

The Spirituality among Cancer Patients at the National Cancer Society Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur

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ABSTRACT

Individuals diagnosed with cancer would normally suffer from emotional stress or depression, such as sadness and anxiety. They often find it difficult to accept it as their fate, and therefore would experience inner turmoil or internal pressure. Cancer patients would also experience fatigue and apprehensiveness which may lead to chronic anxiety. Hence, cancer patients need to develop their inner strength in the form of spirituality in order to develop their souls. The purpose of this is to draw them closer to the Creator and to provide them with the inner strength they require in facing the trial of the cancer disease. This study aims to present the understanding of the concept of spirituality according to Islam and its benefits towards female cancer patients. This is a quantitatively-designed study, in the form of a research survey. The data collection was made based on the questionnaire distributed to 20 cancer patients at the National Cancer Society Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur. The data were descriptively analysed. The findings of the study show that the cancer patients understand that spirituality is an internal element in developing the soul (mean 3.68) and it is important to the cancer patients in dealing with their lives more courageously, as well as the positive impact that spirituality has on the cancer patients in helping them to get closer to the Creator (mean 3.63). Thus, it is desirable for the cancer patients to understand the element of spirituality and to practice spiritual practices in obtaining the positive impact on their lives and in continuing to do well.

Keywords: Spirituality, Cancer patients, National Cancer Society Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

Spirituality is a matter that is closely related to the relationship between human beings and Allah the Almighty, which is based on the practices in their lives and their adherence to the laws as ordained by Allah SWT [1]. The process of applying the concept of spirituality as proposed by Islam includes *musyaratah* (the setting of conditions), *muraqabah* (the worship of Allah), *muhasabah* (to perform self-reflection or the contemplation of mistakes), *mujahadah* (effort) and *mu'atabah* (to be consistent) [2]. Humans require for consistent exploration and guidance in practicing spiritual habits or practices because they are complex and subtle. Three important concepts in the exploration and guidance of spiritual habits or practices are: (a) *muhasabah* by reflecting on every action performed), (b) *muraqabah* by worshipping Allah SWT, and (c) *mujahadah* by performing good deeds and abandoning bad deeds [2].

This study aims to propose the concept of spirituality and well-being according to Islam, as well as to identify the virtues of the spiritual element towards female cancer patients. Apart from that, this study also analyses the method

in applying the element of spirituality among the female cancer patients towards their well-being.

Usually, cancer patients would experience different types and levels of emotional stress compared to healthy individuals. The patients' mood disorder needs to be immediately addressed. This is because cancer is categorised as a chronic disease that affects the physical and therefore causes the patients to be afraid in dealing with it [3]. Cancer patients need to be positive-minded and treat and guide their spirituality towards the positive side in living for a better life. Positive thinking can help cancer patients to become

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more open, stronger and more confident in undergoing the treatment process and in withstanding the pain due to the side effects of the disease. Besides that, among the important methods of restoring the patients' emotional stability is by practising practices that are able to bring them closer to Allah, such as self-reflection, reciting the Quran, praying and making supplications to the Creator [4]. Hence, cancer patients need to understand that the application of the spiritual element is vital in facing life more courageously and in a good manner. The inner strength of each individual is developed based on their own high spirit and *mujahadah* (effort).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study has been quantitatively-designed based on a survey. The collection of research data was made based on

the questionnaire. The selection of the sample for the study is purposive sampling. A total of 20 female cancer patients at the National Cancer Society Malaysia (PKKM) Kuala Lumpur were selected as the sample for the pilot study. The data obtained were descriptively analysed based on frequency, percentage and mean. The Cronbach's Alpha item obtained for the spiritual practices of the cancer patients is high, which is 0.978.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings for the mean score for spiritual understanding according to Islam as demonstrated by the respondents are shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Spiritual understanding according to Islam.

No.	Items	Percentage and Frequency (%)				Mean	S.D
		SD	D	A	SA		
1	Spirituality is a matter that relates to the human soul	0 0.0	0 0.0	7 35.0	13 65.0	3.68	0.478
2	Spirituality brings forward the values of well-being in life	0 0.0	0 0.0	6 30.0	14 70.0	3.74	0.452
3	Spiritual values give a positive impact on human life	0 0.0	0 0.0	4 20.0	15 75.0	3.79	0.419
4	Spirituality is a religious practice that draws a person closer to Allah the Almighty	0 0.0	2 10.0	3 15.0	15 75.0	3.63	0.684
5	Spiritual practices are able to develop the well-being of a person's physical and emotional aspects, as well as his mind	0 0.0	0 0.0	6 30.0	14 70.0	3.74	0.452
6	Islam emphasises on spiritual fulfilment which involves a person's faith in Allah SWT	0 0.0	0 0.0	3 15.0	16 80.0	3.84	0.375
7	Islam emphasises on spiritual fulfilment which involves the worship of Allah SWT	0 0.0	0 0.0	5 25.0	15 75.0	3.79	0.419
8	Islam emphasises on spiritual fulfilment that fosters Islamic morality in a person	0 0.0	0 0.0	4 20.0	16 80.0	3.84	0.375
9	Spirituality according to Islam is able to form good personalities in a person	0 0.0	0 0.0	5 25.0	15 75.0	3.74	0.452
10	Islam brings about spirituality from the physical and spiritual perspective in the creation of quality individuals	0 0.0	0 0.0	5 25.0	15 75.0	3.79	0.419
Alpha Cronbach (ϕ) Reliability Value						0.958	

Source: 2017 Questionnaire

Islamic spirituality involves the understanding about the meaning and purpose of life in this world, which emphasises

on the well-being of the Islamic faith. The essential necessity for the well-being of a person's physique is by

fulfilling his spiritual needs which in turn help to provide peace and wisdom in handling his mind and emotions [5]. Spiritual practice should be practised consistently in life based on the right and proper guide, so that the human heart will be directed towards the high appreciation of Islam [1].

The respondents are between 31 to 61 years old and they have between 1 to 9 children. Ten of them are employed while another two respondents do not work. Breast cancer is the highest type of cancer suffered by the respondents, followed by cancer of the ovary, uterus, cervix and intestine. In terms of their marital status, 13 respondents are married, 3 are still single, 2 are divorced, one is a widow while another respondent has not stated her marital status. Majority of the respondents are with second stage cancer, followed by those with stage 3 cancer, and finally those with stage 1 cancer. A total of 19 respondents are first-time patients while one is a recurrent patient of the disease.

Table 1 shows the results of the study on the respondents' understanding of the concept of spirituality according to Islam. Islamic spirituality brings about the importance of fulfilling the soul, which involves the faith in Allah the Almighty and in fostering Islamic morality of 20 people involved in this study. This item shows the highest understanding with a mean value of 3.84. This is supported with the speciality of Islamic spirituality which has the connection and the force to motivate for the practise and effort in meeting the requirements of the faith as believed in Islam [6].

Besides that, the respondents understand that spirituality has a positive impact on human life based on the values that are applied, emphasizes on the aspect of worship to Allah SWT and also affects both the physical and spiritual aspects, hence creating quality human beings. The spiritual aspect plays an important role in developing quality human beings [7]. Each of these three statements show the second highest mean of 3.79. Islam brings about the concept of the formation of quality human capital as seen from the physical and spiritual perspective. The spiritual aspect has a truly significant effect on the lives of individuals who always have faith in their Creator. This is because, human nature requires for dependence on the Creator in providing them with emotional balance and peace of mind [8].

Next, the respondents understand that spirituality helps in creating a life filled with well-being which includes the well-being of the physical, spiritual and emotional aspects (mean=3.74). This statement is supported in the sense that spirituality acts in providing spiritual treatment to individuals who seek for tranquillity, thus stabilizes their emotion [5]. The respondents also understand that Islamic spirituality brings about practices that help in the development of good personality (mean=3.68). This is because, Islamic spirituality is aimed at educating mankind to face the challenges in life by being obedient to Allah SWT and to have faith in Him.

The respondents understand that spirituality is a matter that is closely related to the human soul, as well as the practices that draw them closer to Allah SWT (mean=3.63). The effects of spirituality start by having true faith, followed by the proper implementation of the Islamic law. All these would result in a high spiritual impact to Muslim individuals, especially to chronic patients. By having a high level of dependence on Allah the Almighty, as reflected in the words of Allah SWT: "If you remember Allah, then surely Allah will remember you", the application of spirituality will therefore provide a high level of well-being in the lives of these individuals. The stronger the faith of an individual, hence the higher is the level of his piety and devotion and thus the more he will enjoy the happiness in life.

The findings show that most of the mean scores for the respondents' understanding of Islamic spirituality are within the range of 3-4, which indicates that there is still room for improvement and to consistently apply the knowledge and education about the concept of spirituality that needs to be carried out on the respondents. This is performed in order to enhance their confidence in the importance of the spiritual aspect in healing and treating their disease.

As a conclusion, it can be said that every patient is able to attain well-being in life when they understand about the concept of spirituality as proposed by Islam that is by practising spiritual practices that lead them to choose the best actions for themselves, as well as having strong dependence on their Creator.

CONCLUSION

The understanding of spirituality is a necessity for Muslim female cancer patients in treating themselves, apart from undergoing modern treatments proposed by the medical doctors. These female cancer patients need to have confidence in their Creator and to have positive thoughts about Him in the sense that He has promised that there is a treatment to cure every illness. The well-being of an individual depends on his or her spiritual level as proposed by Islam. Spiritual understanding is very important in bringing about happiness and well-being in a person's soul. Spirituality requires for the cancer patients' determination in their effort (*mujahadah*) and persistence in controlling their thoughts and emotions in order to bring themselves towards their well-being. This helps the cancer patients to have more strength in facing the pain, to be more brave to continue living in a state of readiness to deal with any situation and to undergo their daily activities in a positive way.

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