

PSYCHOLOGICAL DETERMINANTS OF POST-OPERATIVE RECOVERY AMONG MASTECTOMY CLIENTS: A FOCUS ON POST-SURGERY SELF ESTEEM (PSSE)

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to investigate how psychological factors affect post-operative recovery among mastectomy clients, with a focus on post-surgery self-esteem. The study adopted a correlational research design and used Researchers made questionnaire to collect primary data. The construct validity of the instrument was determined through factor analysis while its reliability was determined through the Cronbach's Alpha test. All the analyses were done using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20.0. Data collected from seventy-seven (77) mastectomy clients were used in the final analysis. The study found that post-operative recovery is strongly influenced by psychological factors. Chiefly, the study found out that post-surgery self-esteem has significant and positive relationship with post-operative recovery. Consequently, the study concluded that post-surgery self-esteem is a relevant psychological factor that enhances post-operative recovery. The study therefore recommends that Counselling Psychologists and other care givers must be on ground to counsel mastectomy clients before and after their surgery. They should counsel them on how to carry themselves even though one of their breast has been removed, is not an end to their life. Relations, care givers and counsellors must continue to love and encourage their clients to have a healthy attitude to life, to enhance their speedy recovery and adjustment in their new condition.

Keywords: Mastectomy Clients, Psychological Determinants, Post-surgery self-esteem, Post-operative recovery.

INTRODUCTION

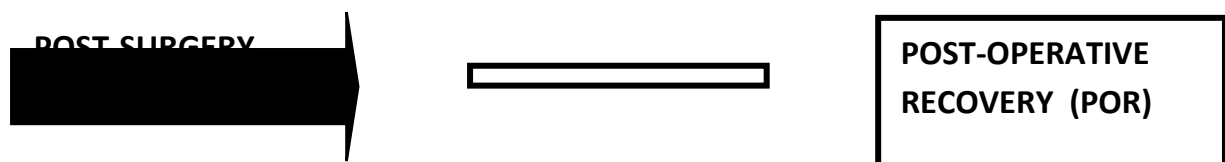
Personal experience of the writers as counselling psychologists has given great insight into the pains, regrets and unendless worries that fill the lives of mastectomy clients. These clients are found to always wet their pillows with tears of sorrow and emptiness. They also struggle with self-denial, self-pity and often wish for death than to have lost what they term as the substance of their femininity (Ekechukwu & Emekwuru, 2017). The researchers also observed that there exists disparity in the pace of recovery of individuals who undergo mastectomy and as well as how long they stay in the hospital due to certain psychological variables.

The crisis that mastectomy clients experience is not something peculiar to them since human beings in general tend to consciously pursue pleasure and avoid pain. Higgins cited in Emekwuru (2017), stated in his regulatory focus theory, that individuals are motivated to promote goals of advancements, growth and achievement and to prevent insecurity, instability and loss. However, events in life continue to unfold, people find that there are certain unpleasant states they cannot totally avoid. Such unavoidable states include, but not

limited to ailments that have deprived them of the good life in more ways than one, and have put them in states that they do not wish for, hence one is mastectomy.

Mastectomy is the treatment for breast cancer through surgery by the partial or complete removal of the affected breast of a woman. It is a practice that dates back to 548 AD, when it was first proposed by Aetius of Amida for the treatment of Theodora (Wikipedia, 2014). In modern day medical practice, William Halsted (1852-1922) was the first to promote a meticulous operative technique, synthesized the best points in the techniques suggested by famous surgeons of the 16th century and provided a scientific basis for the performance of radical mastectomy (Sakorafas, 2008). With the advancement of technology and refinement of methods mastectomy in all its shades has become safer than they were during the time of William Halsted and have received wider acceptability as a standard medical procedure. Yet it cannot be said that the procedure is without effects on patients who undergo it, as many who have had to undergo mastectomy have found it difficult to come to terms with their new selves after surgery, thus requiring the attention and support of experts, friends, counsellors as well as family members to herald a quick post-operative recovery.

Generally, surgery is an experience with multiple stressful components including worries about physical conditions that threatens several individuals (Kiecott-Glasser, Marucha, MacCallum and Glaser, 1988). Consequently, even surgical operations considered minor by physicians can provoke strong emotional reactions in patients which can have important consequences when they are intense (Johnston & Wallace 1990). Irrespective of the type of surgical procedure a patient may undergo, the post-operative recovery is an important part of the patient experience. Whereas recovery is influenced by both social and psychological variables such as self-esteem, many patients will want the post-operative recovery period to pass quickly because they like to resume their normal life routine and might be unprepared and surprised if recovery takes longer than expected (Mottram, 2010). However, post-operative recovery is individual specific and involves a composite of many different social, physical and psychological factors, among which self-esteem is one which this paper seek to address.



Mastectomy is a treatment for breast cancer which women, and in some cases, men believed to be at high risk of breast cancer have the operation prophylactically, that is, as a preventive measure (Sacchini, 2006). It is a medical procedure carried out to remove cancer tissue in males and females. Also, patients may choose lumpectomy, an operation in which a small volume of breast tissue containing the tumour and a surrounding margin of healthy tissue is removed to conserve the breast. Mastectomy and lumpectomy may be referred to as local therapies for breast cancer because they target the area of the tumour (Sacchini et al, 2006). There are different ways in which mastectomy is carried out, ranging from simple to total. Total, skin-sparing, nipple-sparing, total skin sparing modified, radical, extended radical and prophylactic mastectomy.

Psychological factors associated with clients recovery encompasses all factors other than medical interventions that interfere with the recovery of clients after regular treatment of ailment. Psychological factors affecting clients recovery are diagnosed when psychological

or behavioural factors adversely affect the course or outcome of the recovery process (Dimsdale, 2013). Studies carried out by other researchers and the present researchers indicates that clients usually have one or more clinical psychological or behavioural variable that often affect their recovery after surgical procedures (Ekechukwu & Emekwuru, 2017). Such psychological factors are assumed to significantly affect an existing condition or interfere with the recovery of patients/clients. These factors may increase the risk of suffering, fatality, or prolong the duration of a patient's stay in the hospital. such psychological factors include but not limited to loss of self-esteem and depression.

The term self-esteem is used in psychology to mean a person's overall emotional evaluation of his or her own worth. It is often a judgement of oneself as well as an attitude towards the self. Smith and Mackie (2007) suggest that the self-concept indicate what individuals think about themselves, hence self-esteem is the positive or negative evaluations of the self. It is how or what we feel about it. It encapsulates the beliefs, dispositions and emotions that a person has which represents their judgement of their own worth. Self-esteem may also be discerned as the assessment of the self that includes feelings of worth pride and discouragements. The need for respect from others and the need for self-respect or inner self-esteem are two different forms of self-esteem described by (Maslow, in Ekechukwu and Emekwuru 2017). Whereas respect from others entails recognition, acceptance and appreciation and is believed to be more fragile and easily lost, self-esteem usually refers to how individuals view and think about themselves and the value that they place on themselves as individuals.

Post-surgery self-esteem on the other hand, describes the overall opinion or feeling one has of him/herself after surgery, which is based on low or high judgement or evaluation of oneself. Post-surgery self-esteem is low when the individual places a general negative value on himself as a person and high when the individual places a general positive value on himself as a person. Everyone, at some point or another in life's journey feels uncertain about themselves, doubts their abilities, losses self-confidence, thinks negatively of themselves because the world we live suffers an epidemic of low self-esteem (Venzinid).

The lost of a woman's breasts to cancer can affect her self-esteem, her sex drive and just how she feels about herself as a woman. Thus, closely associated with loss of self-esteem in this context is the concept of loss of femininity. Loss of femininity is a feeling of diminished physical and sexual attractiveness in women. Females that have had breast cancer and had to undergo mastectomy quite often mourn the loss of their breast or at the very least, their loss of feeling safe in their own bodies (Williams, 1991). They are often faced with trying to maintain or recapture what it was that made them feel feminine and desirable before their operation. This is not always easy since society places emphasis on the breast as a symbol of womanhood, nurturing, sexuality and femininity. However, a woman must understand that mastectomy does not lessen her physical attributes or sexual desirability. It is thus, important for women to maintain a strong sense of self in order to avoid the pit falls of feeling vulnerable or damaged both physically and mentally (Allison, 2014).

Methodology

Thus this research work investigated how post-surgery self-esteem relates with post operative recovery of mastectomy clients. The study adopted a correlational research design. A correlational design is most appropriate where the aims of a research study is to determine the connections between two or more variables (Lomax, 2007). The population consisted of

clients who have undergone mastectomy from 2010 and 2015 in the University of Port Harcourt Teaching Hospital, Rivers State, Nigeria. The purposive sampling technique was used to draw eighty-three clients who underwent this kind of surgery. The validity of the instrument was done by the experts in measurement and evaluation while the reliability was confirmed using the Cronbach's Alpha test with a threshold of 0.70. Data collected was analysed using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Statistics, while the test of hypotheses was done at 0.5 level of significance in 2-tail test. All the statistical analyses was performed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 2010. This version of SPSS was chosen because it has the capacity to transform scaled data into discrete or continuous data and vice versa.

Results

Research Question: What is the relationship between Post-Surgery Self-Esteem (PSSE) and Post-Operative Recovery (POR) among mastectomy clients in Port Harcourt?

Research Hypothesis: There is no significant relationship between Post-Surgery Self-Esteem (PSSE) and Post-Operative Recovery among mastectomy clients in Port Harcourt.

Table 1:1 Correlation analysis showing the relationship between Post-Surgery Self-Esteem (PSSE) and Post-Operative Recovery

Variables	Statistics	Post-surgery Self-esteem	Post-surgery Recovery
Post-surgery Self-esteem	Pearson Correlation	1	.720**
	Sig. (2-Tailed)		.000
	N	77	77
Post-surgery Recovery	Pearson Correlation	.720**	1
	Sig. (2-Tailed)	.000	
	N	77	77

**** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)**

Table 1.1 displayed the result of the test of the hypothesis. The P(r) produced by the test is .720. This high value suggests that a strong relationship exist between post-surgery self-esteem and post-operative recovery among mastectomy clients. The positive sign of the correlation coefficient means that the relationship between the variables is a positive one, which implies that the higher a mastectomy client carries herself, the more likely the client will recover quickly after the surgical operation. Based on the significance 2-tail value ($P = 1000 > .05$), the study rejects the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis. It therefore holds that there is a significant relationship between post-surgery self-esteem and post-operative recovery among mastectomy clients.

DISCUSSION OF FINDING

The study found a significant and positive relationship between post-surgery self-esteem and post-operative recovery among mastectomy clients. This finding is justified by the fact that,

as the evaluative dimensions of the self, self-esteem includes feeling of worth, pride and self-encouragement. Low self-esteem affects every aspect of an individual's life from the way one thinks about oneself to the way one thinks and reacts to life situations. Thus, feeling of high self-esteem have the potential to keep an individual upbeat and also keep the individual optimistic in facing challenges. The way one feels about oneself is adversely affected when negative thoughts are allowed to take a better part of one (Solomon, 2012). This also affects the experiences the individual has in his life. Over time, this can lead to loss of self-esteem which can reduce the quality of a person's life in many different ways, including the person's coping strategies in time of adverse conditions and one's ability to recover from illness. When not adequately addressed, low self-esteem may lead to mental health issues including depression and its attendant tragic results.

A positive self-image, a sense of self-worth as well as feelings of desirability helps the post-operative recovery of clients; as a sense of worthiness usually boosts the individual's physical health. It is also important for mastectomy clients to pay close attention to their emotional and spiritual well-being throughout the entire journey, since it is not uncommon for the focus on tests and treatment to overshadow these incredible important aspects of their lives (Sacchini, 2016).

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

High post-surgery self-esteem informs speedy post-operative recovery among mastectomy clients. This implies that low post-surgery self-esteem will delay post-surgery recovery among mastectomy clients. Guidance Counsellors and other care givers should thus encourage their mastectomy clients to always think highly of themselves and always carry a positive and optimistic countenance if they must enjoy quick post-operative recovery.

The researchers having carried out this study efficiently, concludes that quick post-operative recovery of mastectomy clients is not dependent on medical intervention alone. Clinical counselling plays a very important role in patient's recovery too.

The researcher, equally recommends that hospital managements and other stakeholders should also know that other psychological factors such as post-surgery anxiety, post-surgery self-pity and post-surgery depression impede post-operative recovery while post-surgery self-esteem and post-surgery social support facilitate quick post-operative recovery, hence the services of both Guidance Counsellors, significant ofnrs and other care giver should be involved alongside medical care to ensure quick and steady recovery of mastectomy clients.

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