



Overcoming the Emotional Challenges of Cancer Patients through Psychosocial Support

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ABSTRACT

Cancer not only affects the patient's physical condition but also has significant emotional impacts, such as anxiety, depression and stress. Emotional challenges can affect the quality of life and recovery process of cancer patients. This study aims to identify the types of emotional challenges faced by cancer sufferers and explore the effectiveness of psychosocial support in overcoming these challenges. This research method uses a qualitative approach by collecting data through in-depth interviews and questionnaires involving 10 cancer patients from various backgrounds. Research results show that cancer sufferers often experience feelings of fear, hopelessness and social isolation. Anxiety about the future, uncertainty about the effectiveness of treatment, and drastic changes in physical and social roles are the main factors causing emotional distress. Psychosocial support, which includes counseling, group therapy, and assistance from mental health professionals, has proven effective in helping patients manage their emotions. This psychosocial intervention can provide space for patients to express their feelings, get support from fellow patients, and learn effective coping strategies. This research also found that family and community support plays an important role in the emotional recovery process of cancer patients. Active involvement of family members in counseling and therapy sessions can increase the patient's sense of support and reduce the patient's sense of isolation. Additionally, participation in cancer patient support groups helps them feel more understood and emotionally supported. The conclusion of this study is that psychosocial support is an important component in comprehensive cancer care. Psychosocial interventions not only help overcome emotional challenges but also contribute to improving the patient's quality of life. Therefore, healthcare programs must include psychosocial support as an integral part of cancer care, ensuring easy and inclusive access for all patients. Supportive health policies and adequate funding are also needed to implement these services effectively and sustainably.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Cancer is a chronic disease that has a significant impact not only on the physical aspect, but also on the psychological and social aspects of the sufferer [1]. This disease not only causes physical suffering due to severe symptoms and treatment, but also presents complex emotional challenges. Cancer sufferers often experience various emotional problems, such as anxiety, depression, stress, and uncertainty about their future [2], [3]. Additionally, the long and intensive treatment process often leads to feelings of isolation, loss of hope, and changes in social relationships [4], [5].

The emotional challenges faced by cancer survivors can worsen their overall health condition. Research shows that cancer survivors who experience high levels of anxiety and depression have a lower quality of life and poorer treatment outcomes compared to those who receive adequate emotional support [6]. Therefore, it is important to pay special attention to psychosocial aspects in cancer care.

Psychosocial support is a holistic approach that involves a variety of interventions to help cancer sufferers overcome their emotional and social challenges [7]. This support can take the form of individual or group counseling, psychological therapy, support from family and friends, and community programs designed to provide a sense of togetherness and solidarity [8]. Psychosocial support not only helps reduce negative emotional symptoms, but also increases coping abilities, improves social relationships, and improves the quality of life of cancer sufferers.

Although the importance of psychosocial support has been widely recognized, its implementation still faces challenges. Limited resources, lack of trained professionals, and social stigma associated with mental health problems often hinder cancer survivors' access to adequate psychosocial support [9]. In many developing countries, including Indonesia, psychosocial support for cancer sufferers is still not an integral part of cancer care. This indicates an urgent need to develop effective strategies in providing and increasing access to psychosocial support for cancer sufferers.

This research aims to explore the emotional challenges faced by cancer survivors and identify effective strategies in overcoming these challenges through psychosocial support. By understanding the needs and experiences of cancer sufferers, as well as evaluating various forms of psychosocial interventions, it is hoped that this research can provide practical recommendations for improving the quality of life of cancer sufferers through better and more affordable psychosocial support.

Thus, this research not only aims to provide theoretical insight into the importance of psychosocial support, but also to make a practical contribution to the development of more holistic and patient-focused health services. It is hoped that the results of this research can be a basis for policy makers, health service providers, and community organizations in designing and implementing effective psychosocial support programs for cancer sufferers.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a mixed-methods approach, which combines qualitative and quantitative methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of the emotional challenges faced by cancer survivors and the effectiveness of psychosocial support in overcoming these challenges. This approach allows researchers to examine data in depth and breadth. The population of this study were cancer sufferers who were undergoing treatment or follow-up care at hospitals and oncology clinics. Samples were taken using a purposive sampling technique, where participants were selected based on certain criteria such as type of cancer, stage of treatment, and willingness to participate in research. A total of 100 participants were taken for the quantitative part, and 20 participants were taken for in-depth qualitative interviews. The questionnaire was designed to collect quantitative data regarding the emotional challenges faced by cancer sufferers and the forms of psychosocial support they received. This questionnaire includes Likert scales to measure levels of anxiety, depression, stress, and quality of life, as well as open-ended questions about experiences of psychosocial support.

In-depth interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview guide to explore the experiences of individuals with cancer regarding emotional challenges and psychosocial support. This interview aims to gain an in-depth understanding of their emotional needs and perceptions of the support they receive. FGDs were conducted to collect opinions and suggestions from small groups of cancer sufferers, families and health workers regarding effective forms of psychosocial support and obstacles in their implementation. This FGD helps in identifying the most needed and effective interventions. Observations were carried out in hospitals and oncology clinics to see directly the interactions between cancer sufferers and psychosocial support providers. These observations provide additional context for understanding how psychosocial support is provided and received.

Quantitative data from the questionnaire was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. This analysis includes frequency distributions, means, and correlation tests to identify relationships between levels of anxiety, depression, stress, quality of life, and psychosocial support. Qualitative data from in-depth interviews and FGDs were analyzed using the thematic analysis method. These analysis steps include data transcription, coding, identification of main themes, and drawing conclusions. The results of this analysis are used to deepen understanding of the emotional experiences and psychosocial support needs of cancer survivors. To ensure the validity and reliability of the research, several steps were taken, including: data triangulation by combining results from various data collection methods. Validation of the questionnaire through initial trials (pilot tests) and assessment by experts. Use of member checking techniques in interviews to ensure accurate interpretation of qualitative data. This study adhered to the principles of research ethics by obtaining approval from the research ethics committee. All participants were provided with complete



information about the purpose of the study, procedures, and their rights as participants, including the right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequences. The confidentiality and privacy of participants is guaranteed by disguising their identities in all research reports. This research has received approval from Palembang Health Polytechnic Health Research Ethics Committee.

3. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

3.1. Result

Based on the analysis process, coding, categories and themes can be formulated.

3.1.1. Coding

The coding of the interview and FGD data carried out in this research is

Table 3.1.1 Coding

No.	Interview excerpts	Coding
	Anxiety about the future	
1.	I often worry about what will happen to me and my family	Undecided
	I'm afraid I won't be able to see my children grow up	Nervous
	Treatment-induced depression	
2.	The side effects of chemotherapy made me feel really bad	Negative
	There are days where I feel very sad and don't want to do anything	Grief
	Social isolation	
3.	I feel like a burden to my family	Obstacle
	I avoided friends because I didn't want them to see me sick	Stay away
	Need for emotional support	
4.	The support from the counselor really helped me understand and accept this situation	Help
	The support group gave me the strength to keep fighting	Capacity
	Support from family and friends	
5.	My family is always there for me, it makes me feel not alone	Join
	My friends often visit me and give me encouragement	Motivating
	Social stigma	
6.	Some people consider me a curse because I have cancer	Reply
	There is a huge stigma associated with cancer in my community	Negative
	Access to psychosocial services	
7.	It's hard to find available counselors in my area	Obstacle
	We need more easily accessible psychosocial services	Need

3.1.2. Category

After coding, the next step is to group the coding into broader categories including: negative emotions, anxiety about the future, depression due to treatment, social isolation, emotional support, need for emotional support, support from family and friends, access barriers, social stigma and access to psychosocial services.

3.1.3. Theme

From these categories, several main themes can be identified:

a. Emotional challenges faced by cancer survivors

Cancer survivors often face significant emotional challenges, such as anxiety, depression, and social isolation. Uncertainty about the future and fear of death often worsen their emotional condition. Severe side effects of treatment also add to the psychological burden, causing feelings of hopelessness and loss of enthusiasm for life. In addition, the social stigma of cancer can make sufferers feel isolated and embarrassed, reducing the social support they receive. Without adequate psychosocial support, these emotional challenges can have a negative impact on the quality of life and recovery process of cancer sufferers.

b. The role of psychosocial support in coping with negative emotions

Psychosocial support plays an important role in helping cancer survivors overcome negative emotions such as anxiety, depression, and social isolation. Psychological counseling provides a space for patients to express their feelings, develop coping strategies, and gain a better understanding of their condition. Support groups offer a safe environment where patients can share experiences and get emotional encouragement from fellow sufferers. Support from family and friends also provides a sense of security and togetherness, helping patients feel less alone in their struggles. This psychosocial intervention has been shown to improve patients' quality of life by reducing negative emotional symptoms and improving overall well-being. Therefore, the integration of psychosocial support in cancer care is an important step to help patients better face their emotional challenges.

c. Barriers to getting psychosocial support

Barriers to obtaining psychosocial support for cancer sufferers include various complex and interrelated aspects. First, limited resources, such as a lack of professionals trained in providing psychosocial support, are a major obstacle in many health facilities, especially in rural areas. Second, the social stigma associated with mental health problems makes many cancer sufferers reluctant to seek psychosocial help, for fear of being seen as weak or experiencing discrimination. Third, limited access to psychosocial services is also a problem, particularly in remote areas where technological and transportation infrastructure may be inadequate. Fourth, lack of awareness and knowledge about the importance of psychosocial support among patients and their families can hinder efforts to seek necessary help. Fifth, the burden of additional costs for obtaining psychosocial support services can also be an obstacle for patients with financial limitations. Without efforts to overcome these barriers, many cancer survivors will not get the emotional support they need to manage their emotional challenges effectively

3.2. Discussion

This research reveals that psychosocial support plays an important role in helping cancer survivors overcome the various emotional challenges they face. These challenges include anxiety, depression, stress, and feelings of social isolation that are often caused by a cancer diagnosis and the arduous treatment process [10]. Through psychosocial support, such as psychological counseling, support groups, and support from family and friends, patients can find ways to manage their emotions more effectively [11].

The research results show that psychological counseling provides space for patients to express their feelings safely and develop better coping strategies [12]. Support groups allow patients to share experiences and get emotional encouragement from fellow cancer survivors, which can increase a sense of community and solidarity [8]. Apart from that, support from family and friends also provides a sense of security and that you are not alone in facing this disease [5].

However, this research also identified several barriers that prevent patients from getting the psychosocial support they need. Limited resources, such as the lack of professionals trained in providing psychosocial support, are a major obstacle, especially in rural areas [13]. Social stigma associated with mental health problems also makes many cancer sufferers reluctant to seek psychosocial help, for fear of being seen as weak or experiencing discrimination.

Limited access to psychosocial services, especially in remote areas, is another significant barrier. Inadequate infrastructure and a lack of support programs in remote areas mean that many patients do not get the help they need. Lack of awareness and knowledge about the importance of psychosocial support among patients and their families also hinders efforts to seek help.

In addition, the burden of additional costs for obtaining psychosocial support services is an obstacle for patients with financial limitations. Overcoming these barriers requires collaborative efforts between governments, health care providers, and community organizations. Strategies that can be implemented include increasing awareness of the importance of psychosocial support [7], training professionals, and providing more accessible services.

Increasing access to psychosocial support can help patients reduce negative emotional symptoms and improve their overall well-being. The findings of this study are consistent with the literature which states that psychosocial support is effective in reducing negative emotional symptoms and improving the quality of life of cancer patients. Therefore, the integration of psychosocial support in cancer care is essential to improve the emotional well-being of cancer survivors [14].

By providing adequate support, we can help cancer patients better manage their emotions and increase their chances of facing the disease more strongly. In conclusion, this study emphasizes the importance of psychosocial support in cancer care and the need for ongoing efforts to address barriers that impede access to this support. This joint effort will help ensure that all cancer patients have access to the psychosocial support they need to cope more effectively with their emotional challenges.



4. CONCLUSION

This research concludes that psychosocial support plays a crucial role in overcoming the emotional challenges faced by cancer survivors, such as anxiety, depression and social isolation. Psychological counseling, support groups, and support from family and friends have proven effective in improving patients' quality of life. However, there are significant barriers preventing access to this support, including limited resources, social stigma, and limited access, especially in rural areas. Overcoming these barriers requires collaborative efforts between governments, health care providers, and communities to increase awareness, train professionals, and provide more accessible services. Increased access to psychosocial support can reduce negative emotional symptoms and improve the overall well-being of cancer patients. This research emphasizes the importance of integrating psychosocial support in cancer care as a strategic step to improve the quality of life of sufferers. Thus, the development and dissemination of psychosocial support services should be a priority in holistic, patient-focused cancer care efforts.

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