

Stress Related Diseases Affecting Health of Indian Women under Different Age Group

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Abstract: *The purpose of this study is to find out the different type of stress problems faced by women in different age group and make them aware about factors causing stress. Data was gathered from 511 women living in various localities of Chandigarh (U.T.), Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh. Fourteen stress related problems like hair loss, insomnia, obesity, B.P., diabetes, migraine, thyroid, anxiety, skin allergy, irregularities in menstrual cycle, depression, arthritis, infertility, asthma, etc., were taken into account for data collection and analysis. For this, data was divided into four age groups viz., below 30 years, between 30-50 years, between 50-60 years and above 60 years of age. As various physiological, psychological and social changes are taking place during these years in women's life, the observation under this study indicates that women below 30 years of age generally suffer from skin allergies and irregular menstrual cycle. Between 30-50 years age group, women showed multiple stress related problems such as high blood pressure, hair loss and irregular menstrual cycle while arthritis was found to be more prevalent in addition high B.P., hair loss, in the 50-60 years age group. Above 60 year of age, the women suffer from high blood pressure, arthritis and diabetes.*

Keywords: Stress, Diseases, Indian women, Age group.

1. Introduction

Stress is the feeling one get when you faced with challenges. It prepares the body for various physiological demands to cope, adapt or adjust according to the environment [1] [9]. In small doses, *i.e.* Acute or short-term stress can be beneficial because it makes you more alert and gives you a burst of energy. But feeling stressed for a long time (Chronic stress) can take its toll on the mental and physical health of any individual. Chronic stress includes perceived discrimination, neighbourhood stress, family stress, acculturative stress, environmental stress and maternal stress [3]. Even though it may be hard to find ways to de-stress with all the things you have done, it's important to find those ways on which your health depends upon.

The body responds to any stress by releasing various stress hormones (catecholamines, cortisol). These hormones regulate various essential physiological factors of the body such as blood pressure, heart rate and blood sugar level, etc. Long term stress can cause a variety of health problems *viz.*, mental disorders like depression and anxiety, obesity, heart attack, high blood pressure, menstrual problems, infertility, acne and other skin problems. Stress may prematurely age the immune system and could enhance the risk of illness as well as age-related diseases [3] [4]. Various studies examining the role of social and biological stress on health suggests that there is a very close link between socio economic status and ethnic disparities in stress and health [11]. Socio-economic status and environmental stress contributes towards many health disparities among ethnic and racial groups [8]. Also daily stress associated with lower social position and poor family conditions can lead to adverse health outcomes [7].

In today world, to meet the demands of high living cost and to protect the life standard in a fixed level, women in India have to adopt dual responsibility (*i.e.* doing paid work outside and to look after their family also) [10]. Even when a woman don't work outside home, they are confronted with a

high level of stress for many other reasons such as carrying out various household duties, looking after the needs of whole family (whether nuclear or joint) without taking proper care of their own health. With the time, their mind and body gets overburdened, resulting into various stress related problems in many Indian women. The impact of stress on women health may be severe in India due to the fact that they often have more vulnerable socio-economic, physical and physiological health status and also fewer resources to buffer the effect of stress. The aim of present study is to find out different type of stress related problems faced by women in different age groups.

2. Methodology

A total of randomly selected 511 women whether studying, working or housewife and belonging to different economic strata of Chandigarh (U.T.), Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh was surveyed for this investigation. The whole survey sample was divided in four age groups, *i.e.*, below 30 years, between 30-50 years, 50-60 years and above 60 years of age. This survey was conducted during December - 2015 to March - 2016. All the women are briefed about the purpose of this study. A questionnaire was prepared having various demographic questions and asked to fill by the women of different age group especially for their age, family income, marital status, working status, hours of working (if working), various diseases, their diet, etc. They were also asked for addiction to alcohol or smoking or doing regular exercise and yoga to manage stress. The collected data was then analysed on various parameters for getting significant inference from that data and the outcome of the study are further supported with the help of percentage value table and histogram charts for various diseases.

3. Results and Discussion

The disease distribution pattern (in %age) of all women under study is shown in the Table-1. The study includes a

total of 511 women distributed under four age groups. These women are from different background of the society and from different walks of life, employed in various professions (government & private), students, housewife, retired, etc. For the past few decades, the growing demand of social and economic status has lead to more and more women opting for doing jobs in various organisations which make them financially independent. But these works are also associated with overload, excessive demands for increased working hours and many other responsibilities which lead to a high risk of adverse health outcomes^[6].

It was observed that among women below 30 years of age, about 26% suffers form the problem of Hair loss and 15% reported having irregular menstrual cycle. Another 14% showed various types of Skin allergies (Graph 1). About 9% of women suffer from Migraine disorder whereas 7% of them are having Diabetes and Insomnia. 6% of them are also suffering from Anxiety and related stress factors.

In the age group between 30-50 years, it was observed that the women in this age group are suffering from more than one type of stress related problems. This can be attributed to the fact that in this age group woman are under family and work related stress more consistently as compared to other age group. It was observed that 40% women reported high

Blood Pressure, 25% Hair loss and 17 % irregularities in their menstrual cycle and 14 % reported to have Skin allergies (Graph 2). About 11% and 12% women were also reported with Diabetes and Migraine respectively. Obesity and Thyroid related problems are also reported by 9% and 8% of women under study of this age group. Other diseases were also found in them but in very fraction of women population.

Among the women of age group between 50-60 years of age, 60% women are suffering from high or low Blood Pressure, 40% from Arthritis and 35% from Hair loss (Graph 3). About 25% of women under study are suffering from Migraine and Insomnia in this age group while 15% women have been reported with Diabetes and Thyroid problems. 10% of them are reported to have Obesity, Skin allergy, Anxiety and Depression also.

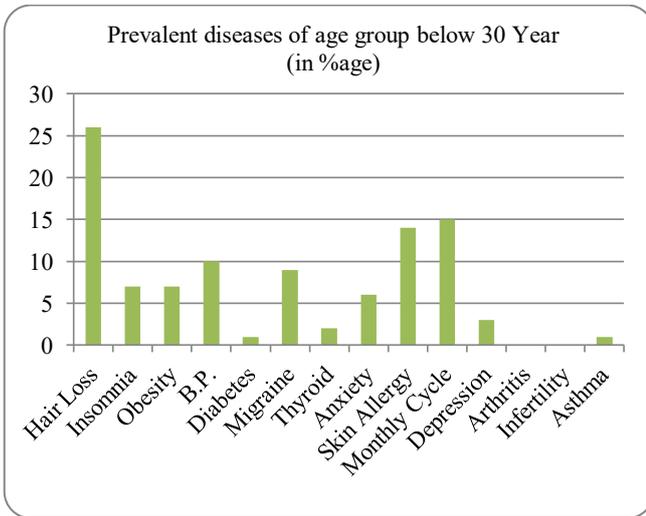
Above 60 years of age group, 32% women suffer from either high or low Blood Pressure and Arthritis while 27% are reported to have Diabetes. Another disease prevalent amongst them is Skin allergy (20%), Hair loss (17%), Thyroid (15%), Obesity and Migraine (10%). Depression, anxiety and insomnia are found to be very less in this age group (Graph 4).

Table 1: Common Ailments prevailing amongst the Indian females of different age groups

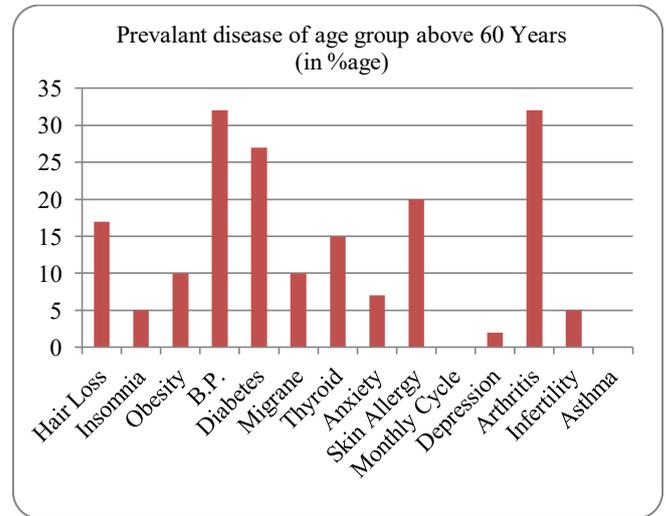
PREVALENT DISEASES	Age Group Below 30 yrs. (in %age)	Age Group between 30-50 yrs. (in %age)	Age Group between 50-60 yrs. (in %age)	Age Group Above 60 yrs. (in %age)
Hair Loss	26	25	35	17
Insomnia	7	3	25	5
Obesity	7	9	10	10
B.P.	10	40	60	32
Diabetes	1	11	15	27
Migraine	9	12	25	10
Thyroid	2	8	15	15
Anxiety	6	4	10	7
Skin Allergy	14	14	10	20
Monthly Cycle	15	17	0	0
Depression	3	5	10	2
Arthritis	0	10	40	32
Infertility	0	1	5	5
Asthma	1	1	0	0

Now a day the numbers of working women are increases significantly. They do outside work besides performing their household duties as well. Since women are more sensitive and emotionally attached with everything as compared to their spouse and other male counterparts as they end up having more workload at their home and workplace which takes a good toll on their physical health. The result manifests that the working status of women has no direct relationship with any stress conditions and that both working and non-working women's are experiencing equal stress symptoms^[2]. This was also observed during the

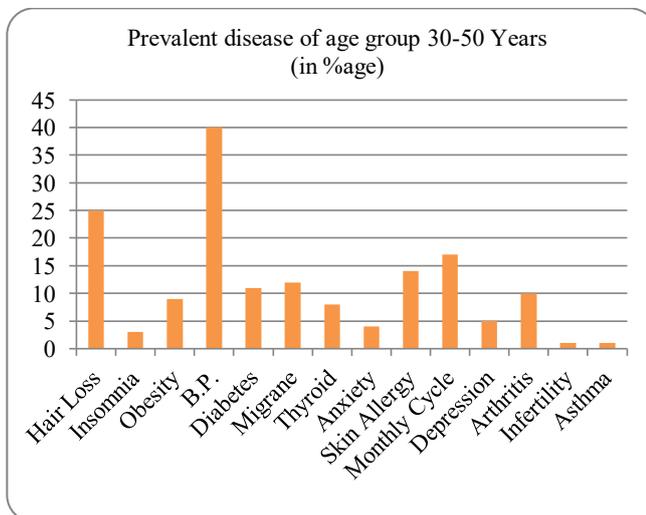
present study conducted for various age group women which shows that high or low B.P. is very common between the age group 30-50 years, 50-60 years and above 60 year women. This is accentuated by other diseases such as arthritis, irregular menstrual cycle, hair loss, thyroid, obesity and migraine. Asthma is reported in very small number in each age group since it is more of a genetically controlled factor as compared to age related problem. It was also observed that perceived stress score of women with physical disabilities was significantly higher that other normal women in general^[5].



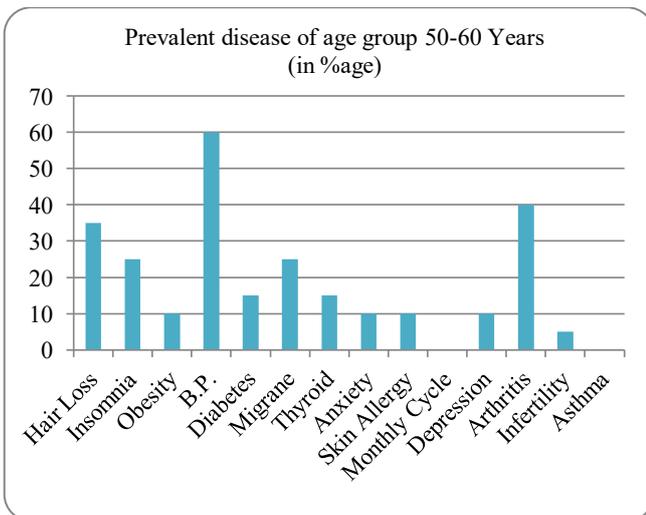
Graph 1: Showing %age of various diseases prevalent amongst the women of age group below 30 years.



Graph 4: Showing %age of various diseases prevalent amongst the women of age group above 60 years



Graph 2: Showing %age of various diseases prevalent amongst the women of age group 30-50 years.



Graph 3: Showing %age of various diseases prevalent amongst the women of age group 50-60 years.

4. Conclusion

It has been observed that women are under stress in every age group but the stress related problems varies in them depending upon many factors like family background, working conditions, financial status, marital status, etc. It was found during the study that the age factor plays a very significant role in developing and sustaining any form of disease in the Indian women (whether working or not). As most of the works at home are done by woman that causes her to experience more stress if also working any paid job outside.

The main finding of this study is that women in the age group 30-50 years are suffering maximum from stress related problems which results in deterioration of their physical and mental health later in life. Further studies will be carried out to relate stress with other factors as family income, working status, hours of work and other stress management strategies such as diet, exercise, etc. Such related results can be used to promote regular exercise, rest, balanced diet and would increase women personal awareness and encourage them to manage stress better.

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