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Reproductive health in a rural Scenario
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ABSTRACT
This paper is the outcome of my two months intensive and in-depth field work conducted in two multi-caste villages of Belgaum District of North Karnataka. The aim of this paper is to know the importance of Reproductive Health hazards of Farm Women Labourers who hail from different socio-economic background and deprived of basic health facilities. World Health Organization (W.H.O.) has defined Health as a "state of complete physical, mental and social well being and not merely an absence of disease or infirmity" (W.H.O. 1948). The Webster dictionary defines health as "the condition of being sound in body, mind or spirit especially freedom from physical disease or pain". Health to all is the prime motto of W.H.O.

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Introduction
Health is a common theme in every society and has its own beliefs and practices regarding healing diseases and its treatment. Since time immemorial, man has been trying hard to control diseases. The medicine man, the priest, the herbalist and the magician all under took various ways and means to cure man's diseases and there by to bring relief to the sick. In the past health and illness were interpreted in a Cosmological as well as Anthropological perspective. Medicine in the past was dominated by magico-religious beliefs, which were an integral part of society itself. Dubos opines that, “ancient medicine” was the mother of every Culture. All of these practices are keenly interrelated with environment. During the past few decades the concept of health has emerged as a fundamental human right and a world wide social goal. In 1977, the 30th World Health Assembly decided that the main social target of the government and World Health organization in the coming decades should be “the attainment by all citizens of his health to all is the prime motto of W.H.O.

Keeping in view the concept of reproductive health the present study has been conducted in two multi caste villages of North Karnataka which are numerically bigger in size. Women Farm Labourers were selected at random giving appropriate attention for their caste/community and age group. These people were briefed specifically about the importance of the study and we one can take care about one's reproductive health. First of all the informants were informed about some ticklish issues such as pregnancy, miscarriages, abortion, child and a number of other issues involved in it. 250 respondents were selected at random who are sexually active and were totally unaware of the reproductive health and its disorders hazards. This is true that the women folk are by and large illiterate and hails from agrarian families. Added to this before something is learnt or known about marriage, husband and children their marriages are celebrated. A series of issues regarding reproductive health has been taken up seriously and meticulously dealt with. Issues such as, Pregnancy, Miscarriages, Abortion, Problems in Child delivery and Menopause were studied carefully. Attempts were made to understand these issues by using both emic and etic perspectives.

Somapur and Kallapur are the two villages selected to undertake this study. These two villages are multi-caste ones and have agriculture as the prime activity. As a result of this in these two villages we could find lot of women folk who work as landless agricultural labourers. These farm women labourers are studied for their reproductive health disorders. In the beginning a pilot study was conducted to study these women folk to understand their overall socio-economic and cultural background. Added to this these women folk were classified on the basis of age and caste. For a clear understanding of the health disorders we restricted the sample size of the women for study from 20 to 45 age group only. On an average in a rural scenario a girl will be given in marriage on an average age of 16 to 18 years. As a result of this, at this age, it is very difficult to know about the reproductive hazards as well. This is due to non awareness of health aspects that too reproductive health illness. Added to this these women folk are totally illiterate and innocent ones. Out of the 250 respondents interviewed 135 women are in the age group of 25-37 and suffering from an innumerable reproductive health disorders which have affected their reproductive life badly. The major problems like, recurrence of frequent white discharge, urinary tract infections, miscarriages, and giving birth to the babies which are not normal and so on, are commonly found among them. Soundatti and its adjacent places are known for dry land cultivation. It requires lot of manual work from morning till evening. Both men and women involve in cultivation of land. Constant work in the fields, without proper hygienic condition makes these women folk to develop a series of health hazards. Especially the carrying women who work continuously without break and rest are prone to loose their pregnancy. As a result miscarriages are more in
number. To find the exact solution to these problems the researcher met Ayurvedic, Homeopathic and Allopathic doctors in the area to whom these women labourers often visit for medical checkup. For many having sexual intercourse it self is a major problem due to several constraints due to multi infections. As a result most of these women folk by and large avoid sexual intercourse to avoid problems, 75 respondents fell under the category of 37 to 45. They are sexually active. The common problems are also confronted them. Yet they are managing them intercourse to avoid problems, 75 respondents fell under the category of 37 to 45. They are sexually active. The common problems are also confronted them. Yet they are managing them

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With regard to the economic status of the farm women labourers is concerned. They are living below the poverty line. As a result of this they don’t find any alternative other than working as agriculture labourers.

 Few reproductive issues were tackled here such as

### Female Reproductive Health

#### Pregnancy

Indigenously known as $\text{હીણ}^\text{૧} / ^\text{૫}\text{૨૮૭}$, indicates a woman who has growing fetus inside her.

#### Miscarriages

Locally known as $\text{સ્વતંત્ર}$, it is a spontaneous abortion which takes place unknowingly. A number of causes are responsible for miscarriages. Due to chromosomal or genetic problems, pregnancies fail to develop.

#### Menopause

Locally known as $\text{મેનોબોલ}$, it is the absence of menstrual period. The age at which this occurs differs from woman to woman. A number of cultural factors are also responsible for this. This is also determined by environmental and food habits. Menopause means a woman ceases to give birth to a child.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No.</th>
<th>Name of Caste</th>
<th>20-25</th>
<th>26-37</th>
<th>38-45</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Lingayat</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Jadav</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Kuruba</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mulwala</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Talawar</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Jan</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Harian</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>250</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table shows the distribution of women labourers according to age groups. The respondents to whom I have studied deprived of good health in the area to whom these women labourers often visit for medical checkup. For many having sexual intercourse it self is a major problem due to several constraints due to multi infections. As a result most of these women folk by and large avoid sexual intercourse to avoid problems, 75 respondents fell under the category of 37 to 45. They are sexually active. The common problems are also confronted them. Yet they are managing them

3. K. Park and Park, 2002 Preventive and Social Medicine, Vol. 17, Bangalore IBH.


other villages in these two villages also one can find lot of trees and a good number of animals. Most of the villagers are depending upon cows as well as buffalos milk for their daily livelihood side by side with agricultural income.

Social Composition of Irapur and Somapur

Irapur and Somapur are the multicaste villages. There are as many as eight castes in these two villages. Lingayats dominate the village both numerically as well as economically. As per the census conducted by us in these two villages December 2011, the total population of the villages are 16500 and 9200 respectively. More than 70% of the Lingayat families own land and cultivate the land. For this endeavour they are in need of more and more agricultural labourers. Along with other labourers their women folk will also contribute their might in the overall process of this cultivation. This study is mainly focused its attention in knowing the impact of menopause on individual life of the women labourers.

400 samples were selected at random from different castes and different age groups of these two villages. The random selection of women from different castes who have attained menopause and still working as agricultural labourers are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No.</th>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>No. of women samples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Lingayat</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Kuruba</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Madivala</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Talawar</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Harijan</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table No: 1

Age At Which Women Labourers Have Attained Menopause

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No.</th>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>Age 35-40</th>
<th>Age 41-45</th>
<th>Age 45-50</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Lingayat</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Kuruba</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Madivala</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Talawar</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Harijan</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>182</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table No: 2

Due to the restlessness and heavy working conditions almost half of the women who were studied for menopause have attained menopause at the very early age i.e. within the 40 years mark. Issues such as miscarriages, late pregnancy, frequent abortion have marred their progress in various forms.

Out of 182 women who have attained menopause 68 women had frequent miscarriages, 94 had late pregnancy, 07 had frequent abortion and 13 had some other Reproductive Health disorders like excess bleeding, frequent menses, early are late menses etc.

Majority of the farm labourers to whom I have interviewed are of the opinion that they were married at an early age and could not know anything about marriage, and other related issues such as pregnancy, abortion and such other things. Since ages agrarian economy had witnessed child marriage and it was continued unabatedly till recently. As a result of this girls were given in marriage at an early age. Hence they could not had any opportunity in understanding issues such as puberty, pregnancy and delivery of a child.

Individually speaking menopause makes a woman feel unproductive and useless. She also feels that her husband and daughter-in-law may not give her any respect in the way she was given in the past. Women to whom I have interviewed opined that

1. Physically speaking they will be looking very old and also the growth of hair on the face makes them to look aged.
2. For many women who attained menopause complaints that they will be having severe body ache and pain in legs as well.
3. These types of complaints are very common in agrarian families.

4. Woman who have attained menopause develops hatredness over those who are sexually active and as for as possible they try to prevent woman deliberately, from having sex by telling so many ill facts about it.

5. Woman who have attained menopause are more or less treated as senior ones and the younger community who play a very vital role in getting advise from them and several issues pertaining to pregnancy, abortion and the delivery of the child

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