

Age at Menopause in Two Caste Group (Brahmins and Rajputs) From Rural Areas of Jammu

Neeru Sharma, Sumati Vaid and Anju Manhas

*P.G. Department of Home Science, University of Jammu, Jammu 180 006,
Jammu and Kashmir, India*

KEYWORDS Climacteric. Menstruation Ceases. Dogra

ABSTRACT The present study was conducted to find the mean age at menopause in two different caste group i.e. Brahmins and Rajputs and to study the rituals, taboos, social restrictions, health problems, nutrition observed during the menopausal period. The sample for the research comprised of 50 Brahmin women and 50 Rajput women in the age group of 40-52 years from different rural areas of Jammu (Jammu and Kashmir State). Purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample. The tools used for study were recall method and interview schedule. The results reveals that the mean age of the Brahmin women were 47.90 $\pm$ 0.051 and the Rajput women is 48.02 $\pm$ 0.0689. Majority of the women were belonging to both the caste group faced weakness during menopause and they can do all the household work. There is no restrictions in eating, going for temples and performing her rituals. It was also found that after menopause there is no changes in the behavior of the women of both the caste group. The result showed that the 't' value is significant therefore there is difference in the mean age of menopause between the two-caste groups.

INTRODUCTION

Menopause marks the end of reproductive span for a woman. For an Indian woman reproduction is very important. Giving birth to offsprings is the prime duty, and mothering the prime role of a woman. An Indian women's identity is her motherhood (Prabhu, 1988). Cessation of the ability to become a mother is of a great loss to her womanhood. She considers herself as a useless object, if she cannot reproduce. Hence menopause is a marker of her worthlessness. Though there are still many women who believe in imposing restrictions at the time of monthly periods (Gupta, 1990). The belief of menstrual blood as impure still leads to imposition of restrictions in homes of Brahmins or Rajputs of Jammu (Gupta, 1990). Menopause marks the end of this monthly embarrassment and women usually say 'Khalasi Muki' (got rid of), 'Sayapa Khatam' (problem is over). The earlier the menopause, more relieved they are. Some also indulge into indigenous medicine systems for earlier cessation due to the embarrassment especially if their daughters are married and the son-in-law arrives at a time when mother-in-law is not supposed to enter the kitchen. Hence the women's feelings about the menopause are mixed and culturally marked.

The present research focuses on the age at menopause among Brahmins and Rajputs of Dogra community of Jammu region and the main

purpose of the study were to find the mean age at menopause in two different castes i.e. Brahmins and Rajputs and also to study the cultural beliefs, social restrictions, health problems, nutrition during menopausal period.

METHODOLOGY

The sample of the study consists of 100 women who had experienced menopause were selected (50 women of Brahmin caste and 50 women of Rajput castes in the age group of 40-52 years) from different rural areas of Jammu (Jammu and Kashmir State). Sample was drawn from among the middle socio economic strata. Recall method was used to obtain the age at menopause and interview schedule for gathering the information regarding the rituals, taboos, social restrictions, health problems, nutrition observed during the menopausal period.

Analysis of the Data: The response obtained was coded, tabulated and percentages were drawn. Content analysis was done. Mean, Standard Deviation was also done. 't' test is also used to know whether difference between two samples is small enough to accept the null hypothesis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 reveals that the mean age at menopause among Brahmin women is 47.90 $\pm$ 0.051

Table 1: Number of respondents from different age groups (in year) among two castes groups who have experienced menopause

Age (in years)	Caste group		Total
	Brahmin	Rajput	
42	0	1	1
43	0	1	1
44	0	1	1
45	6	3	9
46	9	4	13
47	9	8	17
48	4	9	13
49	8	10	18
50	10	9	19
51	4	3	7
52	0	1	1
Mean	47.90	48.02	
S.E	0.051	0.0689	
T Value	0.334		

and Rajput women is 48.02 ± 0.069 . t-test shown that within the rural areas the difference among Brahmins and Rajputs were significant at 0.25 level.

Table 2 shows that all the women (100%) from both the caste do not go to their parents home during menopause. Majority (80% of Brahmin women and 87% of Rajput women) faced problem of eyesight and 40% Brahmin women and 32% Rajput women complained of weakness but only 20% of both the group consult doctors. All the women of both the group do their household work and they eat whatever is cooked at home. No rituals are performed at the time of

Table 2: Social and health problems during menopause

Response		Brahmin	Rajput
Whether go to parents house	No	100%	100%
<i>Any Problem Faced During Menopause</i>			
1) Weakness	Yes	59%	54%
2) Weak in eye sight	Yes	40%	32%
3) Lassitude	Yes	80%	87%
4) Irritability	No	52%	40%
5) Depression	No	42%	60%
6) Headache	No	80%	72%
Whether you consult doctor	Yes	70%	62%
Do household work	Yes	20%	20%
Do you eat whatever you cooked	Yes	100%	100%
<i>Any Special Food Eat</i>			
1) Milk and Lassi	No	100%	100%
2) Meat and Egg	Yes	80%	84%
Any special food avoiding	Yes	62%	60%
Any ritual performed	No	0%	52%
Avoid going temple	No	100%	100%
Any change in behavior observed	No	100%	100%
	No	80%	72%

menopause and there is no restriction to going to temple. There is also no change in the behavior of the respondents (80% Brahmin women and 72% Rajput women).

DISCUSSION

Health and medical referral is the least important thing that women consider themselves privileged for. They are not very concerned about their ill health and usually depend on indigenous medicines for any ailments they have. The symptoms associated with menopause are often mis-interpreted and precautions to be taken during this period are often ignored. Women are not aware that they need medical assistance and consultation at this time often leading to osteoporosis and weakening of body structure. Present research aimed at determining the age at menopause among rural Dogra Brahmin and Rajput women and to know the beliefs that are attached to this event. The result revealed that mean age at menopause among rural Brahmin women is 47.90 ± 0.051 and the rural Rajput women are 48.02 ± 0.0689 . Gupta (1990) reported that mean age of the menopause among the Brahmin, Rajput and Mahajan women belonged to urban areas of Jammu were 44.63 ± 0.422 , 45.54 ± 0.365 and 42.26 ± 0.251 respectively. Comparing the two data, from the rural and urban areas, it was found that the differences were significant (t-test) for Brahmins and Rajputs (at 0.005 level of significance). Within the rural areas the difference among Brahmins and Rajputs were significant at 0.25 level whereas for urban areas there were significant at 0.005 level. This shows that an ethnicity i.e. rural and urban setting does have an impact at the age at menopause. It was found that the age at menopause among urban women of both the community having earlier ages. Caste differences were also found to be significant with Brahmins women of both the areas having earlier ages at menopause. Earlier menopause has been shown to occur because of early menarche and quantity of menstrual flow, Socio-Economic Status, marital status, education, number of children, urban/rural residence, psychosocial stress, smoking and drinking (Singhvi, 1988; Kirchengast, 1992; Borkaya et al., 1994; Smith et al., 1994; Avenell et al., 1995). The results of the present study commensurate with the previous reviews.

REFERENCES

- Avenell, A., Torgerson, J., Russell, I. T. and Reid, D. M.: Factors associated with onset of menopause in women aged 45-49. *Maturitas*. **19(2)**: 83-92 (1995).
- Borkaya, H., Besar, E., and Aydemir, V.: Body mass index and age at natural menopause. *Gynecol-Obstet-Invest*. **37(1)**: 40-42 (1994).
- Gupta, N.: *Age at Menarche and Menopause among Three Caste Groups of Jammu*. Post Graduate Department of Home Science. Jammu, University of Jammu. (1990)
- Kirchengast, S.: Effect of Socio-economic factors on timing of menopause and the course of climacteric. *Maturitas*. **25(2)**: 128-133 (1992).
- Singhvi, P.: Menopause-Men-O-Pause. *Body and Body Care*, **VII(8)**: 27-35 (1988).
- Smith, A., Morse, C. A., Dennerstein, L., Green, A; Hopper, J., and Burger, H.: The treatment-seeking women at menopause. *Maturitas*. **18(3)**: 161-173 (1994).