

Research Paper

Psychological Well-Being and Perceived Stress of Postmenopausal Women

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the present research paper is to study the relationship between the levels of psychological well-being and perceived stress of postmenopausal women. Menopause is considered an important transition in the life of a woman. Menopause is indicated when a woman stops experiencing menstruation for at least 12 months. As a result of this major biological change, the body goes through multiple hormonal fluctuations that can negatively impact a woman's mental health. However, this population is rarely studied when it comes to the psychological impact. The primary objective of this study was to measure the levels of psychological well-being using and perceived stress of postmenopausal women. The researcher conducted a correlational and comparative study by using purposive sampling. The sample size was 30 and aged between 51 to 60 years (15 women aged between 51 to 55 and 15 women aged between 56 to 60). The results indicated that there is a significant negative relationship between the psychological well-being and perceived stress of postmenopausal women and early postmenopausal women have lower levels of psychological well-being and higher levels of perceived stress as compared to late postmenopausal women. The findings of this study will shed light on the mental state of postmenopausal women and highlight the importance and needs of a postmenopausal woman's psychological health along with physical health.

Keywords: *Psychological Well-Being, Perceived Stress, Postmenopause, Women, Mental Health*

Women throughout the world go through the biological process of Menopause. This phenomenon marks the end of a woman's reproductive years and fertility. It can be generally described as the time when a woman does not experience menstruation for 12 months. This change brings about many biological and psychological changes in the female body. While there are many studies that examine the physical

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symptoms of menopause such as lack of metabolism and hot flashes; limited studies focus on the psychological impact of menopause in a woman's body. As a result of this, the psychological well-being of a postmenopausal woman is treated as a secondary concern as compared to her physical health.

Women who fall under the age group of 51 to 60 years face multiple stress inducing situations simultaneously. These situations include taking care of aging parents, retirement planning, children leaving for further studies; and these situations occur at the same time as the biological and psychological changes caused by menopause. Most of the times the psychological health of postmenopausal women takes a hit day by day and is not noticed till it grows into a severe condition. Thus, understanding the well-being of these women and examining how they perceive stress can help in developing effective support mechanisms.

Conceptual Framework

Psychological Well-Being refers to an individual's positive functioning in the long run, their eudaimonic functioning. It is not simply the absence of illness. It is characterized by the presence of healthy relationships, self-acceptance, positive functioning and personal growth.

Definitions of Psychological Well-Being:

1. **Fredrickson, B. (2001).** Psychological well-being is the ability to experience positive emotions and build personal resources.
2. **Maslow, A. H. (1943).** Psychological well-being is part of self-actualization, which is the realization of one's full potential and the most profound level of psychological development.
3. **Ryff, C. D., & Keyes, C. L. (1995).** Psychological well-being is a multidimensional construct that includes positive functioning and the absence of negative functioning.
4. **Seligman, M. (2002).** Psychological well-being is the ability to flourish and thrive in life.

Types of Psychological Well-Being

1. **Hedonic Well-Being (Pleasure):** It refers to a state when an individual experiences emotions such as joy and happiness and there is an absence of negative emotions such as sadness and anxiety.
2. **Eudaimonic Well-Being (Purpose):** It refers to a state when an individual experiences personal growth and achieves their purpose in life.

Perceived Stress refers to the subjective judgement an individual makes when they believe that the demands of their life are exceeding their capacity to cope. They may feel that the situation is beyond their control and they are overloaded with problems.

Definitions of Perceived Stress

1. **Aldwin (2007).** Perceived stress is the person's appraisal of stressors combined with confidence in coping, shaping emotional and behavioural responses.
2. **Cohen (1988).** Perceived stress denotes subjective judgments about life situation stressfulness rather than objective counts of stressful events.
3. **Lazarus (1966).** Perceived stress is the individual's appraisal of environmental demands as exceeding their coping resources, producing a taxing relationship between person and environment.

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4. **Taylor (2015)**. Perceived stress is the interpretation of life circumstances as threatening or exceeding one's resources, producing physiological and psychological strain.

Postmenopause refers to a stage in a woman's life when she experiences 12 consecutive months without a menstrual period. This date is fixed retrospectively when a woman goes through 12 months without menstrual flow, she is considered a year into postmenopause.

Definitions of Postmenopause

1. **Cleveland Clinic (2025)** Postmenopause is the stage following menopause, defined clinically as 12 months after the last menstrual period.
2. **North American Menopause Society (NAMS)** Postmenopause is the stage following menopause, characterized by low oestrogen levels and absence of ovulation.
3. **Soules, et.al. (2001)** Postmenopause is defined as the time after the final menstrual period, confirmed after 12 consecutive months of amenorrhea.
4. **World Health Organization (2024)** Postmenopause is the permanent cessation of menstruation resulting from loss of ovarian follicular activity.

Rationale of the Study

When a woman goes through the transition of menopause, she is extremely vulnerable. The researcher plans on studying this demographic to gain a better understanding of the psychological implications of postmenopause. The idea behind this study is rooted in the fact that it is extremely important to understand the implications of the menopausal transition on the mental health of a woman. If a woman is experiencing higher levels of perceived stress, immediate action should be taken to manage these levels and help her in reducing her perceived stress. If these signs are ignored and unmanaged, they may increase over time and develop into a severe condition. It can affect both physical as well as mental health of the woman.

In a country like India menopause is still considered a taboo topic and it is discussed in hushed tones. Most women go through the psychological distress of postmenopause without even realising it and suffering in silence. The study will not only help in clearly explaining the psychological effects of postmenopause, but it will also help in creating awareness amongst patients as well as healthcare professionals about the same.

If the relationship between psychological well-being, and perceived stress of postmenopausal women is examined formally, it will not only help healthcare workers to understand the mental health of the patient, it will also motivate them to include interventions that will help in the reduction of perceived stress and increase the levels of psychological well-being into the standard operating procedure of postmenopausal care.

Research Gap

There is extensive literature that covers the physical symptoms of postmenopause and techniques to manage the same. However, there is a lack of correlational studies that focus on the psychological profile of postmenopausal women aged between 51 to 60 years. Studies such as Majid et.al., 2022 and Mu, et.al., 2024 have used machine learning and physiological sensors to study psychological well-being and perceived stress. However, such complex machinery is not accessible in all clinics and hospitals. As a result, there is a need for research that uses standardized psychological tests in paper and pencil format providing

data that is accessible and available for taking immediate action to improve the mental health of this population.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Agrawal, U. Parihar N. (2023) conducted a study of psychological well-being in working and non-working menopausal women. The study was designed to study the psychological well-being in working and non-working menopausal women. For this study, a sample of 60 perimenopausal women (30 working and 30 non-working) and 60 postmenopausal women (30 working and 30 non-working). The age range of the samples was between 35 to 55 years, and Ryff's scale of psychological well-being (42 items) was used for the assessment. After analysing the data using MANOVA, the study concluded that postmenopausal women have higher psychological well-being as compared to perimenopausal women and working menopausal women have a higher psychological well-being as compared to non-working menopausal women.

Arnot M., Emmott E.H., Mace R. (2021) conducted research on The Relationship Between Social Support, Stressful Events, And Menopause Symptoms. The research used nine years of data from the Study of Women's Health Across the Nation and consisted of 2718 samples. The research used multilevel Poisson regression with random effects to test if more social support is associated with decreased VMS frequency, if increased life stress worsens VMS, and if support acts as a buffer against stress. The research concluded that there is an association between stressful events and worse menopause symptoms.

Sarveswaran G., Jayaseelan V., et al (2021) conducted research on Perceived Stress and Its Determinants among Postmenopausal Women in Urban Puducherry. The aim of this study was to determine the level of stress and its associated factors among postmenopausal women in urban Puducherry, India. It was a cross-sectional study and consisted of 219 women who had not experienced menstruation for at least 12 months. Cohen's Perceived Stress Scale was used for this study. The study concluded that more than one-fourth of postmenopausal women had high to very high levels of stress.

Hashemipoor, F., Jafari, F., Zabihi, R. (2019). Maladaptive schemas and psychological well-being in premenopausal and postmenopausal women. The aim of this study was to study the relationship between early maladaptive schemas and psychological well-being in postmenopausal and premenopausal women. It was descriptive-correlative research and consisted of 282 women (142 postmenopausal and 140 perimenopausal) aged between 45 to 55 years old. For the data collection, Young Schema Questionnaire (2003) and Ryff's Scales of Psychological Well-being (1989) were used. Spearman correlation test and multiple regression analysis were used to analyse the data. The study concluded that menopause could activate some passive schemas, and psychologists can prevent a decrease in well-being in them through making women aware of these changes and using appropriate interventions.

Sharma S., Gupta S. (2019) Effect of menopausal symptoms severity and self-compassion on psychological well-being among post-menopausal women. The aim of the study was to examine how the severity of menopausal symptoms, and self-compassion shape well-being among employed menopausal women. For this study, a sample of 60 postmenopausal employed women aged between 50 to 60 years were included. The tools used for the study were Menopause Symptom Severity Inventory by Pimenta, Leal, Maroco, and Ramos (2012); Self-compassion scale by Neff (2003); and Psychological Well-being Scale by Ryff

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(1995). The study concluded that the menopausal symptoms had a significant impact on psychological well-being and some of its domains whereas the effect of self-compassion and interaction of both the independent variables was non-significant on well-being and any of its domain.

Kannur D., Itagi S. (2018) did research on Psychological Well-Being, Anxiety and Stress on Working and Non-working Menopausal Women. The study aimed to study Depression, Anxiety and Stress among working and non-working women menopausal women. The Depression, anxiety and stress scale was used to know the psychological well-being of women. SES scale was used to know the socio-economic status of family. The study conducted among working (n=40) and non-working women (n=40) in Dharwad. The results revealed that 54.17% of working women had severe depression, while 43.75% of non-working women in mild depression, 45.83% of working women in severe level of anxiety as well as stress. The results showed that there was significant difference between working and non-working women with respect to depression, anxiety, and stress. The results also revealed that there was non-significant association observed between SES and depression, anxiety, and stress. The study concluded that proper educational intervention is necessary to manage the psychological aspects of working women and educational intervention needed for coping strategies to overcome mental health problems.

Abdelrahman R., et al (2014) did research on Predictors of Psychological well-being and stress among Jordanian menopausal women. The aim of this study was to investigate purpose in life psychological well-being, self-acceptance, perceived stress levels, and menopausal symptoms among Jordanian women. It was a descriptive co relational design study which used a sample of 193 women aged between 40-55 years. This study concluded the importance of including both physical and psychological symptoms during encounters with mental health professionals, besides considering women's expectation about menopause to help ease their menopausal transition and improve their well-being.

Cuadros J.L., Fernandez-Alonso A.M., et al (2012) conducted research on Perceived stress, insomnia, and related factors in women around the menopause. The objective of this research was to assess perceived stress, insomnia, and related factors in mid-aged Spanish women. This was a cross-sectional study consisting of 235 women aged between 40 to 65 years. For this study, Menopause Rating Scale (MRS), Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), Insomnia Severity Index (ISI) were used. The study concluded perceived stress and insomnia were significantly correlated and related to various female and partner issues.

Dennerstein, L., Lehert, P., Guthrie, J. (2002) The effects of the menopausal transition and biopsychosocial factors on well-being. The study aimed to determine whether women's well-being changed with the menopausal transition and to study the effect of other biological, psychosocial and lifestyle factors on well-being. It was a longitudinal observational study and included a sample of 226 middle aged Australian women. The study concluded that well-being improves as women enter the later stages of the menopausal transition and psychosocial factors influence well-being.

Statement of the Problem

- To study the levels of Psychological Well-Being and Perceived Stress of Postmenopausal Women.

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Objectives of the Study

1. To study the levels of Psychological Well-Being of Postmenopausal Women.
2. To study the levels of Perceived Stress of Postmenopausal Women.
3. To study the relationship between Psychological Well-Being and Perceived Stress of Postmenopausal Women.
4. To study the effect of age on the Psychological Well-being of Postmenopausal Women.
5. To study the effect of age on the Perceived Stress of Postmenopausal Women.

Hypotheses

1. There is a negative relationship between Psychological Well-Being and Perceived Stress of Postmenopausal Women.
2. Early Postmenopausal Women (51 to 55 years) have lower levels of Psychological Well-Being as compared to Late Postmenopausal Women (56 to 60 years).
3. Early Postmenopausal Women (51 to 55 years) have higher levels of Perceived Stress as compared to Late Postmenopausal Women (56 to 60 years).

Research Variables

1. Psychological Well-Being.
2. Perceived Stress.

Controlled Variables

1. Postmenopause status.
2. Age (51 to 60 years).

Sampling Method

The present study used purposive sampling to select participants and 30 postmenopausal women aged between 51 to 60 years (15 women aged between 51 to 55 and 15 women aged between 56 to 60) were selected. The researcher used purposive sampling to ensure that there are equal samples in both the groups, and the samples belong to postmenopausal women within the specified age range.

Sample Distribution

Group	Menopausal Status	Age Range	Size	Total
Early Postmenopausal Women	Postmenopause	51-55 years	15	30
Late Postmenopausal Women	Postmenopause	56-60 years	15	

This was a quantitative correlational and comparative research with a cross-sectional design. The primary objective was to study the relationship between psychological well-being and perceived stress of postmenopausal women and to study the impact of age on the levels of psychological well-being and perceived stress of early (51 to 55 years) and late (56 to 60 years) postmenopausal women.

Tools Used for the Study

- **Psychological Well-Being Scale (2019):** This test was developed Dr. Devendra Singh Sisodia and Miss. Pooja Chaudhary (2019) to measure Psychological Well-Being. The test consists of 50 items, rated on a 5-point scale, which assesses several aspects of well-being like Satisfaction, Efficiency, Sociability, Mental Health and Interpersonal Relations. The scale is meant for the age group 16 to 60 years. Each

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domain consists of 10 items. The test-retest reliability of the test is 0.87 and the internal consistency reliability of the test is 0.90.

- **Cohen's Perceived Stress (1983):** It was developed by Sheldon Cohen in the year 1983. It consists of 10 items. The questions in this scale ask about an individual's feelings or thoughts during the past month. Each item is rated on a five-point scale ranging from never (0) to almost always (4). This scale demonstrated an adequate internal consistency reliability of ($\alpha = .78$). The face validity and scale content of this test are remarkable, and the KMO coefficient is 0.82.

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 1: Relationship between Psychological Well-Being and Perceived Stress of Postmenopausal Women.

Statistical Test	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Pearson's Correlation (r)	Df	p	Remark
Group							
Postmenopausal Women	30	Psychological Well-Being: 166.26	Psychological Well-Being: 20.79	-0.54	51	0.003	Significant at the 0.05 level.
		Perceived Stress: 17.36	Perceived Stress: 10.48				

To study the relationship between Psychological Well-Being and Perceived Stress of Postmenopausal Women, the researcher selected a sample of 30 postmenopausal women aged between 51 to 60 years and conducted appropriate statistical analyses. The Mean of Psychological Well-Being was 166.26 and the Standard Deviation was 20.79. The Mean of Perceived Stress was 17.36 and the Standard Deviation was 10.48. Then, the researcher calculated Pearson's Correlation (r). The results indicated the value of r to be -0.54, indicating that it is significant at the 0.05 level. The findings conclude that there is a significant negative correlation between the Psychological Well-Being and Perceived Stress of Postmenopausal Women aged between 51 to 60 years, i.e. when the levels of Perceived Stress increase, the levels of Psychological Well-Being decrease. Thus, the first hypothesis was accepted.

Table 2: Comparison between the levels of Psychological Well-Being of Early (51 to 55 years) and Late (56 to 60 years) Postmenopausal Women.

Statistical Test	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Df	t	Remark
Group						
Early Postmenopausal Women	15	153.53	17.99	28	-4.21	Significant at the 0.01 level.
Late Postmenopausal Women	15	179	14.99			

To compare the levels of Psychological Well-Being between Early Postmenopausal Women (51 to 55 years) and Late Postmenopausal Women (56 to 60 years), the researcher selected 15 samples for the first group and 15 samples for the second group. The Mean of Psychological Well-Being of Early Postmenopausal Women was 153.53 and the Standard Deviation was 17.99. The Mean of Psychological Well-Being for Late Postmenopausal Women was 179 and the Standard Deviation was 14.99. Followed by this, an independent samples t-test was conducted. The results indicated the value of t to be -4.21, indicating that it is significant at the 0.01 level. The findings conclude that Early Postmenopausal Women

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have lower levels of Psychological Well-Being as compared to Late Postmenopausal Women. Thus, the second hypothesis was accepted.

Table 3: Comparison between the levels of Perceived Stress of Early (51 to 55 years) and Late (56 to 60 years) Postmenopausal Women.

Statistical Test	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Df	t	Remark
Group						
Early Postmenopausal Women	15	23.66	11.04	28	4.08	Significant at the 0.01 level.
Late Postmenopausal Women	15	11.06	4.54			

To compare the levels of Perceived Stress between Early Postmenopausal Women (51 to 55 years) and Late Postmenopausal Women (56 to 60 years), the researcher selected 15 samples for the former and 15 samples for the latter. The Mean of Perceived Stress of Early Postmenopausal Women was 23.66 and the Standard Deviation was 11.04. The Mean of Perceived Stress for Late Postmenopausal Women was 11.06 and the Standard Deviation was 4.54. Next, the researcher conducted an independent samples t-test. The results showed the value of t to be 4.08, indicating that it is significant at the 0.01 level. The findings conclude that Early Postmenopausal Women have higher levels of Perceived Stress as compared to Late Postmenopausal Women. Thus, the third hypothesis was accepted.

DISCUSSION

The aim of the present study was to examine the levels of Psychological Well-Being and Perceived Stress of Postmenopausal Women. To test the first hypothesis, the researcher calculated Pearson's Correlation (r) and found a significant negative correlation between the two variables, thus, the first hypothesis was accepted. The findings were supported by previous studies such as Sainudheen, et.al., 2024.

To test the second and third hypothesis, the researcher conducted an independent samples t-test and found a significant difference in the levels of Psychological Well-Being and Perceived Stress of Early Postmenopausal Women (51 to 55 years) and Late Postmenopausal Women (56 to 60 years), thus, the second and third hypothesis were accepted. These findings are supported by previous studies such as Dennerstein, et.al. (2022), Agrawal, U. and Parihar N. (2023), and Shaji, A. and Reeja R., (2024),

Implications

1. The findings of this study will have practical implications that will be helpful for doctors and medical practitioners.
2. The findings shed light on the mental state and its underpinnings amongst postmenopausal women.
3. Efforts should be made to provide interventions that can reduce the Perceived Stress of Postmenopausal Women especially those aged between 51 to 60 years.
4. Furthermore, counselling centres and support groups can be established in hospitals that cater specifically to the mental health struggles of Postmenopausal Women.

CONCLUSION

1. A negative relationship was observed between the levels of Psychological Well-Being and Perceived Stress of Postmenopausal Women.

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2. Early Postmenopausal Women (51 to 55 years) reported lower levels of Psychological Well-Being as compared to Late Postmenopausal Women (56 to 60 years).
3. Early Postmenopausal Women (51 to 55 years) reported higher levels of Perceived Stress as compared to Late Postmenopausal Women (56 to 60 years).

Limitations and Suggestions

1. Future researchers can expand the sample size.
2. A longitudinal study can share deeper insights on the influence of age on the mental health of Postmenopausal Women.
3. The present study did not consider medical conditions other than postmenopause.
4. The researcher used self-report measures and assumed the answers given by the participants were honest.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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