

A Dive into the Experiences on Menopause and Andropause

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Abstract. Menopause and andropause are significant biological transitions that individuals experience, yet they are often surrounded by misunderstanding and stigma. For women, menopause signifies the end of reproductive capability, while men typically undergo a gradual decline in reproductive function. This study sought to explore the experiences of individuals undergoing menopause and andropause, focusing on their biological, cognitive, psychological, and social experiences. The researchers employed a qualitative phenomenological research design, conducting face-to-face semi-structured interviews with twelve (12) participants: six (6) women experiencing menopause and six (6) men experiencing andropause, selected through purposive sampling. The collected data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis. The results indicated that individuals experiencing menopause and andropause encounter a range of experiences, including managing health issues, adapting to physical changes, handling personal relationships, coping with heightened emotions, and changed social dynamics. Additionally, the findings revealed the interconnectedness of biological changes, cognitive difficulties, psychological effects, and social dynamics. Recognizing these diverse experiences is essential for understanding their impact on well-being. The study's findings could serve as a foundation for developing interventions to enhance individuals' welfare and provide strategies to address these multifaceted challenges.

Keywords: Andropause; Lived experiences; Menopause; Philippines.

1.0 Introduction

Menopause and andropause, representing universal biological transitions bound to be experienced by all, mark a change from the reproductive years often veiled in mystery and stigma. For women, menopause marks the end of fertility, while most men typically do not undergo a similarly dramatic decline in reproductive function, impacting cognitive changes (Goldstein, 2021; Martelli et al., 2021; Price, 2021). Although physical symptoms and cognitive changes are slowly recognized, the psychological impact of menopause remains underexplored, especially in diverse cultural settings, as highlighted by the World Health Organization (2022). Similarly, the terminology surrounding andropause has undergone several changes over the years, including terms such as male menopause, male climacteric, and androclise, indicating a lack of exploration of the transition itself, providing little indication for deeper inquiry into this life stage (Singh, 2013, as cited in Çetin et al., 2023). Thus, a deeper understanding of these transitions' biological experiences, cognitive, psychological, and social experiences is needed.

As individuals age, they undergo biological changes, including a natural decline in hormone production in men and hormonal shifts during menopause in women. Menopause and andropause, typically occurring between the ages of 45 and 55, are natural parts of aging that often coincide with the working age, underscoring the intersection

between occupational and life transition experiences (Bacelonia, 2023; Gurarie, 2023; Khan, 2023). Although menopause and andropause can share similar symptoms such as irritability, fatigue, mood swings, and more, the severity and impact of these experiences may vary, with women experiencing severe menopausal symptoms expressing more negative attitudes toward menopause, whereas some men may never experience any significant symptoms (Ali et al., 2020; Krans, 2023; Schwalbe, 2023; Talaulikar, 2022). Therefore, the depth of the biological experiences from which all other experiences will stem emphasizes the need for focused research.

In addition to the need to comprehend hormonal shifts and biological changes, it is crucial to grasp the cognitive functions stemming from the biological aspect. During menopause and andropause, hormonal changes, particularly estrogen in women and testosterone in men, profoundly affect brain function, impacting memory, concentration, and overall cognitive abilities (Burch, 2024; Conde et al., 2021; Goldstein, 2021; Van Der Berg, 2023). Building upon the idea that the severity and impact of experiences may vary between men and women, true enough, it is more of the women who report forgetfulness, lack of focus, and mental clarity (Abootalebi et al., 2019; Maki & Jaff, 2022; Marcin, 2018; Schwalbe, 2023). The interplay of biological changes and cognitive experiences necessitates a more profound inquiry to grasp their implications for cognitive health in this life stage.

Alongside the shifts and changes are psychological experiences that significantly impact everyday life. Given that the mind and body have an interconnection, the shifts mentioned can significantly impact mental health, leading to frequent encounters with issues such as anxiety, depression, and fatigue among men and women undergoing this life transition (An et al., 2022; Amini et al., 2023; Chiu et al., 2020; Hersh, 2020; McDowell, 2023). The variation of the existing and possible experiences highlights the need for a nuanced and expert approach to effectively understand the complex symptoms associated with this stage of life (Bromberger & Epperson, 2018). Acknowledging the interconnection between physical shifts and mental health is crucial to having a balanced understanding of this life stage.

Building upon psychological experiences are interpersonal relationships, society, and social experiences that play a significant role. The dive into social experiences supports the idea of interconnection: our mental growth is influenced by our interactions with our society (National Academies Press, 2019; Huang & Lajoie, 2023). Menopause and andropause occur during the working years, highlighting the overlap between work and this life stage (Ali et al., 2020; Krans, 2023; Schwalbe, 2023; Talaulikar, 2022). This involves social dynamics as people outside their homes surround individuals; therefore, reported attitudes vary, with women experiencing severe menopausal symptoms expressing more negative attitudes toward menopause, whereas some men may never experience any significant symptoms (Bacelonia, 2023; Gurarie, 2023; Khan, 2023). This life stage further illustrates how all experiences intersect, affecting our social dynamics.

Research on menopause and andropause has been extensive globally, yet local studies that delve deeper into the biological, cognitive, psychological, and social experiences, while providing qualitative insights, remain scarce. Christina Metcalf, Ph.D., from the University of Colorado School of Medicine, emphasizes that this life stage is crucial for addressing psychological needs and advocates for focused studies to understand these experiences better, highlighting the need for widespread education and psychoeducation initiatives during these biological transitions (DeAngelis, 2023). By advancing research beyond academic inquiry, we can enhance awareness and develop tailored programs to support individuals navigating menopause and andropause.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative-phenomenological research design to focus on understanding individuals' experiences, particularly regarding menopause and andropause. A qualitative research design delves into real-world issues, providing deeper insights and the necessity of understanding to explain and provide solutions (Hailey, 2024; Tenny et al., 2022). Also, this research design provides understanding by collecting non-numerical information, avoiding generalization, and aiming for a deeper understanding of phenomena (Levitt, 2021; Nassaji, 2020). Thus, the qualitative research design enables researchers to better understand individuals' experiences during menopause and andropause.

The research design highlights the experiences of the participants. According to Delve et al. (2022), a phenomenological approach is used to understand the universal essence of a phenomenon by exploring the perspectives of individuals who have directly encountered it. Additionally, using the phenomenological approach effectively explores lived experiences, for it helps acquire a more profound understanding of human thinking and expands researchers' knowledge about a particular phenomenon (Neubauer et al., 2019). This research design enabled the researchers to explore and understand the experiences of individuals undergoing menopause and andropause, with a specific focus on providing detailed descriptions of their biological, cognitive, psychological, and social experiences.

2.2 Research Locale

The study was conducted in General Santos City, where individuals undergoing menopause and andropause currently reside. The researchers interviewed participants through onsite visits at their locations.

2.3 Research Participants

In this study, the researchers interviewed twelve (12) participants. Six (6) women participants were interviewed based on their experiences with menopause, while the other six (6) participants were men experiencing andropause. Participants were within the age range of 45-55, which is typical for those experiencing menopause and andropause. They had also been residents of General Santos City for at least ten years, as long-term residency and the local environment could impact health, experiences, and attitudes (Davis et al., 2023; Lindberg, 2023; Samipoor et al., 2017; Staff, 2023; Su & Zhou, 2022; Toruńczyk-Ruiz & Martinović, 2020). Lastly, respondents were eligible to participate in the study regardless of their marital status, as menopause and andropause are biological processes. However, the researchers excluded participants with cognitive impairments or psychiatric conditions that could affect the accuracy of their self-reports related to menopause and andropause. Participants with a history of major surgeries or medical interventions that may impact hormone levels were also excluded, such as those using pills or contraceptives, as researchers aimed to reduce the risk of potential confounding factors.

2.4 Research Instrument

The researchers gathered the necessary data through individual interviews, specifically semi-structured face-to-face interviews. A semi-structured interview was one of the safety protocols used to collect data and guide the researchers during the interview process. It helped ensure that the questions asked did not cause harm to the participants (Magaldi & Berler, 2020). Mutudi (2022) stated that a semi-structured interview involved a series of open-ended questions and strategies for conducting face-to-face interviews. This served as a guide to inform participants about the flow of the interview session. A researcher-made interview guide questionnaire consisting of twelve (12) questions served as the primary investigative tool for the study. In qualitative research, it is recommended to start with collecting a small amount of data before diving into data analysis (Belk, 2013, as cited in Fischer & Guzel, 2022). A local gynecologist, a licensed psychologist, and a licensed psychometrician validated the questions. Moreover, the researchers conducted face-to-face interviews at a secure and accessible venue for the participants and themselves.

2.5 Data Gathering Procedure

To achieve the objectives of this study, the researchers employed various steps to gather the needed data. The procedures, in detail, were as follows:

The researchers initially secured the study's approval from their thesis adviser and college dean. Following this, they drafted a letter addressed to selected individuals through heterogeneous purposive sampling to initiate the collection of preliminary participant information using a pre-survey. An initial assessment was conducted using messenger, an online communication platform to gather essential information from participants, such as their contact details. Subsequently, the researchers compiled and analyzed all received responses to establish inclusion and exclusion criteria. Next, the researchers created an interview guide questionnaire to explore the experiences of individuals undergoing menopause and andropause. This questionnaire, comprising approximately twelve (12) questions, served as a tool to facilitate data collection and enhance understanding of the difficulties encountered by individuals in these stages. Before implementation, the research instrument underwent validation by experts in the field, specifically a local gynecologist, a psychologist, and a psychometrician.

Afterward, the researchers prepared a letter of approval signed by the thesis adviser and college dean, authorizing research activities. They also drafted a parental permit to ensure awareness and consent for participation in data-gathering procedures conducted in General Santos City. Participants had to sign informed consent forms to confirm their voluntary participation and understanding of the study's key aspects. A pilot interview involving four (4) participants was conducted to test the effectiveness and clarity of the interview questions and procedures. This pilot phase helped refine the interview protocol before proceeding with complete data collection. Research participants then responded to the researchers' questions using the validated instrument during individual semi-structured interviews conducted in their homes.

2.6 Data Analysis

To interpret the data effectively, the researchers utilized Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis approach, renowned for its accessibility and flexibility in psychology. This qualitative method involved identifying the data's patterns, themes, and meanings to gain insight into participants' experiences. The analysis followed a structured process that included familiarizing with the data, coding, identifying themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing the analysis. The researchers immersed themselves thoroughly in the data by reviewing interview transcripts to understand the experiences of individuals with menopause and andropause, laying a solid foundation for analysis. They systematically coded meaningful text segments to identify key concepts and experiences, organizing the data into categories for more straightforward analysis and pattern recognition.

Building upon the coded data, the researchers identified common patterns to generate overarching themes that represented recurring ideas across the dataset, providing a framework for interpretation. They reviewed and refined these themes to ensure accuracy by revisiting transcripts and employing peer debriefing to validate the integrity of the thematic analysis, aiming for transparency and rigor. Themes were clearly defined with descriptive names that articulated their content and meaning, facilitating understanding for researchers and readers while ensuring alignment with research questions and objectives. In the final stage, researchers synthesized the thematic analysis into a coherent narrative for publication, adhering to scholarly conventions to present findings transparently, clearly, and rigorously. This process contributed valuable insights into participants' experiences. Through thematic analysis, the researchers aimed to uncover rich insights into the experiences of menopause and andropause, thereby enhancing understanding of these significant life stages.

2.7 Ethical Considerations

Maintaining anonymity in research is a critical consideration. Anonymity in research, as emphasized by Hoft (2021), is a crucial aspect as it entails ensuring that the identity of research participants remains undisclosed throughout the study process, including data collection, analysis, and reporting. Ensuring anonymity involves the protection of participants and shielding them from potential consequences or societal stigmatization associated with their personal experiences regarding menopause and andropause.

Confidentiality and the privacy of the participants were essential to the researchers. Retaining accuracy and integrity was crucial in the collection of data. Confidentiality was vital to protecting participants' personal information, especially in cases where their identity was known (Hoft, 2021). Also, the rights of the participants to their data should be respected and given the utmost importance (Shaughnessy, 2020). The researchers followed the instructions, ensuring that all collected data, including personal profiles and responses, remained confidential. Confidentiality protected participants from potential stigma or discrimination related to their hormonal health, ensuring that individuals felt secure in sharing their experiences regarding menopause and andropause.

Providing all necessary information is a priority. Informed consent outlines the research's main aim and essential details for prospective participants (Kunz et al., 2020). This information enhances participants' understanding of the study, allowing them to make informed decisions about their involvement and recognize any potential risks (Bazzano et al., 2021). Researchers view informed consent as crucial for ensuring that participants can fully comprehend and voluntarily engage in the study without coercion.

3.0 Results and Discussion

The identified themes are presented based on the experiences of individuals with andropause and menopause. The data have been organized to highlight both andropause and menopause in terms of biological experiences, cognitive experiences, psychological experiences, and social experiences.

3.1 Biological Experiences of Individuals with Andropause

This section outlines several key themes that reflect the diverse biological experiences of individuals undergoing andropause. The identified themes include: (1) physical exhaustion, (2) decreased physical energy, (3) changes in eating behavior, (4) decrease in immune system, and (5) reduced sexual motivation. These themes are further supported by the participants' responses, illustrating the impact of andropause on their daily lives.

Theme 1: Physical Exhaustion

During andropause, individuals often report significant physical exhaustion, which manifests in many forms such as bodily exhaustion and work-related exhaustion. Bodily exhaustion, characterized by a constant sense of tiredness and reduced physical capability that makes daily tasks more difficult, is closely linked to declining testosterone levels that decrease by about 1% each year (Haque et al., 2016; Hogan et al., 2020). This decline is associated with fatigue, mood swings, and decreased energy, negatively impacting work efficiency (Bhasin et al., 2010). Addressing these issues through appropriate interventions, including hormone therapy and lifestyle modifications, may help alleviate some of the burdens associated with physical fatigue during andropause (Haque et al., 2016; BodyLogicMD, 2022). As men experience these physiological changes, they may find it increasingly difficult to engage in physical activities, leading to a cycle of inactivity that can worsen their overall health and well-being.

Theme 2: Decreased Physical Energy

Decreased physical energy is common for men experiencing andropause, significantly affecting their daily lives. As testosterone levels decline, many men report increased fatigue and reduced energy, making engaging in physical activities or completing everyday tasks difficult (Bhasin et al., 2006; Buvat et al., 2010). Low testosterone is closely linked to fatigue in aging men, highlighting the hormonal changes' impact on energy levels, which often leads to decreased motivation to exercise and creates a cycle of inactivity that worsens fatigue, further affecting work performance and personal relationships. (Bonci, 2009; McBride et al. 2015). Restoring testosterone through healthier lifestyle choices, such as regular exercise and balanced nutrition, can improve energy levels and overall quality of life during andropause (Mawer & Ajmera, 2023; Fischer, 2024). Decreased energy during andropause impacts physical health and overall well-being, underscoring the importance of early intervention and lifestyle changes to manage its effects.

Theme 3: Changes in Eating Behavior

Changes in eating behavior can result from various factors, including lifestyle shifts and emotional influences, with stressful events such as job changes or personal challenges often leading to altered eating patterns and affecting appetite (Hill et al., 2021). Both men and women experience physiological and psychological changes that negatively impact their eating habits and may lead to adverse long-term health outcomes if not managed properly (Versele et al., 2021). Participants have reported a preference for avoiding unhealthy foods. Regular exercise and balanced nutrition are essential for improving energy levels and overall quality of life during andropause, highlighting the importance of addressing these changes to enhance well-being.

Theme 4. Decreased in the Immune System

Andropause, as described by participants, often weakens the immune system, making them more susceptible to illnesses. Shields et al. (2020) emphasize that immune system processes are influenced by social, neurocognitive, and behavioral factors, challenging the traditional view that immune function is solely regulated by pathogen exposure and physiological processes. The author notes that chronic stress, poor nutrition, lack of sleep, and underlying health conditions can further impair immune function. While individual immune responses may vary, Brodin and Davis (2016) highlight that they generally remain stable over time. Even minor health issues can compromise the immune response during andropause, increasing susceptibility to illness (Weng & Pawelec, 2019). Therefore, addressing these challenges through balanced nutrition and proactive health measures is essential for improving immune health during this critical life stage.

Theme 5. Reduced Sexual Motivation

Reduced sexual motivation during andropause is a significant concern for participants, impacting their quality of life and intimate relationships. As testosterone levels decline, men may experience symptoms such as decreased libido, erectile dysfunction, and reduced sexual satisfaction (Chawla, 2024). Psychological factors, including stress, can exacerbate low libido, creating a cycle where reduced sexual motivation leads to increased emotional distress (Shields et al., 2020). Addressing this issue requires a holistic approach, including medical evaluation of testosterone levels and lifestyle changes like regular exercise, stress management, and healthy eating, which can boost well-being and improve sexual motivation (Khoo et al., 2013; Brodin & Davis, 2016). Understanding and addressing these factors is essential for maintaining fulfilling relationships during andropause.

3.2 Cognitive Experiences of Individuals with Andropause

Several themes reflect the cognitive experiences of individuals undergoing andropause, with a total of four (5) themes related to their cognitive challenges encountered. These (5) themes will be discussed in the following paragraph:

Theme 1. Cognitive Decline

Participants reported struggling with cognitive decline, often misplacing items and having difficulty recalling tasks due to exhaustion, with this issue perceived as more significant among older individuals, reflecting ageist assumptions about cognitive decline (Cherry et al., 2020). The impact of cognitive decline on daily life was exacerbated during andropause, where fatigue from work-related challenges made it even harder to remember tasks or locate items. Participants often reported absent-mindedness, memory gaps, and memory lapses, especially in the workplace. The mentioned are generally defined as bothersome impairments in recalling information known to be stored in memory, while these issues can accompany various physical and neurological conditions, they are also common in depressive states (Förstl et al., 2001). Overall, experiencing cognitive decline is a frequent human experience that can manifest in everyday situations, such as struggling to remember names or specific details, highlighting the need for understanding and support during this transitional phase.

Theme 2. Mindset Shifting

Participants shared that they consciously shift their mindsets to engage positively with challenges, focusing on solutions rather than stress. This transformation fosters personal growth and resilience, as they believe that abilities can be developed through effort rather than viewing them as fixed traits (Kouzes & Posner, 2019). By embracing a growth mindset, individuals learn to see challenges as opportunities for development, significantly enhancing their leadership capabilities, work efficiency and overall effectiveness (Heifetz, 2020). This adaptive thinking enables them to align their values with the realities they face, ultimately leading to improved decision-making and problem-solving.

Theme 3. Decisions Prioritizing Family Needs

Participants emphasized a collaborative approach in family-focused discussions, where members engage in decision-making that impacts the entire unit, fostering open communication and mutual respect while considering each member's perspectives and needs. Although family-focused practices (FFP) are recognized for their importance in adult mental health services, evidence shows they are not routinely implemented (Tuck et al., 2022). Effective family communication enhances relationships and promotes shared responsibility, improving overall satisfaction. Additionally, involving trained family members in educational roles has been shown to increase the preparedness of medical trainees in core communication competencies (Parham et al., 2019). By prioritizing family involvement, families can strengthen their bonds and better support one another through challenges.

Theme 4. Changes in Cognitive Agility

Participants noted challenges with quick thinking during andropause, often feeling that their cognitive speed was diminished. Despite this, they strive to complete tasks efficiently, demonstrating a commitment to their responsibilities even when fatigued. They expressed determination to work effectively despite the difficulties associated with this life stage, reflecting an understanding of the cognitive processes involved in decision-making, where quick thinking may not always be feasible. However, effort and intention can lead to satisfactory outcomes (Hoerl & McCormack, 2018). Participants aim to prove their capability and resilience during this period by focusing on their family's future.

3.3 Psychological Experiences of Individuals with Andropause

The psychological experiences of andropause encompass a range of challenges that men may face during this period. Five (5) key themes emerged from the gathered data, highlighting the various struggles associated with andropause. These themes are discussed in the following paragraphs:

Theme 1. Prone to Stress

Stress during andropause is a crucial aspect of maintaining mental and emotional well-being. Panigrahi (2016) noted that stress is often viewed as a disruption to the normal functioning of the body and mind, and excessive stress can lead to harmful effects on both physical and psychological health. Many individuals describe feelings of losing control and reacting impulsively due to stress. While various factors contribute to this stress, one notable factor is financial instability, which participants have also mentioned ("Stress in America 2020: A National Mental Health Crisis," 2020; Zito et al., 2023). In light of this understanding, Worthen and Cash (2023) emphasize that effective stress management techniques, including mindfulness practices, regular exercise, and adequate sleep, can help mitigate these negative impacts. Thus, effectively managing stress during andropause is essential for maintaining mental health, especially in the face of parenting challenges and financial pressures.

Theme 2. Irritable Mood

Increased irritability and difficulties in anger management were prominent among participants, marking a significant psychological challenge during andropause. Many reported that heightened irritability affected their daily lives, expressing feelings of losing control and reacting impulsively, which underscores how stress can hinder emotional regulation and lead to angry outbursts. This increased irritability, commonly associated with hormonal fluctuations and psychological stressors experienced by men during andropause, can lead to conflicts in personal relationships, as Zito et al. (2023) indicate that changes in testosterone levels contribute to mood disturbances, including irritability and frustration. Such heightened irritability and anger can lead to conflicts in personal and professional relationships, further complicating social interactions and overall well-being (Maslach & Leiter, 2016; Sonnentag & Fritz, 2015). Addressing these emotional challenges is essential for improving quality of life during this life stage.

Theme 3. Dealing with Emotional Struggles

Participants revealed that significant life events, such as the death of a loved one and infidelity, create heavy emotional burdens that profoundly affect their overall well-being during andropause. According to Franco et al. (2017), unexpected losses can lead to intense emotional distress and overwhelming grief. Similarly, the pain from infidelity represents a significant emotional struggle, as participants expressed feelings of betrayal and hurt, illustrating how infidelity can break trust and cause deep emotional pain. Zito et al. (2023) highlight that infidelity not only impacts relationships but also severely affects an individual's self-esteem and emotional health, resulting in feelings of anger and worthlessness. These experiences underscore the need for understanding and support in coping with such significant emotional challenges.

Theme 4. Mental Exhaustion

The cycle of stress can trap individuals in a state of fatigue that makes it difficult to recharge, especially during andropause. Participants reported feeling drained and overwhelmed due to mental exhaustion, mainly stemming from excessive workloads, highlighting how demanding work environments can lead to significant mental fatigue. This aligns with the findings of Sonnentag and Fritz (2015), who emphasize that heavy workloads can result in burnout and negatively impact mental well-being, noting that consistently pushing beyond one's limits fosters fatigue and a growing sense of disengagement from work. Additionally, Maslach and Leiter (2016) indicate that chronic work stress adversely affects both productivity and emotional health, leading to increased frustration and diminished job satisfaction, which contributes to a downward spiral of mental fatigue and decreased motivation. This cycle can be incredibly intense during andropause, as the cumulative effects of stress may worsen feelings of helplessness and disengagement, making it harder to cope and recharge, highlighting the need to address these challenges to improve overall well-being through interventions.

Theme 5. Mental Distress

The interview results highlight the complexities of the theme Mental Distress, encompassing anxieties related to one's thoughts and apprehension about negative influences from external sources. Participants expressed significant anxiety regarding their internal thought processes, particularly concerning their loved ones. The fear of thinking differently or harboring unacceptable thoughts about one's spouse illustrates the profound emotional conflict individuals experience, reinforcing the idea that personal relationships heavily influence mental states. This aligns with existing literature on the internal struggle associated with cognitive dissonance in intimate relationships as men may also worry about how their thoughts or behaviors will be perceived by peers, leading to increased social anxiety (Nicholson & Lutz, 2017). Barmanpek (2020) notes that individuals often fear negative judgment from others, which can hinder their willingness to express themselves and seek support. This significant fear can contribute to emotional distress and impede effective communication with others, underscoring the need for understanding and support in navigating these challenges.

3.4 Social Experiences of Individuals with Andropause

Several themes capture the social experiences of individuals going through andropause. Four (4) themes related to their social interactions and support systems during this transition. The first theme of social experiences is increased involvement in society:

Theme 1. Community Engagement

Active social interaction is critical in fostering community engagement through inclusive behaviors and kindness, particularly for older men experiencing andropause. Engaging in social interactions has been linked to improved mental health outcomes, helping to reduce feelings of loneliness and depression prevalent during this period, as research indicates that social networks and regular interactions with peers significantly enhance emotional resilience among older adults (Bhatta et al., 2020; Cohen & McKay, 2020). This suggests that altruistic actions, such as showing kindness to others, can create a positive feedback loop that enriches social experiences and promotes overall mental health during andropause.

Theme 2. Selective Socialization

Individuals experiencing andropause often engage in selective socializing, opting for fewer social interactions. To support this, Vitale and Smith (2022) say that hormonal changes can lead to altered mood states, resulting in a preference for solitude or familiar social settings, so this social reservation is a common response during andropause, as older individuals may grapple with feelings of inadequacy or vulnerability. Additionally, men often feel pressure to conform to societal expectations of masculinity, which can lead to withdrawal from social engagements (Cooper et al., 2023). This pressure fosters feelings of isolation and hinders meaningful connections, ultimately affecting emotional well-being and social support networks. Understanding these social challenges is essential, as addressing them can promote healthier coping strategies and enhance overall well-being during andropause.

Theme 3. Having a Social Support System

Community support plays a vital role in enhancing social well-being during andropause. Participation in community activities fosters a sense of belonging and purpose, effectively counteracting the loneliness often experienced during this transition (Dadswell et al., 2017). Also, the stress-buffering model proposed by Liu et al. (2023) suggests that social support is crucial in reducing social stress and promoting physical health in response to external stressors. These elements highlight the interplay between external support and individual characteristics in mitigating stress. Engaging with community resources and support groups can help men build new social connections and reinforce existing relationships, further promoting their mental and emotional health during this transitional phase.

Theme 4. Open Peer Communication

Open communication is vital for fostering understanding and support among peers throughout andropause. Participants noted that transparency strengthens relationships and helps individuals navigate the changes of this life stage, creating a supportive environment where shared experiences and concerns can be openly addressed. One example is the tendency to quickly apologize to peers, which reflects a heightened awareness of interpersonal dynamics and a desire to maintain harmony in social relationships, as noted by a participant. Lewis et al. (2015)

suggest that successfully resolving conflicts and expressing remorse can enhance social connections, particularly during challenging times. This is further supported by Palmer et al. (2019), who said that open lines of communication are closely associated with improved emotional adjustment and effective coping strategies. For men with andropause, open communication facilitates sharing feelings and concerns, encourages mutual support, and creates stronger connections with peers, ultimately reducing feelings of isolation.

3.5 Biological Experiences of Individuals with Menopause

The biological experiences of menopause present a range of challenges that individuals encounter during this transition. Analysis reveals four key themes that illustrate the various difficulties related to menopause. These themes will be discussed in the following paragraphs:

Theme 1. Physical Exhaustion

The theme of physical exhaustion during menopause significantly impacts individuals' daily lives, as participants reported exhaustion directly linked to menopausal symptoms. This aligns with findings that identify fatigue as a prevalent issue severely affecting daily functioning and the author also highlights the necessity for comprehensive evaluations of its causes, including psychological and lifestyle factors (Maisel et al., 2021). Additionally, MacDonald (2003) explored the relationship between job demands and stress-related fatigue, noting that work pressures can exacerbate menopausal fatigue. Participants expressed how balancing work responsibilities with menopausal symptoms contributed to their overall exhaustion. Together, these studies underscore the critical interplay between menopausal symptoms and external stressors, justifying the need for targeted support and interventions during this period.

Theme 2. Changes in Physical State

Participants mentioned changes in physical state during menopause that encompass various symptoms affecting health and well-being including headaches, vaginal dryness, dizziness and more. The common complaints linked to hormonal fluctuations associated with menopause are dizziness, headaches hot flashes, nocturnal sweating, mood swings, and vaginal discomfort (Davis et al., 2023; World Health Organization, 2022). In specific, Walker and Barnes (1998) also provide a comprehensive overview of linked to hormonal fluctuations associated with menopause in which dizziness and headaches are part of the many changes. Similarly, a longitudinal study by Waetjen et al. (2018) identifies several factors associated with the development of vaginal dryness symptoms in women with menopause in which can greatly impact sexual health and overall quality of life during this phase. By pinpointing key factors contributing to this condition, the findings emphasize the necessity for lifestyle changes and targeted interventions aimed at addressing these physical changes and improving health outcomes for menopausal women.

Theme 3. Increase in Body Weight

Many participants reported experiencing notable weight changes that can affect their physical health, self-esteem, and overall quality of life. Studies by Wing et al. (1991) and Davis et al. (2012) explore these issues in depth, highlighting significant weight changes during menopause. Wing et al. (1991) found that this transition often coincides with notable weight gain driven by physiological and hormonal factors, underscoring the importance of understanding these changes for effective weight management. Similarly, Davis et al. (2012) emphasized that hormonal fluctuations, lifestyle changes, and aging contribute to weight gain during menopause, advocating for a comprehensive approach to address these multifaceted issues. Together, this theme highlights the presence of increased body weight as a factor that could impact physical health, self-esteem, and overall quality of life.

Theme 4. Nutritional Awareness

Nutritional awareness emerged as a significant theme among participants, highlighting their awareness and understanding of food choices, nutritional value, and health impacts. This concept is particularly relevant for individuals navigating significant life transitions, such as menopause. The article by Dog (2005) reviews various botanical dietary supplements that may support health during menopause, encouraging individuals to be mindful of dietary choices that affect their well-being during this life stage. Similarly, Slavin and Lloyd (2012) emphasize the health benefits of fruits and vegetables, reinforcing the notion that conscious consumption of these foods can lead to improved health outcomes. Together, these studies underscore the importance of informed dietary choices

as a critical component of food consciousness, suggesting that a proactive approach to nutrition can enhance overall health during menopause.

3.6 Cognitive Experiences of Individuals with Menopause

The cognitive experiences of individuals during menopause present a range of challenges that can affect daily functioning and overall well-being. Analysis reveals three key themes that illustrate the various cognitive difficulties associated with this transition. These themes will be discussed in the following paragraphs: hormonal influences, psychological factors, and lifestyle impacts.

Theme 1. Cognitive Challenges

Research indicates that menopause is linked to cognitive challenges primarily due to declining estrogen levels, which can affect memory, attention, and executive function. Conde et al. (2021) emphasized the variability of these experiences based on genetics, lifestyle, and mental health, calling for more research and interventions such as lifestyle changes and cognitive training. Similarly, Goldstein (2021) noted that while memory lapses may occur, they are often temporary and can be mitigated through a healthy lifestyle and mental engagement. As brain fogs were also mentioned by the participants, Maki and Jaff (2022) discuss "brain fog" and provide guidance for healthcare professionals to support women experiencing cognitive changes, highlighting the importance of understanding these challenges for effective management. Overall, a proactive approach is encouraged to help women navigate the cognitive impacts of menopause, ensuring that they receive the necessary support and resources during this life stage.

Theme 2. Struggles in Making Decisions

The struggle with decision-making is a daily challenge influenced by various factors, as expressed by participants. Understanding the complexities of decision-making is crucial, especially since participants have mentioned frustrations and impulsivity alongside this process. Jönsson et al. (1977) propose a framework for understanding how frustration can disrupt decision-making, suggesting that emotional states significantly impact choices. Similarly, Russa et al. (2013) explored how frustration affects decision-making in contexts such as physical discipline, highlighting its influence on the interplay between past experiences and disciplinary attitudes. Hinson et al. (2003) delve into the relationship between impulsive decision-making and working memory, indicating that limitations in cognitive resources can lead to more impulsive choices. Together, these studies underscore the complex dynamics of frustration, cognitive capacity, and past experiences in shaping decision-making struggles.

Theme 3. Shift in Perspective

Participants often experience significant changes in perspective during menopause, particularly toward more positive outlooks. Scheier and Carver (1993) highlight the substantial benefits of positive thinking and optimism for mental and physical health, noting that optimistic individuals tend to have better coping strategies, resilience, and overall well-being. They further suggest that such individuals are more likely to engage in health-promoting behaviors and persevere through challenges, leading to improved life outcomes. Conversely, Levinson (1998) underscored the importance of focusing on one's strengths to achieve success, especially in fields like biotechnology. He argues that leveraging individual talents fosters innovation and effectiveness, advocating for a mindset that maximizes strengths rather than attempting to improve weaknesses. Together, these perspectives emphasize the value of optimism and strength-based approaches in enhancing health and achieving success.

3.7 Psychological Experiences of Individuals with Menopause

The psychological experiences associated with menopause encompass a variety of challenges that individuals encounter during this period. From the analyzed data, four key themes have emerged, reflecting the diverse difficulties linked to menopause. These themes will be discussed in the following paragraphs:

Theme 1. Increased Emotional Sensitivity

Participants often experience increased emotional sensitivity which impacts their daily lives. The studies by Gordon et al. (2020) and Umeh et al. (2011) highlight the intricate connections between emotional sensitivity, hormonal changes, and decision-making. Gordon et al. (2020) demonstrated that increased mood sensitivity during menopause is linked to a higher likelihood of depressive symptoms, emphasizing the need for personalized mental health interventions for women in this transition. Meanwhile, Umeh et al. (2011) reveal that

individuals with greater emotional vulnerability face more challenges in decision-making, suggesting that fostering emotional resilience and adaptive coping strategies can improve conflict resolution. Together, these findings underscore the importance of understanding emotional dynamics and coping mechanisms in mental health contexts.

Theme 2. Heightened Anger

Anger is a common emotional response that can significantly influence individuals' stress levels and overall well-being. The studies by Mills et al. (1989) and Schieman (2007) shed light on the complex nature of anger and its substantial impact on stress and well-being. Mills et al. (1989) demonstrated that individuals with heightened anger reactivity are more susceptible to stress-related symptoms, underscoring the necessity of assessing anger in clinical contexts to tailor effective stress management strategies. Schieman (2007) further explored the psychological and social dimensions of anger, revealing how social factors and cultural norms influence emotional experiences and interactions. These findings highlight the importance of understanding anger both as an individual emotional response and a social phenomenon.

Theme 3. Relationship Doubts

Doubts in terms of relationships is a common emotional response among participants. Farrell (1980) explored the philosophical dimensions of jealousy, delving into its emotional and moral implications within relationships. He argues that jealousy reveals deeper issues of insecurity and possessiveness, raising ethical questions about its effects on interpersonal dynamics and prompting reflection on its broader social implications. In contrast, Guerrero et al. (1996) focused on the experience and expression of jealousy in romantic relationships, highlighting how it is influenced by individual differences, relational contexts, and cultural factors. They analyze the triggers of jealousy, such as perceived threats to the relationship, and the various ways individuals express their jealousy, from confrontation to withdrawal. These studies provide valuable insights into jealousy, emphasizing the need for understanding and managing this complex emotion to enhance both personal well-being and relationship health.

3.8 Social Experiences of Individuals with Menopause

The social experiences related to menopause involve a range of challenges that individuals face during this significant transition. From the analysis, four main themes have emerged, highlighting the varied complexities associated with menopause. These themes will be explored in the subsequent paragraphs:

Theme 1. Social Participation

Participants often surround themselves with a community, which can significantly influence their well-being and interpersonal relationships. Kaplan et al. (2010) emphasize the importance of creating a culture of mutual respect in healthcare settings to enhance collaboration and improve patient outcomes, advocating for strategies like open dialogue and constructive conflict resolution. Similarly, Zubiri-Esnaola et al. (2020) highlight the role of inclusivity and collaboration in educational environments, noting that these elements encourage active participation and enhance the overall learning experience. Participants also mention that community plays a vital role in their lives, which aligns with Baumeister et al. (2004), who explored gossip as a significant mechanism for cultural learning within social groups, arguing that it helps individuals navigate social dynamics by providing insights into norms and behaviors. Additionally, Ahmed (2008) examines how meaningful social interactions contribute to happiness, positing that these connections significantly enhance overall well-being. These studies underscore the necessity of fostering respectful, inclusive, and engaging environments to enhance collaboration, learning, and personal fulfillment.

Theme 2. Selective Social Interaction

Participants often experience challenges in socialization and express avoidance towards community. Betz et al. (1975) examined how the characteristics of voluntary associations influence selective attraction and socialization among members by emphasizing that shared goals, values, and activities attract individuals with similar interests, thereby fostering interpersonal connections and community cohesion. Similarly, Burger (1995) explored individual differences in the preference for solitude, revealing that while some individuals, especially those with introverted traits or a strong need for autonomy, thrive in solitary environments, others may experience discomfort and loneliness, highlighting the complexity of solitude and its implications for personal well-being.

and social behavior. The interplay between social avoidance and community engagement is particularly relevant during significant life transitions such as menopause.

Theme 3. Dealing with Family Interactions

Participants often navigate complex family dynamics that can significantly influence their personal development and well-being. Conger and Little (2010) investigated the dynamics of sibling relationships during the transition to adulthood, highlighting that while positive connections provide essential emotional support and a sense of belonging that contributes to overall well-being, conflicts can have negative repercussions, underscoring the importance of fostering healthy sibling relationships for a smoother transition into adulthood. Griesemer et al. (2019) conducted a qualitative study to explore how different relationship patterns among couples affect physical activity behaviors and motivations, identifying distinct couple types based on support, shared goals, and communication styles, and stressing the importance of understanding these factors when designing tailored interventions to promote active lifestyles and healthier behaviors. Together, these studies illuminate the complex interplay of family dynamics in both sibling and couple relationships, highlighting their impact on personal development and health behaviors.

4.0 Conclusion

This study explored the diverse experiences of individuals going through menopause and andropause, highlighting significant challenges across biological, cognitive, psychological, and social aspects. Participants reported issues such as physical fatigue and hormonal fluctuations that affected their daily lives and contributed to emotional distress. Many experienced cognitive difficulties, including forgetfulness and slower processing speeds, which hindered their ability to perform everyday tasks effectively. Psychologically, increased stress and emotional difficulties related to significant life events highlight the need for strong support systems and open communication to help individuals navigate these challenges. Socially, while some sought greater involvement in their communities to reduce feelings of loneliness, others felt societal pressures that led them to withdraw from social interactions.

A notable difference between menopause and andropause emerged in the specific challenges reported by participants. Women often expressed greater concerns related to physical changes, such as more pronounced symptoms like hot flashes and weight fluctuations. Additionally, they reported feelings of jealousy and insecurity that impacted their emotional well-being. In contrast, men frequently voiced concerns about work-related stress and financial pressures during this transitional period. These differences highlight how societal expectations and personal experiences shape the challenges faced by each gender. While women navigated complex emotional landscapes influenced by physical changes, men tended to focus more on external pressures related to career and financial stability. Understanding these distinctions is crucial for developing targeted interventions that address the unique needs of individuals experiencing menopause or andropause. By tailoring support systems to these distinct experiences, practitioners can better assist individuals in navigating their respective transitions while promoting overall mental health and well-being.

Despite these differences, both menopause and andropause share common experiences that underscore the universal nature of aging. Individuals in both groups may encounter emotional fluctuations, such as mood swings and feelings of irritability, which can affect their interpersonal relationships. Physical symptoms, including fatigue and changes in body composition, are also prevalent in both transitions; women may experience weight gain and decreased energy levels during menopause, while men often report similar issues during andropause. Furthermore, both genders may grapple with a sense of loss regarding their youth and vitality, leading to increased anxiety about aging and its implications on their identity and self-worth. Recognizing these shared experiences can help foster empathy and understanding between genders, paving the way for more inclusive support strategies that address the holistic challenges associated with these life stages.

The findings emphasize the importance of recognizing the diverse experiences associated with menopause and andropause. Throughout the study, the interconnectedness of biological, cognitive, psychological, and social aspects during this phenomenon became evident among participants. This recognition allows individuals to enhance their resilience and improve their overall quality of life, as reflected in Engel's Biopsychosocial Model

(1977), which acknowledges the interplay of these dimensions. This highlights the critical role of balanced support in all aspects to foster overall well-being.

This study is significant for its potential impact on community stakeholders by addressing the challenges of menopause and andropause. It provides valuable insights for both men and women, enhancing their understanding of these life stages. Healthcare professionals can use the findings to tailor care strategies that effectively support patients during these transitions, while policymakers are encouraged to develop targeted programs that address related issues, promote mental health awareness, and reduce stigma. Ultimately, this research serves as a vital resource for improving understanding and support for individuals experiencing these significant life changes, contributing to overall community well-being.

To build upon this foundational work, future research should focus on specific areas such as longitudinal studies examining the long-term psychological impact of menopause and andropause. Additionally, investigating cultural variations in experiences related to these life stages would provide deeper insights into how sociocultural factors influence perceptions and coping strategies. By emphasizing these directions for future studies, this research not only contributes to improving individual well-being but also serves as a critical resource for fostering community-wide awareness and support for individuals navigating these significant life transitions.

5.0 Contributions of Authors

The authors divided the work equally to produce this research. Cherry edited the entire document, gathered related literature, interviewed participants going through menopause, and led the conduct of the study. Maedane regularly checked the paper's formatting, edited various research sections, and interviewed participants going through menopause. Meanwhile, Ivan and Marc assisted by interviewing participants experiencing andropause, gathering relevant literature, and editing certain study sections. Lastly, the research adviser, Darwin, oversaw the entire research process.

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7.0 Conflict of Interests

There is no conflict of interest in the conduct of the study.

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