



A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY TO ASSESS THE KNOWLEDGE ON MIDLIFE CRISIS AMONG WOMEN WITH MIDLIFE CRISIS

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ABSTRACT

Background: In the transition to old age, midlife plays a significant preparatory role. During this period, a person may go through a stage called the stage of Midlife crisis. In a life review process, a woman with midlife crisis may search for her identity. Some women may be disturbed due to the missed educational or occupational opportunities and, some may have regrets about the decisions made in the past. Poor knowledge and understanding regarding midlife crisis may lower the psychological resilience of women. Knowledge regarding the midlife crisis will help a woman to take measures to be more resilient, and this understanding is essential for the proper management of the midlife crisis. **Objectives:** 1) To assess the knowledge on midlife crisis among women with midlife crisis in selected community areas in Malappuram district, Kerala. 2) To find the association between the knowledge score on midlife crisis with selected socio demographic variables among women with midlife crisis in selected community areas in Malappuram district, Kerala. **Methods:** A descriptive study was conducted among 60 female middle-aged women with midlife crisis to assess their knowledge on midlife crisis in different community areas in Malappuram district, Kerala. The data was collected during the month of January 2022. A structured knowledge questionnaire was developed to assess the knowledge on Midlife crisis. The data analysis was done using descriptive and inferential statistics. **Results:** The results of the study showed that 13.33% of the sample had low knowledge on midlife crisis and only 1.67% were having adequate knowledge on midlife crisis. The results also showed that 85% of the sample had moderate knowledge on midlife crisis. There was no significant association between the knowledge score on midlife crisis with the selected socio demographic variables among the sample. **Conclusions:** The knowledge regarding midlife crisis is essential for the early identification and management of the crisis. Women's understanding of the crisis they are experiencing in middle age is critical in the management of midlife crisis-related physical and mental health issues. This will help a woman to prevent mental health-related issues in the future and is an essential component in the promotion of mental health. Overall, good mental health will positively influence the quality of life of women.

KEYWORDS : middle aged women, midlife, midlife crisis

INTRODUCTION

Background of The Problem

Midlife plays a significant preparatory role in the transition to old age. Multiple responsibilities are played by middle-aged adults, which may include the welfare of children, parents, coworkers, other family members, and friends; it also includes addressing their own needs for meaningful work, health, and wellbeing. The need to balance multiple responsibilities and the need to manage the conflicts can be considered as a characteristic of middle age. Many types of physical problems and chronic illnesses start to develop during midlife.¹

According to Erik Erikson, middle adulthood is defined as a period between the age of 40 and 65 years,² while according to Collin's dictionary, the middle age is the period between 40 and 60 years³. Lachman ME defined midlife as a period which begins at 40 and ends at 60 or 65⁴

Midlife is a pivotal period in a person's life and, when compared to other age groups, a person may achieve better health, economic stability, and more authority during their midlife period. Adults in midlife extend their care and support to their older generations and to the younger generations. During this time, there are associated physical and psychosocial changes that are different for men and women. A primary thought change in this period can be the belief in mortality and the acceptance of the limited opportunities in the future. Hence, during this period, a person may go through a stage called the stage of Midlife crisis⁵

Women face a number of challenges during their midlife crisis. They may experience isolation, inferiority, pressure to remain youthful, feelings of unattractiveness, and feelings of uselessness. In Indian society, the stigma of ageing is greater for women than for men. Some women during this period may develop frustration due to the stagnation in their career growth. The most significant physical level of change

experienced by midlife women is menopause. The way in which the midlife crisis is experienced by the male and female genders is entirely different. The experiences are different based on the situational or environmental set up, societal norms, and expectations. During life review, a woman with a midlife crisis may go through a stage called search for identity. Some women may be disturbed due to the missed educational or occupational opportunities. Another problem is the regret about the decision made in the past⁶.

A study conducted to assess the knowledge of middle-aged women on Midlife crisis showed that 52% sample had average knowledge, 12% had poor knowledge and none of the sample had excellent knowledge on midlife crisis. There was a necessity to educate the women on the topic Mid Life Crisis. Knowledge regarding midlife crisis will help to solve many problems in the middle-aged woman's life⁷.

A study conducted to assess the midlife crisis experienced by Indian women showed that the way in which the middle age transition is handled has a significant relationship with everyone's mental health status. Effective management of the crisis will aid in growth, whereas ineffective management may exacerbate the women's crisis. A midlife crisis may adversely affect the mental health of the individual, especially in dimensions like anxiety, depression, anger and stress⁸.

Employed people are struggling to meet the expectations of their family as well as the expectations of their work environment. This demand may put additional strain on employees¹⁰. Poor knowledge and understanding of middle-aged women's issues and problems, especially about the midlife crisis, may lower the psychological resilience of the woman and may affect all the dimensions of an individual's living. Knowledge regarding the midlife crisis will essentially help a woman in understanding the common features of crisis and will help them to take the measures to become more

resilient. Understanding the level of knowledge about the midlife crisis is essential before taking measures to manage the crisis. In this context, the present study aimed to understand the knowledge on midlife crisis among women experiencing midlife crisis. This knowledge will help a woman to realize the physical and psychological problems that she is experiencing while passing through the midlife crisis. Finally, knowledge and awareness about the midlife crisis will aid in the promotion of mental health by improving quality of life.

Statement of The Problem

A study to assess the knowledge on midlife crisis among women with midlife crisis in selected community areas in Malappuram district, Kerala.

OBJECTIVES:

- To assess the knowledge on midlife crisis among women with midlife crisis in selected community areas in Malappuram district, Kerala.
- To find the association between the knowledge score on midlife crisis with selected sociodemographic variables among women with midlife crisis in selected community areas in Malappuram district, Kerala.

MATERIALS AND METHODS:

The present study adopted a descriptive research design. The ethical clearance was obtained from the Institutional Ethical Committee. The necessary permission was taken for conducting the study from the director of a Self-Help Group in Kerala. The data was collected during January 2022 from women with midlife crisis who were residing in different community areas in Malappuram district, Kerala. The sample size was 60. The investigator provided detailed information to the participants about the study. An informed consent was obtained from each subject. The researcher assured the confidentiality of all the informations. The sample included in the study were women with midlife crisis between the age group of 40-65 years.

The Midlife Transition Questionnaire was used as a screening tool to recruit the sample in to the study. The knowledge regarding midlife crisis was assessed using a structured knowledge questionnaire prepared by the researcher. The tool was divided into two sections: Section A, which contained sociodemographic data, and Section B, which contained a structured questionnaire designed to assess knowledge on midlife crisis. The questionnaire was prepared by reviewing the literature, and the focus areas of the questionnaire were the meaning, sources, features, and management of midlife crisis. The maximum score of the knowledge assessment tool was 25. The data analysis was done using descriptive and inferential statistics.

Data Analysis And Findings

The data analysis and interpretation were done using descriptive and inferential statistics. The major findings of the study were presented as follows.

Section 1: Analysis of the Socio demographic data:

This section included the frequencies and percentages of adult women experiencing Midlife Crisis based on the variables such as age, education, occupation, religion, type of family, area of living, source of previous knowledge on midlife crisis and the attainment of menopause.

Table 1: Socio demographic data of the sample n=60

SL NO:	VARIABLE	f	%
1)	Age (in years)		
	a) 40-49	34	56.67
	b) 50-59	26	43.33
	c) >60	00	00

2)	Education:		
	a) Primary Education	02	03.30
	b) High school education	14	23.30
	c) Higher secondary education	21	35.00
	d) Higher education	23	38.40
3)	Occupation:		
	a) Self employed	09	15.00
	b) Government employee	31	51.70
	c) Private employee	20	33.30
4)	Religion:		
	a) Hindu	26	43.30
	b) Muslim	23	38.30
	c) Christian	11	18.40
5)	Type of family		
	a) Nuclear family	40	66.67
	b) Joint family	20	33.33
6)	Area of Living		
	a) Urban	31	51.67
	b) Rural	29	48.33
7)	Source of Previous knowledge on midlife crisis		
	a) Friends	11	18.33
	b) Family members	02	03.33
	c) Health care agencies	01	01.68
	d) Mass media	08	13.33
	e) No previous knowledge	38	63.33
8)	Attainment of menopause		
	a) Attained	17	28.33
	b) Not attained	43	71.67

The data from table 1 clearly showed that among the sample, 56.67% were between the age groups of 40-49 years, 38.40% had the higher education, 51.70% were government employees, 43.30% were from the Hindu religion, 66.67% were from the nuclear family, 51.67% were from urban area and 18.33% knew about the midlife crisis from their friends.

The table also showed that 71.67% did not attain menopause. The data analysis on the source of previous knowledge on midlife crisis showed that most of the sample (63.33%) had no previous knowledge on midlife crisis, 18.33% sample knew about the midlife crisis from their friends and 13.33% from the mass media.

Section 2: Assessment of the knowledge on midlife crisis:

This section dealt with the assessment of knowledge on Midlife crisis. The questionnaire comprised 25 questions, which covered the main areas like meaning, risk factors, common manifestations, and the management of midlife crisis.

Each question carried one mark, with a maximum score of 25. The obtained knowledge score was categorized as low (0 - 7), moderate (8-18), and adequate (19 and above). The knowledge score of the sample was described as follows:

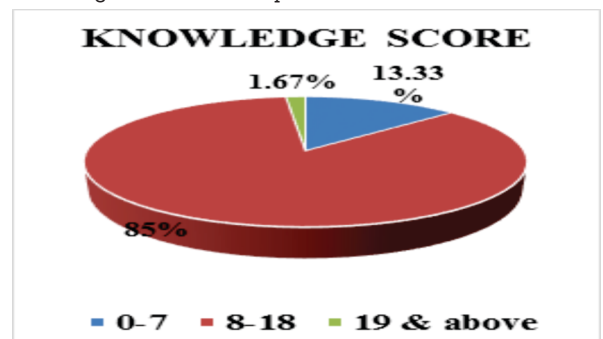


Figure 1: Distribution of sample based on the knowledge score

The above figure shows that most of the sample (85%) had moderate knowledge, 13.33% had low knowledge, and only 1.67% had adequate knowledge on midlife crisis. The analyzed data also showed that the mean knowledge score was 11.75.

Section 3: Association between the knowledge score on midlife crisis and the selected sociodemographic variables

This section was about the association of knowledge score with the selected socio- demographic variables like age, education, occupation, religion, type of family, area of living, source of previous knowledge on midlife crisis and the attainment of menopause. A Chi- square test was performed to find the association between the knowledge score and the selected socio- demographic variables. The data analysis clearly showed that none of the variables were associated with the knowledge score.

DISCUSSION

In the present study, 56.67% sample were between the age group of 40-49 years, 38.40% were having higher education, 33.3% were private employees, 43.3% were from Hindu religion, 66.67% were from the nuclear family. It was also noted that 51.67% were from urban areas, 71.67% never attained menopause, and finally, 63.33% had no previous knowledge on Midlife crisis.

A study was conducted to assess the effectiveness of a planned teaching program on knowledge regarding middle age crisis among women of a selected urban community in Mangalore. The results showed that 38% of the sample were between the age groups of 40 to 44 years, 34% had higher education, and 56% were from the Hindu religion. On the other hand, only 42% were from the nuclear family⁷.

The current study findings showed that only 1.67% of the sample were having adequate knowledge, 85% had moderate knowledge on midlife crisis. On the other hand, the knowledge assessment study on Midlife crisis done at Mangalore showed that 52% of the sample had average knowledge on midlife crisis⁷.

The association of knowledge score with the selected socio-demographic variables like age, education, occupation, religion, type of family, area of living, source of previous knowledge on midlife crisis and the attainment of menopause was assessed in the present study. After the data analysis, it was interpreted that none of the variables were associated with the knowledge score. However, in the study conducted at Mangalore, the knowledge score and the socio demographic variables like age, education, religion, income, type of family and occupation were significantly associated but the variable marital status was not associated with the knowledge score⁷.

CONCLUSIONS

As middle age is considered as a bridge between adulthood and old age, special care and attention are needed in this period. Compared to women of other age groups, middle-aged women talk less about their anxiety. They provide priority to the needs and problems of their family members and often understate their issues and problems.⁹ Due to various factors, they experience anxiety, stress, and crisis. The midlife crisis is negatively correlated with the quality of work life, and family relations.¹⁰ It was noticed that many middle-aged women's crises go unnoticed. But this crisis may negatively influence the mental health of the family members, especially the children. In many other situations, even if the crisis is noticed, the problems associated with the crisis receive low priority. Most of the women are unaware about the consequences of neglecting the crisis. The awareness about the crisis and its management will help a woman to prevent unwanted psychological stress and this will also enhance their personal life satisfaction and the also the quality of the

work. The knowledge regarding the midlife crisis is essential to identify and manage the crisis on time. A mentally healthy adult woman is an asset to the family and society as a true supporting person.

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