



Perception and Experience of Women Facing Menopause in the Town of Mbujimayi in the Democratic Republic of Congo

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Abstract

Objective: The general objective of our research contributes to the promotion of women's health during the menopause. **Methodology:** This research addresses the qualitative phenomenological approach by seeking to try to unveil the perceptions and experiences of women facing menopause. The information was collected in a systematic and prospective manner from the respondents in order to allow us to describe the perceptions and experiences of women facing menopause in our environment. The study was carried out in a natural environment, in the city of Mbujimayi more precisely in the DIULU health zone. We used as a data collection instrument a "self report" which included a main question and secondary questions, which were posed according to the conceptual model. Our research concerned married women for two reasons: they experience this phenomenon, they can explain their experiences. The sample size is 21 women. **Result:** The respondents consider the menopause as a return of age, the time to rest, while for others it is the sexual intercourse that becomes painful and suffocating. Regarding the causes of menopause, our respondents mentioned in particular sterility, certain gynecological pathologies, hormonal dysfunction, witchcraft. On the lived plan

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of the menopause: the origin depended on each one. For some, they believe that it is a divine punishment, others think that it is a disease. Our respondents mentioned certain causes such as divorce, illnesses. **Conclusion:** Menopause is a real upheaval in a woman's life. Formerly, a taboo subject, the consultant was hardly interested in the disorders of the fifties and had difficulty in apprehending the complications that the cessation of ovarian functions could cause. However, progress in hormonology, women's complaints amplified by the media, have meant that menopause and the phenomena which are related to it have gradually gone out of the field of action reserved for a few specialists to enter fully into the domain of the doctor generalist. He has become the first point of contact: listening to his patients, he can offer therapy that is both curative and preventive. This role is immense and allows the woman to cross often critical milestone under better conditions.

Subject Areas

Public Health, Women's Health

Keywords

Perception, Lived, Menopause, Woman

1. Introduction

Menopause, a normal and physiological event in the life of every woman, means the end of menstruation. Hippocrates did not yet speak of hormones but already in the mood wrote "the woman with the flesh looser than the man." In the XIXth century, the doctors of the time had an obscure vision of menopause and described it as dangerous period which turns the whole life of the woman upside down. In addition to the illnesses caused by the cessation of menstruation, there is the narcissistic injury caused by the loss of femininity [1].

Menopause is experienced differently by women. For some, it is a liberation; for others, the rules play the role of purifier, their cessation puts the health of the woman in danger, they are their biological clock, they give a reassuring pace to the life of the woman. Menstruation is above all proof that a woman is biologically alive because she carries with her the hope of a motherhood that is always possible. "No woman, recalls **Hélène Deutsch**, [2] really renounces motherhood as long as a monthly or even irregular blood loss reminds her of this possibility".

Menopause has become a real public health problem for several reasons: demographic, because the average age of menopause in France is 50 years. It was not until the beginning of the 20th century that life expectancy exceeded the age of menopause. In 2015, according to the report "State of health of the population in France" published by the DREES, the life expectancy of a woman at birth is 85.4 years. In France, in 2015, there were 13 million women over 50, or 39% of the female population. The life expectancy of a woman at age 50 is approximate-

ly 36 years [3].

Doctors around the world indicate that in the DRC with its 400,000 young women who reach menopause each year, many of them do not consult a gynecologist, while menopause is a normal period of life, women can therefore lead to different complications, including diseases such as cervical cancer and breast cancer [4].

In Mbujimayi, **Mboloko** [5] in his study had demonstrated that there is troubled and silent menopause that in the event of a complication, women must have recourse to gynecologists, taking drugs to “harmonize” sexual intercourse or other difficulties that may arise after menopause.

For our part, the observation made was of several cases of menopause that women undergo and tend to become abnormal. This prompted us to address this topic entitled: Perception and experience of women facing menopause in the town of Mbujimayi

So we asked ourselves the question: what are the perception and experience of women in the health zone of Diulu when faced with menopause?

2. Methodology

This research tackles the qualitative phenomenological approach by seeking to try to unveil the perceptions and experiences of women facing menopause. The information was collected in a systematic and prospective manner from the respondents in order to allow us to describe the perceptions and the experience of women facing menopause in our community.

The study was carried out in a natural environment, in the city of Mbujimayi more precisely in the DIULU health zone. We used as a data collection instrument a “self report” which included a main question and secondary questions. which were posed according to the conceptual model. Our research concerned married women for two reasons: they experience this phenomenon, they can explain their experiences. The sample size is 21 women. For the data collection instrument, we used the maintenance guide and the phone logger.

3. Result

Table 1 shows that the age group of 55 and over is more represented with 61.9%.

With regard to **Table 2**, we see that the sample is dominated by married respondents with 66.7%.

Table 3 shows that the level of secondary education is dominant with 42.8%.

Table 4 shows that 47.6% of the respondents were saleswomen.

Development of Themes or Variables of the Study

In relation to the subject of the study, the thematic analysis of the data helps us to identify the following main theme:

1) perception of menopause

- Meaning of the theme
- Knowledge of menopause
- Manifestation of menopause

2) lived through menopause

- Origin
- Causes
- Consequence

Meaning of the theme

We note in this box (**Table 5**) that the respondents define menopause according to the understanding and perception of each, some define it as the return of age, a stage of life for a woman. Rest Time For A Woman, Punishment From God And Others Define It As A Demonic Problem.

Causes of menopause

In relation to this category (**Table 6**), the respondents gave the different causes of menopause, in particular sterility, certain gynecological pathologies, hormonal dysfunction, witchcraft.

Table 1. Distribution of respondents by age.

Age	Effective	%
35 - 44 years	2	9.5
45 - 54 years	6	28.6
55 and more	13	61.9
Total	21	100

Table 2. Distribution of respondents according to civil status.

Civil status	Effective	%
Married	14	66.7
Widow	5	23.8
Divorcee	2	9.5
Total	21	100

Table 3. Distribution of respondents by level of education.

Level of education	Effective	%
Without level	4	19.1
Primary	8	38.1
Secondary	9	42.8
Total	21	100

Table 4. Distribution of respondents by activity.

Activities	Effective	%
Household	7	33.4
Worker	1	4.7
Saleswoman	10	47.6
Unemployed	3	14.3
Total	21	100

Table 5. First theme: perception of menopause.

Theme	Category	Verbatim
Perception and experience of menopause	Meaning of the theme	... Eh ...! for me, it is about the return of the age where the woman feels like a little girl It could be a demonic problem (disease) Hmm...! It's time to rest for a woman The stages of life for a woman. ... It is the punishment of God. ... It is the separation of the marital bed.
	Causes of menopause	Hmmm! primary sterility, Ahhh ... some gynecological pathology, For me it is a phenomenon of cessation of production of the ovaries Hmm, eh, the abnormal functioning of hormones ... communicable diseases ... witchcraft

Table 6. Second theme: lived d e menopause.

Theme	Category	Verbatim
lived through menopause	Origin	Hey! above all, a divine punishment Yes, it's more communicable diseases
	Events	Ok! When there is menopause in the home the intercourse becomes painful and suffocating ehhh I can still say the hot flashes First of all the rules without a schedule, failure to respect the date, lower abdomen pain often there is a drop in blood pressure, dizziness The manifestations ... often nervousness It's the extension of the rules, back pain

Origin

For this category, our respondents gave their various points of view, for menopause it is a divine punishment, others think it is a disease.

Events

This category shows that the most cited manifestations are: nervousness, hot flashes, menstruation without a schedule, disruption of menstrual dates, lower

abdomen pain, drop in blood pressure, dizziness, lack of sexual appetite, back pain, extension of rules.

4. Discussion

4.1. Results in Relation to the Profile of the Respondents

4.1.1. Age

In **Table 1**, we notice that the age group from 55 years and over holds the top of the block with 61.9% followed then the group of 45 to 54 years with 28.6%. These results agree with the conclusions of **UNFPA** [6] which stipulate that the age group between 50 years and over is more represented.

4.1.2. Civil Status

On the basis of the results presented in **Table 2**, With regard to this table, we note that the sample is dominated by the surveyed married with 66.7%. What at one time realized as a concept of globalization. These results are close to those found by **Pizzini, L.** [7].

4.1.3. Level of Study

We find that the level of secondary education dominates with 42.8%. We believe that the observed fact can be justified by the fact that traditionally the reproductive function is appropriate to the period of marriage. These results are similar to those of **Pizzini, L.** [7] who according to him the level of secondary education dominated the pavement.

4.1.4. Activities

Saleswoman activity comes first with 47.6%, housewives 33.4% and unemployed with 14.7%. This heterogeneity shows the various realities in which the population lives. These results are contrary to those of **Saka Mj et al.** [8] who according to her housewives were represented.

4.2. Results Related to the Themes

4.2.1. Perception and Experienced Menopause in Women

4 categories of perception emerge from this theme, they are:

- **The meaning of menopause**

In view of our results, the respondents consider the menopause as a return of age, the time of rest, while for others it is the sexual intercourse becomes painful and suffocating. For his part, **Freud** [9] shows that the perception of menopause differs from one environment to another for some it is a taboo, demonic diseases.

- **Cause of menopause**

The results of this study indicate that there are different causes of menopause. In connection with this category, the respondents gave the different causes of menopause, in particular sterility, certain gynecological pathologies, hormonal dysfunction, witchcraft, **Mbarga, P.** [10] Menopause has several causes, mainly of hormonal, demonic and pathological origin.

4.2.2. Vécu of the Menopause

- **Origin of Menopause**

According to this study, respondents think in a diverse way. Some believe it is divine punishment, others think it is a disease, for **Pizzini, L.** [7] menopause exists everywhere and it is more surprising that women themselves perceive menopause positively than menopause. they suffer, on the other hand, **Amare, D.** [11] consider that during menopause the sexual intercourse becomes painful and suffocating.

- **The manifestations of menopause**

The results of the study show that menopause causes many manifestations including nervousness, hot flashes, menstrual periods, disruption of menstrual dates, lower abdomen pain, drop in blood pressure, dizziness, lack of sexual appetite, back pain, prolonged periods. According to **Pizzini, L.** [7] women victims of menopause are confronted with social problems.

5. Conclusion

Menopause is a real upheaval in a woman's life. Formerly a taboo subject, the consultant was hardly interested in the disorders of the fifties and had difficulty in apprehending the complications that the cessation of ovarian functions could cause. However, progress in hormonology, women's complaints amplified by the media, have meant that menopause and the phenomena which are related to it have gradually gone out of the field of action reserved for a few specialists to enter fully into the domain of the doctor generalist. He has become the first point of contact: listening to his patients, he can offer therapy that is both curative and preventive. This role is immense and allows the woman to cross often critical milestone under better conditions.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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