

Impact of Psychological Distress in Women upon Coping with Breast Cancer

أثر المحنة النفسية عند النساء على التكيف مع سرطان الثدي

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المستخلص:

الهدف: لتحديد أثر المحنة النفسية على تكيف النساء المصابات بسرطان الثدي.
المنهجية: تم استخدام التصميم الوصفي في هذا البحث. أُختيرت عينة متوفرة من (٦٠) امرأة من المجتمع. تم تطوير أداتين للقياس في هذا البحث والمكونة من مقياس المحنة النفسية ومقياس التكيف مع سرطان الثدي. تم الحصول على الإتساق الداخلي وصدق المحتوى لأدوات القياس. جمعت البيانات من خلال استخدام أدوات القياس. حللت البيانات من خلال استخدام أسلوب تحليل البيانات الإحصائي الوصفي وإسلوب تحليل البيانات الإحصائي الإستدلالي.
النتائج: بينت النتائج بأن النساء المصابات بسرطان الثدي يتعرضن للمحنة النفسية وستراتيجيات التكيف السلبي.
الإستنتاجات: أثبتت الدراسة بأن المحنة النفسية لها أثر على تكيف النساء المصابات بسرطان الثدي.
التوصيات: أوصت الدراسة إلى التحري عن المحنة النفسية بين المرضى المصابين بسرطان الثدي والمعرضين إلى عوامل الخطورة العالية والذي يسهل وقت الإحالة للخدمات النفسية الإجتماعية المناسبة.
الكلمات المفتاحية: أثر، المحنة النفسية، النساء، التكيف، سرطان الثدي

Abstract:

Objective(s): To determine the impact of psychological distress in women upon coping with breast cancer.

Methodology: The current study employs a descriptive design. Convenient sample of (60) women with breast cancer are recruited from the community. Two instruments, psychological distress scale and coping scale are developed for the study. Internal consistency reliability and content validity are obtained for the study instruments. Data are collected through the application of the study instruments. The descriptive statistical data analysis technique and the inferential statistical data analysis approach are used to analyses the data.

Results: Women with breast cancer have experienced psychological distress and negative coping strategies.

Conclusion: The study confirms that psychological distress has an impact upon women's coping with breast cancer.

Recommendations: Screening for psychological distress among high-risk breast cancer patients may lead to earlier referral to suitable psychosocial therapy.

Key Words: Impact, psychological distress, women, coping, breast cancer.

Introduction

Breast cancer is a diverse illness that often begins as a local lesion in the breast and progresses to an invasive malignancy that targets the lymph nodes in the armpits and other organs. Several factors serve as warning signs and influence the kind, treatment, and outcome ⁽¹⁾.

Psychological discomfort refers to non-specific feelings of stress, worry, and sadness. High levels of psychological discomfort are suggestive of poor mental health and may represent common mental diseases such as depression and anxiety disorders ⁽²⁾.

Psychological distress can be stimulated by stressors, personal life changes, or trauma. When an individual experiences this unpleasant feeling, it can greatly impact their overall functioning. While every person reacts to stress in distinct ways, psychological distress can manifest as extreme fatigue, sadness, avoidance behaviors, fear, and anxiety. A person experiencing psychological distress may seem distant and unlike themselves, often avoiding social situations ⁽³⁾.

Being diagnosed with breast cancer and going through cancer treatment can be quite stressful. One-third of cancer patients are expected to be struggling with psychiatric problems for example, anxiousness and despair, as well as tenacity is a technique of managing and overcoming life challenges such as cancer detection ⁽⁴⁾.

A prospective research was conducted to determine the prevalence of women with early stage breast cancer experienced considerable levels of psychological suffering almost two years after diagnosis. One hundred and seventy women participated in the study. Almost two years after being diagnosed, sixteen percent of the women experienced severe psychological anguish. The following factors were Intrusive thoughts about the disease, trait anxiety, health symptoms, and sleeping difficulties are the strongest indicators of a high level of discomfort ⁽⁵⁾.

As breast cancer survival rates raise so will the number of women who are still dealing with the long-term repercussions of breast cancer treatment. Many academics are becoming increasingly concerned about Women's responses to and coping with breast cancer diagnosis ⁽⁶⁾.

As a result, the goal of this study is to determine the impact of psychological distress on breast cancer patients.

Methodology

The current study employs a descriptive design. Convenient sample of (60) women with breast cancer is recruited from the community. All women who have taken part in the study have been asked to sign a consent form stating their desire to take part in the study. Two instruments, psychological distress scale of (10) items and coping scale of (12) items are developed for the purpose of the study. Internal consistency reliability

for the study instruments is measured using the Cronbach alpha correlation coefficient and the split-half approach of ($r = 0.83$) for the psychological distress scale and ($r = 0.86$) with relation to the coping scale. A panel of (10) experts determined the content validity of the study instruments.

Results

Table (1): Overall Evaluation of Women's Psychological Distress

Mild (10-23.33)	Moderate (23.34-36.67)	Severe (36.68-50)
0 (0.0%)	6(10%)	54(90%)

According to the results of this table, the majority of the women (90%) have suffered severe psychological distress.

Table (2): Mean of Scores on Items of Women's Psychological Distress

List	Items	1	2	3	4	5	Mean of Scores	Evaluation
1	How frequently in the previous 30 days did you feel fatigued for no apparent reason?	0	0	0	8	52	4.86	High
2	How often did you feel nervous in the previous 30 days?	0	0	0	6	54	4.9	High
3	How frequently in the previous 30 days did you feel so worried that nothing could calm you down?	0	0	0	3	57	4.95	High
4	How frequently did you feel hopeless in the previous 30 days?	0	0	0	0	60	5	High
5	In the preceding 30 days, How frequently did you feel agitated or fidgety?	0	0	0	0	60	5	High
6	How frequently in the previous 30 days Were you so agitated that you couldn't sit still?	0	0	0	2	58	4.96	High
7	How frequently did you feel depressed in the previous 30 days?	0	0	0	0	60	5	High
8	How frequently did you feel like everything was an effort in the previous 30 days?	56	4	0	0	0	1.06	Low
9	How frequently in the previous 30 days Were you so depressed that nothing could lift your spirits?	0	0	2	8	50	4.8	High
10	How frequently did you feel useless in the previous 30 days?	0	0	0	8	52	4.86	High

1. None of the time, 2. A little of the time, 3. Some of the time, 4. Most of the time, 5. All of the Time, High: Mean of Scores > 3, Low: Mean of Scores < 3

Results out of this table reveal that the mean of scores on items of psychological distress is high on all items except that of item 8 which is low.

Table (3): Overall Evaluation of Women's Coping with Breast Cancer

Low (12-19)	Moderate (20-27)	High (28-36)
46(76.6%)	12(20%)	2(3.33%)

Results out of this table present that most of women have not expressed positive coping with breast cancer (76.6%).

Table (4): Mean of Scores on Items of Women's Coping with Breast Cancer

List	Item	Always	Sometimes	Never	Mean of Scores	Evaluation
1	Relying on prayer	13	38	9	2	High
2	Avoiding negative people	5	12	43	1.36	Low
3	Developing a positive attitude	6	6	48	1.3	Low
4	Having a will to live	1	5	54	1.1	Low
5	Obtaining assistance from family, friends, and support groups	3	5	52	1.82	High
6	Positive cognitive restructuring	3	8	49	1.23	Low
7	Wishful thinking	7	9	44	1.38	Low
8	Making changes	6	8	46	1.33	Low
9	Social support engaging in physical activity	0	7	53	1.1	Low
10	Using medications	11	45	4	2.1	High
11	Resting	7	11	42	1.4	Low
12	Finding positive meaning in life	5	4	51	1.23	Low

High: Mean of Scores > 1.5, Low: Mean of Scores < 1.5

The results of this table show that the mean of scores on coping items is low on most items except item 1, 5, and 10, which are high.

Table (5): Impact of Psychological Distress upon Coping with Breast Cancer

Model	Sum of Squares	Degree of Freedom	Mean Square	F	Significance
1 Regression	370.029	1	370.029	18.950	0.000
Residual	1132.571	58	19.527		
Total	1502.600	59			

a. Dependent Variable: Coping

b. Predictors: (Constant), Psychological Distress

This table's findings show that women's psychological distress has a substantial influence on coping with their breast cancer.

Discussion

Part I: Discussion on Psychological Distress and Breast Cancer Coping

Throughout the data analysis process, the study findings provide evidence that women with breast cancer develop psychological distress as a result of developing breast cancer. Such evidence is noted in the high mean of scores on items of psychological distress.

In a cross-sectional study, patients with breast cancer have a reported significant level of distress ⁽⁷⁾.

In a descriptive comparative study, the main effect of cancer on psychological distress is found to be significant ⁽⁸⁾.

High levels of psychological distress are found in 63.1 percent of women with a history of depression vs 14.3 percent of those without a history (P = 0.000). ⁽⁹⁾.

In terms of how women cope with breast cancer, the study findings reveal that they have experienced negative coping with breast cancer. Such finding is evidenced in the low mean of scores on items of women's breast cancer coping except items of relying on prayer; obtaining assistance from family;

support groups and friends; and using medications, which have high mean of scores.

A qualitative phenomenological study has highlighted three themes of coping with breast cancer which are retaining hope; spiritual progress; and self-perceived support resources ⁽¹⁰⁾.

Part II: Discussion of the Impact of Psychological Distress in Women upon Coping with Breast cancer

As a result of the data analysis, the study has approved that psychological distress can impact significantly upon women coping with breast cancer. This can be interpreted in a way that as long as women with breast cancer, they develop psychological distress and cannot experience positive cope strategies with overwhelming disease.

Unfortunately, supportive evidence for this relationship is not available in the literature for such finding of the present study due to its originality

Conclusion

The study confirms that psychological distress has an impact upon women's coping with breast cancer.

Recommendations

1. Psychological distress screening in high-risk breast cancer patients may allow for more prompt referral to appropriate psychosocial care.
2. As an initial approach to patient therapy, a unique examination of coping techniques is strongly recommended, and to assist these ladies in dealing with their challenges, an informal support group must be formed.
3. Furthermore, the findings of this study can serve as a foundation for future study that will result in the development of a care approach that enhances coping mechanisms in women suffering with breast cancer

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