



Effects of Psychosocial-Spiritual Interventions and Psychological Well-being among Cancer Patients Supported by Lady Hope Wellness Institute in Kitisuru, Nairobi County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of psychosocial- spiritual interventions provided by Lady Hope Wellness Institute, on psychological well-being among cancer patients in Saint Catherine of Siena Parish at Kitisuru, Nairobi County. The objectives of the study were: to establish different types of psychosocial-spiritual interventions applied by Lady Hope Wellness Institute in facilitating psychological well-being among cancer patients, and to determine to which extent these interventions have promoted psychological well-being among these patients. This research used a mixed method approach, using survey questionnaire and interviews. It was based on a sample of 13 respondents from a total of 50 cancer patients. A purposive sampling technique was applied. Data were collected using both qualitative and quantitative methods where a questionnaire and interview were administered. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, with SPSS (version 25) for the management of scores, mean, frequency, percentages and tables. Content analysis was used to transcribe the qualitative data. The findings established that Lady Hope Wellness Institute used personal counseling, group counseling, prayer group meetings, meditation, religious services, medical support and social aid/ material support to foster patients Psychological Well-being (PWB). The study also revealed that the patients were experiencing a high level of flourishing in life.

Keywords: Cancer Patient, Psychological Wellbeing, Psychosocial Spirituality Intervention, Flourish and Meaningfulness

1. Background

Lady Hope Wellness Institute is a charitable health organization that is based at St. Catherine of Siena Catholic Parish at Kitisuru in the Archdiocese of Nairobi, catering for people living with cancer. Its aim is to enhance the quality of life for poor cancer affected patients. Cancer is a major public health problem worldwide, and the second leading cause of death in the United States (Siegel et al. 2023). An overview of GLOBOCAN 2020 estimates that in Africa, Egypt was the leading country with 143,632 new cases and 89,042 deaths; Nigeria was ranked second, followed by South Africa, with an estimated incidence of 124,815 and 108,168, respectively. Egypt, Nigeria and South Africa were the top three ranked countries in terms of cancer deaths (Sharma et al., 2022). In Kenya, cancer is the third leading cause of mortality after infectious and cardiovascular diseases (Jani et al., 2021). From 2012 to 2018, the annual incidence of Cancer increased from 37,000 to 47,887 new cases.

The challenges faced by cancer patients in Kenya are many including expensive cost of cancer treatment, lack of access to cancer centers, and lack of trained specialized oncologists (Makau-Barasa et al., 2020). Moreover, socio-cultural barriers including stigma, fear as well as pervasive myths around cancer impede patients from seeking care early. Another issue facing cancer patients is the inadequate availability of quality care. The global cancer burden continues to grow and exerting tremendous physical, emotional and financial strain on individuals, families and communities. Up to 40% patients diagnosed with cancer experience significant levels of psychosocial-spiritual distress that are related to life changes associated with cancer diagnosis and treatment side effect (Khait&Lazenby,2021). Psycho-social support and counseling for patients in the hospital settings is found to be lacking (Nmoh, 2019).

Additionally, despite Kenya Government effort to improve access to cancer testing and treatment in the country, some policy implementation gaps are noted. These include inadequate financing for cancer services, concentration of cancer services in urban areas, limited research and treatment services as well as inadequate support interventions for cancer patients (Makau-Barasa, 2020). There is still a need for suitable intervention strategies to improve the life the affected patients and their families. However, there is increasing research indicating that psychosocial-spiritual distress associated with cancer disease can be addressed applying psychosocial and spiritual interventions such as dignity therapy, cognitive behavioral therapy, and meaning-centered therapy (Cardoso et al., 2023). These interventions intend to meet cancer patients' psychological and spiritual needs, and improving their psychological well-being (Bozel et al., 2020).

According to the Oncology Nursing Society (ONS, 2023), psycho-spiritual interventions are approaches that involve religious or existential aspects such as finding meaning and purpose in life. Psycho-spiritual interventions may include activities such as individual counseling, group counseling, spiritual counseling, meaning-focused meditation, or psychotherapy and religious services. Religiously oriented spiritual interventions include activities such as prayer, worship, and religious rituals. Liu et al. (2023) noted that spiritual interventions are those that involve religious or existential aspects, such as finding meaning and purpose in life. Spiritual intervention is considered as an important aspect of holistic care and has been identified as a standard component that contributes to the well-being of cancer patients. Therefore, spiritual interventions have been studied for their effects on anxiety and depression among patients with cancer (Shi et al., 2023).

Psychological well-being refers to an individual's subjective experience positive psychological states such as pleasure, happiness, life fulfillment, and a sense of purpose and meaning in life. It is a holistic theory that encompasses different traits of an individual's mental and emotional health, including positive relationships, personal growth and development, positive self-esteem and self-acceptance, and feeling of being in charge (Dhanabhakya & Sarath, 2023). According to World Health Organization (WHO, 2021), psychological well-being is "a state of mind in which an individual is able to develop their potential, work productively, and creatively, and is able to cope with the normal stress of life".

Statement of the Problem

Effective psycho-social and supporting counseling services improve cancer patient's quality of life, symptoms of depression and anxiety, and enhance their well-being (Aini, 2020). Unfortunately, cancer care in Kenya tends to focus primarily on the physical, meanwhile ignoring the psychological, spiritual and mental well being of the patient (Nmoh, 2019). This lack of psycho-social spiritual interventions contribute to the widespread of fear, stigma as well as the pervasive myths around cancer and resulting in impeding patients from seeking care early. In Kenya, stigma continues to surround people living with cancer and leading into isolation and refusing treatment. If psycho-social support interventions are not part of cancer care and treatment, distress emanating from cancer disease will continue to have far-reaching negative impact on individual's life. This study therefore sought to explore the effects of psychosocial-spiritual interventions on the psychological well-being among cancer patients in Saint Catherine of Siena Parish at Kitisuru in Nairobi County.

Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the spiritual interventions used by Lady Hope Wellness Institute to improve cancer patients psychological well-being?
2. To what extent have these psycho spiritual interventions improved cancer patients' psychological well-being.

2. Methodology

This research adopted a mixed method approach, involving a survey research design using questionnaire and interview as instruments for data collection. The study used a non-probability sampling and convenience sampling techniques. Data for this study was collected from 50 cancer patients supported by Lady Hope Wellness Institute with a sample of 13 participants. Three cancer patients were involved in interview, and qualitative data collected through such interviews was analyzed using content analysis techniques.

The Flourishing Scale (Diner & Biswas-Diener, 2009) a 8-item questionnaire that measures global life satisfaction was used to measure the psychological well being of the patients. This scale measured the respondents self-perceived success in important areas such as relationships, self-esteem, purpose, and optimism. This scale has been found to be reliable and valid, and is often used as a quick and simple measure of psychological well-being. Each individual responded to various statements indicating on 7-point Likert scale how true each statement is true of them. 13 Respondents rated statements on a scale of 1 to 7-points, with 1 indicating strongly agree and 7 indicating strongly disagree.

3. FINDINGS

Demographic Information of the Respondents

The respondents were asked to identify their age group, gender, marital status, educational level, occupation, level of income and religious affiliation as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Socio-Demographic Information (n=13)

Socio-economic Characteristics	Category	F	%
	25-29yrs	1	7.7
	40 yrs and above	12	92.3
Gender	Male	1	7.7
	Female	12	92.3

Marital Status	Single	1	7.7
	Married	6	46.2
	Widowed \	6	46.2
Education Level	Primary	5	38.5
	Secondary	4	30.8
	College	2	15.4
	Did not go to school	2	15.4
Occupation	Unemployed	12	92.3
	Self Employed	1	7.7
Income Level per month	< 2000	3	23.1
	None	10	76.9
Religious Affiliation	Catholic	4	30.8
	Anglican	1	7.1
	Protestants	5	38.5
	Muslims	1	7.7
	Full gospel	1	7.7
	Redeemed	1	7.7

The results in Table 1 indicate that about 92.3% of the patients, were aged 40 years and above. This shows that majority of the cancer patients have past the youthful stage, which is non-industrious in the society. Results further shows that about 92.3% of the patients were female. This could imply that men are not willing to seek health care to improve their life, or stigma is involved. The table shows also that almost all patients were unemployed 92.3%. In addition to this, the table shows that the dominating respondents earn nothing (76.9%), contrary to a few (23.1%) who reported that they earn more than Ksh. 2000 monthly.

Types of Psycho spiritual Interventions Patients Received

The first objective of this study was to establish different interventions applied by Lady Hope Wellness Institute in facilitating psychological well-being among cancer patients as shown in Table 2

Table 2

Type of interventions and number of supports by Lady Hope Wellness Institute

Interventions Provided	Less than 5		6-10		11-15		25-30		30 and above	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Personal counseling services	10	83.3	2	16.7	0	-	0	-	0	-
Group counseling services	11	91.7	1	8.3	0	-	0	-	0	-
Prayer group meetings	8	66.7	3	25.0	1	8.3	0	-	0	-
Spiritual support, mediation religious services	6	50.0	3	25.0	3	25.0	0	-	0	-
Medical care /support since joining	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	11	100
Social aid /assistance/material support since joining	8	66.7	0	-	0	-	3	25.0	0	-

The results in Table 2 indicate that majority of the patients (83.3%) have had personal counseling services at least less than 5 sessions/supports, while 16.7% of the patients noted attending a number of sessions ranging from 6-10. The majority of the patients (91.7%) have also received group counseling services at least 5 sessions, and 8.3% of them indicated that they have been supported by the organization from 6 up to 10 sessions. The table revealed also that 66.7% of the patients had the opportunity of attending less than five sessions of meditation and prayer group. These services were delivered during home visits, when opportunity arises, from the church groups and the visiting groups.

With regard to spiritual support interventions, such as meditation and other religious services, Table 2 indicates that 50% of the respondents got sessions/supports below 5 times, while 25% reached up to 15 sessions each. In interview, some of the participants reported that this support came through NHIF (National Health Insurance Fund) while others said prayer meetings were held in their local churches as some indicated prayer groups on Sundays and a few mentioned meditation at every opportunity.

Furthermore, findings in table 2 shows that all patients (100%) who participated in the study received more than 30 sessions in Medical care /support since joining the organization. Majority of the patients in their comments affirmed NHIF, consultation and blood test as the means through which they used to get these services. In an interview, one patient reported that;

Treatment given to the cancer patients should be looked into where there is a need to declare it free and accessible for the common man. The health benefits such National Health Insurance Funds (NHIF) should be accessible to all.

Finally, the study showed that majority of the respondents (66.7%) have had session of 6 to 11 for Social aid /assistance/material support since joining the Institute, a few (8.3%) reported less than five sessions while 25% of the respondents recorded 11-15 supports/sessions. Most off the patients in their views described that they got services through home visits, food, and medical attention and in form of screening. A few alluded that they received accommodation facility and economic empowerments. In interview, one of the respondents requested more economic empowerment;

As cancer patients, we are requesting for financial support to boot some of the business we have including poultry farming. Government support for finances is also rewired to cater for our children's education in terms of school fees. There is a need for education to the community more on cancer awareness and helping the patients earn a living.

Furthermore, in the interview with respondents, concerning the most needed support, it was reported;

There is need for provision of financial empowerment materials such as wool, sisal. We are also requesting for the provision of finances to cater for movement from rural to treatment hospital and doctors consultations. Some of us need mentorship programs for encouragement and food support for us.

Patients Perceptions of Spiritual Interventions

The patients were asked to indicate their views about spiritual support interventions offered by Lady Hope Wellness Institute. Table 3 shows a synopsis of their perceptions about these support interventions.

Table 3

Cancer Patients Perceptions of Spiritual Support interventions

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Very supportive	12	92.3
No opinion	1	7.7
Total	13	100.0

The results in Table 3 indicates that majority of the patients (92.3%) affirmed that the institution is very supportive. However, a number of 7.7% had no opinion in relation to this statement. It is therefore clear that the Lady Hope Wellness Institute has been standing with the cancer patients in various circumstance of life to deal with the burden of the disease. One of the cancer patients in an interview reported;

Since I joined this organization most of us learned how to make carpet and soap, sewing and basket weaving.

Extent to which Spiritual Interventions have Promoted Psychological Well-being

The respondents were requested to indicate the degree to which they agree or disagree with the statements on Patients' perception of their flourishing in life, taking Likert scale of 1-7 where 1=strongly disagree 2=Disagree, 3= slightly disagree, 4= neither agree nor disagree 5= slightly agree, 6 = Agree and 7 = strongly agree. Findings were as presented in table 4.

Table 4

Patients' perception of their psychological well-being or life flourishing

Indicators of flourishing in life	N	Score	Mean	Interpretation
1. I lead a purposeful and meaningful life	13	72	5.54	High flourishing
2. My social relationships are supportive and rewarding	13	46	3.54	Lack of flourishing
3. I'm engaged and interested in my daily activities	13	60	4.62	Flourishing
4. I actively contribute to the happiness and well-being of others	13	63	4.85	Flourishing
5. I'm competent and capable in the activities that are important for me	13	50	3.85	Slight lack of flourishing
6. I'm good person and live a good life	13	64	4.92	Flourishing
7. I'm optimistic about the future	13	62	4.77	Flourishing
8. People respect me	13	68	5.23	High flourishing

The data presented in Table 4 indicate that majority of the patients in Lady Hope Wellness Institute feel that they lead a purposeful and meaningful life. This is shown by the total score of 72 with a mean of 5.54. This finding suggests that a larger population of the participants is proud and feel satisfied with the life they lead. They may be feeling a sense of recognition or a massive psycho-spiritual support they get from the surrounding which boosts their strength. The results in Table 4 also indicate that patients feel respected as shown by a total score of 68 with a mean of 5.23. In addition, majority of the

respondents with a total score of 63 and a mean of 4.85 recognize that they actively contribute to the happiness and well-being of others. Cancer patients engaged in this study affirmed that they are reliable to give hand to one another and give happiness to their colleagues as a means of psychological support. Standing with one another in this case help the patients gain more strengths required for human wellness. This could be coming from spiritual, material support or psycho-social support received.

Results in Table 4 also indicate that they are optimistic about the future as shown by a total score of 62 with a mean of 4.77. This finding implies that cancer patients feel that they have a future. They must have experienced changes in life that give them hope for better life. This could be a result of close interactions with their organization and individual colleagues. This shows a sense of high esteem among the patients. The life of the participants in this study is motivating them for there could be some improvements that instill hope in them, and psycho-spiritual interventions boost their emotions positively. In interview patients mentioned some of the skills they acquired from Lady Hope wellness Institute that help them increase spiritual life and living;

Since I joined Lady Hope Institute, my hope is renewed; most of us learned how to make carpet and soap, sewing and basket weaving.

4. Discussions

The results of the study showed that psycho-spiritual interventions provided by Lady Hope Wellness Institute to cancer patients included personal therapy, group counseling, prayer group meetings, meditation and religious services. These findings of the study regarding these psycho-spiritual interventions strengthened the position of Aini et al. (2020) asserting that spirituality, religion, belief and practices are important elements of health and wellbeing. The balance of services concerning bio, psycho and spiritual needs is necessary for patients during their hospital stay and home follow-up. Others studies (Bozek et al., 2020) have emphasized that spirituality is a strong predictor and promoter of psychological health. Studies (Kirca, et al., 2023) which also supported these findings underline that spiritual care of cancer patients decreases the physical problems, anxiety, sleep disorders, depression and disorders in their social functioning. Spiritual care can aid cancer patients connecting to self, and/or a higher power or nature, find meaning and purpose in life (Shi et al., 2023). Spiritual well-being in cancer patients can reduce symptoms of depression and increase life expectation (Nasution et al., 2020).

Furthermore, findings of this study are in line with studies that emphasized the effectiveness of spiritual interventions on psychological outcomes and quality of life among patients with cancer (Liu et al.2023). These findings note that there is a significant influence of the psycho-spiritual interventions on the global quality of life and physical, role, emotional, cognitive, and social isolation of these patients (Aini et al., 2020). This study revealed that psychosocial and existential interventions provided by Lady Hope Wellness Institute, focused on the psychological, social and existential needs of patients, aiming at preserving their dignity and helping them finding meaning in life and suffering (Cardoso et al., 2023). This is also shown in Table 4 and their views of these interventions in Table 3.

On the other hand, the views of cancer patients about psycho-spiritual support received particularly counseling and spiritual services indicate their positive appreciation of such interventions as indicated in Table 3. This fair perception of life satisfaction and purpose shows that their sense of meaning may have evolved on their transcendental and spiritual concerns, which are focused on themselves and not attributed to the events happening in their lives and the environment (Paloutzian & Park, 2021).

Findings of this study in Table 3 and Table 4 showed that cancer patients are experiencing a high level of flourishing in life. In Table 4, the total score of 72 with a mean of 5.54 indicated that patients are leading a purposeful and meaningful life. This is in line with Bozek et al. (2020) view that psychological well-being covers a wide range of welfare including positive assessments of oneself and one's past life (self-acceptance), a sense of continued growth and development as a person (personal growth), the belief that one's life is meaningful (purpose in life), the possession of quality relationships with others (positive relations with others), the capacity to manage effectively one's life and the surroundings (environmental mastery) and a sense self-determination (autonomy). Although, the patients are experiencing challenges such as insufficient income to maintain treatment and food support report a sense of meaning in life.

The finding of this study are also consistent with spiritual health theory according to which spiritual and religious belief systems provide companionship, advice, and self-esteem during difficult times. An individual seeks to find meaning and direction in life through faith and conviction in something higher bigger, a might universal power greater than himself (Dudi, 2023). The religious belief system, conviction, and hope give rise to a sensation of well-being and improve mental health. This is also emphasized by Feingold (2023), who points out that spirituality is a key part and a critical element of cancer care. Spirituality/religion instills cancer patients with a significant degree of hope, optimism and meaning in life. Several studies (Nasution et al., 2020) in line with this view indicate that cancer patients with high spiritual well-being enjoy life and have high value life (meaning) and peace even if they feel cancer symptoms such as pain and fatigue.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

Based on the findings above, the study therefore concludes that psycho-spiritual interventions are fairly improving cancer patients' well-being. Personal counseling, group counseling, prayers group meetings, meditation and religious services were being moderately implemented in Lady Hope Wellness Institute. This implies that these programs need to be well programmed and implemented to be more meaningful to patients.

Cancer patients feel that their life is purposeful and meaningful despite the challenges they are going through such as low income to maintain their life, high cost of medication and transport to reach hospitals for treatment. There is a positive relationship between psycho-spiritual interventions and the well-being of cancer patients' support by Lady Hope Wellness Institute.

Recommendations

The findings of this study revealed that cancer patients lack financial resources for their up-keeping. It is therefore recommendable that the government of Kenya through the Ministry of Health assists Lady Hope Wellness Institute and similar organization catering for patients and making available treatment at affordable cost.

This study has revealed that socio-economic difficulties may hinder the development of psychological well-being among cancer patients. It is recommended that Lady Wellness Hope Institute should make comprehensive needs assessment in order to implement relevant projects which may help to foster self-sustenance among patients.

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