up with menopause. In between this woman will undergo series of reproductive hazards and this cannot be revealed publically. In this paper an attempt has been made to understand 'menopause' in a rural setting keeping in view the farm women labourers, who are by and large illiterate and superstitious in nature.

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Introduction

This paper is an attempt to know menopause and its complication in a rural setting. To understand this, first hand intensive field work was conducted in two villages of North Karnataka selecting 400 farm women labourers from different sections of the society. These 400 women (in the age group of 35-50) were interviewed in isolation to know the general health conditions of them in general and reproductive health in particular. Menopause and issues related to this are seriously studied in detail to know the implications of menopause from both emic and etic perspectives.

Women attains menopause in different times and in different ways. Some of them will attain this without much difficulty and less harmful in nature and others pass through a variety of problems which are not only painful but also carries intolerable pains. As a result of this menopause disrupts their lives as well as their interpersonal relationships.

The commencement of menopause shows certain symptoms such as irregular menstrual periods may be once in three months or some times up to six months. During this period they witness excess bleeding or a few drops of waste blood. Some women feel that this is an indication of their reaching agedness. Those who are in urban areas and having acquaintance of meeting or visiting the doctors will take appropriate steps in avoiding major problems by responding to doctor's treatment where as in rural areas they find it hard in communicating this to their husbands and also to those who are nearer and dearer to them. Since this is purely private and sensitive in nature and cannot be discussed in public. Having no alternative they suffer from this menace throughout.

Health occupied a very significant place in all human societies, irrespective of its size and composition. Health in general and reproductive health in particular is the prime topic of great concern in all societies at present. Reproductive health of the women is relatively a new concept of 20th century phenomenon. The study of menopause involves a series of issues starting from menarche to menopause. The phases between menarche to menopause have been understood

differently in different societies depending upon the significance attached to that. Puberty is the indication of productive stage where as menopause represents the permanent cessation of menstruation which is the indication of showing immunity from having children and becomes unproductive, in all respects. The word, "Menopause" literally means the "end of monthly cycles" from the Greek words, Pausis (cessation) word root mean ' from mensis meaning (month)

Menopause is the time in a women's life when her period stops. It is a normal change in a woman's body. A woman has reached menopause when she has not had a period for 12 months in a row and there are no other causes such as pregnancy or illness for this change. Menopause is sometimes called "the change of life" leading upto menopause, a woman's body slowly makes less and less of the hormones, estrogen and progesterone. This change often occurs normally between the ages of 45 and 55 years of age.

Irapur and Somapur are the two villages wherein the field work was conducted for this study. These two villages are multi-caste ones and moderately big in size having fully depended upon agriculture for their livelihood. Agriculture is the prime occupation of these two villages. To do agriculture, many helping hands are required. In these two villages more than 3000 acres of land is being cultivated. In order to facilitate the men in agricultural activities women will also assist them as agricultural labourers. The general health conditions of the women folk in these villages are not conducive enough to enable the women folk to involve in agriculture. Yet it is inevitable for them to do the same. As a result of this, it has become totally difficult to maintain their health in general and reproductive health in particular. Due to lack of timely food, that too nutritional food, good drinking water, majority of the women folk in these two villages have become totally anemic.

The villages selected for this study are not only adjacent ones but also surrounded by a common flora and fauna. These two villages are not having any irrigation facility. They are totally dry in nature and dependent upon monsoon. Like any

other villages in these two villages also one can find lot of trees and a good number of animals. Most of the villagers are depending upon cows as well as buffalos milk for their daily livelihood side by side with agricultural income.

Social Composition of Irapur and Somapur

Irapur and somapur are the multicaste villages. There are as many as eight castes in these two villages. Lingayats dominate the village both numerically as well as economically. As per the census conducted by us in these two villages December 2011, the total population of the villages are 16500 and 9200 respectively. More than 70% of the Lingayat families own land and cultivate the land. For this endeavour they are in need of more and more agricultural labourers. Along with other labourers their women folk will also contribute their might in the overall process of this cultivation. This study is mainly focused its attention in knowing the impact of menopause on individual life of the women labourers.

400 samples were selected at random from different castes and different age groups of these two villages. The random selection of women from different castes who have attained menopause and still working as agricultural labourers are as follows:

Sl.No.	Castes	No. of women samples
1)	Lingayat	42
2)	Kuruba	65
3)	Madiwala	22
4)	Talawar	72
5)	Harijan	199
	Total	400

Table No: 1

Age At Which Women Labourers Have Attained Menopause

Sl.No.	Caste	Age 35-40	Age 41-45	Age 45-50
1)	Lingayat	18	10	14
2)	Kuruba	1	50	5
3)	Madiwala	4	17	1
4)	Talawar	20	45	7
5)	Harijan	130	41	28
	Total	182	163	55

Table No: 2

Due to the restlessness and heavy working conditions almost half of the women who were studied for menopause have attained menopause at the very early age i.e. within the 40 years mark. Issues such as miscarriages, late pregnancy, frequent abortion have mared their progress in various forms.

Out of 182 women who have attained menopause 68 women had frequent miscarriages, 94 had late pregnancy, 07 had frequent abortion and 13 had some other Reproductive Health disorders like excess bleeding, frequent menses, early are late menses etc.

Majority of the farm labourers to whom I have interviewed are of the opinion that they were married at an early age and

could not know anything about marriage, and other related issues such as pregnancy, abortion and such other things. Since ages agrarian economy had witnessed child marriage and it was continued unabatedly till recently. As a result of this girls were given in marriage at an early age. Hence they could not had any opportunity in understanding issues such as puberty, pregnancy and delivery of a child.

Individually speaking menopause makes a woman feel unproductive and useless. She also feels that her husband and daughter-in-law may not give her any respect in the way she was given in the past. Women to whom I have interviewed opined that

1. Physically speaking they will be looking very old and also the growth of hair on the face makes them to look acquired.
2. For many women who attained menopause complains that they will be having severe body ache and pain in legs as well. These types of complaints are very common in agrarian families.
3. Woman who have attained menopause develops hatredness over those who are sexually active and as for as possible they try to prevent woman deliberately, from having sex by telling so many ill facts about it.
4. Woman who have attained menopause are more or less treated as senior ones and the younger community who play a very vital role in getting advise from them and several issues pertaining to pregnancy, abortion and the delivery of the child

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