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Post menopausal traumas amongst urban women (With special reference to working women in Kota)

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Abstract

Working women across the world have to go through severe health upheavals resulting out of their complex physiologies and the work life balance that they are expected to strike. Majority of them have to suffer an early menopause caused due to improper diet, tight schedules and physical and mental harassments they are subjected to while at work. Over the last couple of decades, menopause has assumed epidemic proportions with every other working woman admitting to be a victim of that. Irregular menstrual cycles have proved to be one of the major health irritants affecting the quality of work, devotion and seriousness that a woman could otherwise pay to the task at hand. The same abnormality may not be that troublesome for a homemaker but to a working woman, it may wreak a serious havoc sometimes even permanently crippling their progress at work place and hampering job opportunities to a large extent. There have been cases when women actually relinquished their jobs as they had given up all hopes on a recovery from irregular menstruations.

The above study conducted on 50 career women chosen arbitrarily from a cross section of society and employed in sectors like teaching, banking, technical and medical threw up disturbing trends which seem to be on an upswing. They were made to respond to a questionnaire with questions centering around their state of health, job profiles, their commitments to their jobs, common ailments they get to suffer and the state of their menstruations. The responses were analyzed, tabled and depicted on a graph to comprehend the gravity of the situation. The study took into its purview women devoting 5 to 8 hours on an average a day to their respective jobs, travelling or driving to their work places.

Keywords: Upheavals, epidemic, gravity, hampering, menstruation

Introduction

Over the last four decades, society has undergone a massive change in terms of living standards, educational needs, medical awareness, transportation and a serious and visible upliftment in the overall position women occupy in the whole scheme of things. The pre-independence India was a country that lacked adequate educational resources, skills and a motivation to do better. That was perhaps a result of methodical oppression that the British perpetrated upon the Indians for centuries.

The worst hit were the women in the society who gradually lost their significance and were reduced to a vegetative state. Their presence in the family wasn't recognized for what it was worth, they were deprived of even the most elementary needs and this consistent neglect took a heavy toll on their condition. With no formal education, they were reduced to a state where they could no longer claim a decent life which every human has the right to aspire for. Along with this sustained deterioration, they had to endure the ravages of consistent neglect.

Forty years hence, the scene has undergone a sea change. Women are rubbing shoulders with men in almost every possible sector. They are occupying top jobs which were once the sole domain of men and securing pay packets that are envied across the world. But this change of fate has come at a cost. It has put an added burden on their shoulders and urban women now have to cope up with dual responsibilities at office and home at the same time. They have to manage project deadlines while simultaneously handling their child's kindergarten homework. This balancing act on the rope leaves them with no choice but to ignore their health which superficially gets compensated by the monetary rewards at the office.

The given study was conducted on a chosen pool of 50 women aged 40 to 53, picked randomly in the city of Kota and pursuing careers in varied sectors. Each profession comes with its own set of baggage and may get downright demanding and stressful at times. Women were chosen from careers as different as teaching, Banking, Marketing, Medical and Technical spending long hours at their respective work places and subjected to a detailed questionnaire. Stress was specially laid upon the scourge of menopause that traumatizes majority of women

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in this age group today. It's commonly found that working women live a stressful life where they have to live up to the raised expectations out of them, they have to rush more as compared to their counterparts that choose to stay home as homemakers and this puts them under an added pressure apart from the need to deliver their best at home in terms of children's education, marital bliss and domestic chores. This often leads to a reckless attitude wherein women tend to miss their meals, avoid routine sleeping hours which may result in hormonal imbalances in the long run thereby making the women very much prone to premature menopause. So, it's not just the age that results in menopause nowadays, in fact there are several other 'wear and tear' that a woman's body has to put up with and which gradually push a woman towards an early menopause which should logically occur almost a decade later.

Let alone the physical stress that working women have to routinely endure; it's the emotional and mental preparedness that is the most sought after amongst the professionals nowadays and which exhaust the women the most. Jobs today are emotionally challenging and might often get quite depressing to the point that women even start contemplating either quitting the job or carry on with the job under a duress. With the passage of time they develop an acute sense of trauma that often threatens to either jeopardize their career or inflict an irreparable blow to their health.

Objectives

For a smooth and unhindered flow, the study required a few objectives as objectives are said to be vital if the study has to be fruitfully concluded. Objectives lend us a cohesive direction to proceed with a certain pace. Almost everything pertaining to the study rests upon the objectives and thereby we chose certain objectives to guide us all the while during the course of the study:

1. To assess roughly the number of working women suffering irregular menstrual cycles.
2. To assess the number of working women visiting medical practitioners for a consultation on irregular menstruations.
3. To assess how a 6 to 7 hours working schedule hampers their menstrual cycle.
4. To make an assessment regarding the common ailments those come on the heels of menopause.
5. To assess the symptoms and the common changes that a body undergoes after a menopause.

Materials Required

A. Selection of subjects: The study required a certain set of subjects to act as a sample. The target subjects were chosen out of urban working women employed in sectors like teaching, banking and medical. Adequate care was taken to make sure that the chosen women were working 6 to 8 hours a day in their respective work places with good pay packets and contributing to the well-being of the family. Subjects were chosen from women between 40 to 53 in age (25 women between 40 to 45 in age, another 25 women between 46 to 53 in age), as this is the age group which is the most susceptible to menopause and also the one when women are at the peak of their careers and are thereby under a severe pressure to perform. The state of their psyche could be categorized different from that of homemakers who are relatively at ease in the comfortable environs of their homes. While at work, women have to compete with their peers, attain deadlines, rush around a lot, make compromises with their meals and

stretch their bodies beyond permissible limits and this all has a visible effect on their physical beings. It manifests itself as backaches, lack of appetite, weakening of eyesight, a constant ache in thighs and calves and even lack of attention and forgetfulness. Majority of them suffer a menopause which often threatens to throw a woman's life completely out of gear. Thus concentrating upon women between the given age group and employed in the above given sectors provided the best possible platform for the conduct of study.

B. Questionnaire: The chosen subjects (25 women between 40 to 45 in age and 25 women between 46 to 53 in age) were then exposed to a questionnaire containing questions pertaining to their state of health, the schedules they follow, common aches and ailments their bodies have to put up with in the process of pursuing their careers, to what extent and with what frequency do they suffer disturbances in their menstrual cycles and the frequency with which they have to visit their doctors for a counseling on menstruations. The questionnaire was aimed at accumulating data that could be plotted on a graph and fruitfully analyzed for a coherent conclusion. A questionnaire seemed inevitable as it helped the subjects to register their answers as was desired out of them. There were some crucial questions that sought answers on the visible symptoms that commonly precede a menopause and can be considered as indicators of an impending menopause as answers to these questions held the key to a healthy assessment regarding a woman's well-being and the quality of life she was pursuing. Most of the questions were close ended and were directed towards getting 'to the point' answers which otherwise wouldn't have been possible, had the questions been open ended. The responses to the questionnaire were collected as figures and tabled sequentially to be analyzed later.

Menopause and work life balance

Why menopause assumes so much of importance can be simply judged by the lifestyle a woman pursues and the quality of health she enjoys. As is universally evident that women have to strike a work life balance so as to be able to get the utmost mileage out of their careers and if somehow their health prevents them from doing so, they have to even ponder quitting their careers even before they could get the best out of it.

Their unique physiologies often restrict them from giving their best to their jobs and if it's their menstrual cycles that go irregular and unpredictable, it is too much of an irritant. Sometimes, they have to plan their schedules keeping in view their menstrual dates and this may prove to be a major drawback that has the potential to hold them back. Thereby any symptoms of a menopause may distract a woman and throw her career off the track. Thus while talking of an effective work life balance; irregular menstrual cycles and an approaching menopause can be a major deterrent in a woman's life.

With growing age, women have to get too much aware and judicious regarding any developments that their bodies experience. It often happens that irregularity in their menstruations catches them off guard and hence coping up with the pressure becomes more of a trouble. Being at home it is easy for the homemakers to counter any hassle they might come across whereas for the working women encountering any new trouble in their bodies may prove to be herculean and absolutely daunting.

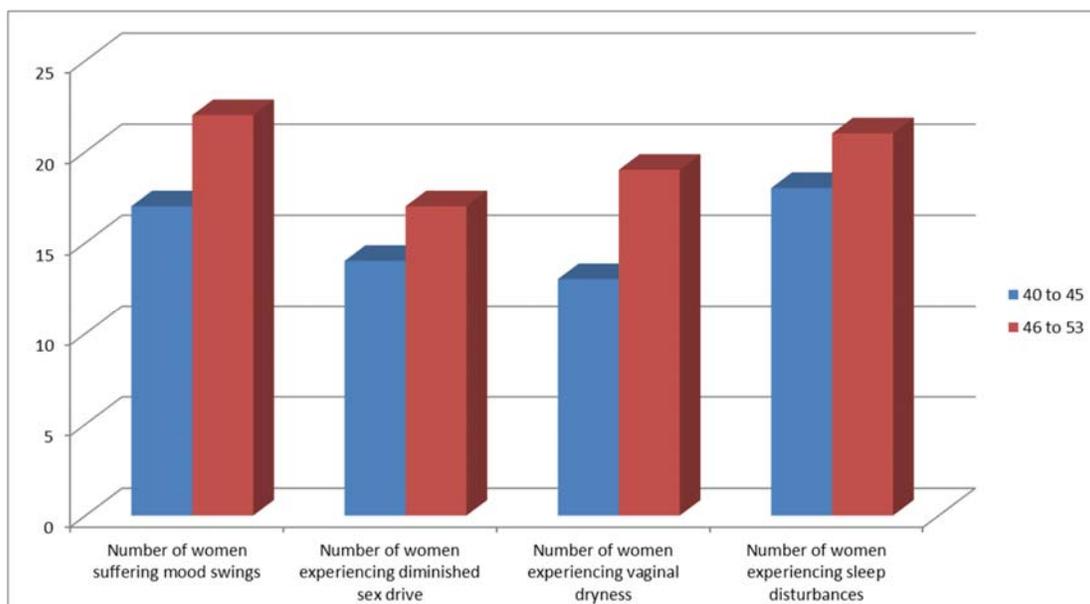
Analysis of Data

The questionnaire handed over to the women provided us a rich data which was quite an eye opener. An overview of the data proved a lot that was once just mentioned superficially and talked about casually without much heed being paid to it. It revealed significantly certain facts that showed a trend common amongst most of the working women. Majority of the questions centered on mood swings, a depleted sex drive, vaginal dryness commonly experienced by women, low appetites and sleep disturbances which are medically

approved precursors to a fast approaching menopause. Though these symptoms to a menopause are universally believed to be all-encompassing, our data did a great job in validating the beliefs. The data thus garnered through a thorough questioning was tabled to be plotted on a graph later.

1. The data gathered might also prove the secondary data to be true. During the course of researching facts and fishing for details, we stumbled across many details which had to be checked across through relevant data.

Age group(25 women each in both the groups)	Number of women suffering mood swings	Number of women experiencing diminished sex drive	Number of women experiencing vaginal dryness	Number of women experiencing sleep disturbances
40 to 45	17	14	13	18
46 to 53	22	17	19	21



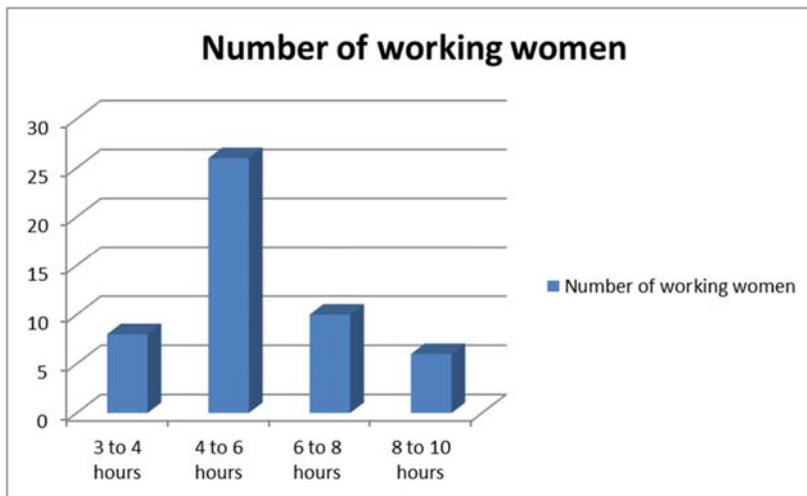
As the above graph clearly suggests, a substantial number of women suffer mood swings during their middle ages. Especially if the woman is working, she has to cope with a dual pressure of managing her office with the domestic chores where definitely it's either the home that suffers or the work place that has to bear the brunt. With the advent of globalization, an increasing number of women have started stepping out of their homes to rub shoulders with men but that doesn't mean this rids them off their responsibilities at home. It's ultimately the woman only who has to return back home to look after the kitchen and the family needs. Mood swings are medically proven to be stark indicators of an impending menopause.

Further, the figures are equally disturbing when it comes to sex drive in a growing age. Majority of the subjects amongst the chosen sample were found to be languishing with a diminished sex drive as the data amply suggests. This could be a result of not getting enough time to think of the family or marital bliss. Working women are too much preoccupied with their work and can't afford much time thinking of the pleasures of copulating. It even impacts the levels and secretion of the female hormone estrogen which in the long run may result in vaginal dryness and could be troublesome if it carries on. As the graph sufficiently proves that most of the working women among the selected sample are plagued with

vaginal dryness which reduces their efficiency to a far extent and even leaves them vulnerable to irritations of all kinds. Another common symptom of a fast approaching menopause is the sleep disturbance that a lot of women experience in their middle ages. Working women are the worst in this category as they often suffer sleepless nights with growing age. Most of the women among the chosen sample admitted to suffering from sleeplessness as the figures clearly indicate. For the working women, problem gets compounded with pressures at work place occupying most of their time and exhausting their levels of patience. Mental imbalances, irritations, excessive physical exhaustion and the ever increasing work load make them highly susceptible to an early menopause as is equivocally claimed by medical practitioners and gynecologists across the world.

2. The figures tabled below reflect the number of hours the working women (out of the chosen sample) devote at their respective work places.

Number of working hours devoted at workplace	Number of working women
3 to 4 hours	08
4 to 6 hours	26
6 to 8 hours	10
8 to 10 hours	06

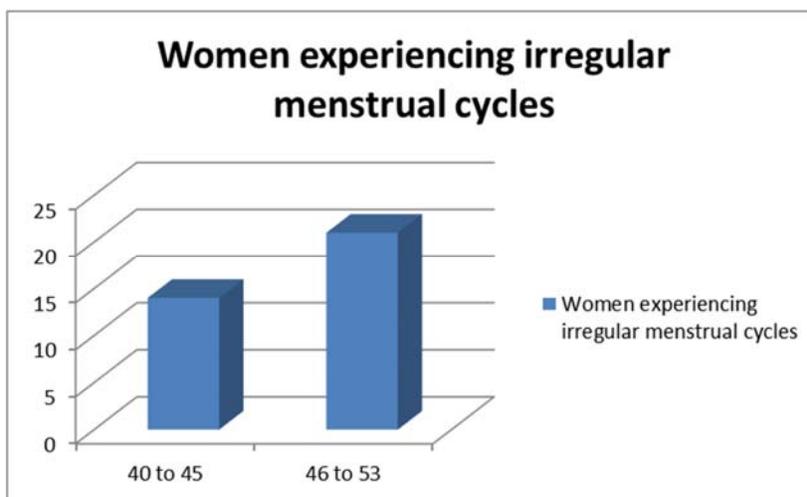


The graph plotted above is a clear reflection of the fact that majority of the working women spend 4 to 6 hours at their work places on an average. There are a miniscule proportion of women spending 8 to 10 hours too which is long enough duration to tire a woman mentally and physically. Long durations at work coupled with household chores to look after take a heavy toll on a woman’s body and make her more likely to get inflicted with some or other ailments.

3. A majority of women among the sample selected are found to be experiencing irregular menstrual cycles. They complain

of unpredictable periods which they have to endure with a painful regularity. The figures accumulated through the questionnaire have been tabled below to be plotted on a graph.

Age group (25 women each in both the groups)	Women experiencing irregular menstrual cycles
40 to 45	14
46 to 53	21



The figures plotted in a graph above amply demonstrate that a major chunk of working women in the age group 46 to 53 experience unpredictable periods and a routine disturbance in their menstrual cycles. It’s all a result of excessive pressure they have to undergo while at jobs and the household expectations they have to live upto. With growing age, hormonal imbalances are a norm among the women. The female hormones estrogen and progesterone lose their natural rhythm as a woman approaches 40. With an advancing age, women even suffer disorders of thyroid, weird swings in their blood pressures and sugar levels. Being at work also brings in its wake disorders in eating and these all add up to the resultant disruptions in their menstruations.

Even women between the ages 40 to 45 show signs of irregularity in their periods very much like the women older than them as the work pressure they live under is no way less. For the women, an irregular menstrual cycle is a distant

indication that their menstruations would gradually cease. Though it’s not a strong symptom but it is a symptom no way less. Apart from the above discussed reasons, there could be a few more reasons for a menopause worth noting. Usually with an advancing age, women contract infections or cancers in their uterus which necessitates the removal of uterus through a surgery which may also result in a sudden halt to the menstrual cycles. Further, if a woman is under some heavy dosages of medicine for some other ailment that she is being treated for, this may too result in irregular periods as different salts act differently on a human body. Women may also be undergoing treatments like radiotherapy and chemotherapy for some cancerous lumps and this may drastically affect the regularity of their menstruations. To sum it up, any medical treatment that a woman undergoes whether it is medicines or therapies may prove to be a major stumbling block for the menstrual health of a woman.

Work Related Stress that triggers menopause

The study and the analysis has generated enough momentum and data that somehow relates working hours to the stress that a woman experiences. Work in this fast paced world has the capacity to generate physical and mental traumatic disorders which could translate into some chronic problems which may even prolong across a woman's life. It could either be stress due to underachievement of goals or a stress that crops out of an individual's incapacity in dealing with work and household commitments. A constant mental block may seriously affect the secretions of various hormones vital to the health of a woman thereby triggering an early menopause. The same doesn't stand true with most of the homemakers as the challenges they face at home may not be as daunting as the ones faced by working women.

Conclusions

The detailed analysis of accumulated data helps us to safely conclude that a large number of working women suffer irregular menstrual cycles as their endless working hours and hectic schedules bring about a hormonal disturbance that disturbs their cycles. As the data reflects, around 84% of the women in the age group 46 to 53 experience irregular menstruations and it seriously affects their commitments at work.

As the data clearly suggests around 50% women work 4 to 6 hours a day and around 20% work 6 to 8 hours a day which proves too hectic and burdensome on their shoulders as well as their psyches. Coupled with an additional responsibility at home, children and domestic chores, women tend to get seriously affected and lose their natural menstrual rhythms.

It was also assessed during the course of study that a large number of working women start showing symptoms of a menopause quite early in their middle ages. Almost 88% of women in the age group 46 to 53 go through extreme mood swings during their menstrual cycles which are quite indicative of an approaching menopause. Further, around 68% women in the age group 46 to 53 were found to be experiencing a severe lack in their sex drives which reflects an inevitable menopause. A similarly large number of working women experience vaginal dryness and acute sleep disturbances which definitely indicate that they are almost on the verge of a menopause.

The figures collected are an ample proof that working women are the most vulnerable to an early menopause which come with a host of other bodily ailments like a sudden weight gain, an affinity towards thyroid imbalance and unexplained viral fevers.

The sudden vaginal dryness may even lead to rashes and boils which may again be the reason for the dip in the sex drive that majority of the women have to endure immediately around the menopause.

Recommendations

- 1) Working women should ensure that they undergo a routine health check up especially if it's a gynecological problem that they are going through.
- 2) While at work women should ensure that they take their routine nutritious diets which helps them in avoiding hormonal imbalances which often trigger a menopause.
- 3) If they suddenly experience a weight gain or a thyroid disorder, it might be a remote indicator of an impending menopause and should be immediately given heed to.
- 4) If a working woman is going through a mental trauma or

certain irritations, it could be presumed that she is approaching a menopause and should take adequate measures to cope up with the reasons leading to that.

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