

# Social Support And Its Relationship With Life Satisfaction Among Women With Breast Cancer: A Field Study Of Six (06) Cases At The Mustapha Pacha University Hospital Center, Algeria

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## Abstract:

Throughout life, individuals face numerous unwelcome experiences that threaten their well-being, such as cancer, which poses a serious threat to life and disrupts the patient's daily existence. Among various types of cancer, breast cancer is one that affects women and has significant negative impacts, both physically and psychologically. The breast is considered an essential part of a woman's femininity, beauty, and motherhood, and its loss or damage can lead to a disturbance in psychological, physical, and social balance. This results in feelings of fear, anxiety, and sadness, as well as challenges in establishing social relationships with others due to feelings of embarrassment. This condition often leads to a loss of self-confidence and a distorted body image due to the removal of this vital part of the body. Consequently, in addition to medical treatment, women diagnosed with cancer require social support in its emotional, material, and moral dimensions. The feeling of being supported by others, especially close family members and friends, is crucial in alleviating anxiety and suffering. Based on this, the following question arises: Is there a relationship between the level of social support and the degree of life satisfaction in breast cancer patients?

**Keywords:** Social Support; Life Satisfaction; Breast Cancer.

## Introduction:

– Cancer is currently considered one of the most serious and significant diseases that threaten human life. The diagnosis of cancer is a sudden, distressing event that impacts both physical and mental health, particularly psychological well-being. When a cancer patient first learns of their diagnosis, they often struggle to accept the truth, leading to a traumatic experience that negatively affects their psychological state, resulting in emotional pain (Nouibat, 2013). This is especially true when the disease affects women, as it threatens their lives, causing fear, anxiety, and depression, while also impacting their social relationships (Mahmoud, 2009, P:20). Therefore, they need support from those around them to help alleviate the effects of the trauma. Social support is a vital psychological and social intervention for

women with breast cancer, concerning both psychological adjustment and therapeutic adaptation, as well as maintaining self-confidence. It is also an important factor in alleviating pain and helping them accept treatment, particularly chemotherapy (Baouia, 2013).

– From a physical perspective, the breast is one of the most prominent parts of a woman's body, representing a source of admiration and pride, as well as a symbol of femininity. The disease may require its removal, which can result in a loss of

self-confidence and a distortion of the body image. The feeling of support from others, especially close family members and friends, is crucial in alleviating anxiety and suffering. Additionally, the patient's awareness of this support can have a positive impact on both their psychological and physical well-being.

- A comparative study by Lim et al. (2008) between Korean-American women and Korean women diagnosed with breast or uterine cancer aimed to evaluate the role of social support in improving the quality of life for these women. The results indicated that social support had a direct positive impact on their quality of life. Furthermore, the size of their social networks had both a direct and indirect effect on the quality of life related to health in both groups, proving to be effective in reducing psychological stress and enhancing life satisfaction. This raises the following question: Is there a relationship between the level of social support and the degree of life satisfaction among breast cancer patients?

## – Study Problem:

- The problem of this study can be formulated in the following main question:
- **Is there a relationship between the level of social support and the level of life satisfaction among breast cancer patients?**

## Study Hypothesis:

There is a relationship between the level of social support and the level of life satisfaction among breast cancer patients.

**Importance and Objectives of the Research:**

- To identify the differences between the level of social support and life satisfaction among breast cancer patients.
- To examine the role of social support in

Social Support Level	Frequency	Percent age (%)	Chi-Square Value	Statistical Significance
Low	—	—	Not statistically significant	—
Medium	5	83.30%	2.66	—
High	1	16.70%	—	—

alleviating psychological stress and increasing life satisfaction among cancer patients.

- To explore the relationship between social support and life satisfaction among individuals diagnosed with cancer.

### Study Terminology:

- **Social Support:** Refers to the assistance and backing perceived by a breast cancer patient from the support provided by family members, friends, and close acquaintances.
- **Life Satisfaction:** Refers to the sense of contentment and happiness derived from an individual's material and physical abilities and resources, representing the degree to which a person values what they possess, regardless of its size, and enjoys it.
- **Breast Cancer:** A type of cancer that develops in the tissue of the breast. Symptoms include changes in breast shape, the appearance of a lump in the breast, discharge from the nipple, or the presence of a red, scaly patch. When the disease spreads throughout the body, additional symptoms such as bone pain, swollen lymph nodes, difficulty breathing, or yellowing of the skin may appear.
- **Cancer Patients:** Refer to individuals diagnosed by oncologists with breast cancer.

### The Applied Aspect

### Field Study:

### Methodology Used:

This study employed a clinical approach and the case study method.

### Sample of the Study and Selection Criteria:

The sample for this study was selected using the purposive sampling method. Participants were chosen from the public hospital institution of Mustafa Basha, Algiers. Six cases, ranging in age from 30 to 55 years, were selected, all of whom were diagnosed with breast cancer.

### Research Tools:

The following research tools were used in the current study:

- Scientific observation
- Semi-structured interviews
- Social support questionnaire
- Quality of life scale

### Presentation and General Analysis of the Cases:

#### Personal Data:

The study sample consisted of six women diagnosed with cancer, aged between 30 and 55 years, with educational levels ranging from primary to secondary.

#### Medical History of the Cases:

Most participants reported that their cancer diagnosis was linked to either past traumatic events or family genetic history.

#### Acceptance or Rejection of the Disease by the Patients:

Responses varied, with some participants expressing an inability to accept the disease, as they could not imagine their bodies without an essential organ, which they felt would lead to a distortion of their body image.

#### Psychological Well-being:

Regarding the psychological aspect of women diagnosed with breast cancer, the following was observed:

- **Feeling of Anxiety:** Cancer patients often experience feelings of anxiety and distress. Most participants stated that after their cancer diagnosis, they constantly felt anxious, and their psychological state remained unstable.
- **Feeling of Depression:** Cancer patients often experience feelings of depression. Participants expressed a sense of hatred towards everything in life, despite acknowledging it as fate.
- **Fear and Concerns:** All patients reported a fear of the cancer spreading throughout their bodies. Some even mentioned that death seemed preferable to the spread of the disease and the accompanying pain.

### 1. Characteristics of the Sample:

Characteristics		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Educational Level	Primary	2	33,3%
	Intermediate	2	33,3%
	Secondary	2	33,3%
Economic Level	Good	1	16,7%
	Average	3	0.5
	Poor	2	33,3%
Marital Status	Single	1	16,7 %
	Married	5	83,3 %

## 2. Hypotheses:

### **There is no difference between breast cancer patients in the level of social support they received**

This was tested using the Chi-square test, and the results are presented in the following table. The table shows that the majority of patients received support at an average level, accounting for 83.3%. In contrast, only 16.7% received support at a higher level. No cases were recorded where patients did not receive any support, which could be due to the nature of the illness. To confirm the nature of these differences, they were statistically tested using the Chi-square test, which yielded a value of 2.66. This result is not statistically significant, indicating that there is no difference between the patients in terms of the level of support they received. The majority of them received assistance and support at an average level.

	Moderate Satisfaction	High Satisfaction	Cramer's V Value	Statistical Significance
Moderate Support	4	1	0.20	Not statistically significant
High Support	1	0		
Total	5	1		

### **There is no difference between breast cancer patients in their level of life satisfaction**

The table shows that the majority of patients received support at an average level, accounting for 83.3%. In contrast, only 16.7% received support at a higher level, while no cases were recorded where patients did not receive support, which may be due to the nature of the illness. To verify the nature of these differences, they were statistically tested using the Chi-square test, which yielded a value of 2.66. This result is not statistically significant, indicating

that there is no difference between the patients in terms of the level of support they received. The majority of them received assistance and support at an average level.

### **2.2 There is no difference between breast cancer patients in their level of life satisfaction.**

Life Satisfaction Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Chi-Square Value	Statistical Significance
Low	—	—	2.66	Not statistically significant
Medium	5	83.30%		
High	1	16.70%		

### **There is a relationship between the level of social support received by breast cancer patients and their level of life satisfaction.**

To confirm this, it was statistically tested using Cramér's V coefficient, and the results are represented in the following table.

It can be concluded that life satisfaction is not strongly correlated with support among these patients; rather, there are other factors that the patients require. Furthermore, support can indeed assist them in achieving satisfaction. This necessitates further research to explore the key factors that contribute to their sense of satisfaction, in line with the first hypothesis, which states that "there is a relationship between the level of social support and the degree of life satisfaction among breast cancer patients." To verify its accuracy, statistical testing was conducted using the Kramer correlation coefficient, which was found to be 0.20, indicating no statistical significance (Ali, 1998). Based on this result, we conclude that social support does not always contribute to increasing life satisfaction among breast cancer patients, confirming the existence of negative effects of social support. Additionally, all the mitigating effects turned out to be the opposite of what was expected. A study by Kleiber (2021) found that social support was linked to an increase in psychological depression, and that social integration led to an increase in stress.

### **Conclusion:**

The importance of social support lies in its positive role in enhancing the traits that help combat breast cancer, especially when it contributes to creating a positive psychological state for the patient. This underscores the need for social support and its close connection to life satisfaction among breast cancer

patients.

### Study Recommendations:

- Train psychologists to provide psychological care for cancer patients during their treatment in the hospital.
- Design counseling programs to improve the quality of life and reduce depressive symptoms in women diagnosed with cancer.
- Conduct subsequent studies on the impact of palliative care concepts in increasing patients' ability to adapt and cope with the challenging situation of chronic illness.
- Train cancer patients in pain management techniques to alleviate their physical and emotional pain.
- Conduct group therapy sessions to reduce stress and anxiety levels in cancer patients.
- Develop counseling programs for the families of cancer patients, particularly spouses.
- Study the body image of women with cancer, especially those who have undergone surgery to amputate an organ, and its relation to the nature of the amputated body part.
- It is crucial to prevent the causes of breast cancer and to better understand its causes, symptoms, and methods of treatment and prevention to reduce the spread of the disease.

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