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## SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS IN THE MENOPAUSAL EXPERIENCE OF SELECTED MIDDLE CLASS FILIPINO WOMEN

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by

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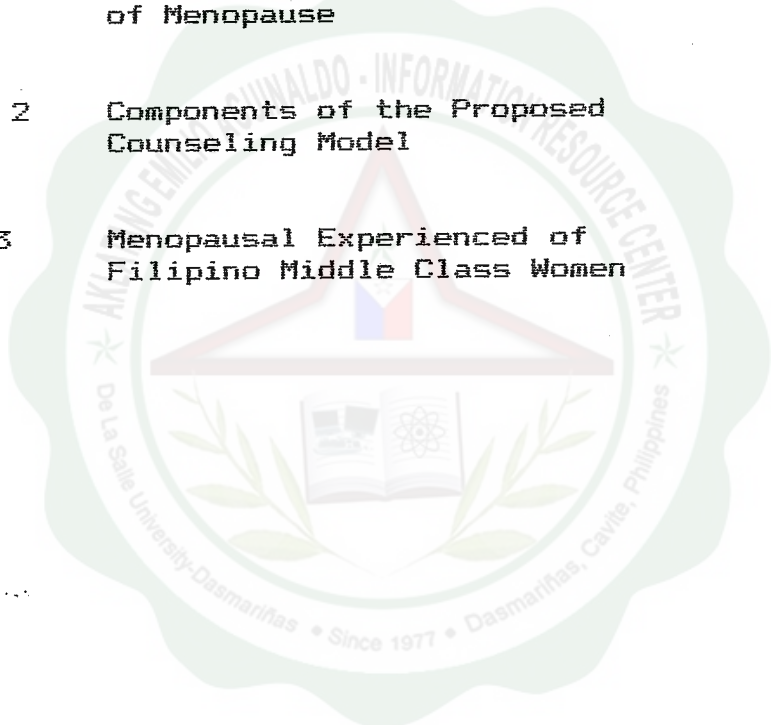
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## ABSTRACT

The study sought to describe the menopausal experience and coping strategies of Filipino women. The menopausal experience was investigated in the light of civil and employment status, menopausal phase, life satisfaction and life events to map out a counseling model appropriate for the Filipino mid life.

This was undertaken to respond to a lack of information about menopause from the developing countries. It was seen that with more empirically based data from these countries, social services for women can be made more available.

The study ventured to find answers to the following questions:

1. What is the experience of menopause of women belonging to different groups under each of the following variables? a) civil status, b) employment status, c) menopausal phase
2. Are there qualitative subgroup differences in the women's menopausal experience, based on the variables under consideration?
3. What is the level of life satisfaction of a)





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single, b) married, c) widowe,d and d) separated working and non-working women who are in their perimenopausal, currently menopausal and postmeno-pausal phases?

4. What perceived life events are associated with the menopausal experience of middle class Filipino women from Metro Manila?

5. What coping strategies are employed by the women in the study?

The descriptive method was used. The interview and ginabayang talakayan, were utilized for data gathering. Ginabayang talakayan is an indigenous group research method which emphasizes equality of status among participants, facilitator, rapporteur and process observer. This can be seen in the sharing of ideas, experiences according to a set of guide questions which participants numbering 5-8 formulate. This equality of status is also made evident in the involvement of the participants in the interpretation of data generated. Altogether 63 purposively selected women participated in the study. Criteria for selection were a) age (40 - 60) b) menopausal phase (from perimenopausal to post menopausal) c) employment status (working and



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non-working) and d) civil status (single, married, widowed and separated). Fifty-three women were interview respondents and 5 nuns and 5 grade school teachers participated in the two ginabayang talakayan sessions.

An interview guide which included the 5-point scale Kaufert-Syrotuik Symptom Index and the Bulatao Happiness Scale was used to gather data. A separate set of guide questions was utilized for the ginabayang talakayan.

Data obtained from the interview and ginabayang talakayan were content analyzed, categorized, tabulated and converted into percentages.

Results showed that the menopausal experience is a highly personal matter and varied from woman to woman in terms of intensity, type and number of symptoms experienced. However, some discernible patterns were seen such as a) the married women experiencing the most number of symptoms b) the employed noting more symptoms in the KSSI c) the perimenopausal encountering the most number of symptoms. The commonly reported symptoms being hot flashes, fatigue, headaches, vaginal dryness. Irritability and depression were among the predominantly experienced symptoms. The changes experi-



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enced were not limited to those in the KSSI list.

The subjects in the study were found to be generally satisfied with their lives in contrast to the perception that midlife is a chaotic and problematic stage. Certain life events, however, were perceived to be associated with the menopausal symptom. These were illness, problems with parents, children, spouse and family members. To cope with menopausal symptoms, the minimizing personal discomfort strategy was the most commonly employed. Coping responses under this category include prayer, relaxation, eating, keeping busy, among others.

A counseling model consisting of menopausal education and crisis counseling as primary and tertiary interventions respectively, was proposed in response to the subjects' endorsement of the necessity of such interventions. It was concluded a) that while the menopausal experience of the women under study follows a particular pattern, the changes varied from woman to woman; b) menopause is not a significant event and viewed simply as a natural milestone; c) the use of minimizing personal discomfort strategies enable the woman to cope with



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the changes; d) life events are viewed independently of menopause because it is a life event as well; e) increased awareness of the changes can contribute to adequate coping with menopause and finally, education and socio-economic status are important factors in the life satisfaction of the subjects; f) life satisfaction is not a function of civil status nor menopausal phase; and finally, education and socio-economic status are important factors in the life satisfaction of the subjects.

