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# The Role of the Husband in Coping with Breast Cancer: How to Adapt to Emotional Challenges and Effectively Support the Wife

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**Abstract**

Studying a woman's cancer diagnosis and its impact on marital relationships, along with the husband's role in supporting her, is crucial due to the widespread prevalence of this disease and the significant marital challenges it can cause, sometimes even leading to divorce. This research analyzes the psychological and social challenges couples face, examines the illness's impact on their relationship, and highlights the husband's supportive role during this difficult period. Notably, the husband is also vulnerable to emotional setbacks, highlighting his need for psychological support as well. This research includes a systematic review of previous studies on couples facing breast cancer, employing both descriptive and analytical methodologies. The findings indicate that religious values and personal beliefs can serve as therapeutic tools, helping couples cope with the emotional trauma casused by the illness. Additionally, shared medical decision-making, mutual emotional support, and joint coping strategies play a vital role in reducing emotional distress. The study further concludes that the husband's emotional support is a key factor in enhancing the wife's quality of life. These findings underscore the need for counseling


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programs for spouses to help them navigate the challenges associated with the disease effectively.

**Keywords**: Husband's Role; Breast Cancer; Psychological Support; Emotional Challenges; Coping Strategies

## Introduction

The nature of scientific research assumes the treatment of issues facing humanity to find solutions to the problems individuals and communities suffer from. This is to make research serve society (Klaina, 2024a), aiming to elevate it and provide proposals that can overcome difficulties, spreading a spirit of understanding and goodwill among the parties. In this context, the topic of cancer arises, which is one of the greatest health and psychological challenges faced by individuals and their families, with its effects extending beyond the physical aspect to include psychological and social dimensions as well. Breast cancer is among the most common types of cancer in women, posing a direct threat to women's health and quality of life. Despite significant advances in early diagnosis and treatment, the emotional and psychological effects associated with the disease still require more attention from researchers and specialists. Psychological and social support plays a crucial role in enhancing the patient's ability to cope with the disease. On the other hand, focus has often been placed on the patient's experience itself, with little consideration given to the challenges faced by her husband during this stage (Allen et al., 1999).

One of the issues that has emerged in recent studies is the impact of breast cancer on the husband, showing that he experiences high levels of psychological stress and anxiety due to the changes in his daily life and marital relationship (Schaffer et al., 2022). The demands of providing moral and material support during the treatment process can sometimes place a burden on the husband, especially if he is the sole breadwinner of the family, which can negatively influence his psychological well-being, sometimes leading to feelings of helplessness or emotional exhaustion. Despite the growing recognition of the husband's important role in coping with the illness, studies addressing this issue remain limited, often focusing more on the supportive role rather than exploring the husband's own experience.

The emotional and social support provided by the husband can be an important factor in improving the quality of life for the patient, as it helps reduce feelings of anxiety and depression. However, a significant gap exists in the scientific literature regarding the psychological complications affecting the husband (Barker et al., 1995). While some studies have focused on the importance of effective communication between spouses in coping with the disease, the issue of improving support strategies to balance the needs of both partners has not been sufficiently addressed. Therefor, this research on analyzes the emotional and social role of the husband in the breast cancer treatment process, highlighting the challenges he faces and their impact on the quality of support provided.

In parallel, the ethical values that call for respecting and caring for women are fundamental principles in Islam. Islamic principles have emphasized treating women with kindness and mercy, making the husband responsible for caring for and providing for his wife, as well as protecting her in all stages of her life. In the context of the marital relationship, the husband's important role in providing emotional and psychological support to his wife, especially in difficult health circumstances such as breast cancer, is evident. The importance of the wife accepting her fate, as well as the husband's acceptance of his wife's illness and the challenges they may face together, reflects the belief of both spouses in the importance of patience and faith in dealing with trials. Islam has made it obligatory for the husband to support his wife in facing her health and social challenges and not abandon her, reflecting a deep concern for family solidarity and respect for women's rights at all times (Klaina, 2024b).

**First: Importance of the Study**

The husband's position and role in providing support to his wife who is diagnosed with breast cancer are significant in the process of adapting to the disease and responding effectively to treatment, especially during difficult periods characterized by intensive treatment or deterioration in health condition. In contrast, the husband often acts as the primary supporter, facing complex psychological and emotional challenges that put him in constant confrontation with feelings of helplessness and anxiety about his wife’s health and the effectiveness of the treatment. At the same time, he must also take on the responsibility of being a father and family provider, striving to maintain family stability under this psychological pressure and the mother’s illness.

However, the challenge is not limited to the husband alone, but also includes the wife, who faces significant physical and psychological changes due to the illness, such as loss of confidence in her appearance, dealing with constant pain and treatment side effects, and emotional distress that may lead to depression or withdrawal from social life. These challenges make it difficult for the wife to adapt to her new health situation, which in turn increases the husband's responsibility as he strives to be a successful partner.

The shared suffering experienced by the couple requires adopting flexible and effective coping strategies. It is essential for the husband to understand how to manage his own feelings and balance his wife's needs with his personal requirements. At the same time, the husband needs clear strategies to support his wife during this sensitive stage, ensuring that his support is not limited to the material aspect but also includes psychological support, which is a crucial factor in the healing process.

From the above, the importance of this study becomes evident in highlighting the psychological and social dimensions of breast cancer and its impact on the marital relationship, providing a theoretical framework that helps develop guidance programs aimed at couples to enhance their ability to cope with the psychological and emotional challenges associated with the disease.

**Second: Study Objectives**

This study aims to:

1. Explore the emotional challenges faced by women diagnosed with breast cancer.
2. Highlight the challenges faced by the husband in supporting his wife.
3. Analyze the coping strategies employed by the couple to deal with these challenges.

**Third: Problem of the Study**

The relationship between spouses should be strong; however, we observe issues arising in several cases related to the wife being diagnosed with breast cancer, which can lead to divorce and a failure to accept the situation. From this point, it became necessary to explore how effective support can be provided by understanding the emotional challenges between the spouses, how to cope with the health and psychological changes caused by the disease, and the role of the husband in maintaining marital stability while balancing supporting his wife with his personal and family needs. Thus, it was essential to pose the following problem:

- What is the husband's role in confronting breast cancer? In addition, how will they cope with the emotional challenges they face while tackling this disease?
- What are the main emotional challenges that the woman diagnosed with breast cancer faces, and how do they affect her identity and sense of self?
- What are the main emotional and practical challenges the husband faces while supporting his wife?
- How can couples adapt emotionally and practically to these challenges in a way that strengthens the stability of their relationship?
- How can couples use emotional and practical coping strategies to maintain their marital relationship in the face of breast cancer challenges?

## The Emotional Challenges of Women with Breast Cancer, and Analysis

Breast cancer is more than a physical illness; it deeply affects a woman's life, reshaping her identity and challenging her self-confidence, relationship, and psychological stability. These factors collectively contribute to the many emotional difficulties and challenges she faces.

### 1. Difficulties and Challenges

#### *a. Anxiety*

The anxiety caused by the illness is linked to the fear of what the future holds and the loss of control, a shared feeling among women at various stages of cancer, from diagnosis to different stages of treatment. These feelings intensify due to the waiting between treatment phases or the fear that the treatment may not be effective. A study by Linden et al. (2012) indicated that women with breast cancer showed high levels of anxiety, which negatively affected their quality of life and limited their ability to cope with the illness.

#### *b. Depression*

Depression appears as a direct result of the psychological and physical pressures associated with the disease and its treatments. The woman often feels a loss of control over her life due to the fear of an uncertain future, and the effects of treatment, such as hair loss and changes in body shape, affect her self-confidence and self-esteem. Symptoms may

include persistent sadness, loss of interest in daily activities, sleep and appetite disturbances, and decreased energy (Tsaras et al., 2018).

***c. Changes in Identity and Self-Image***

The self-identity of a woman diagnosed with breast cancer is affected by the physical changes imposed by the treatments. Surgical procedures—such as mastectomy and reconstructive cosmetic surgeries—are among the factors that impact a woman's sense of femininity, leading to a decrease in body satisfaction. A study by Fobair et al. (2006) reported that 70% of breast cancer survivors experienced negative feelings toward their bodies after surgery, which made it more difficult for them to adapt to the illness. This, in turn, led to feelings of incompetence or self-rejection, increasing social isolation and difficulties in maintaining personal relationships.

***d. Fear of Disease Recurrence***

The fear of cancer recurrence is a psychological nightmare faced by breast cancer survivors, ranging from a constant sense of danger to intermittent feelings triggered by specific situations, such as routine checkups. This fear can hinder health-related decisions, such as adhering to preventive treatments or returning to normal life activities. The fear of recurrence not only influences mental health but also increases psychological, social, and emotional stress due to the feeling of insecurity (Simard et al., 2013).

***e. Fear of Losing the Marital relationship***

The fear of losing the marital relationship is one of the most prominent concerns for women diagnosed with breast cancer. It is linked to the physical and psychological changes that may affect the woman's perception of her role in the relationship. Many women with breast cancer worry that the illness may cause them to lose emotional support or distance themselves from their husbands, reflecting the impact of cancer on marital dynamics. This fear may stem from changes in body image and self-confidence, as well as concerns about the effects on marital and intimate roles. In some cases, it can exacerbate psychological pressure, highlighting the need for specialized support for women in this situation to cope with these challenges (O'Mahoney & Carroll, 1999).

## 2. Analytical Reading of the Impact of these Challenges on the Women Diagnosed with Breast Cancer

A woman diagnosed with breast cancer undergoes a complex psychological experience, where she faces contradictory emotions between hope and fear, strength and weakness, as well as between perseverance and resignation. This experience is not just a health crisis but also a turning point in her self-perception, her relationships, and life as a whole. In this confrontation, the greatest challenge is not a the physical pain but the profound psychological impact on her self-perception and role within her family and society.

What makes this crisis even more complex is that the woman is not only facing the illness but also its reflections on her identity and self-image. She finds her body in conflict with the standards of beauty and femininity that have been ingrained in her collective consciousness, leading her to ask existential questions she never considered before: Does she still possess her femininity? Has she lost something of her value and beauty? Will her relationships with those around her remain the same? These questions do not only create existential anxiety but also push her to redefine herself beyond traditional societal perceptions, trying to find her way in another context (Ashjan, 2021).

The relationship between the wife and her husband may also face challenges, as some husbands struggle to deal with the new emotions formed from fear, helplessness, and increased responsibility. However, emotional closeness and support may increase under this pressure, while in other cases, distance may occur due to the inability to adapt to the new circumstances. Some husbands may feel frustration or anxiety about the impact of the illness on their marital life, including intimacy, especially if the woman experiences a decrease in sexual desire or feels a loss of femininity due to hormonal treatments or other factors.

For the woman, emotional support from her husband becomes an urgent need, as finding support from him provides her with a sense of safety and containment. Therefore, it is crucial for the husband to be a source of psychological stability, listening without judgment, helping her accept the physical changes, and engaging in activities that improve her mood. Providing practical support, such as accompanying her to treatment appointments and assisting with daily tasks, alleviates the psychological and physical pressures that she can no longer bear as before (Tugan, 2024). Thus, the woman needs a

supportive environment that includes family, friends, and psychological professionals. Participation in support groups may also be effective in enhancing her coping ability, as the more she feels supported and accepted, the more confident she becomes in facing the disease, which positively impacts her marital and family life.

However, this stage is not only about pain and loss; it can also be a chance for personal growth. It helps her build resilience, deepen self-awarness beyond superficialities, and reorder her priorities, ultimately making her and more appreciative of life's blessings. Circumstances that may seem outwardly tragic and catastrophic can turn into a starting point toward deeper awareness and a more mature outlook on life and the self. Living with these challenges requires more than emotional or psychological support; it involves reshaping one's mindset. Rather than seeing illeness as a threat, it can become an opportunity for self-reflection and for building a resilient identity that derives strength from the experience rather than physical changes (Rashad, 2019). The woman who overcomes this trial does not return to what she was before but becomes a new person, more aware, more resilient, and more able to appreciate life and its opportunities from a different perspective.

## The Emotional and Practical Challenges of the Husband of a Woman with Breast Cancer, and Analysis

The impact of breast cancer is not limited to the wife, but extends to the husband who becomes part of the treatment and confrontation journey. The husband is subjected to significant psychological and emotional pressures due to changes in his daily life. Hence, understanding this suffering and the necessity of providing support and guidance for him becomes important.

### 1. Emotional and Practical Challenges

#### *a. Fear of Losing the Wife*

The first challenge faced by the husband of a woman diagnosed with breast cancer is the fear of losing his wife to this fatal disease. This fear manifests in the constant worry about her deteriorating health and the possibility of death, which can lead to high levels of stress and psychological pressure. This fear is linked to feelings of helplessness due to his inability to alter the course of the disease or improve his wife's health amidst the challenges of treatment. This fear of losing his wife contributes to heightened feelings of sadness and

anxiety, influencing the stability of the marital relationship. In some cases, the husband may suffer from depression or feelings of isolation, especially if he is the sole breadwinner of the family and lacks sufficient support. Therefore, providing psychological support for the husband is critical to protecting him from the negative effects resulting from this emotional challenge (Bultz & Carlson, 2005).

### *b. Psychological Pressure and Continious Anxiety*

When the wife is diagnosed with breast cancer, the husband faces psychological pressure manifested in continuous anxiety about his wife's health and future. Many husbands fear losing their wives or seeing their health deteriorate, which leads to increased levels of stress and depression. They also worry about the side effects of treatment, such as chemotherapy or radiation, and the fear of the disease returning after remission. All of these factors put psychological pressure on the husband's mental state (Zimmermann, T. 2015).

### *c. Changes in Sexual and Emotional Life*

The physical changes the wife undergoes due to treatment, especially if it involves a mastectomy or hormonal changes that alter her body shape during treatment, have a significant impact on the couple's sexual life. Many husbands feel that their sexual life has been greatly affected, leading to feelings of frustration and emotional distance. The challenge here is how to adapt to these changes and maintain intimacy in a new way that suits the new circumstances (Di Mattei et al. 2020).

### *d. Financial Challenges*

The financial aspect places a significant burden on the husband who accompanies his wife through breast cancer treatment. The ongoing treatment costs require financial resources that may exceed his ability, especially if he does not have health insurance. Over time, these costs may deplete his savings and increase his debt level, leaving him in a constant state of worry about securing the basic needs for treatment and daily living. This negatively influences financial stability and household income, which exacerbates psychological pressure and stress, as he may find himself in a constant struggle to balance his commitment to caring for his wife while trying to maintain the family's financial stability. This can lead to emotional and physical exhaustion, affecting his quality of life and ability to provide the necessary support to his wife (Fitch et al. 2007).

### *e. Feeling of Isolation*

Caring for his ill wife and adapting to new daily challenges often isolate the husband psychologically and socially. He may hide his emotions to spare her worry or because he feels unheard. Over time, his withdrawal from social life reduces the support he once had, deepening his lonliness. This gradual withdrawal from social life reduces the emotional support he once received, increasing his sense of loneliness. Additionally, the increased responsibilities and sometimes taking on the wife's role at home make his communication with others less important, which further isolates him psychologically and negatively impacts his emotional balance (Wagner et al. 2005).

## 2. Analytical Reading of the Challenges Faced by the Husband

The husband's suffering during his wife's battle with breast cancer is profound and complex, extending beyond feelings of anxiety or sorrow. It leaves lasting psychological scars, persisting long after the hardship ends. The husband finds himself confronted with emotional and psychological challenges he never expected or imagined, as he sees his wife, who has always been his strong partner, fighting for her life. This stirs within him feelings of helplessness, confusion, and sorrow. This shock begins to affect him, as he grapples with feelings of guilt and fear, questioning whether there is anything he could have done to save her, or whether he has failed to provide her with the support she needs. He is overwhelmed with doubts about his ability to cope with this new reality (Manne, 2004).

This challenge does not stop there; the husband begins to feel psychological isolation, as no one fully understands the burdens he carries or the magnitude of his responsibilities. He cannot express his weakness or fears to his wife, who needs his strength.

The relationship between the husband and wife at this stage becomes more sensitive, as the sudden circumstances impose new difficulties that may change the details of daily life. Simple moments that once seemed ordinary turn into true tests of love, understanding, and affection. Some husbands find in this trial an opportunity to strengthen their emotional bond, as a kind of love based on support and unconditional affection develops. However, in other cases, the illness may create a psychological barrier between them, especially if the husband is unable to express his feelings properly, or if he feels unable to cope with the changes in his wife (Revenson, 2005).

The need for support becomes mutual; the husband also needs someone by his side despite his primary role as a supporter. Friends and family can become an important source of relief, or perhaps he finds solace in psychological support sessions where he can understand and express his feelings without fear or embarrassment. Just as his wife needs support, he too needs reassurance that life hasn't stopped and that he can move forward with her on this journey—not as a bearer of burdens, but as a true partner in this confrontation.

Amidst these circumstances, there is another growing responsibility: the increasing financial burden. Cancer treatment is expensive, adding pressure on the husband to secure enough funds to continue the treatment. This financial burden becomes a weight around his neck, adding to the list of problems he must deal with. As the challenges increase, so do his feelings of anxiety about the future. With every doctor visit or new test, his fears about his wife's future grow, and he questions his ability to cope with this long-term situation. There are also deeper psychological impacts that make him question the identity of his relationship with his wife after this illness. The relationship between them becomes unclear, as he tries to be supportive and strong while struggling with his own internal battles. How will he continue his role as a husband and father while drowning in a sea of mixed emotions? How can he be a companion in this difficult moment, while his heart is torn between pain and fear?

This internal conflict reflects deep emotional suffering that few people can fully understand. The husband may appear strong to others, as if he is handling things with strength and logic, but the truth is, his heart nearly breaks every moment as he tries to remain upright. The moment hope dims, he finds himself clinging to a faint hope he sees in his wife's eyes or in her pale smile after a long treatment. However, at the same time, he is constantly threatened by an uncertain future, a future in which he may not be in his rightful place, alongside the one he loves.

This suffering is more than just daily pressures; it is a real test of resilience, not only in facing the illness but also in confronting the unceasing pressures of life. These emotional and practical challenges require deep empathy and sensitivity toward the husband, as he is not just a supporter of his wife but also has his own pain and weaknesses, making his experience a unique suffering that he may struggle to express fully.

In contrast, some husbands may decide to distance themselves, not necessarily out of a desire to hurt their wives, but due to their emotional collapse that makes them feel

incapable of facing the pain of the illness or of bearing the financial treatment costs. In these dark moments, separation may seem like an easier solution than facing the pain, and it becomes a defensive reaction to escape the weight of responsibility and conflicting emotions (Fathi, 2024). From here, the importance of awareness of the methods to follow when making such a decision becomes clear (Klaina, 2024c).

This abandonment, though seemingly a personal decision, carries profound meanings; it is a reflection of an internal struggle between the desire to stay with his wife and the fear of losing control over his life. Within this struggle, the husband may lose the emotional connection that once served as the bridge of safety between them, and the relationship becomes a gap filled with silence and isolation.

Here, the wife is left with a deep sense of loneliness and pain, feeling that the one who was supposed to be her support in facing the illness has decided to abandon her. This intensifies her suffering and leaves psychological scars that may last longer than the illness itself, scars that are not easily healed. While the husband drowns in a whirlwind of guilt and emptiness, it becomes difficult for him to rebuild himself or find the support he needs to overcome the crisis.

## Emotional and Practical Coping Strategies, and Analysis

### 1. Emotional and Practical Coping Strategies

In the context of marital relationships, emotional and material support is essential, especially in difficult circumstances, such as chronic illnesses or cancer. The role of the spouses in these situations is crucial in determining the success of treatment and psychological adaptation. The roles that a husband can take on vary, but the main question is how couples choose coping strategies and methods to navigate this challenging phase. For this reason, we will highlight several strategies as follows:

#### *a. Therapeutic Sessions Based on Activating Values*

Therapeutic sessions should be held for the couple or one of them, as needed, to activate the deep-seated values within them to help them accept the wife's breast cancer diagnosis in a positive manner. In this regard, we can distinguish between two cases for the person in need of these sessions:

- **The First Case: If the Couple Believes in Islam:** In this case, the focus can be on divine destiny and fate, emphasizing that everything that happens to a person is part

of Allah's test, and it is up to the person to accept it or not. Acceptance of this test elevates their status in the eyes of Allah, and as a result, they receive blessings. If they fail to accept it, they will not receive these blessings and cannot change their situation. This belief is part of the pillars of faith, as mentioned in a Hadith of Gabriel when he asked the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH): "...'0 Messenger of Allah, what is faith?' The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: 'To believe in Allah, His Angels, His Book, the meeting with Him, and His Messengers, and to believe in the Resurrection, and to believe in *Al-Qadar* (the divine decree), all of it.' He said: 'You have spoken the truth…." (Muslim, 2007, No. 7). It is also the belief that whatever missed you was never meant to reach you, and whatever reached you was never meant to miss you" (Ibn Hajar, n.d., 11:490).

Emphasizing the value of patience is crucial in helping individuals accept their hardships, especially since patience in the face of adversity is closely tied to acceptance of divine decree. Those who remain patient earn rewards from Allah, and therefore, therapeutic sessions should focus on this value, reminding individuals that the reward for patience is Paradise, as stated in the Quran: *Only those who are patient shall receive their reward without reckoning.'* [Surah Az-Zumar (39), Ayah 10]. Moreover, Allah praised Prophet Ayyub (PBUH) for his patience in enduring hardships [Surah Sad (38), Ayah 43].

Based on this, emphasizing the value of patience and linking it to the promise of reward in the Hereafter greatly aids in accepting illness and hardships. However, this does not imply neglecting the pursuit of treatment.

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This belief fosters psychological tranquility in the couple and serves as an effective means of alleviating the emotional distress caused by illness and its consequences. Additionally, emphasizing the husband's responsibilities toward his wife - in both health and sickness- reinforces the idea that he earns rewards for treating her well and is accountable for any negligence. This, in turn, encourages him to avoid mistreatment.

Notably, neglecting religious values in psychological treatment can negatively affect individuals who seek reassurance and peace.

This belief reassures the couple, making it an effective means of addressing the psychological state affected by the disease and its consequences. Additionally, focusing on

the duties the husband must fulfill towards his wife in both health and illness, and how he earns rewards by treating her well, while he will be held accountable for any shortcomings, will help him avoid mistreating her. It is noted that neglecting to rely on religious values in therapy negatively influences anyone who needs reassurance.

- **The Second Case: If the Couple Does Not Believe in Religion:** In this case, the focus can shift to universal principles they uphold. Certain values are universally acknowledged, guiding humain actions. If a person accepts that some things are beyond their control and must be lived with, logic suggests embracing the reality they cannot change. However, this does not mean disregarding possible solutions or treatments. Instead, the therapist should emphasize fostering optimism to help the individual achieve psychological tranquility.

**b. *Managing Personal Emotions***

Managing personal emotions is a beneficial learning process that allows couples to deal with their feelings more effectively. This begins with the couple recognizing their own emotions and learning how to express these emotions correctly and healthily. Such emotional management is an integral part of a successful marital relationship, as it helps strengthen mutual understanding and cooperation between the couple. Couples who manage their emotions effectively tend to have a more stable and resilient relationship, enabling them to tackle challenges and problems in a logical and efficient manner. This effective management of personal emotions also helps promote the psychological and physical health of both spouses (Rajapaksha & Karunanayake, 2014).

***c. Open Communication***

Open communication is the foundation of every successful marriage. It is a way to express internal feelings, and continuous and clear communication between spouses is vital for strengthening the marital bond. It allows the couple to express their feelings, opinions, and differing perspectives correctly and enables them to listen to each other effectively. This effective communication helps resolve problems that arise between them. They become better equipped to handle daily challenges, leading to increased mutual understanding and cooperation. It also helps strengthen the marital relationship, making it more stable and resilient (Valente et al., 2021).

### *d. Self-Care as a Couple*

Allocating time for self-care and engaging in shared activities are important strategies that help couples reduce stress and enhance their happiness. Self-care and engaging in enjoyable activities with the other person can significantly improve the quality of the marital relationship, especially during difficult periods such as chronic illness treatments. When couples prioritize spending quality time together, whether through a shared hobby or relaxing in a calm environment away from the noise of life, this behavior strengthens their understanding and connection, positively reflecting on their ability to face challenges together (Prendre soin de soi dans le mariage, 2024).

### *e. Making Joint Decisions Related to Treatment*

Making joint decisions between the spouses about treatment options is a crucial step in enhancing adaptation to the illness and alleviating the psychological burdens associated with it. Couples who participate in the decision-making process have greater chances of achieving positive therapeutic outcomes and improving their psychological well-being. Using decision support tools (PtDAs) and sharing difficulties between partners are essential factors that help in responding well to treatment. When couples can discuss treatment options clearly and make decisions based on mutual understanding and individual needs, it reduces stress and anxiety, and enhances the feeling of support and solidarity in facing health challenges (Oprea et al., 2023).

### *f. The Role of the Husband as a Caregiver*

In many cases, the husband takes on the role of primary caregiver for his wife. This role requires significant preparation to manage the details of daily life requirements and contribute effectively to providing the necessary care. The husband who assumes this responsibility needs flexible and adaptive strategies to cope with the challenges he faces during this stage. This includes managing health-related aspects and handling specific and sometimes urgent circumstances that require practical support, which helps alleviate the burden on the wife and strengthens the family's stability (Comas-d'Argemir, et al., 2018).

### *g. Providing Social Support for the Husband*

Continuous communication with friends and family is vital for the husband who is caring for his wife, as it provides him with emotional and practical support. This social support can act as a source of renewal for the husband, helping him ease the significant

responsibility he carries. It also enhances his sense of connection with others, reducing feelings of isolation and enabling him to face challenges with resilience. This, in turn, positively impacts the marital relationship and the overall quality of life (Andrea A. Cohee et al., 2023).

***h. The Husband's Participation in the treatment***

The husband's participation in therapy sessions or counseling plays an important role in enhancing the marital relationship and adapting to the challenges associated with breast cancer. By being involved in the treatment process at various stages, he gains a deeper understanding of his wife's experience and the changes she is undergoing, which improves his ability to provide her with emotional and psychological support more effectively. The husband's participation in treatment positively impacts the quality of the marital relationship, strengthens emotional bonds, and improves coping strategies with the disease (Zahedi et al., 2024).

***i. Planning for the Future After Treatment***

Planning after the long and exhausting treatment process is a critical stage in the recovery journey, as the couple faces new challenges related to how to return to life after cancer. This return requires reorganizing life roles and restoring daily routines, while continuing to monitor health and prevent relapses. Strengthening the emotional bond between the couple is a key factor in achieving psychological and social adaptation during this phase. Furthermore, marital counseling and follow-up medical plans play a pivotal role in facilitating the transition to life after treatment by providing the couple with effective strategies for managing psychological stress and enhancing mutual support (Howard & Raymond, 1999: 225-240).

## 2. Analytical Reading of Marital Coping Strategies in Facing Breast Cancer

Breast cancer represents a harsh test for married life, as it presents the couple with unexpected physical, psychological, and emotional challenges. This makes coping strategies a vital element in restoring balance to the relationship and regaining mutual support and security. Coping with this illness is not just about endurance and patience, but is a shared journey of seeking strength and reinforcing the bonds of the relationship, where emotional support becomes the foundation for dealing with difficulties. When the couple adopts

positive coping strategies, they do not face the disease as separate individuals, but as a team with a shared responsibility to confront fear and anxiety.

Therefore, relying on coping strategies between the spouses is one of the main pillars that helps reduce the psychological and physical effects of this disease on the family as a whole. The couple faces significant challenges that require them to come together and exchange support. This coping often begins with open and honest communication, where the couple shares their fears, hopes, and works together to plan how to deal with the therapeutic and practical aspects of the illness (Northouse et al., 1987). Practically, organizing treatment appointments and dividing household responsibilities helps reduce the intensity of stress caused by the sense of helplessness. The more both parties participate in decision-making, the more confident they become in their ability to control and manage situations. Committing to a daily routine that includes periods for rest and physical activity is another strategy that helps alleviate stress and improve mood.

On the emotional level, coping strategies play a vital role. These can include participating in psychological counseling sessions or joining support groups dedicated to couples. These initiatives help express suppressed emotions, reduce feelings of isolation, and foster mutual understanding. Practicing relaxation techniques and breathing exercises, helps improve psychological stability, creating a positive environment that enhances the couple's ability to continue facing challenges together.

It is noted that some couples show remarkable ability to strengthen their bond through strategies such as open communication and expressing emotions honestly, creating a safe space to disclose fears and hopes. Others rely on cognitive coping, where they reframe the crisis as an opportunity to strengthen their connection and reassess life priorities, which provides them with a greater sense of control and clarity. However, the role of social support cannot be overlooked, whether from children, family, or friends. It helps reduce emotional pressure and restores balance to the marital relationship, giving the couple space to rest and recharge from accumulated stresses. Additionally, resorting to religious or spiritual strategies helps couples create a sense of reassurance in the face of the unknown and acceptance of fate, which enhances their ability to endure challenges.

On the other hand, some unhealthy coping strategies, such as avoidance or denial, can create gaps in the relationship, increasing psychological pressure and isolating both partners in their personal struggles. Therefore, consciously choosing the appropriate coping

strategies not only affects the psychological health of the couple but also affects the quality of their family life and their emotional stability in the long term (Robinson et al., 1993).

Ultimately, combining emotional communication, practical planning, and specialized support significantly improves the couple's quality of life during breast cancer treatment. (Mansouri, Jallouti, and Bashir, 2023).

## Conclusion

This study explord the emotional challenges faced by women with breast cancer and their husbands, highlighting the complex psychological and social effects of the illness. Through analysis, the dimensions of these challenges were explored, not only from the perspective of the woman facing the disease, but also from the perspective of the husband who finds himself in a supportive role while also being affected at the same time. The study also examined marital coping strategies, illustrating how they can contribute to strengthening emotional resilience and alleviating the psychological burdens on both parties.

The findings indicate that coping with breast cancer is not merely an individual response, but rather a dynamic process that requires the combined efforts of both spouses to face the daily pressures, whether psychological, physical, or social, associated with the illness. It is clear that the quality of the marital relationship and mutual support directly affect the couple's ability to overcome the crisis more positively. The study provided an in-depth theoretical and analytical framework for these aspects, opening the door for future studies based on real experiences that can test the effectiveness of different coping strategies.

The significance of this study lies in shedding light on the psychological and social dimension of breast cancer, which is often treated as secondary compared to the medical focus on the disease itself. Therefore, this study can contribute to directing efforts towards developing more effective psychological and social support programs for couples facing this challenge, thereby enhancing the quality of life and mitigating the negative emotional effects that may result from the illness experience.

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