

Family and Spousal Support during Menopause: Influence on Women's Well-being

Dr. M. Thianes Mary

Associate Professor

Department of Social Work, St. Joseph University, Nagaland-India

Abstract:

Menopause is a normal life transition that causes significant physical and psychological changes, which frequently affect women's overall well-being. During this stage, family and spousal support are critical in shaping women's experiences and coping strategies. This study explores the impact of family and spousal support on the well-being of menopausal women, with an emphasis on the emotional, social, and practical aspects of support. Using a descriptive and analytical method, the study demonstrates how strong family connections, understanding from spouses, and shared responsibilities help to minimise stress, anxiety, and emotional instability. The findings indicate that women who receive regular assistance had better psychological adjustment, improved self-esteem, and a higher quality of life. In contrast, insufficient support has a connection to higher emotional suffering and a negative view of menopause. The study emphasises the necessity of raising awareness among family members, particularly husbands, regarding menopausal symptoms and the need for empathy and care. Strengthening family support systems through education and counselling can improve women's health and allow them to view menopause as a time of growth and acceptance.

Key word: Menopause, Family support, Spousal support, Wellbeing & Quality of Life.

INTRODUCTION

The North American Menopause Society (NAMS) states that menopause brings rapid and often unexpected changes in both physical and mental health. As women enter this transitional phase, many concerns and varying perspectives arise regarding how best to manage menopause, a stage that may span nearly one-third of a woman's life. Each woman's experience is unique, and there is no standard pathway, making it difficult to anticipate the course of changes. Menopause represents a significant life transition affecting physical health, psychological well-being, emotional stability, personal identity, and interpersonal relationships.

Cowell et al. (2024) highlight the importance of support systems—including familial, workplace, medical, technological, and governmental support—in shaping women's perceptions and experiences of menopause. They emphasize that menopausal experiences are complex and influenced by multiple factors such as social conditions, cultural beliefs, lifestyle patterns, family support, marital status, and socioeconomic background. Similarly, the North American Menopause Society (NAMS) reports that strong social support helps women cope more effectively with menopausal symptoms, reduces stress, and enhances overall life satisfaction.

FAMILY AND SPOUSAL SUPPORT

Any family members, men, as partners, husbands, fathers, brothers, co-workers, play a vital role in supporting women during menopause. Awareness and understanding of menopausal symptoms can enable men to provide meaningful emotional, practical, and social support. However, many perimenopausal women report a lack of understanding from their partners, sometimes being misjudged as overreacting or emotionally unstable. Such misconceptions highlight the need for greater awareness and sensitivity.

Women who receive spousal support tend to report a better quality of life during menopause, facilitated by effective communication, emotional reassurance, and shared understanding (Cowell et al., 2024). In addition, support from family members such as fathers, brothers, and sons can foster an accepting and empathetic home environment, thereby easing the menopausal transition. Family support has also been associated with reduced severity of menopausal symptoms (Cowell et al., 2024).

Furthermore, cultural attitudes and social norms significantly influence the type and extent of support women receive during menopause. In many traditional societies, menopause remains misunderstood or stigmatized, leading to silence and limited communication within families. This underscores the importance of awareness and education in creating supportive environments that promote women's well-being during midlife transitions (World Health Organization, 1996).

Therefore, understanding the influence of family and spousal support during menopause is essential for developing comprehensive and holistic health interventions that enhance women's overall well-being.

OBJECTIVES

1. To study the effect of family and spousal support on women's health throughout menopause.
2. To examine the relationship between support systems and menopausal women's quality of life.

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive study using a quantitative methodology was undertaken on 282 women experiencing menopause. Participants aged 40 to 55 years were considered, however those who had undergone hysterectomy, ovariectomy, or had medical conditions that interfered with normal hormone function were excluded. The data collected through the respondents gave a comprehensive overview of menopausal experiences, with a special emphasis on the importance of family and spousal support in coping with menopause and promoting women's health. The data was analysed using cross-tabulation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1.1: Family Members' Understanding

Parameter	Age			Total
	40-45 years	46-50 years	51-55 years	
Strongly Disagree	22	14	14	50
	7.7%	4.9%	4.9%	17.5%
Disagree	16	17	22	55
	5.6%	5.9%	7.7%	19.2%
Neutral	24	24	34	82

	8.4%	8.4%	11.9%	28.7%
Agree	20	20	24	64
	7.0%	7.0%	8.4%	22.4%
Strongly Agree	14	12	9	35
	4.9%	4.2%	3.1%	12.2%
Total	96	87	103	286
	33.6%	30.4%	36.0%	100.0%

The above table 1.1. shows that 28.7% of respondents are neutral, implying that family members’ understanding of menopause is moderate and unclear. While 22.4% agree and 12.2% strongly agree that their family members understand their challenges, a significant proportion 17.5% strongly disagree and 19.2% disagree feel misunderstood during menopause. These findings indicate that family understanding is present but not well established, as reflected in the high level of neutrality and disagreement (36.7%). Furthermore, the data demonstrate that women in the 51–55 years age group report more neutral and negative perceptions, suggesting a decline in perceived understanding with increasing age. Although some level of positive understanding exists, it is not strong or consistent across all groups. Overall, the variation in responses across age groups highlights inadequate and inconsistent levels of understanding and support from family members. As a result, the study suggests that such limited and inconsistent family understanding may negatively influence women’s well-being during menopause, emphasizing the need for greater awareness and supportive communication within families.

Table 1.2: Support for Managing Stressors

Parameter	Age			Total
	40-45 years	46-50 years	51-55 years	
Strongly Disagree	22	21	18	61
	7.7%	7.3%	6.3%	21.3%
Disagree	24	27	22	73
	8.4%	9.4%	7.7%	25.5%
Neutral	22	14	32	68
	7.7%	4.9%	11.2%	23.8%
Agree	23	19	27	69
	8.0%	6.6%	9.4%	24.1%
Strongly Agree	5	6	4	15
	1.7%	2.1%	1.4%	5.2%
Total	96	87	103	286
	33.6%	30.4%	36.0%	100.0%

The above table 1.2 the support for managing stresses across different age groups reveals varying levels of perceived support among menopausal women. Overall, a greater proportion of respondents stated disagreement (25.5%) and severe disagreement (21.3%) than those who agreed (24.1%) or strongly

agreed (5.2%), showing that many women receive inadequate support in coping with stressors during menopause.

Women aged 46-50 years reported the highest level of dissatisfaction with 9.4% disagreeing and 7.3% strongly disagreeing, indicating a higher difficulty coping with stress during the mid-menopausal stage. Similarly, women aged 40 to 45 reported significant dissatisfaction indicating a lack of support during the early stages of menopause. Women aged 51-55, on the other hand, reported higher levels of neutrality (11.2%) and agreement (9.4%), indicating stronger coping support or adaptation in the later stages of menopause. However, the percentage of high agreement remains low across all age categories, indicating a lack of effective support systems in general.

Overall, the data indicate that women in the 40-50 age group experience more frequently with stress management due to a lack of support, but those in the 51-55 age category cope slightly better. This emphasises the importance of strengthening family and spousal support for women's well-being all through menopause.

Table 1:3: Family Support

Parameter	Age			Total
	40-45 years	46-50 years	51-55 years	
Very Strongly Disagree	23	12	14	49
	8.0%	4.2%	4.9%	17.1%
Disagree	21	14	20	55
	7.3%	4.9%	7.0%	19.2%
Neutral	23	25	40	88
	8.0%	8.7%	14.0%	30.8%
Agree	16	22	23	61
	5.6%	7.7%	8.0%	21.3%
Strongly Agree	13	14	6	33
	4.5%	4.9%	2.1%	11.5%
Total	96	87	103	286
	33.6%	30.4%	36.0%	100.0%

The above table 1.3. the analysis of family support reveals that the majority of respondents responded neutrally (30.8%), followed by agreement (21.3%), while a significant proportion expressed disagreement (19.2%) and very strong disagreement (17.1%), indicating inconsistent levels of family support during menopause.

Women between the ages of 40 and 45 expressed greater levels of dissatisfaction which is indicative of a lack of support in the early stages of menopause. In a similar vein, women between the ages of 46 and 50 reported moderate levels of agreement and disagreement, indicating mixed support experiences. Women between the ages of 51 and 55, on the contrary, reported higher neutral (14.0%) and agreement (8.0%) responses, suggesting comparatively better familial support or adjustment over time. In

summary, the data suggest that family support varies by age group, with younger women facing more challenges, emphasising the need to strengthen a supportive family environments.

Table 1:4: Support from Husband

Parameter	Monthly Income					Total
	Nil	Rs.1000-5000	Rs.5001 - 10,000	Rs.10,001 - 15,000	Rs.15,001 - 20,000	
Strongly Disagree	13 4.5%	8 2.8%	15 5.2%	2 0.7%	0 0.0%	38 13.3%
Disagree	19 6.6%	11 3.8%	11 3.8%	1 0.3%	0 0.0%	42 14.7%
Neutral	33 11.5%	24 8.4%	13 4.5%	6 2.1%	0 0.0%	76 26.6%
Agree	35 12.2%	37 12.9%	33 11.5%	2 0.7%	1 0.3%	108 37.8%
Strongly Agree	8 2.8%	2 0.7%	9 3.1%	3 1.0%	0 0.0%	22 7.7%
Total	108 37.8%	82 28.7%	81 28.3%	14 4.9%	1 0.3%	286 100.0%

The above table 1.3. the spousal support across income groups indicates a generally positive trend, however differences do exist. Overall, 45.5% of respondents (37.8% agree and 7.7% strongly agree) stated their spouses supported them, while 28.0% (14.7% disagree and 13.3% strongly disagreed) indicated they didn't. Additionally, 26.6% were neutral, indicating moderate or inconsistent support.

In terms of income, women in the Nil income group reported quite high levels of both support (15.0% combined agreement) and lack of support (11.1% combined disagreement), reflecting mixed experiences. Support levels in the Rs.1000-5000 group were higher (13.6% agreement) than dissatisfaction (6.6% disagreement), indicating greater spousal involvement. Similarly, in the Rs.5001-10,000 bracket, support (14.6%) outweighed lack of support (9.0%), indicating a favourable trend. However, in the higher income groups (above Rs.10,000), despite the small sample size, responses show less visibility of strong support, with minimal representation in both agreement and disagreement categories. This shows that income alone may not be enough to predict how much emotional or practical help husbands provide.

Overall, receiving support (45.5%) has a considerably greater impact than lack of assistance (28.0%), demonstrating that spousal support improves women's ability to manage during menopause. However, the fact that a significant number receive inadequate or neutral support demonstrates that not all women

gain equally. These findings indicate that, while spousal assistance is important in improving women's well-being, more efforts are needed to maintain consistent emotional and practical support across all income levels.

1.5: Financial Support

Parameter	Monthly Income					Total
	Nil	Rs.1000-5000	Rs.5001 - 10,000	Rs.10,001 - 15,000	Rs.15,001 - 20,000	
Very Strongly Disagree	19	9	20	5	0	53
	6.6%	3.1%	7.0%	1.7%	0.0%	18.5%
Disagree	33	35	25	0	0	93
	11.5%	12.2%	8.7%	0.0%	0.0%	32.5%
Neutral	26	23	15	4	1	69
	9.1%	8.0%	5.2%	1.4%	0.3%	24.1%
Agree	25	12	8	3	0	48
	8.7%	4.2%	2.8%	1.0%	0.0%	16.8%
Strongly Agree	5	3	13	2	0	23
	1.7%	1.0%	4.5%	0.7%	0.0%	8.0%
Total	108	82	81	14	1	286
	37.8%	28.7%	28.3%	4.9%	0.3%	100.0%

The above table 1.5.the financial support across income levels shows that the majority of respondents receive inadequate financial assistance throughout menopause. Overall, 51.0% of respondents (32.5% disagree and 18.5% very strongly disagree) stated a lack of financial support, while only 24.8% (16.8% agree and 8.0% strongly agree) reported receiving assistance. Additionally, 24.1% remained neutral, implying uncertainty or inconsistency in financial support.

In terms of income, women in the Nil income group reported more discontent (18.1% combined disagreement) than support (10.4% agreement), indicating more financial vulnerability. Similarly, in the Rs.1000-5000 category, discontent (15.3%) was much higher than support (5.2%), demonstrating the lack of financial security in lower income groups. Although some respondents expressed support (7.3% combined agreement), a greater proportion reported a lack of support (15.7% combined disagreement), indicating ongoing financial difficulty. Higher income groups (over Rs.10,000) have moderate involvement, but replies imply a slightly better balance, however not strong enough to indicate consistent financial support.

Overall, the impact of a lack of financial support (51.0%) is significantly higher than that of receiving support (24.8%), suggesting that financial constraints continue to be a substantial barrier for menopausal women. Lower income groups are more vulnerable, which may have a significant effect on their access to healthcare, stress management, and overall level of life.

DISCUSSION

The present study highlights the importance of family and spousal support in determining women's health and quality of life during and after menopause. Menopause is a challenging biopsychosocial change that influences physical, emotional, and social well-being (WHO, 1996; Utian, 2005). The findings across important dimensions family members' comprehension, support for stress management, family support, spousal support, and financial support show both strengths and severe gaps in existing support systems.

The findings show that family members' understanding remains moderate, with many women reporting neutral or negative experiences. This shows a lack of awareness and sensitivity among families about menopausal changes, which may have a negative impact on women's mental well-being and coping abilities (North American Menopause Society NAMS, 2021). Similarly, support for managing stressors was assessed to be insufficient, with a sizable minority of respondents expressing dissatisfaction.

Furthermore, overall family support is inconsistent, particularly among women aged 40 to 50, who expressed higher dissatisfaction. This indicates that women in the early and middle stages of menopause are more vulnerable and require additional emotional and practical assistance. Women aged 51 to 55, on the other hand, had relatively superior perceptions, which could be attributed to adaptation and stronger coping mechanisms with time.

Among all attributes, spousal support emerged as a more significant and positive factor, with a higher percentage of respondents agreeing. This emphasises the importance of spouses in giving emotional comfort, communication, and stability, which improves women's well-being. Notably, this support was shown across income levels, demonstrating that emotional assistance is not primarily determined by financial standing.

However, financial support remains a big worry, with the majority of respondents dissatisfied, particularly among low-income groups. Financial constraints may increase stress and restrict access to healthcare and supportive services, lowering women's quality of life. This is consistent with research showing that socioeconomic status has a major impact on health outcomes and access to care during menopause.

Overall, the findings demonstrate the concept that family and spousal support have a major impact on women's health throughout menopause, as well as showing the relationship between support systems and women's quality of life. While spouse support is beneficial, gaps in family understanding, stress management support, and financial assistance still exist. These findings emphasise the importance of comprehensive and integrated support systems to improve women's well-being (NAMS, 2021; WHO, 1996).

RECOMMENDATIONS AND GAP

Recommendations include raising awareness and education among family members, improving family communication, and increasing spousal involvement through specific programs, with a focus on vulnerable groups, notably women aged 40-50. Improving financial support systems. It is critical, particularly for low-income groups, to improve access to healthcare and integrate psychological counselling and stress management services. At the same time, the study identifies existing gaps, such as limited research on family and spousal support in local contexts, insufficient emphasis on financial

aspects, a lack of age-specific analysis, and underexplored cultural influences, indicating the need for more comprehensive and longitudinal studies. In conclusion, strengthening emotional and financial support systems is essential for ensuring a positive menopausal experience and improving women's overall health and quality of life.

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