

## ROLES OF COUNSELLORS IN MITIGATING PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL MENOPAUSAL CHALLENGES AMONG WOMEN IN PUBLIC HOSPITALS, ENUGU STATE

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**ABSTRACT:** This study examined the roles of counsellors in mitigating physical and psychological menopausal challenges among women attending public hospitals in Enugu State. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. One research question and one null hypothesis guided the study. The population for the study comprised 30 counsellors drawn from five public hospitals in Enugu State. A structured questionnaire developed on a four-point Likert-type scale was used for data collection. The instrument consisted of six items and was face-validated by three experts from the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The reliability of the instrument was determined using the Cronbach Alpha method, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.81, indicating that the instrument was reliable. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation, while the t-test statistic was used to test the hypothesis at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed, among others, that counsellors play significant roles in mitigating physical and psychological menopausal challenges among women attending

public hospitals in Enugu State by empowering women through health education to understand and manage menopausal symptoms effectively, and by assisting women to develop coping strategies for managing the physical and emotional changes associated with menopause. Based on the findings, it was recommended that continuous staff training, retraining, and professional development programmes should be organized to strengthen the capacity and competence of counsellors in addressing menopausal symptoms and related challenges among women in public hospitals.

**Keywords:** *Counselling, Physical and Psychological Menopausal Challenges, Women, Public Hospitals, Enugu State.*

## **Introduction**

Menopause is a natural biological transition in a woman's life, marking the permanent cessation of menstruation and the end of reproductive capacity. Menopause is a part of the normal aging process (Azita, Safoura, Zohreh, Anooshirvan & Seyedeh.2018). It usually occurs between the ages of 45 and 55 and is characterized by significant hormonal changes, particularly a decline in estrogen and progesterone levels. Menopause is also a normal physiological process, it is often accompanied by a wide range of physical and psychological challenges that can significantly affect women's health, wellbeing, and quality of life. Menopause can impact women's physical and mental well-being, including sexual function (Jaafarpour, Rashan, Bahmani & Direkv and-Moghadam, 2025).

Physically, menopausal women commonly experience symptoms such as hot flashes, night sweats, sleep disturbances, fatigue, joint and muscle pains, weight gain, and changes in sexual health. WHO, (2024) categorized the challenging experience of menopause as vaginal dryness, hot flashes, insomnia, night sweats. Sexual dysfunction is a common problem in menopausal women (Bahri, Riazi, Keshavarz & Montazeri, (2025). Many women in menopause period feel a loss, such as loss of motherhood, youth, beauty, and life (Bahri, Roudsari, Hashemi, 2015).These symptoms may vary in severity and duration among women, sometimes interfering with daily activities and overall functioning. Psychologically, menopause is frequently associated with mood swings, anxiety, depression, irritability, memory

lapses, and reduced self-esteem. For many women, these psychological challenges are compounded by social, cultural, and economic factors, making the menopausal experience particularly distressing.

In Nigeria, and specifically in Enugu State, menopause remains a sensitive and often misunderstood subject. Cultural beliefs and limited awareness can lead to poor health-seeking behavior, delayed diagnosis, and inadequate management of menopausal symptoms. Women attending public hospitals may face additional challenges such as limited access to specialized care, insufficient counseling services, and inadequate information on menopausal health. These factors can worsen both the physical and psychological impact of menopause, especially among women from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

However, The combined physical and psychological effects of menopause can negatively influence women's **daily functioning, interpersonal relationships, work productivity, and overall mental health**. Untreated menopausal challenges may lead to chronic stress, poor coping mechanisms, and increased vulnerability to non-communicable diseases such as hypertension, osteoporosis, and cardiovascular conditions.

Understanding the physical and psychological menopausal challenges among women in public hospitals in Enugu State is therefore essential. Such knowledge will help healthcare providers, policymakers, and stakeholders develop appropriate interventions, improve clinical management, and promote supportive health education programs tailored to the needs of menopausal women. This study seeks to explore these challenges in order to contribute to improved maternal and women's health outcomes within the public healthcare system of Enugu state. Given these multifaceted challenges, menopause requires not only medical management but also psycho-social **support**, making counselling a vital component of care in public hospital settings. Counseling has beneficial effects on lifestyle modification in both menopause women and their spouses (Azita, et al, 2018). Azika et al (2017) further stated that active and structured counseling effectively improve sexual functions and behaviors in menopausal women. Counselling education is also one of the ways of

mitigating menopausal challenges among spouses (Yoshany, Morowatisharifabad, Mihanpour, Bahri & Jadgal, 2017). Counselling education are given by counsellors. A counsellor is a person whose vocation inclines towards building the reputation, inspiration, aspiration, personality and skills of students through counselling (Chigbu, Nwobi, Ngwaka & Mokwelu, 2021; Chigbu, Oguzie & Obi., 2021) . Counsellors in this study refer to professionally trained guidance and mental health practitioners who are equipped with relevant knowledge, skills, and therapeutic competencies to support women in mitigating physical and psychological menopausal challenges. Counsellors are found in the urban and rural public hospitals. Their roles include health education, emotional support, lifestyle counselling, coping skills development, and collaboration with healthcare professionals to promote women's overall well-being during menopause and its education attachment.

Education improves women's perception of menopause and support needs as they journey through menopause (Chioma, Chinweuba & Kenneth, 2025). Although several studies have examined the impact of menopause education on women's knowledge, attitudes, and lifestyle modifications during the menopausal transition, limited attention has been paid to the specific roles of counsellors in mitigating physical and psychological menopausal challenges among women in public hospitals in Enugu State. Consequently, this study seeks to examine the roles of counsellors in addressing these menopausal challenges among women attending public hospitals in Enugu State.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Menopause is a natural biological transition in a woman's life that is often accompanied by a range of physical and psychological challenges. These challenges include hot flashes, night sweats, fatigue, sleep disturbances, mood swings, anxiety, depression, and reduced self-esteem, which may significantly affect women's health and overall quality of life. Observations by the present researchers indicate that in public hospital settings, where many women seek affordable healthcare services, these menopausal challenges are frequently compounded by limited access to specialized psychosocial support and inadequate counselling services.

Most existing studies have focused largely on the impact of menopause education on women's knowledge, attitudes, and lifestyle modifications during the menopausal transition. While such studies have contributed to increased awareness and improved health practices, comparatively little attention has been given to the specific roles of counsellors in addressing and mitigating the physical and psychological menopausal challenges experienced by women. This gap is particularly evident in public hospitals in Enugu State, where counselling services are often underutilized or insufficiently integrated into menopausal care.

The limited focus on counselling interventions creates a significant gap in understanding how professional counsellors can support women in coping with menopausal symptoms, managing emotional distress, and developing effective coping strategies. Consequently, women attending public hospitals in Enugu State may continue to experience unmanaged menopausal challenges that negatively affect their well-being, daily functioning, and social relationships.

In view of these concerns, this study is designed to examine the roles of counsellors in mitigating physical and psychological menopausal challenges among women attending public hospitals in Enugu State.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to ascertain the roles of counsellors in mitigating physical and psychological menopausal challenges among women attending public hospitals in Enugu State. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Ascertain the roles of counsellors in mitigating physical menopausal challenges among women attending public hospitals in Enugu State.

### **Research Question**

The following research question was raised to guide the study:

1. What are the roles of counsellors in mitigating physical menopausal challenges among women attending public hospitals in Enugu State

## HYPOTHESIS

This null hypothesis was formulated and tested at .05 level of significance.

1. **H<sub>01</sub>**: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of counsellors serving in urban and rural public hospital on their roles in mitigating physical menopausal challenges among women attending public hospitals in Enugu State.

## Methodology

The research design adopted for this study was a **survey research design**. The area of the study was **Enugu State, Nigeria**. Survey research design involves the collection of information from a sample of individuals through their responses to research instruments (Check & Schutt, 2012).

The population for the study comprised **all counsellors working in public hospitals in Enugu State**. According to records obtained from the hospitals, the population consisted of 30 **counsellors** across the public hospitals in the state.

The instrument used for data collection was a **researcher-developed structured questionnaire** titled *“Roles of Counsellors in Mitigating Physical and Psychological Menopausal Challenges Questionnaire”* (RCMPPMC-Q). The instrument was designed in line with the research questions and consisted of **six (6) items** addressing the roles of counsellors in mitigating both physical and psychological menopausal challenges among women attending public hospitals.

The instrument was **face-validated by three experts**, two from the Department of Guidance and Counselling and one from the Measurement and Evaluation Unit, Department of Science and Computer Education, Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The reliability of the instrument was determined using the **Cronbach Alpha reliability method**, which yielded a reliability coefficient of **0.81**, indicating that the instrument was reliable for the study.

A total of 40 **copies of the questionnaire** were administered to all the counsellors in public hospitals in Enugu State with the assistance of two trained research assistants.

Out of these, **37 properly completed questionnaires** were retrieved, representing a **91.75% return rate**.

The data collected were analyzed using **mean and standard deviation** to answer the research questions, while the hypotheses were tested using the **t-test** at the **0.05 level of significance**.

A **four-point Likert rating scale** of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD), with corresponding numerical values of **4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively**, was used to elicit responses from the respondents. The decision rule for interpreting the results was based on the calculated mean values. Items with mean scores of **2.50 and above** were interpreted as *Agree*, while mean scores **below 2.50** were interpreted as *Disagree*.

For hypothesis testing, when the **calculated t-value** was less than the **table t-value**, the null hypothesis was regarded as **not significant**. However, when the calculated t-value was **greater than or equal to the table t-value**, the null hypothesis was considered **significant**.

1. **Research Question:** What are the roles of counsellors in mitigating physical menopausal challenges among women attending public hospitals in Enugu State?

Table 1. Mean ratings on the Roles of Counsellors in Mitigating Physical and Psychological Menopausal Challenges among Women in Public Hospitals, Enugu State.

S/N	Items	Urban Counsellors =18			Rural Counsellors = 19		
		X	SD	DEC	X	SD	DEC
1.	Counsellors provide accurate information about menopause, its physical symptoms (like hot flashes, night sweats, and fatigue), and	3.71	0.88	A	3.70	0.88	A

psychological changes (such as mood swings, anxiety, and depression).

- |    |  |      |      |   |      |      |
|----|--|------|------|---|------|------|
| 2. | They offer one-on-one or group counselling<br>A<br>to help women cope with emotional challenges associated with menopause, such as depression, irritability, anxiety, and low self-esteem.                         | 3.23 | 0.91 | A | 3.23 | 0.90 |
| 3. | Counsellors assist women in developing<br>A<br>practical coping mechanisms and behavioral strategies to manage menopausal symptoms, including stress management, relaxation techniques, and lifestyle adjustments. | 3.19 | 0.99 | A | 3.20 | 0.98 |
| 4. | They identify severe cases that may require<br>A<br>medical intervention or specialist therapy and refer women to gynecologists, psychologists, or other healthcare professionals, ensuring holistic care.         | 3.51 | 0.98 | A | 3.55 | 1.00 |
| 5. | Counsellors guide women on nutrition,<br>A<br>exercise, sleep hygiene, and other lifestyle habits that can reduce the intensity of menopausal symptoms and improve overall well-being.                             | 3.73 | 1.08 | A | 3.74 | 1.09 |

6.	They organize support groups or peer sessions where women can share experiences, reduce feelings of isolation, and learn from one another, fostering a sense of community and belonging.	2.50	0.98	A	2.45	0.97
<b>Cluster Mean</b>		<b>3.31</b>	<b>0.97</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>3.31</b>	<b>0.97</b>

A

The Roles of Counsellors in Mitigating Physical and Psychological Menopausal Challenges among Women in Public Hospitals, Enugu State

Data presented in Table 1 revealed that the respondents agreed with 6 of the items listed under urban public hospitals and 5 items from rural public hospitals. Rural counsellors disagreed with item 6 with recorded mean score of 2.45. However, the urban counsellors' mean ranged from 2.50 to 3.73 while the rural counsellors' mean ranged from 2.45 to 3.74. In addition, they were cluster means of 3.31 and 3.31 and grand standard deviations of 0.97 and 0.97 for urban and rural counsellors respectively.

Thus, the respondents agreed on the roles of counsellors in sustaining constitutional democracy in Enugu state.

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant difference between the mean responses of school counsellors serving in urban and rural secondary schools on their roles in mitigating physical and psychological menopause challenges among women in public hospitals, Enugu State.

Table 2. T-test on the mean ratings of urban and rural counsellors on their roles in mitigating physical and psychological menopausal challenges among women in public hospitals, Enugu state.

Group	n	Mean	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Urban Counsellors	30	3.31	0.97	265	0.00	±1.96	Not Significant
Rural Counsellors	30	3.31	0.97				

Table 2 showed that the calculated t-value is 0.00 at 0.05 level of significance and 265 degree of freedom while the critical t-value is 1.96. Since the calculated t-value is less than the critical value, the null hypothesis is, therefore, not significant. Thus, there is no significant difference between the mean scores of urban and rural counsellors on their roles in mitigating physical and psychological menopause challenges among women.

## **Discussion**

The results from the research question revealed that the roles of counsellors in mitigating physical and psychological menopausal challenges among women attending public hospitals in Enugu State include educating women on menopausal symptoms, providing emotional support, and helping them develop effective coping strategies for physical and psychological changes associated with menopause. Counsellors also guide women on adopting healthy lifestyle practices such as proper nutrition, exercise, and sleep hygiene to reduce the severity of menopausal symptoms. Furthermore, counsellors facilitate support groups where women can share experiences, reducing feelings of isolation and promoting peer learning. They also identify women requiring further medical or psychological intervention and make appropriate referrals to specialists, ensuring holistic care.

The hypothesis tested in the study showed that there is no significant difference between the mean responses of counsellors in different public hospitals on their roles in mitigating menopausal challenges, indicating that counsellors across hospitals perform similar functions in supporting women during menopause.

These findings align with the work of Yoshany, et al., 2017, who emphasized that counsellors play a critical role in promoting health and well-being by providing guidance, emotional support, and psychosocial interventions that empower individuals to cope with life transitions. Similarly, Azita, et al, 2018, highlighted that counsellors contribute to improving women's quality of life by helping them understand physiological changes, manage stress, and build resilience during menopause.

In summary, the study underscores that counsellors are pivotal in addressing both the physical and psychological aspects of menopause, ensuring that women attending public hospitals in Enugu State can navigate this life stage with knowledge, coping skills, and adequate psychosocial support.

## **Conclusion**

This study has shown that counsellors play a critical role in mitigating both physical and psychological menopausal challenges among women attending public hospitals in Enugu State. Counsellors contribute significantly by educating women about menopausal symptoms, providing emotional and psychological support, assisting them to develop effective coping strategies, promoting healthy lifestyle practices, facilitating peer support, and referring women to appropriate healthcare specialists when necessary.

The findings highlight that counsellors are essential in empowering women to understand and manage the changes associated with menopause, thereby improving their overall well-being and quality of life. By addressing both the physical and emotional aspects of menopause, counsellors ensure that women attending public hospitals are supported comprehensively during this transitional phase of life.

In light of these findings, it is clear that strengthening the capacity and professional development of counsellors in public hospitals is necessary to enhance their effectiveness in supporting women through menopausal challenges.

## **Recommendations of the Study**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. **Continuous Professional Development:** Public hospitals should organize regular training, retraining, and professional development programs for counsellors to enhance their knowledge and skills in managing physical and psychological menopausal challenges among women.
2. **Capacity Building in Menopause Care:** Counsellors should be equipped with up-to-date information on menopausal health, coping strategies, and psychosocial interventions to effectively support women during menopause.

3. **Integration of Counselling Services:** Public hospitals should ensure that counselling services are fully integrated into menopausal care, providing women with access to both educational and emotional support.
4. **Facilitation of Support Groups:** Counsellors should organize peer support groups or group counselling sessions to allow women to share experiences, reduce feelings of isolation, and develop effective coping mechanisms.
5. **Referral and Collaboration:** Counsellors should establish strong collaboration with medical professionals to identify women requiring specialized care and make timely referrals to ensure comprehensive menopausal management.
6. **Promotion of Healthy Lifestyle Practices:** Counsellors should guide women on nutrition, exercise, stress management, and sleep hygiene to help reduce the severity of menopausal symptoms and improve overall well-being.

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