

## THE SPIRITUAL WELLBEING OF FEMALE CANCER PATIENTS AT THE NATIONAL CANCER SOCIETY MALAYSIA

A`dawiyah Ismail<sup>1</sup>,  
Fariza Md. Sham<sup>2</sup>,  
Faizah Mohd. Zaki<sup>3</sup>

### ABSTRACT

*It is the wish of any normal human being to have spiritual wellbeing, both for himself and also for other people. This could be attained by the soul when it is in harmony with its nature. A person who is suffering from a sickness or who is in pain will have a tormented soul because it relates to matters that are not in harmony with its nature. Similarly, female cancer patients who are in pain battling the disease and are fighting for their survival would hardly express themselves as being well. Nonetheless, the element of wellbeing needs to be well-understood by the cancer patients in order for them to enjoy their lives and to benefit from the blessings that they already have, and thus experience the beauty and happiness of their lives. This paper identifies the element of spiritual wellbeing attained by the female cancer patients at the National Cancer Society Malaysia. The design of this study is a quantitative research survey. Data collection in this study was carried out through the questionnaire, which was distributed to 20 female cancer patients at the National Cancer Society Malaysia. The data were descriptively analysed based on frequency, percentage and mean. The results of the study show that the cancer patients possess spiritual wellbeing by accepting the sickness as a trial with perseverance without putting the blame on fate (mean=3.90), by being thankful for their health by performing meaningful activities (mean=3.75), and by not experiencing emotional stress by practising religious teachings (mean=3.70). The element of spiritual wellbeing have a positive impact on the soul, emotion and physique of the female cancer patients, as well as to have positively changed their thoughts and behaviour.*

**Keywords:** spiritual wellbeing, female cancer, National Cancer Society Malaysia

### Introduction

The physical, mental and emotion of an individual that are in good quality and condition are able to give great contribution to the wellbeing of both the society and the individual himself. The quality can be derived from an optimal mental health (Suradi 2005). Both the spiritual and physical aspects are very important in human life. This is because, human nature requires for a source of strength in developing the individuals in the society. In addition, Islam teaches that the perfection of an individual covers both the physical and spiritual perspectives, hence expressing a unique characteristic in the development of a prosperous society (Che Yusoff 1986).

Among the key dimensions of an individual's wellbeing are the physical, spiritual, career, social, mental, emotional and financial elements. Wellbeing is divided into the outward dimension (the physical) and the inward dimension (the spiritual). This paperwork on the other hand, focuses only on the spiritual wellbeing. The dimension of spiritual wellbeing covers the spiritual, intellectual and emotional aspects. The dimension of physical wellbeing on the other hand, includes the physical, career, financial and social aspects (Mohd. Kamel Idris: 2011). Spiritual wellbeing could be defined as matters pertaining to an individual's religious beliefs. In the context of Islam, it is known as the true faith. A true faith means to believe in Allah the Almighty and to worship none other but Him. As long as an individual has the true faith, and is obedient to the true religious beliefs, then the individual will attain wellbeing in the spiritual aspect of his life.

The true faith which is known as "akidah Islamiyah" (the Islamic faith), is closely related to the meaning and purpose of life and the existence of mankind in this world. People with a true, complete faith will place their sole dependency on their Creator and will always surrender to Him. Apart from that, they are also consistent in their actions and beliefs (Mohd. Kamel Idris: 2011).

<sup>1</sup> Senior Lecturer, **Centre for Human and Community Wellbeing (Pusat Kesejahteraan Insan dan Komuniti)**, Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 43600 Bangi Selangor  
Associate Fellow, Institute of Islam Hadhari, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 43600 Bangi Selangor. Malaysia.  
Emel:ada@ukm.edu.my. Tel:+603-89253539. Fax +603-89213152

<sup>2</sup> Senior Lecturer, **Centre for Human and Community Wellbeing (Pusat Kesejahteraan Insan dan Komuniti)**, Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 43600 Bangi Selangor  
Associate Fellow, Institute of Islam Hadhari, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 43600 Bangi Selangor. Malaysia.  
Emel:farisham@ukm.edu.my. Tel. +603-89213885. Fax: +603-89214590

<sup>3</sup> Lecturer at the Department of Radiology Services, Pusat Perubatan Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Jalan Yaacob Latif, Bandar Tun Razak, 56000 Batu 9 Cheras, Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur  
Emel: drfaizah@ppukm.ukm.edu.my

Intellectual wellbeing (mind) refers to a mind that is capable of solving the personal problems, as well as the problems of others effectively. People with intellectual wellbeing are able to use their intellect well in socialising and contributing to the society, thus placing them on a higher rank and respected position (Mohd Kamel Idris: 2011). People with intellectual wellbeing always have a positive mind and will act proactively for their own benefit, as well as for the benefit of the society. They can also think creatively and innovatively in achieving something that can bring joy and prosperity to themselves and others.

Emotional wellbeing on the other hand, is an individual's understanding of his own emotions as well as the emotions of others (Gardner 2003). There are various forms of emotions that can lead to emotional wellbeing, such as by being happy, delightful, grateful, gratitude as the acceptance of fate, and by putting trust in Allah alone (Fariza & et al 2014). All these can be categorised as positive emotions. Negative emotions include sadness, anxiousness, restlessness, and disappointment. An individual with emotional wellbeing is able to balance between the positive and negative emotions. Besides that, he is able to control his emotion when faced with negative emotions such as anger, sadness and disappointment. When an individual is able to control his emotions, he can establish good relationship with the people in his environment. The ability to control emotions makes someone to become respected and will become a person for people to share their complaints with and also to ask for help (Mohd. Kamel Idris: 2011).

This is in accordance with the definition of health by the World Health Organization (WHO) whereby health is defined as a level or condition where an individual has perfect physical, mental, and social wellbeing, and not just in being free of diseases or inabilities (Anita 2012). The wellbeing of an individual is achieved when he feels happy and joyful in living his life. The quality of life needs to be noted by an individual in improving the wellbeing of his life since both the quality and wellbeing of life are of equal importance (Mohd Yusoff 2011). Wellbeing in life is a life that achieves a high level of quality in various aspects such as the economy, education, health, spiritual, and socio-cultural.

### Research Methodology

This is a quantitatively-designed study based on the survey. The collection of research data was made based on the questionnaire. Purposive sampling was used in the selection of the research sample. A total of pilot study of respondents are 20 female cancer patients at the National Cancer Society Malaysia were involved in this study. The data obtained were descriptively analysed based on frequency, percentage and mean. The Alpha Cronbach items obtained for the spiritual practices of the cancer patients are over 0.937. The highest age range of the respondents is between 51 to 60 years old. A total of 13 respondents (65%) were already married, and the highest type of cancer faced by the respondents is breast cancer with 14 respondents. Another 19 respondents (95%) were first-time patients, while only one respondent (5%) was a recurrent patient of the disease.

### Research Findings and Discussion

**Table 1 :The element of wellbeing that the female cancer patients wish to attain in their lives**

No.	Item	[Percentage & Frequency (%)]				Mean	S.D
		SD	D	A	SA		
1	I am able to accept this life test with fortitude.	0 0.0	0 0.0	2 10.0	18 90.0	3.90	.308
2	I am able to tolerate other people.	0 0.0	1 5.0	7 35.0	12 60.0	3.55	.605
3	I am able to accept criticism from the people around me well.	0 0.0	0 0.0	11 55.0	9 45.0	3.45	.510
4	I am not angry with the people around me.	0 0.0	1 5.0	10 50.0	9 45.0	3.40	.598
5	I am able to deal with the people around me.	0 0.0	0 0.0	9 45.0	11 55.0	3.55	.510
6	I am able to think and act positively.	0 0.0	0 0.0	11 55.0	9 45.0	3.45	.510
7	I try to be positive with the people around me.	0 0.0	0 0.0	9 45.0	11 55.0	3.55	.510
8	I do not feel stressed when practising religious teachings.	0 0.0	0 0.0	6 30.0	14 70.0	3.70	.470
9	I try to manage my emotions in a good way.	0 0.0	0 0.0	9 45.0	11 55.0	3.55	.510

10	I am confident that other people are making well wishes for my good health.	0 0.0	0 0.0	10 50.0	10 50.0	3.50	.513
11	I am capable of handling the workload at my workplace calmly.	0 0.0	1 5.0	12 60.0	7 35.0	3.30	.571
12	I take the opportunity to donate my property to those in need so that my heart is peaceful.	0 0.0	1 5.0	8 40.0	11 55.0	3.50	.607
13	I did not injure myself when I discovered that I have been inflicted with this disease.	0 0.0	0 0.0	6 30.0	14 70.0	3.70	.470
14	I am grateful for the health that I still have by doing meaningful activities.	0 0.0	0 0.0	5 25.0	15 75.0	3.75	.444
Alpha Cronbach ( $\varphi$ ) Reliability Value =						.937	

Source: Questionnaire 2017

Table 1 shows the items related to the elements of wellbeing in life that the cancer patients wished to attain after being diagnosed with cancer by the medical officer. The findings of the study show that the item where the respondents are able to accept the disease as a form of life test with fortitude has scored the highest mean of 3.90. This is followed by the respondents being grateful for the health that they still have by doing meaningful activities with a mean score of 3.75. The individual lives of the cancer patients will normally undergo emotional change, either from the negative to the positive or vice versa. Hence, cancer patients need to have a positive mind and treat their spirituality towards positivity in order to lead a good life. They need to learn to accept their condition and lead their lives as usual, yet to have faith and positive thinking in taking care of themselves and in fighting against their emotional stress. These attitudes will help the cancer patients to be more open, stronger and confident in undergoing the treatment, as well as in enduring the side effects of the treatment and the disease. Besides that, among the crucial methods in restoring the patients' emotional stability is by practising religious practices that will bring them closer to Allah. Among the religious practices are self-reflection, reciting the Quran, performing voluntary '*hajat*' prayer and by making supplications to Allah the Almighty (Mohd Rushdan 2008).

Respondents who practise the practices as recommended by Islam do not feel under pressure, and they also do not physically inflict harm upon themselves, but rather to accept the disease with fortitude (mean=3.70). Cancer patients would normally experience negative emotions as well as the attack of perceptions, such as depicting death, being in sadness and depression and also in giving up fighting against the disease. This situation would also affect the patients' perception towards the value of life (A Rahman 2008). Islam strictly restricts and prohibits its followers from finding quick solutions to their life problems such as by injuring themselves or by committing suicide.

The items where the respondents have an open attitude towards others such as by being tolerant towards other people scored a mean of 3.55, and the item where the respondents are able to control their temper when being with other people scored a mean of 3.40. The item that the respondents are confident that other people are making well wishes for their good health has a mean score of 3.50. Being tolerant, being able to control one's temper, to have good faith in other people are among the good qualities that must be possessed by an individual. Spiritual values according to Islam are measured based on the good qualities that are successfully formed in an individual such as to have patience, to accept fate (*redha*), to have complete faith in Allah (*tawakkal*), to be grateful, to have good faith in other people, to be sincere, to have positive thinking, to be strong-willed, to be content with the existing blessings, to have fortitude as well as other qualities. Islamic teachings are comprehensive in nature since they focus on a person's physical, spiritual, intellectual and emotional development in an integrated way in increasing the wellbeing and happiness in the lives of mankind, both in this world and the hereafter (Asmawati 2007). Being obedient towards Allah the Almighty (*taqwa*) is a complete mature state, such as the individual's knowledge about Islam, his faith and mercy which are in tandem with his deeds which involve the benevolence of his heart and morality (Said Hawwa 2010).

The item where the respondents take the opportunity to donate their property to the needy which in turn helps them to attain a peaceful heart scored a mean of 3.50. According to Zaharuddin (2014), the giving of alms or charity (*sedekah*) lead to a person's property to be blessed and therefore increases his livelihood. Apart from that, charity is also a deterring factor against fear and sadness, yet functions as a pulling factor in obtaining peace in life. This practice is demanded on all human beings in increasing their benevolence, as well as in purifying a person's soul in getting closer to Allah the Almighty, apart from getting rid of the negative attitudes and stinginess in themselves (Said Hawwa 2001).

The respondents are capable of handling their workload at their workplaces peacefully scored a mean of 3.30. Peacefulness at the workplace is also an important necessity to the cancer patients in facing life. Social activities are activities that involve the society and the people surrounding a person, outside of his personal space. In National Population and Family Development Board (2011), social wellbeing is measured based on the need to work together and to show cooperation, satisfaction in the relationship and the involvement towards the community.

Therefore, the general findings of this study show that cancer patients strive to lead a better life.

## Conclusion

Cancer patients are able to attain wellbeing in their lives through a multitude of ways, generally by thinking and acting positively. Building the strength of the spiritual aspect is crucial in attaining the wellbeing in life so that the trials and tribulations that befall a person could be readily accepted with a positive mind. The patients' preparation in accepting their health trial with commendable qualities or characteristics show that there is hope for them to heal and recover from the disease, and thus attain wellbeing in their lives. Wisdom, perseverance and determination, good behaviour and purity of the soul help the patients to own commendable qualities and to enjoy a much more prosperous life. The wellbeing and peacefulness of the patients' lives are able to have a positive impact on themselves, as well as to those around them.

The lives of individuals with cancer require for a fulfilment that will lead to their spiritual wellbeing. The elements of spiritual wellbeing are for example, the ability to accept this trial with fortitude, the ability to tolerate other people, able to accept criticisms from the people surrounding them well, able to control their temper towards the people around them and are able to face or confront the people around them. Spiritual wellbeing also includes the following elements, namely; the ability to think and act positively, to try to have an open heart with the people around them, are not under pressure when practising their religious teachings, strive to manage their emotions well, and to have confidence that other people are making well wishes for their good health. The capability of handling the workload at their workplace peacefully, to take the opportunity to donate their property or wealth to the needy so that they will have a peaceful heart, not to physically inflict harm upon themselves when they discovered about the disease that has inflicted them, as well as showing their gratefulness for the health that they still have by doing meaningful activities are also several other elements of wellbeing in the lives of the cancer patients. All these elements of wellbeing need to be paid attention to so that the cancer patients could be helped in attaining a more meaningful and peaceful life.

## Acknowledgement

I. Research Grant GUP-2016-027, UKM

II. National Cancer Society Malaysia (PKKM) Kuala Lumpur

## References

- Santrock. (2001). *Educational Psychology*. New York: Mc Graw Hill.
- Bakar, M. F. (2009). *Perkembangan Emosi Warisan Dan Persekitaran*. Retrieved from <http://eprints.utm.my>
- Anita Abd Rahman. (2012). *Islam dan Kesihatan Awam*. Malaysia: The Inspiration Hub.
- Mohd Rushdan Md Noor. (2008). *Buku Kanser Wanita: Pencegahan dan Rawatan*. Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Publications & Distributions Sdn. Bhd.
- A Rahman A Jamal. (2008). *Mengenal Kanser Langkah Pertama Pembasmian*. Bangi: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.
- Suradi Salim. (2005). Cabaran terhadap kedudukan kesihatan mental wanita. *Jurnal Psikologi Malaysia*, 83-93.
- Che Yusoff Che Mamat. (1986). Kesepaduan Rohani dan Jasmani dalam ajaran Islam. *Islamiyyat*, 3-12.
- Bahagian Kependudukan Lembaga Penduduk dan Pembangunan Keluarga Negara LPPKN. (2013). *Laporan Kajian Indeks Kesejahteraan Keluarga Malaysia 2011*. Kuala Lumpur: Bahagian Kependudukan LPPKN.
- Zaharuddin Abdul Rahman. (2014). *Sedekah Luar Biasa*. Kuala Lumpur: Telaga Biru.
- Said Hawwa. (2001). *Mensucikan jiwa*. Shah Alam: Pustaka Dini Sdn Bhd.
- Mohd Yusof Hussain, Mohamad Shaharudin Samsurijan, Suraiya Ishak, Abd. Hair Awang. (2011). Hubungan kejiwaan dalam membentuk kesejahteraan hidup masyarakat 'kampung bandar': Kes kampung berjaya dan Kampung Mempelam, Alor Setar, Malaysia. *Malaysia Journal of Society and Space*, Issue 3 (36-44).
- A.Sankhe et al. (2017). Spiritual care therapy on quality of life in cancer patients and their caregivers: A prospective Non randomized single-cohort study. *Journal Religion Health*, 56:725-731.
- Asmawati Suhid. (n.d.). Pengajaran Adab dan Akhlak Islam Dalam Membangunkan Modal Insan. *Jurnal Pengajian Umum bil.8*, 167-177.
- Said Hawwa. (2010). *Pendidikan Spiritual*. Batu Caves, Selangor: Mutiara Ilmu Selektia.
- Haron Din. (2007). *Islam rujukan efektif akhlak mulia*. Batu Caves, Selangor: PTS Millennia Sdn Bhd.
- Mukhlis al syarkani al falah. (2007). *Keajaiban sabar*. Johor Bahru: Perniagaan Jahabersa.
- Siti Noorsyafenas Safe, Ahmad Yunus Mohd Nor. (2016). Pengurusan Stres Menurut Al Quran dan Hadith. *Al Hikmah*, 3-18.
- Noor Azura Zainuddin, Jamalnia Aurani, Arifah Fasha Rosmani, Wan Naimah Wan Daud, Hamlussalam Md Dali. (2014). Solat Bio Therapy Module. *Jurnal Intelek*, Vol 9 (1): 23-33.
- Khairunnas Rajab. (2010). Psikologi Iman sebagai Penguatan Nilai Teologis dalam Kesehatan Mental Islam. *Sosio-Religia*, Vol. 9, No.3, 919-932.
- Iskandar, Mif Rohim Noyo Sarkun. (2015). Pengaruh Zikrullah pada Manusia Menurut Perspektif Sains. *Sains Humanika*, 41-46.
- Abbott L. Ferriss. (2010). *Approaches to Improving The Quality of Life*. New York: Springer Dordrecht Heidelberg.
- Abdul Halim El Muhammadiyah. (2008). *Bimbingan Rohani : Pembina peribadi taqwa*. Kajang, Selangor: Aras Mega (M) Sdn Bhd.
- Mohd Kamel Idris. (2011). *Mencari Kesejahteraan : Minda, Emosi dan Fizikal*. Selangor: MKI Publishing.
- Zainab Ismail. (2015). Faktor Gangguan Psikologi Dalam Kalangan Mahasiswa Universiti. *Al Hikmah*, 55-71.
- Abu Ahmad Yasin. (2008). *30 Wasiat Imam al Ghazali*. Johor: Perniagaan Jahabersa.

- Noor Shakirah Mat Akhir, Muhammad Azizan Sabjan. (2014). Pembangunan Modal Insan dari perspektif kerohanian agama: Islam sebagai fokus. *Journal of Human Capital Development*, 33-47.
- Rahnama et.al. (2012). Iranian cancer patients' perception of spirituality: a qualitative content analysis study. *Biomed Central Nursing*, 11:19.
- Nixon et. al. (2013). An Inverstigation into the spiritual needs of neuro-oncology patients from a nurse perspective. *BioMed Central Nursing*, 12:2.
- Renske Kruizinga, Michael Scherer-Rath, Johannes BAM Schilderman, Mirjam AG Sprangers and Hanneke WM Van Laarhoven. (2013). The life in sight application study (LISA) : design of a randomized controlled trial to access the role of an assisted structured reflection on life events and ultimate life goals to improve quality of life of cancer patients. *BIOMed Central*, 13-360.
- A. Sankhe, K. Dalal, V. Agarwal, P. Sarve. (2017). Spiritual care therapy on quality of life in cancer patients and their caregivers: A prospective Non-randomized Single-Cohort Study. *Journal Religion Health*, 56:725-731.
- Zulkifli bin Mohamad Al-Bakri. (n.d.). *BAYAN LINNAS SIRI KE-82: Khusyuk Solat: Hukum dan Cara Mendapatkannya*. Retrieved from <http://www.muftiwp.gov.my/>: <http://www.muftiwp.gov.my/index.php/ms-my/perkhidmatan/bayan-linnas/1366-bayan-linnas-siri-ke-82-khusyuk-solat-hukum-dan-cara-mendapatkannya>
- Lokman Abdul Hamid. (2013). *Perubatan Al Quran Rawatan Kanser*. Kuala Lumpur: Must Read Sdn Bhd.
- Mahyuddin hj Asyaari. (2001). Pendidikan al Quran menjana keupayaan berfikir. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 9;4 ms 1-8.
- Mohd Saiful Islami Mohd Taher & Siti Aisyah Yusof. (2014). Memahami konsep Berzikir berdasarkan al Quran. In *Psikospiritual Islam* (pp. 61-69). Terengganu: Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin.
- Muhammad Azhar. (2014). *Dahsyatnya Syukur, Istighfar dan Muhasabah*. Selangor: Kemilau Publika Sdn Bhd.
- Abi al Qasim al Hussain bin Muhammad al Ma'ruf bi al Gharib al Asfahani. (1998). *al Mufradat fi Gharib al Quran*. Beirut, Lebanon: Dar al Ma'rifah.
- Mohammad Zaini Yahaya, Mohd Sukki Othman. (2010). *Mengurus stres Islam ada caranya*. Kajang Selangor: Soul Excellent Training & Consultancy.
- Mizan Adiliah Ahmad Ibrahim, Wan Mohd Fazrul Azdi Wan Razali, Hanit Osman. (2006). *Kaunseling dalam Islam*. Nilai, Negeri Sembilan: Fakulti Kepimpinan dan Pengurusan, KUIM.
- Amran Kasimin. (1997). *Doa & Rawatan Penyakit*. Cheras Kuala Lumpur: Percetakan Warna Sdn Bhd.

A`dawiyah Ismail  
Fariza Md. Sham  
Faizah Mohd. Zaki