

Meaning of Life in Breast Cancer Survivors: A Qualitative Phenomenological Study

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Abstract: Breast cancer is one of the most common cancers worldwide and a major cause of mortality among women, significantly impacting their physical, psychological, and social well-being. Understanding how individuals find meaning in life is crucial to support their mental health and recovery process. This study aims to explore the lived experiences of breast cancer patients in constructing and understanding the meaning of life after diagnosis and treatment. Using a qualitative design with a phenomenological approach, three participants were selected through purposive sampling based on specific inclusion criteria. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to identify emerging themes. The analysis revealed four main themes: self-acceptance, reflecting the process of accepting personal limitations and circumstances; life motivation, highlighting inner strength driven by family and spiritual values; support group, emphasizing the role of psychological and social support from communities and peers; and positive body image, showing how participants cope with changes in physical appearance and societal perceptions. These findings indicate that the meaning of life plays a central role in enhancing psychological resilience and improving quality of life among breast cancer patients. This study suggests that holistic interventions focusing on psychological, social, and spiritual aspects are essential to help individuals cope with the challenges of breast cancer and foster a sense of purpose and well-being.

1 INTRODUCTION

Cancer is one of the chronic diseases with a high mortality rate today. According to the World Health Organization (2014), cancer is one of the most deadly chronic illnesses worldwide. Survey data in the United States show that cancer accounts for around 23% of all deaths in the country, making it the second leading cause of death after heart disease (Anand et al., 2008). Globally, one person dies of cancer every eleven minutes, and a new case emerges every three minutes. Other evidence indicates that the five most common types of cancer are cervical,

breast, ovarian, skin, and rectal cancers (Rukinah & Luba, 2021).

According to WHO (2020), 2.3 million women were diagnosed with breast cancer, with 685,000 deaths recorded globally. By the end of 2020, 7.8 million women who had been diagnosed with breast cancer in the past five years were still alive, making it the most common cancer worldwide. In Indonesia, breast cancer ranks first in terms of both prevalence and cancer-related mortality. Data from Globocan (2020) reported 68,858 new breast cancer cases, or 16.6% of the total 396,914 new cases, with more than 22,000 deaths (Ministry of Health of the

Republic of Indonesia, 2022). Of these, 65,858 were new breast cancer cases (16.6%), followed by cervical cancer with 36,633 cases (9.2%), lung cancer with 34,783 cases (8.8%), liver cancer with 21,392 cases (5.4%), and nasopharyngeal cancer with 19,943 cases (5%) (Hasni et al., 2022).

Breast cancer is a chronic illness that can affect emotional status and daily activities, potentially leading to both physiological and psychological problems (Romas et al., 2023). Research has shown that the search for meaning in life plays a significant role in alleviating various psychological difficulties, such as excessive worry, heightened anxiety, emotional distress due to stress, severe depression, and even suicidal thoughts. Discovering meaning in life allows patients to foster a more positive outlook, which in turn promotes inner peace and improves their quality of life while fighting the disease (Lapierre et al., 2017). A study conducted in Taiwan found that breast cancer patients often experience profound reciprocal love, especially from family and close friends. They receive strong emotional support through meaningful and intimate interactions, which become a source of strength in difficult times. The presence of family provides substantial moral support and helps them face suffering more effectively (Sun et al., 2022).

Further studies revealed that the development of life processes and efforts to enhance spiritual well-being were dominant experiences among these women. This helped them accept their condition, face emerging challenges, and reconcile with the possible outcomes of the disease (Mokhtari et al., 2020). Research on breast cancer survivors who underwent mastectomy identified three key factors that helped participants cope: social support, coping strategies,

and the ability to reach out. Social support provided emotional strength and a sense of acceptance; coping strategies helped manage stress and challenges adaptively; and reaching out enabled sharing experiences and building positive connections with others (Luoma & Hakamies-Blomqvist, 2004). Some patients accepted their illness with sincerity and submission, believing that their suffering was part of God's test. This perspective helped them deepen their understanding of life's meaning, making them stronger and wiser in their journey (Julistia et al., 2022).

Studies also indicate that meaning in life is significantly related to various psychological and social factors. One study found that individuals' sense of meaning in life was strongly influenced by gratitude; higher gratitude was associated with stronger meaning in life, contributing to greater psychological well-being (Zhang et al., 2021). Furthermore, university students who actively engaged in religious practices and maintained a meaningful outlook on life tended to have better mental health, while those with lower religiosity and weaker meaning in life experienced poorer mental health (Yoon et al., 2021). Other research has shown positive correlations between self-concept, self-control, and meaning in life; individuals with stronger self-concept tended to perceive greater meaning in life (Ghozali & Ruf, 2019). Additionally, individuals with higher meaning in life were found to be more independent, suggesting that life meaning influences decision-making and responsibility (Hanna & Minton, 2021).

On the other hand, meaning in life also plays a vital role in mental health, especially for individuals with chronic illnesses. Research shows that patients

with diabetes mellitus who experience low levels of life meaning tend to have higher death anxiety, while higher levels of life meaning correlate with lower anxiety (Aliche et al., 2023). Self-acceptance has also been shown to be positively associated with meaning in life among adolescents in orphanages, helping them discover purpose and significance (Dumaris & Rahayu, 2019). Likewise, there is a positive correlation between self-esteem and life meaning; individuals with high self-esteem tend to perceive their lives as more meaningful (Anggoro, 2025). Conversely, other studies reported a negative relationship between meaning in life and depression, as well as between emotional stability and depression (Putriana & Gunatirin, 2021).

The meaning of life in the context of breast cancer remains a compelling subject of study. While breast cancer research has been extensive, studies on meaning of life among Indonesian patients are still limited, particularly regarding their subjective experiences after treatment. Evidence suggests that experiencing meaning in life contributes significantly to psychological well-being. Individuals who perceive their lives as meaningful are more likely to have clear goals, positive interpersonal relationships, and stronger abilities to manage their lives effectively. This demonstrates that meaning in life is not only related to life satisfaction but also to goal achievement and personal growth (García-Alandete, 2015). Other research further revealed that life meaning plays a crucial role in promoting prosocial behaviour, involving two essential aspects: purpose and existential significance. This suggests that individuals who perceive life as meaningful are more likely to engage in actions that benefit others and society. Thus, the search for life meaning not only

enhances personal well-being but also encourages positive contributions to the social environment (Lv et al., 2024).

This study aims to explore how women with breast cancer construct and experience meaning in their lives after undergoing treatment.

2 METHOD

This study employed a qualitative design with a phenomenological approach to explore the experiences of individuals regarding the Meaning of Life (Creswell, 2013). The participant criteria were women aged 18–45 years who had been diagnosed with breast cancer and had recovered. Based on these criteria, three participants were selected through purposive sampling to maintain group homogeneity and to gain a deeper understanding of relevant experiences. Purposive sampling was chosen to preserve group homogeneity with a sample size considered ideal for analysis using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Arinda & Mansoer, 2020).

Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews using an interview guide as the research instrument. The guide was designed to elicit participants' experiences, emotions, spirituality, and contributions of the Meaning of Life in the context of breast cancer. Of the three participants, one was interviewed in person at her residence in Sidoarjo, while the other two were interviewed via telephone. Each interview lasted on average 1 hour and 5 minutes. Prior to participation, respondents were provided with an information sheet and signed an informed consent form as a declaration of their willingness to take part in the study. The interview

transcripts were analysed using IPA by identifying recurring patterns (themes) through an inductive process (Arinda & Mansoer, 2020). Through this procedure, the researcher obtained nine themes that represent the core statements of each participant.

3 RESULT

The findings of this study identified themes that reflect the Meaning of Life for breast cancer survivors. Various data codes representing sub-themes were extracted and synthesised into four main themes, which are detailed in Table 1 below. In the numbering of verbatim excerpts, “S” serves as the code for “Subject,” followed by a number indicating the participant, and a final number showing the sequence of the participant’s responses.

Table 1. Subthemes and main Themes of the Meaning of Life in Breast Cancer Patients.

Subthemes	Themes
Changes in mindset	Self-Acceptance
Process of understanding the illness	
Life lessons learned	Life Motivation
Greatest motivation	
Current life focus	
Psychological support	Support Group
Family support	
Feelings of shame about the condition	Body Image
Comments from the environment	

Theme 1: Self-Acceptance

Self-acceptance in this study is described as a process experienced by all participants in embracing themselves as a whole, including their strengths, weaknesses, and life experiences. Most participants stated that self-acceptance began to emerge when they realised that every individual has a unique life

journey and that no life is ever completely perfect. This process was strengthened by their efforts to understand that both joyful and painful experiences contribute to shaping who they are today.

Self-acceptance developed through deep reflection, support from their surroundings, and the awareness of the importance of making peace with the past. This process encouraged them to view themselves more positively, such as by recognising their potential and being less harsh in judging past mistakes. By accepting themselves, participants were able to foster a calmer and more optimistic mindset, focusing on what they could do to live the present with greater meaning and happiness.

Subtheme: Changes in mindset

Positive changes in mindset are explained as a transformation in the way participants approached life’s challenges. Most of them experienced a shift from worry or negative thinking to a focus on what brings positive energy and hope. Subject 1 expressed this as: “At first, it was just ordinary, life just flowed, but now I realize that love is truly valuable. I have to do positive things, keep a good mindset without overthinking, and also make the best use of my time.” (S1.1.24). Subject 2 stated: “...Life feels more meaningful now, I don’t want to waste it...” (S2.1.25-26), while Subject 3 affirmed: “Every day I have to be better than before, I must keep improving myself.” (S3.1.29).

Subtheme: The Process of Understanding the Illness

The process of understanding illness is described as the participants’ journey of accepting their health condition and finding meaning behind the experience.

Each participant showed different stages of understanding, influenced by counselling, medical explanations, and spiritual practices.

Subject 1 developed understanding after counselling, which helped her view the illness as a test in life: “I was advised by a psychologist and began to understand this as a test...” (S1.1.10-13). Subject 2 reached greater acceptance after receiving detailed explanations from her doctor: “After the doctor explained everything to me in detail, I gradually began to accept the reality of this illness.” (S2.1.17). Subject 3 found acceptance through spiritual practice, especially worship, which gave her inner peace and trust that the illness was part of God’s plan: “Through worship and surrender to God, I began to understand that this is part of Allah’s plan.” (S3.1.14-15).

Through these processes, participants not only developed a deeper understanding of their condition but also found ways to reconcile with their illness as part of their life journey.

Theme 2: Life Motivation

Life motivation in this study is described as an inner drive to maintain enthusiasm for life despite challenges and pressures. This motivation arose from their belief that every person has the potential to grow and pursue happiness. Most participants stated that their motivation stemmed from hope for a better future and the conviction that every difficulty carries valuable lessons. Life motivation was reinforced by deep reflection on life goals and by the awareness of their important role in the lives of others.

Subtheme: Lessons Learned

The life lessons identified in this study reflect the dynamics of experience and deep reflection from the three subjects as they faced challenges in their lives. Each subject conveyed lessons that served as guidance and strength in their daily journey.

Subject 1 emphasised the importance of gratitude and drawing closer to God. She expressed that her life experiences led her to a realisation about the uncertainty of age and the significance of appreciating what she currently has. As she stated: “I realize that no one knows how long we will live... I’m learning to be more grateful for what I have.” (S1.2.14–15). This reflection shows that gratitude is not only a response to favourable conditions but also a form of acceptance toward the uncertainties of life.

Subject 2 found meaning in cherishing moments with her family. For her, life is not solely about pursuing achievements but also about valuing time and togetherness with loved ones. This gave her a new perspective that happiness is often discovered in simple things, such as having dinner with family or sharing stories at the end of the day. She shared: “...I am now more aware that moments with family are truly valuable. They cannot be repeated, so I try to cherish every moment with them.” (S2.2.8–9).

Meanwhile, Subject 3 realised that health is a precious blessing that is often overlooked until she encountered moments that made her pause and reflect on the importance of maintaining both body and mind in a healthy state. She stated: “The greatest lesson for me is that life is short... I have learned a lot about being more sincere and closer to God, that’s the only thing I think about.” (S3.2.6).

Subtheme: The Greatest Motivation

The greatest motivation in this study is described as the primary driving force that helps participants to keep persevering and facing the various dynamics of life they encounter. This motivation is manifested in the form of strong emotional bonds with children, close family members, and even grandchildren, which become their main reasons to continue striving.

Subject 1 revealed that her children and close family are the main source of encouragement in her life. The sense of responsibility to provide the best for her children became an irreplaceable strength. This is reflected in her statement: “The greatest lesson for me is that life is short... I have learned a lot about being more sincere and closer to God, that’s the only thing I think about.” (S1.2.17). Her children became the main reason for her to keep fighting and hoping, especially when facing difficult life challenges.

Subject 2 also placed her children as the central source of her life spirit. For her, witnessing her children grow and seeing their happiness is a goal that always radiates positive energy, even in the most difficult circumstances. She felt that the presence of her children in her life gave a profound meaning, enabling her to endure and face challenges more firmly. She expressed: “My young children... are still my greatest motivation.” (S2.2.11–12). This shows that her love and dedication to her children not only gave her the strength to overcome difficulties but also inspired hope and happiness in her daily life.

In contrast to the two previous participants, Subject 3 found her greatest strength in her grandchildren. She felt that every smile and joy from her grandchildren gave her new energy, pushing her to continue striving to give her best. As she stated: “I

want to always be there for my grandchildren... they make me want to recover.” (S3.2.14).

Although each participant had a different central focus of motivation, all three demonstrated how love and responsibility toward family can serve as the greatest source of strength in living their lives.

Subtheme: Current Life Focus

The current life focus in this study is described as participants’ efforts to concentrate on what they can do and develop in the present, without being overly burdened by the past or by anxieties about the future. Each participant had unique ways of nurturing this focus, shaped by their experiences and life dynamics.

Subject 1 illustrated her life focus through efforts to fill her time with positive activities, to make herself more productive, and to improve her outlook on life. She emphasised the importance of maintaining a good mindset as the foundation for her daily living: “I have to do positive things, keep a good mindset without overthinking, and make the best use of my time.” (S1.1.12).

In contrast, Subjects 2 and 3 expressed their life focus mainly through gratitude for every opportunity they had. This awareness grew from deep reflections on life experiences that taught them to value what they had achieved. As Subject 2 explained: “I have become more aware of the small things to be grateful for and try to share that happiness with others.” (S2.2.3). Similarly, Subject 3 expressed that gratitude encouraged her to share more with those around her, especially her family. She stated: “The meaning of life for me now is how we can make the best use of the remaining time we have.” (S3.2.12).

By centring their lives on the present, the three subjects demonstrated positive dynamics in accepting and managing their situations. This focus not only strengthened them personally but also served as a foundation for living with greater meaning.

Theme 3: Support Group

The support group in this study is described as a platform for participants to share experiences, support one another, and build collective strength in facing life's challenges. All participants stated that joining a support group provided them with a safe space to speak without feeling judged. The interactions within the group helped them realise that they were not alone, that there were others who understood and experienced similar struggles. The bonds formed in the group developed into strong emotional ties, resembling a new family, which supported one another to grow and live better lives. This gave participants renewed hope to continue living with a more positive outlook.

Subtheme: Psychological Support

Psychological support in this study is defined as emotional and mental assistance received by participants from different sources, which helped them cope with life's challenges. All participants expressed that such support gave them new strength and became a crucial pillar for maintaining their mental well-being. For Subject 1, support came from both the community and counselling sessions with a psychologist, which became her main source of strength. She stated: "Motivation from the psychologist can change my thinking and my life... I feel that I am not alone." (S1.3.13). The presence of the psychologist offered her a space to share

experiences and to understand that she had the potential to recover, while the surrounding community created a supportive environment.

Subject 2 received support from fellow patients who had similar experiences. Meeting and sharing stories with other sufferers made her feel more understood and accepted. She explained: "After receiving encouragement from friends who are also suffering from cancer, I feel stronger." (S2.3.11). This support fostered a sense of solidarity and strengthened her belief that she was not alone in her struggle.

For Subject 3, inner strength came from her participation in religious gatherings that she attended regularly. These gatherings provided her with both spiritual reflection and calming social interaction. She said: "At first, I felt alone, but after frequently attending religious gatherings and sharing stories, I feel stronger." (S3.3.13). Psychological support drawn from the community, peers with similar experiences, and spiritual groups had a positive impact on the participants' mental conditions. Such support created a space to share, strengthened resilience, and helped them face life's challenges with greater courage and optimism.

Subtheme: Family Support

Family support in this study is described as an essential element experienced by participants in coping with their life challenges. The dynamics of family support varied across individuals, depending on the roles and contributions of family members in providing encouragement and comfort. For Subject 1, support from her husband was perceived as less than optimal. She expressed: "My husband is kind of lacking, he is quiet... so I don't feel satisfied sharing

my thoughts with him.” (S1.4.12). Because of her husband’s tendency to be quiet, she found it difficult to share stories or receive the emotional response she expected, leaving her feeling that her need for support was not fully met.

In contrast, Subject 2 and Subject 3 felt that their families offered significant encouragement in dealing with various challenges. Subject 2 received strong moral support from family members who consistently motivated her, which made her feel emotionally supported. She explained: “My family is very supportive, they are always there for me.” (S2.13.17). For Subject 3, family support was experienced as especially strong, particularly from her children and grandchildren. These dynamics show that family support played a significant role in building emotional resilience and helping individuals live better lives. Optimal support (whether from a spouse, children, or other family members) provided comfort, encouragement, and strength to face life’s difficulties.

Theme: Body Image

A positive body image in this study is described as a strategy adopted by all participants in facing social perceptions and pressures concerning their physical appearance. Most participants expressed acceptance of their current bodies. This acceptance emerged when they realised that their bodies are both a unique part of their identity and a gift from God. A positive body image developed along with increased self-confidence, a healthier mindset, and supportive relationships with the people around them. This attitude of self-acceptance helped them to foster a more optimistic outlook, such as not viewing physical appearance as the sole indicator of self-worth, while

maintaining the spirit to care for their health and nurture themselves with love and respect.

3.4.1 Subtheme: Feelings About Physical Condition

Feelings of shame about their physical condition in this study are described as emotional dynamics experienced by participants when facing challenges in accepting their appearance or bodily changes. The three subjects showed different responses, but all reflected a journey towards self-acceptance through various strategies and support. Subject 1 revealed that shame initially dominated her feelings after the changes in her physical condition. However, she was able to overcome these emotions through strong family support, which became a source of strength for her to accept herself. This was expressed in her statement: “At first, I felt ashamed... but I focused on my family’s support.” (S1.4.12). Emotional support from family provided reassurance and encouragement to shift her attention away from insecurity toward greater self-acceptance.

Subject 2 indicated that feelings of shame only appeared occasionally, particularly in certain social situations. However, she chose to focus more on her recovery and health. For her, prioritising health reduced the negative effects of insecurity about her physical condition. She stated: “Sometimes I feel insecure, but my family always gives me support.” (S1.4.2). This focus on health goals helped Subject 2 maintain optimism despite stigma or judgment from her environment. A similar experience was shared by Subject 3, who explained: “Sometimes yes, but I focus more on my health than on my appearance.” (S3.4.9). Feelings of shame among participants were part of a complex process requiring social support, goal orientation, and inner strength.

Subtheme: Comments from the Surrounding

Comments from the environment in this study are described as responses participants received from those around them, which could take the form of either positive support or negative criticism. Subject 1 explained that she often received negative remarks from neighbours discussing her situation. However, she chose not to pay attention to them and to focus instead on living her life. As she stated: “Yes, some of my neighbors talk like that... but I don’t feel like responding to them.” (S1.4.15). This reflects a coping strategy of ignoring unhelpful opinions, enabling her to maintain emotional well-being.

Subject 2, on the other hand, placed greater emphasis on the importance of family support rather than worrying about comments from the wider community. For her, family was the primary source of strength and motivation in facing challenges. Emotional support from family became her main priority in maintaining balance in her life, while negative remarks from others were seen as less relevant. She expressed: “What matters is that my family keeps supporting me, that is enough for me. Whatever others say, let them be.” (S2.4.13).

Subject 3 also chose to disregard comments from the surrounding environment, but with a different focus. She centred her attention on her family, especially her children, as the core of her life. This helped her maintain emotional stability and find meaning in her role as a mother, regardless of what others said. She explained: “There are some people who make negative comments... but I don’t really mind them.” (S3.4.7). The three participants showed that comments from the environment, whether positive or negative, could have diverse impacts depending on the coping strategies employed. These

varied responses illustrate how individual priorities (such as maintaining mental health, focusing on family support, or protecting relationships with children) played a crucial role in their acceptance and management of external feedback.

4 DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that breast cancer survivors were able to discover a profound *meaning of life* despite facing major life challenges. This is reflected in their capacity to demonstrate dimensions of *self-acceptance*, *life motivation*, *support group*, and *body image*. The findings concerning self-acceptance not only illustrate personal acceptance but also highlight a critical process of meaning-making in navigating existential distress following a cancer diagnosis. According to Park’s Meaning-Making Model (2017), the discrepancy between global meaning (life beliefs before cancer) and situational meaning (the cancer experience) triggers distress, which is then addressed through meaning-making processes such as self-acceptance and identity reconstruction. This aligns with the findings of Renggoningsih et al. (2024), who revealed that breast cancer patients with stronger self-acceptance and social support tend to report higher quality of life. These results emphasise that meaning in the lives of breast cancer survivors is not determined solely by medical conditions but is also shaped by psychosocial factors such as self-acceptance, life motivation, social support, and body image. Therefore, a holistic approach, integrating both psychological and social aspects, is essential to help breast cancer survivors build meaning and enhance their overall quality of life.

In this discussion, interview results are presented according to each participant. For clarity, abbreviations S1, S2, and S3 are used to refer to Subject 1, Subject 2, and Subject 3, respectively.

In the dimension of *self-acceptance*, participants demonstrated the ability to accept themselves as they are, including their challenges and limitations. S1 expressed comfort with her unique personality and viewed her shortcomings as part of herself, which helped her to live more peacefully. S2, in contrast, accepted her difficult past as valuable lessons that shaped who she is today, enabling her to approach life with gratitude. These findings support Ryff's (1989) framework, which identifies self-acceptance as a central element of psychological well-being. Acceptance of oneself allows individuals to experience greater peace with their condition and to cultivate a more positive outlook on life. Hence, self-acceptance serves as a vital foundation for building emotional resilience and improving quality of life.

In the dimension of *life motivation*, participants demonstrated strong motivations to live, particularly grounded in family and spirituality. For S3, her grandchildren were her primary source of encouragement, while her spirituality reinforced the belief that every challenge carries meaning. S1 perceived herself as the pillar of her family, with spiritual values strengthening her conviction that life must be lived with sincerity and trust in God's plan. Meanwhile, S2, through her dedication to her family, believed that her presence had a significant impact, supported by the belief that life's trials are tests leading to eventual happiness. These findings support Ghaffari et al. (2013), who showed that family- and

spirituality-based motivations enhance psychological resilience.

In the dimension of *support group*, participants highlighted the essential role of supportive communities in helping them face life's challenges. They felt assisted by networks that provided a space to share experiences and to explore solutions to their problems. Emotional support from close friends also served as a major source of strength. S1 built strong connections with support groups in her environment, such as social communities and extended family. Their presence not only encouraged her but also made her feel valued and fully accepted. Meanwhile, S3 drew strength from active engagement with support groups in organisations and religious gatherings she attended. These groups not only offered a space to share experiences but also provided new insights to approach life more positively. These findings are consistent with Short and Mollborn (2015), who noted that support groups have a significant impact on emotional and social well-being. Supportive communities foster a sense of belonging and strengthen individuals' capacity to overcome challenges.

In the dimension of *body image*, participants demonstrated the ability to view their bodies positively despite physical changes resulting from illness. One participant (MB) embraced the changes in her body as part of her life journey, regarding them as a symbol of strength and courage that increased her confidence. S1 expressed pride in maintaining her body image through healthy habits and gratitude for what she had. She believed that true beauty derives from the way a person accepts and takes care of themselves. Meanwhile, S2 and S3 interpreted their

bodies as instruments to pursue life goals, maintaining both physical and emotional health. They viewed positive body image as the outcome of self-acceptance and efforts to live a balanced life. These results support Thompson and Heinberg (2001), who demonstrated that positive body image contributes to improved self-esteem and psychological well-being. A constructive perception of the body helps individuals feel more confident and better able to face challenges with optimism.

Overall, these findings both align with and enrich the existing body of literature. Consistent with Tiffany et al. (2022) and Ryff (1989), self-acceptance again emerges as the foundation of well-being. However, this study contrasts and extends Short and Mollborn (2015) by showing that social support not only serves as an emotional buffer but also functions as an active platform for collective meaning-making, where patients both receive and provide support and solutions. Furthermore, the participants' ability to reframe their bodies as a "symbol of strength" goes beyond Thompson and Heinberg's (2001) conceptualisation of positive body image, situating it within the framework of post-traumatic growth theory, in which physical changes are reinterpreted as concrete evidence of the courage and resilience they have lived through.

5 CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This study demonstrates that breast cancer survivors are able to discover meaning in life through four key dimensions: self-acceptance, life motivation, support groups, and body image. Self-acceptance enables them to face their condition with greater

calmness and to develop a more positive outlook on life. Life motivation, which is rooted in family and spirituality, provides strength and resilience in coping with challenges. Support groups play a crucial role in fostering a sense of connectedness, encouragement, and new perspectives. Meanwhile, a positive body image helps them to maintain self-confidence and life balance. These findings affirm that meaning in life among breast cancer survivors is shaped by psychosocial factors that contribute to their overall quality of life. Therefore, a holistic approach that integrates psychological, social, and spiritual aspects is essential to enhance the well-being and quality of life of breast cancer patients.

The findings of this study also hold several important practical implications. For clinical psychologists, the results suggest the need to integrate Meaning-Centred Therapy to support patients in the process of self-acceptance and in reframing bodily changes as part of resilience. Referring patients to structured support groups is also crucial, as these provide not only emotional but also informational support. For patients themselves, the study highlights that sources of strength can be drawn from family relationships and spirituality, as well as from actively constructing a positive narrative about their struggle. Meanwhile, for families, their role extends beyond that of caregivers to becoming active partners in creating a supportive environment that fosters healthy practices and continuously reminds patients of their enduring value and role within the family.

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