



PSYCHOSOCIAL ISSUES IN BREAST CANCER PATIENTS UNDERGOING CHEMOTHERAPY: A LITERATURE RIVIEW

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ABSTRACT

One of the most frequently Identified side effects of chemotherapy in breast cancer patients is psychosocial issues. This scientific review is which conducted through a literature review is aim at identifying psychosocial issues experienced by breast cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy. Articles were searched through several sources, including Google Scholar and PubMed, covering publications from 2020 to 2025. A total 861 articles were initially found, from which 10 articles were selected for analysis based in the inclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria selected with the keywords Breast cancer patients, chemotherapy, and psychosocial problems. The strategy used by researchers in searching and selecting the articles is the PICO framework. The results of the literature review indicated that several psychosocial issues faced by the breast cancer patients are including anxiety, body image disturbances, sleep pattern disorders, and depression. Early identification of emotional conflict and psychosocial issues in breast cancer patients is needed, along with several psychosocial interventions to reduce of level these psychosocial issues.

Keywords: brest cancer patients; chemotherapy; psychosocial problems

How to Cite (in APA Style)

Yolanda, Y., Indriati, T., & Latifah, R. A. (2026). Psychosocial Issues in Breast Cancer Patients Undergoing Chemotherapy: A Literature Riview. *Indonesian Journal of Global Health Research*, 8(2), 607–614. <https://doi.org/10.37287/ijghr.v8i2.794>.

INTRODUCTION

Cancer is a non-communicable disease, yet it continues to remain as the one of the major global health burdens. It is characterized by the presence of uncontrolled proliferation of abnormal cells with the potential to invade and spread to other cells and body tissues. One of the most feared types of cancer among women is breast cancer (Agustin et al., 2024). This is corroborated by a study conducted by Lina Oktavia and Wachyu Amelia (2024), who states that malignant tumors affecting breast tissue are among the most dreaded illnesses by women, although recent research has shown that men can also be affected by this type of cancer.

Breast cancer, also known as carcinoma mammae, is a malignant tumor that develops in breast tissue. As with many other types of cancer, breast cancer is frequently underdiagnosed and may remain undetected by patients until it reaches an advanced stage. Several risk factors have been associated with the development of breast cancer including early onset of menarche, late onset of menopause, late age at first pregnancy, use of exogenous hormones, fibrocystic breast disease, obesity, high fat intake, exposure to radiation, and a family history of breast cancer (Elmika & Adi, 2020). Findings from a study by Alimun et al. (2024) about Breast Cancer Risk Factors, also identified several significant associations namely family history, early age at menarche, and late age at first childbirth were found to have a statistically significant relationship with increased breast cancer risk. In contrast, factors observed such as obesity, alcohol consumption, or smoking history

did not demonstrate statistically significant correlations.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2022), approximately 22 million women have been diagnosed with breast cancer, resulting in approximately 670,000 deaths worldwide. Breast cancer occurs in every country and typically emerges following puberty. Furthermore, statistically, one in twelve women is diagnosed with breast cancer during her lifetime, and one in seventy-onewomen dies from the disease. Based on data from the Indonesian Basic Health Research (Riskesmas), breast cancer ranks as the second most prevalent cancer globally, accounting for 11.6% of cases. In Indonesia, the prevalence of breast cancer has shown a gradual increase identified from data provided by D Indonesian Basic Health Research (Riskesmas) that indicated a prevalence of 1.4% in 2013 rose to 1.49% in 2018. Moreover, data from Dharmas Cancer Hospital in 2018 revealed breast cancer as the most frequently diagnosed cancer, representing 19.18% of all reported cancer cases. It was followed by cervical cancer at 10.69%, and lung cancer at 9.89% (National Institute of Health Research and Development, 2018).

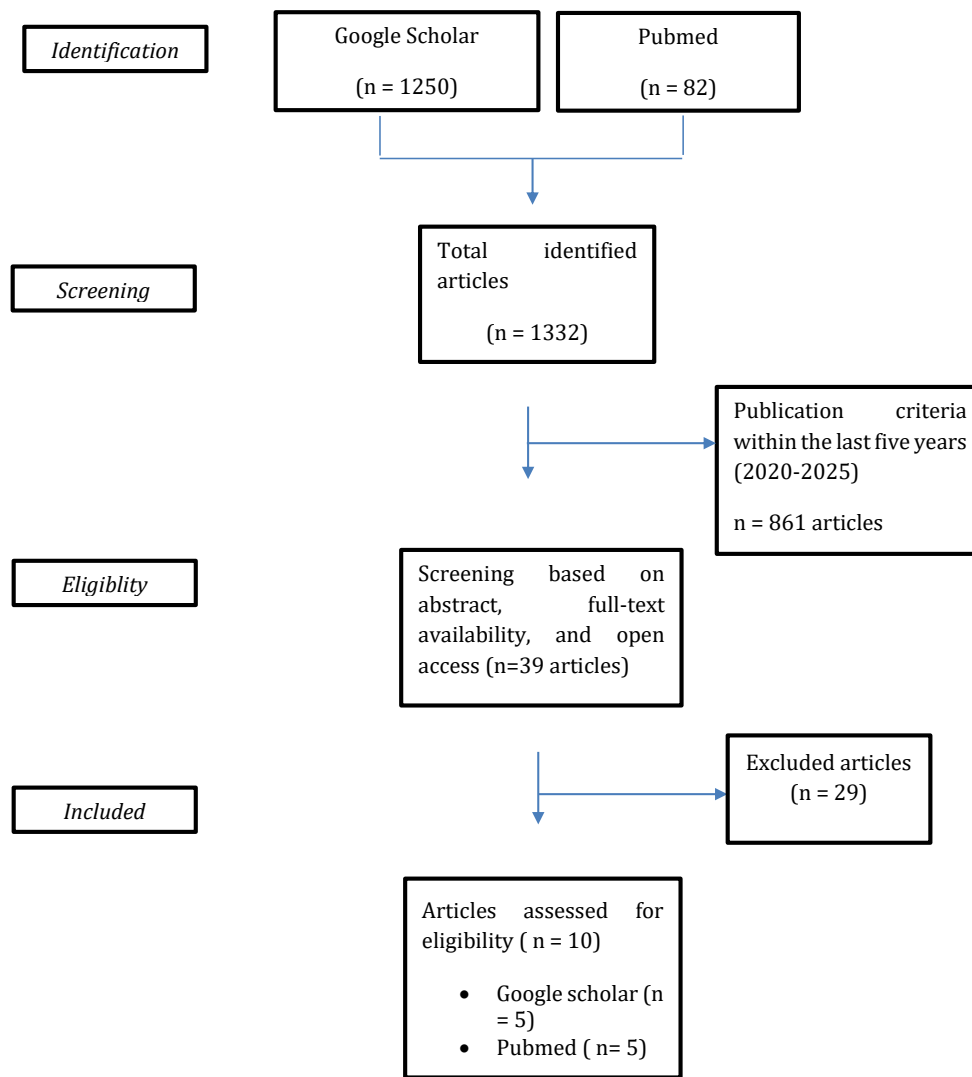
One of the key strategies to reduce the morbidity and mortality rates associated with breast cancer is through chemotherapy. The primary goal of this treatment is to inhibit the growth and spread of cancer cells. However, chemotherapy is known to exert both physical and psychological impacts on patients (Sari et al., 2025). Moreover, psychosocial issues are not limited only to patients in the early stages of diagnosis but also prevalent among those receiving palliative care. This is supported by findings from Ismail (2024), which revealed that more than 50% of respondents identified 46 out of 48 items related to psycho-social needs as essential. Notably, each domain of need, at least one item was reported as unmet by the participants. Hence, these findings underscore the importance of gaining a deeper and comprehensive understanding of the psychosocial issues encountered by the breast cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy. This scientific review is which conducted through a literature review is aim at identifying psychosocial issues experienced by breast cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy.

METHOD

This study employed a systematic literature review method. A total of 1,332 publications were initially identified based on the predefined keywords. After screening by publication year (2020–2025), 861 articles were found to meet the initial criteria. Further selection was conducted based on abstract availability, full-text access, open access status, and the type of research, resulting in 39 eligible articles. In the final stage, a thorough assessment of article quality and relevance by reading and evaluating was carried out, from which 10 articles were selected, comprising five international and five national publications that met all inclusion criteria.

The literature search was conducted through two primary scientific databases, PubMed and Google Scholar. The search strategy was conducted using both keywords in English and Indonesian. Articles were selected based on inclusion criteria which consisted of studies discussing psychosocial issues experienced by breast cancer patients undergoing To ensure the comprehensiveness and relevance of the sources, both international and national articles were considered.

Articles were selected based on inclusion criteria which consisted of studies discussing psychosocial issues experienced by breast cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy, publications within the period 2020 to 2025, availability of full-text and abstract, open-access status, and coverage from both national and international journals. The inclusion criteria encompassed publications addressing psychosocial issues in breast cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy, published between 2020 and 2025, written in either English or Indonesian, and providing full-text access, open access availability, and a clearly stated abstract. Meanwhile, articles were excluded if they were published prior to 2020 or written in languages other than English or Indonesian.



Picture 1. Flow Diagram of Article Selection Process

RESULT

The selected articles were thoroughly reviewed and are presented in Table 1
Tabel 1.

Results of the Literature Search

No	Author/Year	Title	Method	Results
1	(Crespi et al., 2024) Database : Pubmed	Work Productivity Among Younger Breast Cancer Survivors: The Impact of Behavioral Interventions for Depression	Quasi experimental research. Using multivariable linear regression and linear mixed model.	During the initial phase of chemotherapy, patients experienced a decline in productivity, significant cognitive impairment, musculoskeletal pain, depression, and fatigue. The implementation of mindfulness-based interventions resulted in approximately a 54% reduction in depressive symptoms.
2	(Guo et al., 2023) Database : Pubmed	Depression, anxiety and stress among metastatic breast cancer patients on chemotherapy in China	A cross-sectional study design was employed, utilizing purposive sampling for data collection. The data were	The prevalence of depression, anxiety, and stress among female patients with metastatic breast cancer (MBC) was reported at 52.3%, 60.2%, and 36.9%, respectively. General linear regression analysis found that age, marital status, physical function, emotional function,

No	Author/Year	Title	Method	Results
			analyzed using descriptive statistics and general linear regression analysis.	pain, dyspnea, and loss of appetite were significantly associated with depression. These findings point out that depression, anxiety, and stress constitute substantial psychological issues among breast cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy.
3	(Marcondes et al., 2024) Database : Pubmed	Anxiety Levels in Brazilian Women with Metastatic Breast Cancer Undergoing Palliative Chemotherapy	A prospective descriptive study. Data were analyzed using Kruskal-Wallis, Mann-Whitney, and Multiple General Regression Models.	Women with advanced-stage breast cancer demonstrated a mean anxiety score of 48.22. A progressive increase in anxiety scores was observed throughout the treatment evaluation stages, with statistically significant differences between each evaluation ($p = 0.008$). A significant correlation was also found between the level of anxiety and the presence of metastasis ($p = 0.022$)
4	(da Costa et al., 2022) Database : Pubmed	Effects of dance therapy in women with breast cancer	<i>A meta-analysis of intervention trial</i>	Dance therapy, a non-pharmacological intervention administered during oncology treatment under intensive guidance and supervision, has been shown to be effective in reducing treatment-related side effects in women with breast cancer. These effects include pain, cancer-related fatigue, sleep disturbances, body image disorders, and depression.
5	(Li et al., 2023) Database : Pubmed	Listening to voices from multiple sources: A qualitative text analysis of the emotional experiences of women living with breast cancer in China	Qualitatif	There are three main themes were identified: emotional conflict following diagnosis, long-term suffering and worry, and cognitive appraisal. The study also found that distress related to body image disturbances, identity crisis conflicts, and changes in sexuality and fertility.
6	(Irnawati & Ambiya, 2020) Database : Google Scholar	The Relationship Between Chemotherapy Treatment and Body Image Disturbance in Breast Cancer Patients at Faisal Islamic Hospital, Makassar	A descriptive-analytic study with a cross-sectional design.	The results of the study showed that the majority of respondents underwent suboptimal chemotherapy care (72.7%), while 27.3% received good chemotherapy care. In addition, 69.7% of respondents exhibited a positive body image, whereas 30.3% reported a negative body image. The chi-square test yielded a value of 0.032, indicating a significant relationship between the quality of chemotherapy care and body image disturbance.
7	(Primal et al., 2020) Database : Google Scholar	Anxiety Levels and Sleep Patterns in Breast Cancer Patients Undergoing Chemotherapy	Quantitatif	Univariate analysis showed that 60% of breast cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy experienced moderate anxiety, and 63.6% had poor sleep patterns. Furthermore, Bivariate analysis indicated a significant relationship between anxiety levels and sleep patterns, with a p-value of 0.004

No	Author/Year	Title	Method	Results
				(p < 0.1) and an odds ratio (OR) of 5.365."
8	(Setyani et al., 2020) Database : Google Scholar	Anxiety Levels Among Breast Cancer Patients Undergoing Chemotherapy	Quantitatif	25% of patients did not experience anxiety, 43.3% experienced mild anxiety, 13.33% experienced moderate anxiety, 13.33% experienced severe anxiety, and 5% experienced very severe anxiety.
9	(Romas et al., 2023) Database : Google Scholar	The Identification of Psychosocial Hazard Risks in Workers Diagnosed with Breast Cancer	Systematic Literature Review	The results of the review of 30 articles demonstrate that individuals with breast cancer experience significant emotional distress, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, and sleep disturbances.
10	(Waluyo et al., 2023) Database : Google Scholar	Body Image Perception of Patients Undergoing Chemotherapy	Literature Review	Findings from the journal article review indicate that: 1) Patients experience emotional distress, including anxiety, fear, and feelings of helplessness during chemotherapy treatment; 2) Patients report physical discomfort as a result of chemotherapy; 3) Partial and total alopecia are commonly experienced during chemotherapy; 4) Patients express increasing dissatisfaction with their body image, particularly in relation to appearance; 5) Women with higher levels of distress and lower self-esteem are more likely to experience depression. Overall, the perception of body image among female patients undergoing chemotherapy tends to decline and becomes predominantly negative.

DISCUSSIONS

Cancer patients require effective therapeutic interventions that aim at improving their overall quality of life. One of the most widely utilized treatments is chemotherapy. However, this modality is often associated with a spectrum of adverse side effects, including nausea, vomiting, pain, hair loss, and persistent fatigue. According to a study conducted by Nur et al. (2024), nausea and vomiting are among the most frequently physical side effects reported. What is more, beyond the physical burden, these patients also confronted with significant psychological distress. This is in line with what Yanti et al. (2021), find that chemotherapy affects not only patients' psychological well-being but also their social interactions.

Psychosocial issues refer to changes in an individual's life that encompass both psychological and social aspects, which are interconnected and exert reciprocal influence. These issues are considered major contributing factors to the development of mental health disorders. According to Kotijah et al. (n.d.), manifestations of psychosocial issues may include anxiety, irritability, low self-esteem,

depression, sleep disturbances, and body image disorders. Furthermore, psychosocial problems are often unrecognized and may arise under various circumstances. This is supported by a study conducted Susilowati et al. (2025) indicates that breast cancer patients require a high level of psychosocial adaptation and when this adaptive capacity is adequate, there is a greater risk of developing psychosocial disorders.

The first study reviewed was conducted by Crespi et al. (2024), titled "Work Productivity Among Younger Breast Cancer Survivors: The Impact of Behavioral Interventions for Depression." This study employed a quasi-experimental design involving a sample of 247 respondents. The findings revealed a significant decline in work productivity at the onset of chemotherapy ($P = 0.003$), particularly among younger patients ($P = 0.021$), and those experiencing cognitive problems ($P = 0.002$), muscle pain ($P = 0.002$), depression ($P = 0.016$), and fatigue ($P = 0.033$). The study concluded that mindfulness-based interventions led to a significantly greater improvement in productivity compared to the control group across all three post-intervention assessment points (all $P < 0.05$), with approximately 54% of the improvement attributable to a reduction in depressive symptoms. This study highlights depression as a prominent psychosocial issue among breast cancer patients.

The second study, investigated by (Guo et al., 2023) is about Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Among Metastatic Breast Cancer Patients on Chemotherapy in China. The research method applied in this study is cross-sectional which involved 176 women diagnosed with metastatic breast cancer (MBC) undergoing CT Scan, selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through self-administered questionnaires, which included participants' socio-demographic information, the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS-21), and the Brief COPE. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and general linear regression analysis. The results showed that the prevalence rates of depression, anxiety, and stress among the participants were 52.3%, 60.2%, and 36.9%, respectively. General linear regression analysis indicated that variables such as age, marital status, physical functioning, emotional functioning, pain, dyspnea, and loss of appetite were significantly associated with depression. Therefore, these findings highlight that depression, anxiety, and stress constitute substantial psychosocial issues among breast cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy.

The third study, examined by Marcondes et al. (2024), titled "Anxiety Levels in Brazilian Women with Metastatic Breast Cancer Undergoing Palliative Chemotherapy," used a prospective descriptive study design. A total of 123 adult women undergoing outpatient palliative chemotherapy participated in the study. Anxiety levels were assessed using the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) at three points: the beginning of treatment, the fifth week, and the eleventh week. Data were analyzed using the Kruskal-Wallis test, Mann-Whitney U test, and Multiple General Regression Models. The findings pointed out that women with advanced-stage breast cancer had an average anxiety score of 48.22. A progressive increase in anxiety scores was observed throughout the treatment evaluation stages, with statistically significant differences between time points ($p = 0.008$). In addition, a significant correlation was found between trait anxiety and the presence of metastases ($p = 0.022$). In summary, the study demonstrates that women with metastatic breast cancer undergoing palliative chemotherapy experience high levels of anxiety.

The fourth study is explored by (da Costa et al., 2022), titled Effects of Dance Therapy in Women with Breast Cancer. This study utilized a meta-analysis of intervention trials. The results demonstrated that dance therapy, as a non-pharmacological intervention administered during oncology treatment under close supervision, was effective in alleviating several treatment-related side effects in women with breast cancer including pain, cancer-related fatigue, sleep disturbances, body image dissatisfaction, and depressive symptoms. These findings are consistent with those reported in a fifth study by (Li et al., 2023), that identified three major themes regarding the emotional experiences of breast cancer patients: emotional conflict following diagnosis, prolonged

suffering and worry, and cognitive appraisal. The emotional conflict described in the study was categorized as body image distress, identity crisis, and changes in sexuality and fertility.

Subsequent research conducted in Indonesia, such as those by (Irnawati and Ambiya, 2020) and (Waluyo et al. (2023), found that breast cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy reported higher levels of dissatisfaction with their body image, particularly in relation to physical appearance, in which the body image perception tended to decline and was predominantly negative. In addition to body image concerns, several studies have also identified other psychosocial issues. Added to this, Research by Primal et al. (2020), Setyani et al. (2020), and Romas et al. (2023) reported that anxiety and sleep disturbances were also experienced by breast cancer patients receiving chemotherapy.

CONCLUSION

The conducted literature review provides a comprehensive overview of the psychosocial issues encountered by breast cancer patients, particularly those undergoing chemotherapy treatment. In general, the selected and reviewed articles indicate that common psychosocial problems include anxiety, sleep disturbances, body image disorders, and depression. Appropriate approaches are required for the identification of psychosocial issues, as well as the implementation of psychological interventions to reduce the severity of these problems.

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