Lived experience of adult female cancer survivors to discover common protective resilience factors to cope with cancer experience and to identify potential barriers to resilience.

Dr Mary Walton

ABSTRACT

Background and objectives

The significant change in the cancer care trajectory has led to a new phase in the cancer care continuum widely known as “cancer survivorship”. Despite of all the challenges faced by them, cancer survivors face the adversity and move on with life through resilience. The study aims to explore the lived experience of adult female cancer survivors, to discover common protective resilience factors that enabled them to cope with the cancer experience and to identify the potential barriers to resilience. Based on the findings, a resilience tool for cancer survivorship was developed, validated and tested for its reliability.

Objectives of the study

Primary objective

Phase I

1. To identify common protective resilient factors that enabled the adult female cancer survivors to cope with the cancer experience

2. To identify potential barriers to resilience of adult female cancer survivors

Secondary objective

Phase II

3. To develop and validate a resilience tool for cancer survivorship
The conceptual framework is based on a resilience model developed by Dr. Travis in 1972, the Illness-Wellness Continuum.

Method

A mixed approach using sequential exploratory design was used in the study. Qualitative approach using phenomenology design was used in the first phase followed by quantitative approach in the second phase. In the first phase in-depth interviews were conducted until data saturation with fourteen female breast cancer survivors chosen by purposive and maximum variation sampling methods based on inclusion criteria. Data were managed manually. The researcher used Colaizzi’s data analysis framework to analyze the transcripts. Themes and theme categories were identified. Findings were configured as protective resilience factors and barriers to resilience.

Based on the analysis of qualitative phase, the researcher developed a resilience tool for cancer survivorship, comprising of protective resilience factors and barriers to resilience. Content validity, criterion validity and reliability of the newly developed instrument were assessed. The tool comprised of 35 items which consisted of protective resilience factors (23 items) and barriers to resilience (12 items).

Results

In the qualitative phase the mean age of the participants was 57.07 years and the mean age at diagnosis was 55.5 years. Majority 11(78.57%) of them were home makers. All 14(100%) of them had undergone surgery. Majority 11(78.57%) of them had all three modes of therapy i.e., surgery, chemotherapy and radiation therapy. The categories of themes identified are presented under two main headings i.e., protective resilience factors and barriers to resilience. The theme categories identified under protective resilience factors were personal, social, spiritual, physical,
economic and psychological factors. The Barriers to resilience identified were lack of awareness, medical/biological barriers, social, financial and psychological barriers.

Based on the findings of qualitative phase, the researcher developed a resilience tool for assessing resilience during cancer survivorship. Content Validity Index of the newly developed resilience tool for cancer survivorship tool was 0.98. The criterion validity of the developed tool demonstrated an agreement of 0.67 at 95% confidence interval with intra-class reliability with Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale. The internal consistency was 0.88 and stability the tool demonstrated a very good agreement with an intra-class reliability of 0.99 at 95% confidence interval.

Principle Component Analysis (PCA) was used to validate the domains. PCA was done on two parts of questionnaire i.e., Protective resilience factors (Q1-Q23) and barriers to resilience (Q24-Q35). In both, the first component captured most of the variances within the questionnaire with the Eigenvalues 7.65 and 4.49 respectively. A steep fall in the curve was observed in the scree plots, suggesting that there are no hidden factors within the domains. Thus it is evident that all the items in the tool are related to resilience. Hence the resilience tool for cancer survivorship has good construct validity.

**Interpretation and conclusion**

The present study has identified the protective resilience factors and barriers to resilience among adult female breast cancer survivors. The developed resilience tool for cancer survivorship was found to have good validity and reliability. This resilience tool is gender and culture specific; it will serve to address the needs of women with cancer in India. It will be useful
for nurses and all other health care professionals (HCP) to assess the resilience needs of cancer survivors and to provide need based quality cancer care

[Key words – Resilience, protective factors, barriers, cancer survivorship]