

## Happy and Healthy Menopause: The Secret to Optimal Well-being in the Golden Years in Thailand

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### ABSTRACT

This community service program aims to improve the understanding of mothers participating in religious studies in Thailand about menopause. Many women experience physical and emotional changes during menopause that can affect their quality of life. This activity involves counseling, interactive discussions, and healthy lifestyle training to help participants understand menopause as a natural process that can be managed well. The results of the activity showed an increase in participants' knowledge and readiness to face menopause. In addition, a community was formed that supports each other in maintaining physical and mental health. This program is expected to be a model for sustainable education that can be applied in various other communities.

## INTRODUCTION

Menopause is a natural phase in a woman's life marked by the permanent end of the menstrual cycle (Khademi, Kaveh, Nazari, & Asadollahi, 2024; X. Zhang, Huangfu, & Wang, 2023). This phase generally occurs at the age of 45 to 55 years, with an average age of menopause around 51 years (Kamp, Ashraf, Musbahi, & DeGiovanni, 2022). Menopause is not just the end of the reproductive cycle, but also a major change in the body that can affect a woman's physical, mental, and emotional aspects (Santoro, Roeca, Peters, & Neal-Perry, 2021; Talaulikar, 2022). Therefore, it is important for every woman to understand and prepare for menopause in order to stay healthy and happy.

Menopause is often accompanied by various changes in the body that can affect a woman's quality of life (Gatenby & Simpson, 2024; T. M. Nguyen, Do, Tran, & Kim, 2020). Symptoms such as hot flashes, night sweats, sleep disturbances, mood swings, decreased libido, and the risk of osteoporosis and cardiovascular disease are challenges that need to be faced (Duralde, Sobel, & Manson, 2023). In addition, many women experience anxiety and depression due to hormonal changes that occur during menopause (Gnanasegar, Wolfman, Galan, Cullimore, & Shea, 2024). Lack of knowledge about menopause can cause many women to feel anxious and unprepared to face it. This is further exacerbated by the stigma in society that considers menopause as the end of productivity and an unpleasant old age.

Therefore, education about menopause is very important so that women can understand the changes that occur in their bodies and know the right ways to deal with them (Koyuncu, Unsal, & Arslantas, 2018). In Thailand, the Muslim community, especially mothers who participate in religious studies, have an important role in maintaining the welfare of their families and communities. However, access to adequate health information about menopause is still limited. In this case, the community service from the nursing department, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Muhammadiyah Malang aims to provide insight and skills to mothers so that they can face menopause more prepared and positively.

This community service activity has several main objectives, including increasing understanding of menopause by providing education to mothers who participate in religious studies about the physiological, psychological, and social changes that occur during menopause. In addition, this activity aims to provide strategies for maintaining physical health by introducing a healthy lifestyle, including a balanced diet, regular exercise, and body care that can help reduce menopausal symptoms. This community service also focuses on mental and emotional health support by providing an understanding of the importance of maintaining mental health through positive activities, social support, and effective stress management. Furthermore, this activity aims to improve skills in dealing with menopause by teaching relaxation techniques, meditation, and natural methods to reduce menopause symptoms. Finally, this activity is expected to build a community that supports each other so that mothers who participate in the study can share experiences and form support groups to improve mutual welfare.

## IMPLEMENTATION AND METHODS

The methods used in this activity include counseling, as well as individual and group consultation sessions. Counseling is conducted to provide basic information about menopause, including symptoms, its impact on physical and mental health, and how to manage the changes that occur. Counseling is conducted to help overcome menopause symptoms. In addition, participants are given materials in the form of posters so that they can better understand the information provided. Individual and group consultation sessions are also conducted to provide participants with the opportunity to ask health workers directly about the problems they face. Through this method, it is hoped that participants will not only gain theoretical understanding, but also practical skills that can be applied in everyday life to live menopause more healthily and happily.

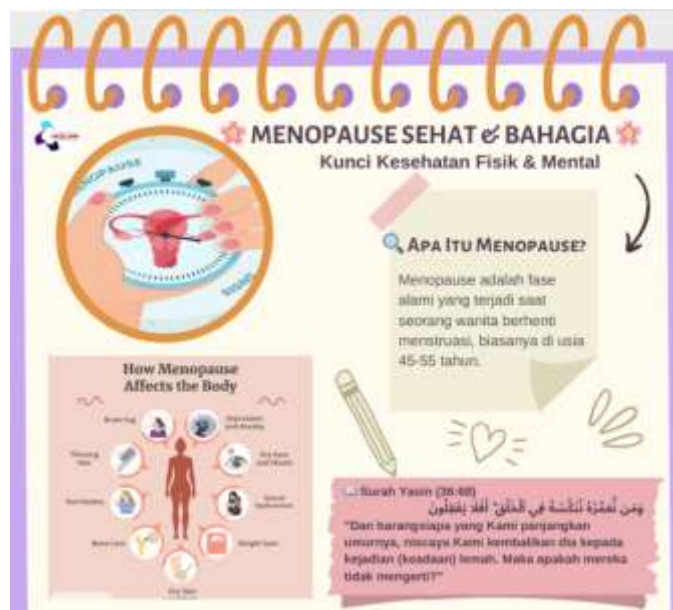
This community service activity was carried out in the community of mothers who participated in the religious study in Thailand with the implementation time adjusted to their religious study schedule. Participants who took part in this activity came from various backgrounds, but the majority were housewives between the ages of 40 and 60 years, who were or would enter menopause.



**Picture 1. Discussion and Brainstorming of Menopause**



**Picture 2. Team and Participants**



Picture 3. Poster of Menopause

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Before being counseled, many participants had a limited understanding of menopause. Most of them considered menopause as a sign of aging that hurts daily life. Some participants even had the perception that menopause is a disease that must be avoided, not as a natural phase in a woman's life. The main concerns that often arose before counseling were related to menopause symptoms such as hot flashes, sleep disturbances, and mood swings that were considered as something that could not be overcome. In addition, the lack of information on how to maintain physical and mental health during menopause made many participants feel anxious and less confident in going through this phase. After being counseled, there was a significant increase in participants' understanding of menopause. They began to understand that menopause is not a disease, but a natural process that can be managed well through a healthy lifestyle and adequate social support (Arnot, Emmott, & Mace, 2021). Participants also gained insight into the importance of a healthy diet, regular exercise, and relaxation techniques such as yoga and meditation to reduce the negative impacts of menopause (Abiç & Yilmaz Vefikuluçay, 2024; Susanti, Sonko, Chang, Chuang, & Chung, 2022). They were taught how to regulate good sleep patterns, manage stress, and maintain bone health with sufficient calcium intake. The information provided through counseling helped reduce their fear of menopause and increased their readiness to face this phase.

The discussion held after the counseling session provided a space for participants to share experiences and support each other. Many participants felt relieved after knowing that they were not alone in facing the changes that occurred during menopause. Several participants said that they are now more confident in talking about menopause symptoms to their families, so support from the surrounding environment has increased.

One interesting discussion topic was how best to manage emotions during menopause. Several participants shared their experiences about how they deal

with mood swings in a positive way, such as increasing their worship, exercising, or doing social activities. This discussion provided insight that social support and positive activities have a big impact on helping women go through menopause better.

Previous research shows that regular exercise can help reduce emotional symptoms of menopause (Maître, 2024; Witkowski, Evard, Rickson, White, & Sievert, 2023), such as anxiety and depression, by increasing the production of endorphins that play a role in mood regulation. In addition, another study revealed that involvement in social activities can improve emotional well-being and reduce stress during menopause (Hickey et al., 2024).

A study also confirmed that social support from family and community has a positive effect on managing menopause symptoms (Naworska, Brzęk, & Bąk-Sosnowska, 2020; T. T. P. Nguyen et al., 2022). Women who have a strong support system tend to experience the menopause transition more comfortably and have lower levels of anxiety than those who do not have adequate support. Therefore, a community-based approach involving social activities, exercise, and emotional support is highly recommended to help women cope better with menopause (L. Zhang, Ruan, Cui, Gu, & Mueck, 2020). is about the best way to manage emotions during menopause. Several participants shared their experiences of how they deal with mood swings in a positive way, such as increasing worship, exercising, or doing social activities. This discussion provides insight that social support and positive activities have a big impact on helping women get through menopause better.

In addition, participants also discussed various myths and facts about menopause. Most participants admitted to having heard misinformation about menopause, such as the assumption that all women definitely experience the same symptoms or that menopause always causes chronic diseases. With this discussion session, participants became more aware of the importance of getting information from trusted sources and how to distinguish between myths and facts in everyday life.

Overall, the discussion after the counseling provided great benefits for the participants. Not only did it increase their understanding of menopause, but it also built a strong social network, where they could support each other and share experiences in facing this phase. With this discussion session, it is hoped that the participants can continue to develop their insights and apply the strategies they have learned to go through menopause more healthily and happily.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Overall, this community service program succeeded in increasing the understanding of women participants in the religious study in Thailand about menopause. Before attending the counseling, many of them had limited understanding and even considered menopause as a frightening and unavoidable condition. However, after attending a series of counseling and interactive discussions, the participants showed an increase in knowledge, understanding, and positive attitudes towards menopause. They became more mentally and physically prepared to face the changes that occur during

menopause, and were able to adopt better health strategies to improve their quality of life.

The counseling provided succeeded in dispelling various myths and misunderstandings that were previously believed by the participants. They also gained new insights about the importance of maintaining a healthy diet, exercising regularly, and managing stress through relaxation and meditation techniques. In addition, the discussion forum held after the counseling provided great benefits in building a supportive community. The participants felt more comfortable sharing their personal experiences and getting solutions from the experiences of others who experienced similar conditions.

The success of this activity also shows that community-based health education can have a significant positive impact. By understanding that menopause is a natural phase in a woman's life, participants now have greater confidence in facing the changes that occur. They are also more aware of the importance of seeking information from trusted sources and participating in support groups to get better social support.

As a recommendation, similar counseling programs should be expanded to other communities that have not received education about menopause. In addition, there needs to be further assistance in the form of individual or small group consultation sessions to help participants apply the strategies they have learned in their daily lives. Developing educational materials in the form of modules, videos, or social media can also be an alternative to reach more people and ensure that the information that has been conveyed can continue to be accessed by participants.

Furthermore, collaboration with medical personnel and health experts must continue to be strengthened so that the material presented is always based on the latest scientific evidence. It is hoped that with ongoing educational efforts, more women will be able to face menopause healthily and happily, without feeling afraid or isolated. By building a community that supports each other and shares experiences, it is hoped that every woman can go through menopause more comfortably, empowered, and have a better quality of life.

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