

## Men's Perspectives on Menopause

### Erkeklerin Menopoza Bakış Açılı

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#### ABSTRACT

**Introduction and Purpose:** The concept of menopause varies within and across cultures regarding lived experiences. Menopause is a period that accounts for a quarter of a woman's life. For a woman to navigate menopause healthily, the perceptions, opinions, and attitudes of the men in her life about menopause should be taken into consideration. This study was conducted to evaluate men's perspectives on menopause.

**Methods:** This was a descriptive study. Research data were collected online with a survey form created on Google Forms from men who agreed to participate in the study between July 15 and September 15, 2022. A personal information form and a questionnaire containing statements about menopause were used to collect research data.

**Results:** While 70% of men participating in the study did not perceive menopause as an illness, 84% perceived it as a normal occurrence in women's lives. 58.5% of participants knew that women lose their fertility during menopause, while 45% believed that women do not need treatment during menopause. 51.0% of participants believed that menopause can be resolved without treatment. 60% of participants stated that women feel irritable and stressed during menopause, and 45% said that some women feel sad and depressed during menopause. 45% of the participants had no idea that sexuality did not decrease during menopause, 51% had no idea that menopause was a difficult process for many women to endure, and 51.5% had no idea that most women in menopause tend to do crazy things.

**Conclusion:** Most of the men participating in the study had no idea about the sexuality, challenges, and crazy things that women experience during menopause. Men were aware of the psychological changes (sadness, depression, irritability, and stress) that occur during menopause. In addition, these findings highlight the ethical dimension of healthcare planning. Ensuring social equality, the right to access information, and addressing social prejudices are essential for supporting women during menopause. Men's perceptions may influence equitable healthcare delivery and should be taken into account within a bioethical framework.

**Keywords:** Menopause, men, perspective

## ÖZET

**Giriş ve Amaç:** Menopoz kavramı, yaşanmış deneyimler açısından kültürler içinde ve arasında farklılık gösterir. Menopoz, bir kadının hayatının dörtte birini kapsayan bir dönemdir. Bir kadının menopozu sağlıklı bir şekilde atlatabilmesi için, hayatındaki erkeklerin menopoz hakkındaki algıları, görüşleri ve tutumları dikkate alınmalıdır. Bu çalışma, erkeklerin menopozu bakış açılarını değerlendirmek amacıyla yürütülmüştür.

**Yöntem:** Bu çalışma, tanımlayıcı bir çalışmadır. Araştırma verileri, 15 Temmuz - 15 Eylül 2022 tarihleri arasında, araştırmaya katılmayı kabul eden erkeklerden Google Formlar üzerinden oluşturulan bir anket formu aracılığıyla çevrimiçi olarak toplanmıştır. Araştırma verilerini toplamak için kişisel bilgi formu ve menopoz yönelik ifadeler içeren bir anket formu kullanılmıştır.

**Bulgular:** Çalışmaya katılan erkeklerin %70'i menopozu bir hastalık olarak algılamazken, %84'ü menopozu kadınların hayatında normal bir olay olarak algılamıştır. Katılımcıların %58,5'i kadınların menopoz döneminde doğurganlıklarını kaybettiklerini bilirken, %45'i menopoz döneminde tedaviye ihtiyaç duymadıklarına inanıyordu. Katılımcıların %51'i menopozun tedavi olmadan geçebileceğine inanıyordu. Katılımcıların %60'ı menopoz döneminde kadınların huzursuz ve stresli hissettiğini, %45'i ise bazı kadınların menopoz döneminde üzgün ve depresif hissettiğini belirtti. Katılımcıların %45'i menopoz döneminde cinselliğin azalmadığını, %51'i menopozun birçok kadın için zorlu bir süreç olduğunu ve %51,5'i menopoz dönemindeki çoğu kadının çalınca şeyler yapma eğiliminde olduğunu biliyordu.

**Sonuç:** Araştırmaya katılan erkeklerin çoğu menopoz dönemindeki kadınların yaşadığı cinsellik, yaşadıkları zorluklar ve yaptıkları çalınca şeyler hakkında fikir sahibi değillerdi. Araştırmaya katılan erkeklerin çoğu menopozu doğal bir süreç olarak algılamakta ve bir hastalık olarak algılamamaktaydı. Menopoz dönemindeki psikolojik değişimlerin (üzgün, depresif, sinirli ve stresli) farkındaydılar. Ayrıca, bu bulgular sağlık hizmetlerinin planlanmasında biyoetik bir bakış açısının önemini göstermektedir. Toplumsal eşitlik, bilgiye erişim hakkı ve önyargıların sağlık hakkına etkisi gibi unsurlar dikkate alınarak, erkeklerin menopozu algılayış biçimleri kadınların bu dönemi daha adil ve destekleyici bir sağlık hizmetiyle geçirmelerine katkı sağlayabilir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Menopoz, erkekler, bakış açısı

## INTRODUCTION

Menopause is the permanent cessation of menstruation resulting from the loss of ovarian follicular activity. It occurs in women between the ages of 49 and 52 and is associated with many physical, emotional, and social conditions (1, 2). Due to increasing life expectancy, women can spend up to one-third of their lifespan postmenopausal (3). Menopausal women experience significant declines in oestrogen levels and increases in follicle-stimulating and luteinising hormones. They may often experience distressing symptoms such as vasomotor symptoms and dyspareunia due to vulvar, vaginal atrophy (4).

Approximately 75% of women are likely to experience period-specific symptoms during menopause (5-7). According to Dökmen, the problems associated with menopause result from the negative meanings and stereotypes that society attributes to old age and menopause, and therefore, significant variations in menopausal symptoms can be observed within and between different cultures. Perceptions and attitudes regarding menopause vary across cultures and even subcultures. Dökmen explains that the physical, cultural, and social meanings of menopause are diverse and that women do not always perceive menopause and its consequences negatively based on their own meanings (8). Not only physiological changes but also culture-specific psychosocial changes occur in this process. Menopause is described as a complex transition process and should, therefore, be considered a biocultural paradigm (9). Having

varying meanings across cultures, ageing and changes in childbearing and appearance combine with social and symbolic implications and can affect women's quality of life, productivity, work performance, self-perception, and self-confidence during the menopausal period (10-13).

Traditionally, studies have focused on women to assess their perceptions and attitudes regarding menopause, menopause symptoms, and available treatment options (14-17), and very few studies have been conducted to date targeting men to assess their perspectives on menopause (17-20). In Parish's 2019 study, most men (63%) reported that the symptoms negatively affected themselves (77%), their partners (70%), and their relationships (56%). In a study with married men in our country, the participants knew little about menopause and treatment options (18). Finally, another study in our country (n = 60) showed that men have positive attitudes towards menopause (19). In this study, men generally perceived menopause as a natural process, emphasized the importance of providing emotional and familial support to their wives, and expressed willingness to contribute positively to their spouses' well-being during this period (19).

Society's perceptions, opinions, and attitudes regarding menopause should be considered when planning services for the menopause period. Because there is a balance in the family where individuals are affected by each other, the changes and problems experienced during menopause are not only women's but also of their spouses, work environments, and society (21, 22). Women need the support of their spouses, children, healthcare professionals, and society as a whole to navigate this period more comfortably. In addition to the common views and attitudes about menopause, especially within the cultural pattern of society, men's perspectives on menopause may affect the support they will give to their wives (23). Training and consultancy services provided by midwives and nurses are essential in ensuring that women have a comfortable menopause period, can cope with the problems they experience during this time, and improve their quality of life (24). Determining men's perspectives on menopause will benefit midwives and nurses in their optimal healthcare approach to this period. This study was conducted to evaluate men's perspectives on menopause.

## **METHOD**

### **Study design and participants**

This was a descriptive study. The data were collected online with a survey form created in Google Forms from men who agreed to participate in the study between July 15 and September 15, 2022. The population of the research consisted of all men who agreed to participate. In this study, a 'snowball' sampling method, one of the qualitative data collection methods, was used to investigate men's perspectives on menopause. Data were collected and analyzed online. Because this was a qualitative study, power analysis was not conducted. Data collection continued until data saturation was reached. Before starting the study, permission was obtained from the Tarsus University Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee (Decision Date: 30.06.2022, Meeting Number: 6, Decision Number: 2022/69). The Declaration of Helsinki was adhered to throughout the research.

### **Outcome measures**

#### **Inclusion criteria:**

- Men over 18 years old
- Men who have internet access and can use smart devices
- Men who can read and write and have no vision defects

- Men who volunteered to participate in the research
- Those with menopausal women in their family

### Data collection tools

Data were collected using a personal information form and a questionnaire with statements describing menopause.

*The Personal Information Form* is a survey form consisting of six questions to determine the socio-demographic characteristics of men.

*Form of Statements to Describe Menopause* examines men's perception of menopause, their views on the benefits and drawbacks of menopause, and their thoughts and approaches towards their partners' need for help during menopause, with a total of twenty-two questions (1-2, 8, 14-17). Expert opinion was taken for this form.

### Data analysis

The data were analysed with SPSS 25.0 software. Average, frequency, and percentage distributions were analysed when evaluating the data.

### Research Limitations and Generalizability

A limitation of this study is that it consisted of online volunteer participants. The research results are generalizable to the sample that participated in the study.

## RESULTS

The mean age of the men participating in the research was  $38.77 \pm 13.53$ . 35% were university graduates and 75.5% were married. 78.5% had a nuclear family, and 32.5% had four or more children. 77% had heard of the concept of menopause, and 70% of their wives had not entered menopause (Table 1).

As seen in Table 2, 70% of men disagreed, while 14.5% agreed with the statement, "Menopause is an illness". The majority of them, 84.0%, agreed that "Menopause is a normal event in women's life". 58.5% agreed that "Women in menopause lose their fertility". 45.0% disagreed with the statement, "Women in menopause need treatment", and 51.0% agreed that "Women in menopause can overcome this without treatment" (Table 2).

Approximately half of the men (49.2%) agreed that "A woman in menopause is attractive, does not lose her appeal". 45.5% disagreed that sexuality does not decrease during menopause, and 45% disagreed that a woman who enters menopause will lose her sexuality. A large majority, 83.0%, disagreed that "Women who have reached menopause lose their social status". 37.5% stated that they had no opinion on the statement, "Women generally do not see menopause as a negative event in their lives", and more than half of them, 51.0%, stated that they had no opinion on the statement, "Menopause increases sexuality". 45.5% had no opinion regarding the statement, "Women are generally worried about how their husbands feel about them after menopause", and 56.5% regarding the statement, "Women in menopause tend to do crazy things that they cannot understand" (Table 2).

**Table 1.** Distribution of Men's Descriptive Characteristics

Characteristics (n=200)	Number (n)	Percentage (%)
<b>Age</b>		
20-29 years	63	31.5
30-39 years	55	27.5
40-49 years	35	17.5
50 years and ↑	47	23.5
<b>Education</b>		
Primary education	74	37.0
High school	56	28.0
University	70	35.0
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Married	151	75.5
Single	49	24.5
<b>Family Type</b>		
Nuclear family	157	78.5
Extended family	43	21.5
<b>Number of children</b>		
0	51	25.5
1	31	15.5
2	27	13.5
3	26	13.0
≥ 4	65	32.5
<b>Heard of the Concept of Menopause?</b>		
Yes	154	77.0
No	46	23.0
<b>Spouse in Menopause?</b>		
Yes	45	22,5
No	106	53.0
Unwilling to answer	49	24.5

60.5% of the men agreed that “Women become irritable and tense during menopause”, and 66.0% thought that “Menopause is a sign of ageing”. 40.5% disagreed that “Many women feel like they are no longer a ‘real’ woman after menopause.” and more than half (51.5%) had no opinion on the statement, “Many women are saddened by the cessation of menstruation.” The majority, 58%, agreed that “Women should expect to experience some difficulties during menopause” and 36.5% had no idea whether “Menopause is an unpleasant experience for a woman.”. 41% agreed that menopause turns many women’s lives upside down and 45% agreed that women are sad and depressed during menopause. 37.5% had no idea regarding the statement, “For many women, menopause is a very difficult thing to endure.” (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Distribution of Statements Related to Men's Definition of Menopause

Statements	I have no idea		I disagree		I agree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Menopause is an illness.	30	15.0	141	70.0	29	14.5
Menopause is a normal event in women's lives.	18	9.0	14	7.0	168	84.0
Women in menopause lose their fertility.	52	26.0	31	15.5	117	58.5
Women in menopause need treatment.	67	33.5	90	45.0	42	21.0
Women in menopause can overcome this without treatment.	77	38.5	33	16.5	90	45.0
Woman in menopause are attractive and do not lose their appeal.	73	36.5	25	12.5	102	51.0
Sexuality is not lessened during menopause.	91	45.5	28	14.0	81	40.5
Women going through menopause lose their sexuality.	85	42.5	90	45.0	25	12.5
Women who have reached menopause lose their social status.	21	10.5	166	83.0	12	6.0
Women generally do not see menopause as a negative event in their lives.	75	37.5	69	34.5	56	28.0
Menopause increases sexuality.	102	51.0	88	44.0	10	5.0
After menopause, women often worry about how their partners feel about them.	77	38.5	32	16.0	91	45.5
Menopausal women tend to do crazy things that they themselves can't understand.	113	56.5	49	24.5	38	19.0
Women become irritable and tense during menopause.	56	28.0	23	11.5	121	60.5
Many women feel like they are no longer a 'real' woman after menopause.	63	31.5	81	40.5	56	28.0
Many women are saddened by the cessation of menstruation.	103	51.5	37	18.5	60	30.0
Menopause is an unpleasant experience for a woman.	73	36.5	58	29.0	69	34.5
Women should expect to experience some difficulties during menopause.	53	26.5	31	15.5	116	58.0
Menopause turns many women's lives upside down.	55	27.5	82	41.0	63	31.5
Many women become sad and depressed during menopause.	58	29.0	52	26.0	90	45.0
Menopause is an important sign of ageing.	37	18.5	31	15.5	132	66.0
For many women, menopause is a very difficult thing to endure.	75	37.5	53	26.5	72	36.0

The total mean scores of the participants were examined according to their status of having heard of menopause. According to the results, the mean of those who said 'Yes' (M=47.04, SD=8.63) was significantly higher than those

who said 'No' (M=38.50, SD=8.90). This difference was found to be statistically significant as a result of the t-test ( $p<0.001$ ). The total mean scores of the participants were compared according to their marital status. The mean of single individuals (M=41.65, SD=9.62) was lower than the mean of married individuals (M=46.19, SD=9.07), and according to the t-test results, this difference was statistically significant ( $p=0.003$ ). The total mean scores of the participants regarding the number of children were examined among the different groups. A significant difference was found between the groups ( $F(4,195)=2.545$ ,  $p=0.041$ ). This result shows that the means of some groups were different from others (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Comparison of Mean Scores According to Demographic Variables

	Group Comparison	Mean± Sd	t/F (df)	p
<b>Menopause Hearing Status</b>	Yes (n=154)	47.04 ± 8.63	t(198)=5.64	<0.001
	No (n=46)	38.50 ± 8.90		
<b>Marital status</b>	Single (n=49)	41.65 ± 9.62	t(198)=2.99	0.003
	Married (n=151)	46.19 ± 9.07		
<b>Number Of Children</b>	No		F(4,195)=2.545	0.041
	1			
	2	42.04 – 47.77		
	3			
	4 or more			
<b>Age</b>	1	43.15±9.58	F(1.394)=3.00	0.296
	2	45.41±8.96		
	3	46.11±8.13		
	4	46.46±10.32		
<b>Education</b>	Primary Education	44.14±9.24	F(0.601)=2.00	0.549
	High School	45.85±9.93		
	University	45.42±9.15		
<b>Family Type</b>	Nuclear family	45.40±9.19	t(198)=0.90	0.340
	Extended family	43.86±10.11		

## DISCUSSION

This study examined men's perspectives on menopause and is one of the few studies investigating the male perspective on menopause in our country. We found that most of the men in the study had no information about sexuality during menopause and how women perceive menopause. This may be due to men's lack of knowledge about women's life phases and female physiology. This may also be due to health training being provided only to those interested, without a holistic approach.

Men have different perceptions about the causes of menopause. They see menopause as a “natural process”, “illness”, and “fatalism” (25, 26). Similarly, in this research, 84% of the men stated that menopause was a natural life event, 70% believed that menopause is not an illness, and 66% considered it a natural result of ageing. This perception may stem from the formal or informal information men have acquired about menopause.

From the men's perspective, the most apparent menopausal changes in women are mood swings and sexual function changes. (27). Islam et al. also reported that Asian women during menopause had higher rates of depression and irritability (28). Gartoulla et al. reported similar results in Australian women in their study (29). In our study, 51.5% of men thought that women were sadder and more depressed during menopause, and 60.5% commented that women in menopause were angrier and more tense. Menopause is a physiological process that every woman experiences, and it is normal for the reactions to be similar, although these studies have been conducted in different cultures.

In the study by Rodolpho et al., men reported that women's sex appeal disappears during menopause and that there is a substantial decrease in the couple's sexual desire (30). 45% of the men in our study did not believe that women would lose their sexuality, whereas some had no idea whether their sexuality would decrease (45.5%) or increase (51%). Unlike the results of Zhang et al.'s study, men do not have information about sexuality during menopause. This may be because there is little or limited education on sexuality for men during menopause in our country. From a bioethical perspective, the study underscores the need to address issues such as equity in healthcare access, the right to accurate information, and the influence of societal stereotypes on health rights. Integrating men's perspectives into healthcare planning may help reduce gender-based disparities and promote justice in women's health.

Most men know little about treatments and health precautions for menopause (18). In the study conducted by Parish et al., slightly more than half of the men reported that they knew that treatments for menopause symptoms were available, but that their knowledge of specific treatment options was limited. 45% of the men who participated in our study believed that women who enter menopause can get through the process without treatment. This may be because most men in our study perceived menopause as a natural process.

As seen in Table 3, men who had heard of the concept of menopause had significantly higher mean scores ( $p < 0.001$ ). This finding indicates that knowledge positively influences the way menopause is perceived. Similarly, Parish et al. (2019) (20) emphasized that men's awareness of menopause increased the support they provide to their partners. Married men in our study also had higher scores compared to single men ( $p = 0.003$ ), suggesting that marital life contributes to awareness of women's health processes. This is consistent with the findings of Aksu et al. (2011) (19) and Hidiroglu et al. (2014) (18), who reported that marital dynamics play an important role in shaping men's attitudes towards menopause. In addition, a significant difference was found between groups in terms of the number of children ( $p = 0.041$ ). This may reflect the influence of family dynamics on men's perceptions of menopause. Zhang et al. (2020) (27) also noted that family structure and childbearing history could affect spousal perceptions of menopause. These results highlight the importance of considering men's demographic characteristics in planning healthcare services for women in the menopausal period.

## CONCLUSION

The study results showed that most men are unaware of the sexuality, difficulties experienced, and crazy things menopausal women do. Most perceived menopause as a natural process and did not perceive it as an illness, and they were aware of the psychological changes (sad, depressed, irritable, and stressed) in menopause.

Based on the research results, it is recommended to inform men about the changes women will experience during menopause, its meaning for women, and sexuality during menopause, and to include them in training programs.

Furthermore, within a bioethical context, it is essential to emphasize that healthcare planning should integrate men's perspectives not only to improve women's experiences during menopause but also to strengthen fairness, equality, and access to healthcare services.

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