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Self-Concept Disturbances As A Psychosocial Issue In Women With Breast Cancer: A Literature Review

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Abstract

Breast cancer is a chronic disease that causes not only physical problems but also psychosocial distress in women. Physical changes resulting from mastectomy, chemotherapy, and radiation therapy can affect patients' self-concept through body image disturbances, decreased self-esteem, anxiety, and a crisis of feminine identity. These conditions can impact patients' quality of life and treatment adherence. This literature review aims to analyze self-concept disturbances in women with breast cancer based on recent research. This study employed a narrative literature review method. Articles were obtained through searches on Google Scholar, PubMed, GARUDA, ScienceDirect, and Scopus using the keywords "breast cancer," "self-concept," "body image," "kanker payudara," and "konsep diri." The articles used were full-text articles in Indonesian and English from the period 2021–2026. A total of 15 articles that met the inclusion criteria were analyzed narratively through data reduction, theme categorization, and synthesis of research results. The review findings indicate that self-concept disturbances in breast cancer patients are characterized by negative body image, reduced self-confidence, depression, anxiety, and difficulty accepting bodily changes. Influencing factors include age, psychological condition, cancer stage, family support, partner support, and social stigma. Psychosocial interventions such as counseling, support groups, and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy are effective in helping to improve patients' self-acceptance. Disturbed self-concept is a significant psychosocial issue among women with breast cancer that affects patients' quality of life and treatment process. A holistic, multidisciplinary, and biopsychosocial approach to healthcare is necessary to help improve the psychological adaptation and well-being of breast cancer patients.

Keywords: Body Image, Breast Cancer, Self-Concept, Psychosocial, Quality Of Life

INTRODUCTION

Breast cancer is a non-communicable disease that poses a major health problem for women in many countries. According to the WHO (2024), this disease results from the growth of abnormal cells in breast tissue that proliferate uncontrollably and can spread to other organs through metastasis. Breast cancer not only causes physical distress but also imposes complex psychological, social, emotional, and spiritual impacts on those affected. The disease is often associated with a threat to feminine identity, as the breasts are viewed as symbols of femininity, sexual attractiveness, and women's body image. These factors make breast cancer one of the chronic diseases that imposes a high psychosocial burden on female patients.

Breast cancer remains a major health issue for women, both globally and nationally. Globally, breast cancer ranks among the cancers with the highest number of cases in women. WHO data shows that in 2022, there were approximately 2.3 million new cases of breast cancer and about 670,000 deaths from breast cancer worldwide. Breast cancer is also the most common cancer among women in 157 of the 185 countries reported (International Agency for Research on Cancer, 2022). This situation indicates that breast cancer is not merely a clinical issue but also a public health problem with far-reaching impacts on women's quality of life.

In Indonesia, the burden of cancer is also high. Data from the Global Cancer Observatory for 2022 indicates that Indonesia had approximately 408,661 new cancer cases and 242,099 cancer-related deaths. Breast cancer is the most common type of cancer among women, with an incidence rate of approximately 41.8 per 100,000 women and a mortality rate of approximately 14.4 per 100,000 women (GLOBOCAN, 2022). These data underscore the need for serious attention to breast cancer, not only in terms of early detection and treatment but also regarding patients' psychosocial well-being.

Breast cancer treatment generally includes mastectomy, chemotherapy, radiation therapy, hormone therapy, or a combination of these modalities. Although these therapies aim to improve patients' life expectancy, the treatment process often results in significant physical changes. Breast loss due to mastectomy is one of the most difficult physical changes for women to accept because it is directly linked to body identity and femininity. Patients may experience breast loss, hair loss, weight changes, chronic pain, fatigue, changes in body shape, and sexual dysfunction. These changes can disrupt how patients view their bodies, their social roles, and their identity as women (Pujiati et al., 2025).

Physical changes during breast cancer treatment often have various psychological and social impacts on patients. Many women experience feelings of sadness, anxiety, fear, shame, loss of self-confidence, and even depression after undergoing breast cancer therapy. The loss of a breast and changes in physical appearance can make patients feel unattractive, unfeminine, and as though they have lost their identity as women. Recent research indicates that breast cancer patients who undergo mastectomy have higher levels of anxiety and psychological distress compared to those who undergo breast-conserving therapy (Susilo et al., 2025). Additionally, some patients experience a decline in social interaction, withdraw from their social environment, and face difficulties in sexual relationships with their partners due to bodily changes during treatment (Wulandari et al., 2025).

Self-concept disturbances in women with breast cancer often manifest as body image disturbances, decreased self-esteem, feelings of unattractiveness, shame, anxiety, depression, and a sense of loss of feminine identity. Self-concept refers to an individual's evaluation of themselves, encompassing body image, self-esteem, self-identity, self-role, and self-ideal. In breast cancer patients, physical changes resulting from the disease and treatment can alter patients' perceptions of themselves. Research by Yao et al. (2024) indicates that concerns about body image and psychological distress are associated with lower quality of life in young women with breast cancer (Yao et al., 2024).

Several international studies have also shown that body image disturbances are one of the primary psychosocial issues among breast cancer patients. Ahn et al. (2023) found that changes in body image are an important predictor of quality of life in women with breast cancer (Ahn & Suh, 2023). Álvarez-Pardo et al. (2023) also explain that poor body image, fear of recurrence, and the course of the disease can reduce the quality of life of breast cancer survivors. These findings demonstrate that disturbances in self-concept cannot be separated from the patient's physical, emotional, and social conditions (Álvarez-Pardo et al., 2023).

Another study by Omari et al. (2024) shows that some women with breast cancer have negative body perceptions. Some patients are dissatisfied with their bodies, do not feel attractive, and tend to avoid outfits that highlight their figures. This suggests that breast cancer can affect self-cognition—that is, how patients understand and evaluate themselves (Omari et al., 2024).

In Indonesia, research on the psychosocial aspects of breast cancer is also beginning to emerge. Merlin (2020) studied the self-concept of breast cancer patients at Prof. Dr. W. Z. Johannes Hospital in Kupang and demonstrated that the self-concept of breast cancer patients needs to be viewed from a multidimensional perspective, encompassing body image, self-esteem, self-identity, self-role, and self-ideal (Merlin & Vanchapo, 2020). This research is important because it demonstrates that patients' self-concept is not only related to physical changes but also to their ability to accept their condition, fulfill social roles, and maintain a sense of self-worth.

Another national study indicates that body image and social support contribute to the quality of life of breast cancer patients. Sari et al. (2025) found that body image and social support are associated with the quality of life of breast cancer patients (Sari et al., 2025). Putri and Nopita (2025) also found that self-acceptance has a significant relationship with the quality of life of breast cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy. These findings reinforce the notion that self-concept disturbances do not exist in isolation but are related to self-acceptance, social support, and patients' adaptive abilities during treatment (Putri & Nopita, 2025).

Based on these findings, there is a need to conduct a literature review on self-concept disturbances in women with breast cancer. This review is important because existing research largely addresses body image, self-esteem, quality of life, or social support separately. Few studies have specifically synthesized self-concept disturbances as a holistic and multidimensional concept. Therefore, this literature review was conducted to summarize, compare, and analyze the results of previous studies on self-concept disturbances in women with breast cancer, including the forms of disturbances, influencing factors, their impact on quality of life, and the psychosocial interventions that can be provided.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a *Literature Review* design. *A literature review* enables researchers to conduct an in-depth synthesis of various research findings, thereby providing a broader understanding of the psychosocial aspects of breast cancer patients.

In this study, the researcher identified, evaluated, and synthesized various scientific articles related to self-concept disturbances in women with breast cancer published in SINTA-accredited national journals as well as reputable international Q1–Q4 journals during the 2021–2026 period.

A systematic literature search was conducted using several electronic databases with broad coverage in the fields of health, nursing, psychology, and public health. The databases used included: Google Scholar, PubMed, GARUDA, ScienceDirect, and Scopus

The selection of these databases was based on the quality of scientific sources, accessibility of full-text articles, and the coverage of national and international publications related to breast cancer and women's psychosocial health. PubMed and Scopus were used to obtain reputable international articles (Q1–Q4), while GARUDA and Google Scholar were used to access nationally accredited articles (SINTA 1–5). The selected articles met the predefined inclusion criteria.

The search strategy utilized a combination of keywords in English and Indonesian, using Boolean operators such as **AND**, **OR**, and **NOT** to narrow or broaden the search results. The keywords used in English include: "breast cancer," "self-concept," "body image," "self-esteem," "women with breast cancer," "psychosocial impact." Meanwhile, keywords in Indonesian include: "kanker payudara", "konsep diri", "citra tubuh", "harga diri", "gangguan psikososial". Keyword combinations were formatted as follows: "breast cancer" AND "self-concept" AND "women" or "kanker payudara" AND "konsep diri" AND "citra tubuh".

This search strategy was used to identify articles discussing the relationship between breast cancer, changes in body image, self-esteem, self-identity, and the psychosocial impacts that influence patients' self-concept.

Inclusion Criteria

The articles used in this literature review were selected based on the following inclusion criteria:

a. Articles published between 2021 and 2026
b. Articles available in full text.
c. Articles written in Indonesian or English.
d. Studies addressing self-concept, body image, self-esteem, or psychosocial aspects in breast cancer patients
e. Articles using quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods research designs.
f. Articles must be published in nationally accredited journals (SINTA 1–5) or reputable international journals indexed in Scopus (Q1–Q4).

These inclusion criteria aim to ensure that the analyzed articles possess sufficient relevance, scientific quality, and currency in line with the latest research developments regarding self-concept disturbances in breast cancer patients.

Exclusion Criteria

The exclusion criteria for this study include:

a. Duplicate articles from different databases
b. Articles irrelevant to the research topic
c. Articles in the form of editorials, commentaries, opinions, non-scientific literature, or proceedings that have not undergone peer review.
d. Articles that do not present clear research findings.
e. Articles that focus solely on the medical aspects of breast cancer without addressing the psychosocial aspects or patients' self-concept.

The article selection process in this literature review was conducted in accordance with the PRISMA 2020 flowchart, which consists of the identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion stages. The article search was conducted through five electronic databases, namely Google Scholar, PubMed, GARUDA, ScienceDirect, and Scopus. The keywords used included *"breast cancer," "self-concept," "body image," "self-esteem*," *"women with breast cancer," "psychosocial impact," "kanker payudara," "konsep diri," "citra tubuh," "harga diri,"* and *"gangguan psikososial*."

During the identification phase, a total of 215 articles were identified across all databases. The breakdown is as follows: 82 articles from Google Scholar, 45 from PubMed, 38 from ScienceDirect, 31 from Scopus, and 19 from GARUDA. After all articles were collected, a duplication check was conducted. A total of 48 articles were found to be duplicates because they appeared in more than one database. After the duplicates were removed, 167 articles remained to proceed to the screening stage.

During the title and abstract screening phase, 167 articles were reviewed for relevance to the topic of self-concept disturbances in women with breast cancer. Of these, 96 articles were excluded because they did not align with the study's focus. The excluded articles generally only discussed the medical aspects of breast cancer, pharmacological therapy, early detection, or cancer in general without addressing self-concept, body image, self-esteem, self-identity, quality of life, or the patients' psychosocial aspects. Consequently, 71 articles were deemed suitable for further review in full text.

During the eligibility phase, 71 *full-text* articles were reviewed in greater depth. Of these, 56 articles were excluded because they did not meet the inclusion criteria. Reasons for exclusion included 14 articles for which *full text* was unavailable, 11 articles published outside the 2021–2026 range, 9 articles that did not specifically address female breast cancer patients, 13 articles that did not address self-concept or psychosocial aspects, and 9 articles that were editorials, opinion pieces, conference proceedings, or non-peer-reviewed articles. After completing the entire selection process, 15 articles that met the inclusion criteria were identified and used in the final analysis. Most of the articles discussed self-concept, body image, *self-esteem*, quality of life, self-acceptance, *self-efficacy*, and psychosocial impacts on breast cancer patients during treatment.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The article selection process is presented in the PRISMA 2020 diagram below.

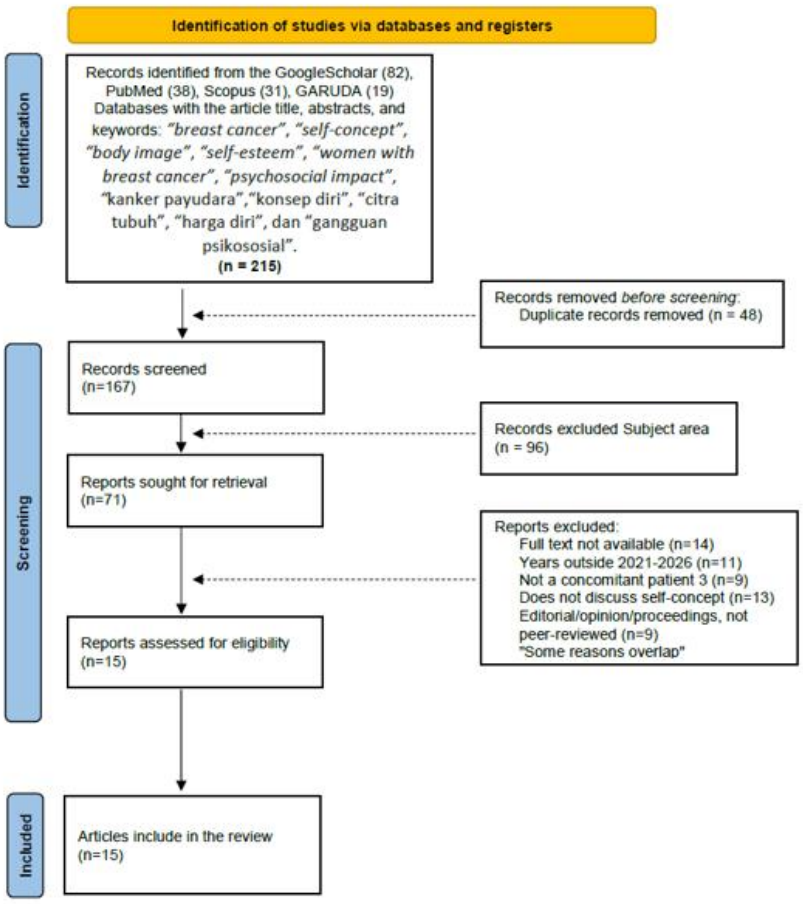

Table 1. Characteristics of Reviewed Articles

No	Author (Year)	Research Title	Research Objective	Respondents	Design & Data Collection Methods	Quality of Evidence	Research Findings
1	Yao et al. (2024)	*The Relationship among Body Image, Psychological Distress, and Quality of Life in Young Breast Cancer Patients*	Analyzing the relationship between *body image*, psychological distress, and quality of life in young breast cancer patients	406 young women with breast cancer in China	*Cross-sectional; FACT-B, BIS, HADS*	Moderate	*Body image* disturbances are significantly associated with psychological distress and reduced quality of life in patients.
2	Ahn & Suh (2023)	*Body Acceptance in Women with Breast Cancer: A Concept Analysis Using a Hybrid Model*	Assessing the impact of changes in *body image* on the quality of life of breast cancer	Breast cancer survivors	*Cross-sectional*; psychological survey	Moderate	Changes in body image are a major factor in the decline in patients' quality of life.

No	Author (Year)	Research Title	Research Objective	Respondents	Design & Data Collection Methods	Quality of Evidence	Research Findings
3	Álvarez-Pardo et al. (2023)	*Factors Associated with Body Image and Self-Esteem in Mastectomized Breast Cancer Survivors*	Identifying factors influencing *body image* and *self-esteem* in breast cancer *survivors*	200 breast cancer survivors	*Observational cross-sectional;* questionnaire	Moderate	Poor *body image* is associated with low *self-esteem* and increased *fear of recurrence.*
4	Omari et al. (2024)	*Assessing the Factors Associated with Body Image Perception and Quality of Life of Palestinian Women Undergoing Breast Cancer Treatment*	Identifying factors influencing *body image* perception in breast cancer patients	210 women with breast cancer	*Cross-sectional*; interviews and questionnaires	Moderate	Most patients are dissatisfied with their body condition after cancer treatment.
5	Merlin & Vanchapo (2020)	*Breast Cancer Self-Concept at Prof. Dr. W.Z. Johannes Hospital, Kupang*	Understanding the Relationship Between Self-Concept and Self-Acceptance in Breast Cancer Patients	52 breast cancer patients	*Cross-sectional*; self-concept questionnaire	Moderate-Low	There is a significant relationship between self-concept and self-acceptance in patients.
6	Sari et al. (2025)	*Body Image and Social Support as Contributing Factors to the Quality of Life of Breast Cancer Patients with*	Assessing the relationship between *body image* and social support on the quality of life of breast cancer patients	96 breast cancer patients	*Cross-sectional; WHOQOL* and *body image questionnaire*	Moderate	Social support and body image influence patients' quality of life.
7	Putri & Nopita (2025)	Self-Acceptance and Quality of Life of Breast Cancer Patients Undergoing Chemotherapy	Analyzing the relationship between self-acceptance and the quality of life of chemotherapy patients	78 breast cancer patients	Quantitative *cross-sectional*	Moderate	Self-acceptance is positively associated with patients' quality of life.
8	Arsy et al. (2024)	Konsep Diri Dan Kualitas Hidup Pasien Kanker	Describing patients' self-concept and quality of life	65 breast cancer patients	Quantitative descriptive	Moderate-Low	Negative self-concept is associated with a decline in

No	Author (Year)	Research Title	Research Objective	Respondents	Design & Data Collection Methods	Quality of Evidence	Research Findings
		Payudara Yang Menjalani Kemoterapidi Rsud Raa Soewondo Pati	during chemotherapy				patients' quality of life.
9	Kim et al. (2022)	*Body Image Experiences Among Women After Mastectomy*	Exploring women's body image experiences after mastectomy	25 women after mastectomy	Qualitative phenomenology; in-depth interviews	Moderate	Patients experience a loss of feminine identity and a decline in self-confidence.
10	Rahmadani (2023)	The Relationship Between *Self-Efficacy* and Motivation to Undergo Chemotherapy in Breast Cancer Patients	Assessing the relationship between *self-efficacy* and motivation to undergo chemotherapy	84 breast cancer patients	*Cross-sectional*; *self-efficacy* questionnaire	Moderate	High *self-efficacy* increases motivation to undergo therapy.
11	Hidayati et al. (2022)	The Relationship Between Anxiety and Changes in Self-Concept Among Breast Cancer Patients	To examine the relationship between anxiety and changes in the self-concept of breast cancer patients	70 chemotherapy patients	*Cross-sectional; HARS* and self-concept	Moderate	High anxiety increases the risk of self-concept disturbance.
12	Lee et al. (2021)	*Impact of Mastectomy on Women's Self-Esteem*	Assessing the impact of mastectomy on women's self-esteem	134 breast cancer patients	*Longitudinal*; periodic survey	High	Post-mastectomy patients experience a significant decline in *self-esteem*.
13	Wang et al. (2023)	*Family Support and Psychological Adaptation among Breast Cancer Patients*	Analyzing the relationship between family support and psychological adaptation in patients	250 women with breast cancer	*Cross-sectional*; social support questionnaire	Moderate	Family support enhances patients' self-acceptance and psychological adaptation.
14	Pratiwi et al. (2024)	Psychosocial Factors Affecting the Quality of Life	Identifying psychosocial factors affecting the	90 breast cancer patients	*Mixed Methods;* questionnaires and interviews	High-Moderate	Depression, *body image disturbance*, and social stigma

No	Author (Year)	Research Title	Research Objective	Respondents	Design & Data Collection Methods	Quality of Evidence	Research Findings
		of Breast Cancer Patients	quality of life of				reduce patients' quality of life.
15	Brédart et al. (2021)	*Body Image Distress, Quality of Life, and Psychological Condition among Breast Cancer Patients*	Examining the relationship between body image distress and the quality of life and psychological well-being of patients	181 women with breast cancer	*Cross-sectional; BIS, EORTC QLQ-C30, and interviews*	Moderate	High *body image distress* is associated with low quality of life, high anxiety, reduced self-confidence, and impaired social functioning.

Discussion

The results of the literature review indicate that self-concept disturbances are one of the most common psychosocial issues experienced by women with breast cancer. According to Stuart's self-concept theory, self-concept consists of five main components: *body* image, self-esteem, self-identity, self-ideal, and *role performance*. A breast cancer diagnosis and various treatments such as mastectomy, chemotherapy, and radiation therapy can affect all of these components, leading to changes in self-concept that impact patients' psychological well-being and quality of life.

Body Image Disturbances as a Key Dimension of Self-Concept

The findings of the review indicate that body image is the dimension of self-concept that undergoes the most significant changes in women with breast cancer. Research by Yao et al. (2024), Ahn and Suh (2023), Omari et al. (2024), Brédart et al. (2021), and Sari et al. (2025) consistently shows that physical changes resulting from the disease and treatment are associated with disturbances in body perception. Patients often experience dissatisfaction with their body shape, a loss of attractiveness, and difficulty accepting the physical changes that occur.

According to Stuart's theory, body image is an individual's perception of their body's shape, size, function, and appearance. Breast loss, changes in skin color, hair loss, and weight changes resulting from cancer treatment can disrupt this perception. When the actual body no longer matches the individual's previous body image, they experience a mismatch between their self-perception and their actual physical condition. This condition explains why many patients experience psychological distress after undergoing cancer therapy.

Although all studies indicate the presence of body image disturbances, the reported severity varies. In their study, Yao et al. (2024) found a strong association between body image disturbances and psychological distress in young patients, whereas Omari et al. (2024) placed greater emphasis on dissatisfaction with body condition following therapy. These differences are likely influenced by respondent characteristics. Young women generally pay more attention to physical appearance, sexual relationships, and feminine identity compared to older age groups, so the impact of bodily changes on self-concept is greater.

Self-Esteem Issues in Women with Breast Cancer

In addition to body image, the review findings indicate that self-esteem also declines in many breast cancer patients. Research by Álvarez-Pardo et al. (2023) indicates that poor body image is associated with low self-esteem, while Lee et al. (2021) found a significant decline in self-esteem

among women following mastectomy. These findings are supported by Kim et al. (2022), who reported a loss of self-confidence following breast loss (Álvarez-Pardo et al., 2023).

Self-esteem is an individual's assessment of their own worth and value. According to self-concept theory, physical changes perceived as a loss of femininity can lead individuals to view themselves negatively. Patients may feel they are no longer attractive, imperfect, or unable to meet their own expectations or those of others. This decline in self-esteem can be exacerbated by social stigma, changes in the relationship with a partner, and concerns about disease recurrence.

Differences in research findings are likely influenced by variations in social and cultural support. In environments that provide strong emotional support, patients tend to have better coping skills, which can mitigate the impact on self-esteem. Conversely, patients who receive less social support are more vulnerable to a decline in self-esteem and psychological distress.

Crisis of Self-Identity and Self-Ideal

Self-identity refers to an individual's perception of who she is as a woman, wife, mother, or member of society. The findings of Kim et al. (2022) indicate that women who have undergone a mastectomy experience a loss of feminine identity. These findings suggest that breast cancer not only affects physical health but also alters how individuals view themselves.

From the perspective of self-concept theory, breasts are often viewed as symbols of femininity, sexual attractiveness, and women's reproductive roles. The loss of these organs can lead to identity conflict, as individuals feel they are no longer the same as they were before the illness. Additionally, patients often compare their current physical condition with their ideal self-image. It is this discrepancy between the actual self and the ideal self that triggers feelings of sadness, shame, disappointment, and even withdrawal from social environments.

Differences in the severity of identity disturbance across studies may be influenced by cultural values and societal perceptions of women. In cultures that place a strong emphasis on women's physical perfection and beauty, the psychological impact of breast loss tends to be greater than in cultures that are more accepting of physical changes resulting from illness.

Changes in Self-Perception Among Breast Cancer Patients

Disturbances in self-concept are also evident in the role changes experienced by patients. During chemotherapy or long-term treatment, many patients face limitations in fulfilling their roles as mothers, wives, workers, or members of the community. This situation can lead to feelings of worthlessness and a loss of self-worth.

The findings of Arsy et al. (2024) indicate that a negative self-concept is associated with a lower quality of life during chemotherapy. This suggests that the inability to perform daily roles can influence an individual's perception of themselves. According to self-concept theory, the successful fulfillment of social roles contributes to the formation of identity and self-esteem. Therefore, physical impairments caused by cancer can lead to disturbances in other components of self-concept .

Factors Affecting Self-Concept Disturbances

The review findings indicate that self-concept disturbances are influenced by various factors, including physical changes, anxiety, family support, social support, self-acceptance, and self-efficacy. A study by Hidayati et al. (2022) found that high levels of anxiety increase the risk of self-concept disturbances. Conversely, Wang et al. (2023) demonstrated that family support can enhance patients' self-acceptance and psychological adaptation. The findings indicate that self-concept is shaped not only by physical changes but also by psychosocial factors. Patients who receive emotional support from their families and communities tend to be better able to accept their physical condition, thereby maintaining a positive self-concept. Conversely, a lack of social support can exacerbate negative self-perceptions.

Culture and stigma are key factors influencing the self-concept of women with breast cancer. In Indonesian society, the breasts are viewed not only as biological organs but also as symbols of femininity, beauty, sexual attractiveness, and female identity. Therefore, the loss of a breast due to mastectomy is often interpreted as a loss of part of one's identity as a woman, which can lead to

feelings of incompleteness, shame, unattractiveness, and a decline in self-confidence. Other physical changes, such as surgical scars, hair loss due to chemotherapy, weight changes, and skin changes, further reinforce negative perceptions of body image. These conditions not only impact body image but also affect patients' self-esteem, self-identity, and the quality of their interpersonal relationships. These findings align with research showing that bodily changes during the course of breast cancer can affect women's experience of femininity and identity in the long term (Cernikova et al., 2024; Lita Eka Putri Ngarani et al., 2024; Sukartini & Sari, 2021).

In addition to being influenced by physical changes, patients' self-concept is also shaped by social and cultural constructs that hold women to certain beauty standards. Many patients experience a conflict between their efforts to accept their physical condition and social expectations to appear "normal" in the eyes of their families and the community. As a result, some patients choose to conceal the physical changes they are experiencing by wearing loose-fitting clothing, limiting their social activities, or avoiding interaction with those around them. This phenomenon indicates that living with breast cancer is not merely a medical issue but is also closely tied to cultural values that shape perceptions of the female body and femininity. Patients who have not yet been able to accept their bodily changes tend to experience difficulties in rebuilding a positive self-concept, especially when acceptance from their social environment is also low (Samosir et al., 2025; Suastika & Suarya, 2024; Wulandari et al., 2023).

In the context of Indonesian culture, which highly values community and family ties, social support plays a crucial role in patients' psychological adaptation process. Acceptance from partners and family can help patients maintain self-esteem, improve acceptance of bodily changes, and strengthen their identity as women. Conversely, a lack of emotional support, ineffective communication, or an excessive focus on physical changes can exacerbate body image disturbances and lower patients' self-esteem. Several studies indicate that family support is associated with body image, anxiety levels, and quality of life in women with breast cancer undergoing chemotherapy or post-mastectomy (Elfeto et al., 2022; Nafiah et al., 2026).

In addition, the social stigma surrounding cancer remains a significant challenge. Cancer is often associated with prolonged suffering, death, and an inability to fulfill one's role as a wife or mother. These negative perceptions lead some patients to keep their illness a secret, withdraw from their social environment, and limit interactions with others. The resulting social isolation can exacerbate self-concept disturbances and increase the risk of psychological problems such as anxiety and depression. However, research indicates that positive emotional support, effective interpersonal communication, and acceptance from the social environment can help patients rebuild their self-confidence and enhance self-acceptance during the course of treatment (Samosir et al., 2025; Tisnasari et al., 2022). Thus, the formation of self-concept in women with breast cancer is the result of a complex interaction between physical changes, cultural values, social support, and stigma within society.

The Impact of Self-Concept Disturbances on Quality of Life

This literature review indicates that self-concept disturbances have a broad impact on the quality of life of breast cancer patients. Research by Yao et al. (2024), Brédart et al. (2021), Sari et al. (2025), Putri and Nopita (2025), and Pratiwi et al. (2024) indicates that body image disturbances, low self-acceptance, depression, and social stigma are associated with a decline in patients' quality of life.

In theory, a negative self-concept can influence how individuals think, feel, and behave. When patients view themselves negatively, their ability to adapt to their illness diminishes, thereby increasing the risk of anxiety, depression, social withdrawal, and low motivation to undergo therapy. Conversely, self-acceptance, family support, and a strong sense of self-efficacy can strengthen the self-concept, thereby helping patients adapt to their illness and maintain a better quality of life.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of a literature review, self-concept disturbances are a psychosocial issue frequently experienced by women with breast cancer and encompass all components of self-concept according to Stuart's theory, namely body image, self-esteem, self-identity, self-ideal, and self-role. Body image is the dimension most frequently affected due to physical changes caused by the disease or treatment, such as mastectomy, chemotherapy, and radiation therapy. These changes not only affect perceptions of the body but also lead to decreased self-esteem, the emergence of a self-identity crisis, a mismatch between the actual self and the ideal self, and limitations in performing daily social roles.

This literature review also indicates that the degree of self-concept disturbance is influenced by various factors, including physical changes, anxiety, family support, social support, self-acceptance, and self-efficacy. Strong social and family support plays a crucial role in helping patients adapt to the changes they are experiencing and maintain a positive self-concept. Conversely, a lack of support and high levels of anxiety can exacerbate the self-concept disturbance experienced by patients.

Impaired self-concept has been shown to have a significant impact on the quality of life of women with breast cancer. A negative self-concept is associated with increased psychological distress, anxiety, depression, social withdrawal, and a decline in quality of life. Therefore, breast cancer management must be approached holistically, addressing both physical and psychosocial aspects through interventions focused on enhancing self-acceptance, family support, social support, and strengthening self-efficacy to help patients maintain a positive self-concept and a better quality of life.

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