

Letter to the Editor

Age of Onset of Menopause and Factors Associated with Common Symptoms among Women in Lusaka District, Zambia

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Dear Editor,

We wish to commend Mulenga and Vwalika for their valuable contribution through the study, "*Age of Onset of Menopause and Factors Associated with Common Symptoms among Women in Lusaka District, Zambia*" published in Vol. 50, Issue 2, 2023.¹ Their research provides much-needed insights into menopause, a life stage that, despite its universal occurrence, remains underexplored in Zambia.

The study's finding that the average age of menopause is 47.4 years aligns with reports from other low- and middle-income countries such as India (46.2 years) and Yemen (47.8 years).² However, this contrasts with findings from industrialized nations, where menopause typically occurs between 50 and 52 years.³ These differences may be attributable to genetics, environmental exposures, and lifestyle factors such as diet and physical activity.⁴

One key takeaway is the high prevalence of back pain (66.1%) among postmenopausal women, particularly among widowed and obese participants.¹ While the association between obesity

and joint pain is well documented,⁵ the link between widowhood and back pain raises intriguing psychosocial questions. Could chronic stress, grief, or reduced social support contribute to increased pain perception in this group? Future research incorporating stress biomarkers and mental health assessments would provide valuable insights.

Additionally, the reported prevalence of mood changes (24%) is lower than international estimates, which often exceed 35%.^{6, 7} Cultural perceptions around emotional health and menopause may influence self-reporting, and the absence of standardized psychological assessments in the study could have led to underestimation.⁸ Given the impact of menopausal mood disturbances on quality of life, employment productivity, and interpersonal relationships,⁹ incorporating validated mental health screening tools in future studies is advisable.

One limitation of the study is its recruitment of participants from healthcare facilities, which may introduce selection bias, as many women experiencing menopausal symptoms do not seek medical attention.¹⁰ A more representative community-based study would provide a fuller epidemiological picture.

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In conclusion, this research highlights the urgent need for increased public health efforts to support menopausal women in Zambia. Raising awareness, integrating menopausal care into primary healthcare services, and addressing barriers to treatment could significantly improve health outcomes. We appreciate the authors' contribution to this essential field and look forward to future studies that build on their findings.

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