

SELF-PERCEIVED STRESS ASSOCIATED WITH THE SEVERITY OF MENOPAUSAL SYMPTOMS ACROSS MENOPAUSAL TRANSITION

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Background: Menopausal symptoms affect approximately 60–80% of women during the menopausal transition. For many, these symptoms substantially reduce quality of life due to their impact on sleep, mood, and stress levels. This issue is particularly important, as a large proportion of perimenopausal women experience chronic stress and exhibit increased sensitivity to psychological stress resulting from fluctuations in estradiol levels.

Objective: The study aimed to assess the relationship between self-perceived psychological stress and menopausal symptoms in peri- and postmenopausal women.

Subjects and methods: Data from 390 women aged 40–65 years (mean age 51.3 ± 6.00) were analysed. Participants completed an anonymous questionnaire covering demographic, health-related, and lifestyle information. Perceived stress was measured using the Perceived Stress Scale 10 (PSS 10), while the severity of menopausal symptoms was assessed with the Menopause Specific Quality of Life Questionnaire (MENQoL). Basic anthropometric measurements and body composition analysis using the BIA method were also conducted.

Results: Overall, women reported moderate stress levels, with perimenopausal women showing significantly higher stress. After adjusting for additional variables – age, place of residence, education, income, occupation status, physical activity, smoking, body mass index, fat mass (FM) or fat mass-to-fat free mass ratio (FM/FFM) – higher FM/FFM was strongly associated with higher stress levels in perimenopausal women; this relationship did not occur in postmenopausal women. PSS 10 scores positively correlated with total MENQoL scores ($r=0.36$, $p<0.001$). Perimenopausal women reported more severe symptoms in the psychosocial, physical, and sexual domains, whereas postmenopausal women had significantly higher scores in the vasomotor domain. Analyses across individual MENQoL domains showed that in both peri- and postmenopausal groups, higher PSS 10 scores were associated with higher symptom severity in all domains except the sexual one.

Conclusions: The study confirms that the severity of menopausal symptoms is associated with perceived stress, with perimenopausal women being particularly vulnerable to elevated psychological stress levels.

Keywords: Menopausal symptoms; MENQoL; Perceived stress; Menopausal status.