



## Spiritual Needs of Nasopharyngeal Cancer Patients in Yogyakarta

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### Abstract

**Background:** Spiritual is related to strength or enthusiasm, which aims to get meaning and goals, beliefs, hopes, and beliefs in oneself, others, and including beliefs in God.

**Objective:** To identify the spiritual needs of nasopharyngeal cancer patients in Sleman Regency, Yogyakarta

**Method:** This study uses phenomenological qualitative methods. The informants in this study were 12 informants consisting of 6 patients and six families determined by the purposive sampling method. In-depth interviews did data collection with interview guides. The Open Code 4.02 application assisted data analysis.

**Result:** This study indicates that faith and the purpose of life affect one's self-acceptance of the illness. This condition affects the peace that is felt by the patient, thus affecting the commitment to worship.

**Conclusion:** The spiritual needs of nasopharyngeal cancer patients are suitable, and there are changes in each dimension of spirituality. Meanwhile, we expect the future researchers will conduct research related to the motivation of health workers in the spiritual fulfillment of nasopharyngeal cancer patients

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## INTRODUCTION

Cancer is the second leading cause of death for the population in the world after cardiovascular disease, while in Indonesia, cancer is the number 7 cause of death for the population, with a high incidence of around 1.4 per 1000 population. There are several types of cancer, one of which is nasopharyngeal cancer. Nasopharyngeal cancer is a malignancy in the head and neck area. Nasopharyngeal cancer is the fourth malignancy in Indonesia after breast cancer, cervical cancer, and lung cancer.<sup>1</sup>

Nasopharyngeal cancer worldwide mainly occurs in South China, with 39.84 cases per 100,000 population. In Asian regions such as Indonesia, the incidence of nasopharyngeal cancer is 6.2% of the 100,000 population. And almost 13,000 new cases are mostly found on the island of Java. (Ministry of Health RI, 2017).<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, in the Special Region of Yogyakarta, the incidence of nasopharyngeal cancer is ranked 4th among other cities in Indonesia, with a percentage rate of 0.03%.<sup>2</sup>

Several factors cause nasopharyngeal cancer: age, living habits, smoking, lack of fruit consumption, Epstein-Barr virus, salted fish, occupational exposure, and other exposures. About 75-90% of Chinese citizens who experience nasopharyngeal cancer are aged 30-60 years, while in Indonesia, the age most experiencing nasopharyngeal cancer is 41-50 years.<sup>3</sup>

Nasopharyngeal cancer can have a severe impact on the sufferer. Often patients with nasopharyngeal cancer are men who act as the backbone of the family. In addition to the economic impact of nasopharyngeal cancer-causing drastic changes in the patient's self-concept and self-esteem, nasopharyngeal cancer patients

feel they have limitations in communicating, swallowing food, and changes in physical appearance after treatment.<sup>4</sup>

The Indonesian Ministry of Health has developed a policy regulating efforts to prevent nasopharyngeal cancer in Indonesia, as regulated in the Minister of Health Regulation No. 1438/Menkes/Per/IX/2010 concerning Medical Service Standards. The policy is intended as a guideline for health services at levels I, II, and III to develop Clinical Practice Guidelines (PPK), a guide to providing health services to nasopharyngeal cancer patients in their respective fields. In addition to government policies, spiritual roles also affect the healing process of nasopharyngeal cancer.<sup>5</sup>

Spiritual is something related to strength or spirit that aims to get meaning and purpose, belief, hope, and trust in oneself, others, and including belief in God or greater power. In nasopharyngeal cancer patients who have advanced stages, healing will be difficult because the disease has spread to other body organs. For patients who are in an advanced stage, the thing that is considered the most valuable is spiritual.<sup>6</sup>

According to the American Psychological Association, spirituality helps increase an individual's ability to accept illness. In patients with nasopharyngeal cancer, spirituality can help maintain self-esteem and increase the meaning of life and purpose in life.<sup>7</sup>

## METHODS

This research is qualitative research using a phenomenological approach that aims to identify the spiritual needs of nasopharyngeal cancer patients in Yogyakarta. There were 12 informants in this study consisting of 6 patients

with nasopharyngeal cancer and six selected families using the purposive sampling technique. The criteria for informants in this study were selected with various considerations: patients who can communicate, patients willing to become informants, and criteria for family members, namely, families who care for patients with nasopharyngeal cancer during illness and families who are willing to become informants. Data collection was carried out using in-depth interviews with an interview guide. The validity of the data in this study uses triangulation of data sources, peer debriefing, and member checking. Thematic analysis is assisted by the open code 4.02 application.

## RESULTS

This study indicates that the patient's spiritual needs can be seen from faith, purpose, the meaning of life, self-acceptance, peace, commitment to worship, and inhibiting worship factors, as shown in Figure 1.

His faith and life purpose influence a person's acceptance of the condition he is suffering from. This condition will affect the peace felt by the patient, so it will affect the commitment to worship.

This study indicates that the faith of patients with nasopharyngeal cancer includes the importance of religion for patients, beliefs about treatment, and spiritual perception of the disease.

### The importance of religion for patients

This study shows that the faith of nasopharyngeal cancer patients can be seen in the importance of religion for patients. According to

the patient, religion is a belief that every human being can freely choose according to the person's heart and belief. With us having a religion, we will be closer to God, and our faith will become more assertive; with solid faith, humans will walk towards goodness. This condition is supported by the statement of the informant as follows:

*"It is important, Mas, that religion strengthens my faith because we ask God for it all; with our religion being strengthened by humans, it is nothing." (Male patient 60 years)*

*"The most important thing is that no one has anything like Gusti Allah because all of them belong to Gusti Allah. Who else has? None." (92-year-old male patient)*

### Beliefs about treatment

The importance of religion is that the patient's beliefs will affect the treatment the patient undergoes. The results showed that the patients had never done alternative treatment during their illness, such as going to a shaman or kyai. They said they were more focused on medical treatment than alternative medicine. This condition is supported by the statement of the informant as follows:

*Q: Have you ever had alternative examinations during your illness, such as going to a shaman/kyai?*

*I: Never, that is why the doctor even suggested not for fear that it would be out of sync.*

*Q: Have you ever gone to an intelligent person for treatment, sir?*

*I: Yes, it is not like that. It is better if I focus on medical treatment first. (43 years old male patient)*

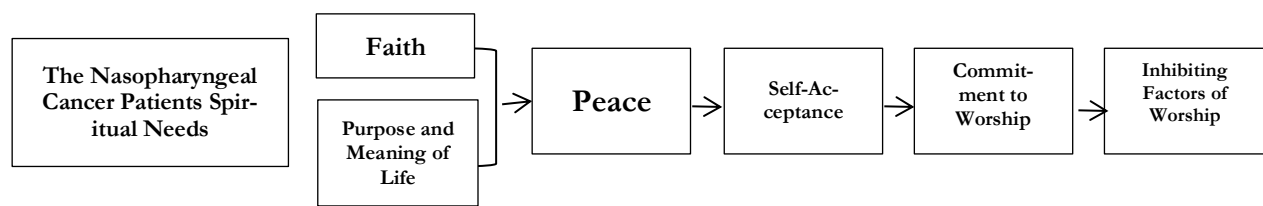


Figure 1. The Nasopharyngeal Cancer Patients' Spiritual Needs

### Spiritual perception of disease

On the belief about the cause of nasopharyngeal cancer, patients stated that they do not believe in diseases caused by witchcraft. Patients consider the disease given as a warning given by God. Therefore, patients can improve themselves and increase their faith and worship activities. In addition, some half believe in diseases caused by supernatural things or commonly called witchcraft. Patients believe that such things depend on faith and prayers offered to God. This condition is supported by the statement of the informant as follows:

*"I half believe half not if our faith is strong it will all disappear and prayer is like a living fence, surely God will protect his people." (43 years old male patient)*

*"No, if it is me, I am just correcting myself, I just ordered my worship to be corrected, if I did, I would take it as a warning so that their faith will increase and their worship will increase." (Male patient 60 years)*

### Purpose of life

The results showed that the purpose and meaning of life for nasopharyngeal cancer patients is to worship Allah. Patients explain that humans live in this world only to worship. They also explain that they have other life goals: happiness in this world and the hereafter. This condition is supported by the statement of the informant as follows:

*I: Yes, if in the Qur'an it is only for worship, it is a matter of worship. It depends on someone. If they believe they can carry out their worship, eee some may not believe me, this religion is not adventurous, right? The important thing is to tell me worship bebe (61 years old male patient)*

*P: Did you get excited about your life's purpose, Mr. Haw is it? What is the purpose of your father's life?*

*I: Yes, he is happy in the afterlife (60 years male patient)*

The results showed that the spiritual needs of nasopharyngeal cancer patients in the aspect of self-acceptance included feelings of shame, feelings of hopelessness, self-awareness, and gratitude.

### Feelings of Shame

The results of this study can describe the self-acceptance of nasopharyngeal cancer patients. Patients mentioned that at the beginning of the illness, they felt embarrassed because of the condition of their voice, which sometimes came and went. However, over time the patient has been able to accept the situation. This condition is supported by the statement of the informant as follows:

*"I almost gave up because I was not strong. My brother said: do not do that! Have mercy on your child, who is still tiny and just known as a junior high school 3rd-grade student who already wants the exam. Imagine*

*that condition, (ngueennng, airplane sound) there I almost gave up hope, (male patient 43 years)*

### **Feelings of despair**

In addition to feelings of shame, the feelings that sometimes arise due to the disease are feelings of hopelessness. The results obtained by the patient have felt hopeless at the beginning of suffering from nasopharyngeal cancer. Patients feel hopeless because of changes in their physical condition. The patient also experienced despair in treatment. The patient said that he had refused to do chemotherapy treatment for the second time.

*P: Have you ever looked desperate yourself, didn't you?*

*I: It used to be that often when the second chemo was there, I did not want to take it there until I was angry, until "Well, I do not want to go there. If I die, that is okay" that is what he said. (Family of 53 years old, girl)*

### **Self-awareness**

The study results show that the current illness is because God is being given a test. The patient also realized that he had many mistakes, so Allah gave him a warning. The patient also mentioned that the current illness results from smoking behavior carried out so far.

*Q: In your opinion, why does God reward his people with the disease?*

*I: Because I acted wrong. If I did not do anything wrong, I would not be sick. I am sure it is (a 92-year-old male patient)*

*I: Yes, I realized that he used to be a smoker hehehe (laughs) because the cause was cigarettes, which cannot be blamed. After all, it has gone. Since it has already gone, what are you going to do? It has already happened.*

*It has already happened. (Female informant 43 years old family)*

### **Feelings of Gratitude**

The results obtained by the patient say that they are grateful for being given this disease. The patient considers that the pain given is a form of reward given to atone for all sins that have been committed. This condition is supported by the statement of the informant as follows:

*"Oh, yes, thanks to God, I was given the disease. By having the reward for the disease, I was told to remember (God) and be grateful. By realizing this, I can say alhamdulillah, I have been rewarded. (92 years old male patient)*

The results showed that the peace of nasopharyngeal cancer patients has several aspects, including interaction with family, family spiritual support, social interaction, problem-solving, and feelings after worship.

### **Interaction with family**

In terms of interaction with the patient's family, they stated that communication with the family was not smooth. The family said they were hampered in communicating with the patient because they had hearing impairments caused by nasopharyngeal cancer, namely fluid coming out of their ears. This condition is supported by the statements of the informants, namely:

*"The communication is less than smooth because the hearing even nowhere (pointing to the left ear) emits a smelly liquid. So communication is not good. (Family 61 years old male)*

### **Family's spiritual support**



Although communication is lacking, the family says that sometimes the family reminds the patient to pray in terms of worship. One patient explained that he was often reminded to pray; family members who often reminded his clients to pray were the patient's children and wife. This condition is supported by the statement of the informant as follows:

*Q: Does your family often not remind you to pray?*

*I: Yes, especially my child and my wife, who often remind them to worship*

*I: They remind me every day, sir*

*I: Yes, when I was sick, I was often reminded to pray. (61 years old male patient)*

### **Social interaction**

In addition to interaction with family, interaction with neighbors is also needed in the dimension of peace. In interactions with neighbors, the informant said that he rarely socialized with neighbors around the house. The patient said that he only socialized with neighbors when there was a need to be resolved.

Despite his lack of social connections, the patient reported that his relationship with his neighbors was delicate before and after his illness. There had never been a crisis that may have weakened their bond. This condition is supported by the statement of the informant as follows:

*P: Do you still often play with your neighbors, sir?*

*I: Yes, only if there are a need hebebe (laughs)*

*P: Why did you not socialize with your neighbors? Why, sir?*

*I: Take care of my body, sir. (Male patient 60 years)*

### **Problem-solving**

In addition, the informant said that if you had a problem, it would be resolved with the family by way of deliberation; in terms of family deliberation and the patient gave each other input regarding the problem and the best way to solve it. This condition is supported by the statement of the informant as follows:

*P: Have you ever had problems with your neighbors around here?*

*I: The problem is, it is just that there are so many differences of opinion*

*Q: Has there ever been an act of silence?*

*I: No(hebebe) (Family of 65 years old girl)*

*I: Yes, my father and I discussed it first, and then the father usually just gave it to me, but the father also took a role, and the father did not dare to be loud; if it was me, it was a woman, right? (Female 65 years old)*

### **The feeling after worship**

In feeling after worship, if something happens that causes the patient to be forced not to fulfill his worship obligations, he says he feels sorry. This condition is supported by the statement of the informant as follows:

*P: Maybe if you are forced not to pray, what is it like, sir?*

*I: Yes, sorry*

*P: What do you feel when you attend the recitation?*

*I: It is reassuring and just for knowledge (Patient is 61 years old male)*

This study indicates that the commitment to worship for patients with nasopharyngeal cancer includes worship activities before illness and worship activities after an illness.

### Worship activities before illness

The findings of this study show that there is a difference in worship activities before and after an illness. Before getting sick, they always perform worship of the five daily prayers followed by dhikr and fasting in Ramadan. The patient also explained that apart from performing obligatory worship, he also carried out sunnah worship activities such as tahajjud prayer. In addition, the patient stated that before he was sick, his worship was still not perfect. This condition is supported by the statement of the informant as follows:

*P: What kind of worship did your father do before you got sick?*

*I: Everything is just praying and fasting*

*P: Is there anything else, ma'am, apart from praying and fasting, for example, dhikr and tahajjud, ma'am?*

*I: Hebehe, it is often (Patient, 60 years old male)*

*P: What kind of worship activities are you doing, praying five times a day or over?*

*I: It is hollow to do, hebe (61 years old male patient)*

### Worship activities after an illness

In worship after illness, there is a change in worship. The patient explained that before being sick, he could perform tahajjud prayer activities for about nine to eleven rakaat, while when he was sick, the number of rakaat decreased to three to five rakaat. In addition, patients are also less involved in religious activities because they maintain their body health.

This condition is supported by the statements of the informants, namely:

*I: Yes, it is tahajjud. I usually do 9-11 rakaats. Currently, after being sick, it is only five rakaat, three rakaat, or at least two rakaat (Male patient 60 years)*

*Q: What caused you to reduce your tahajjud?*

*I: The body's condition, maybe just standing for a long time reading a rather lengthy letter. When I am realized that I am not strong enough about this condition, I will make it short. (Male patient 60 years)*

## DISCUSSION

### The Faith

The research results obtained the theme of faith, which consisted of the importance of religion for patients, beliefs about treatment, and spiritual perception due to illness.

This study indicates that religion is essential for patients because, with religion, we can get closer to God, and by getting closer to God, we will be on the right path. According to Rakhmat's research, one of the roles of religion for a person is to provide direction or guidance in one's behavior to comply with the religion to which he adheres.<sup>8</sup>

Based on the study results, the patient said that he did not believe in the treatment carried out by traditional healers. The patient also explained that he wanted to focus on medical treatment because he believed that medical treatment would accelerate the healing of his illness and would not cause other side effects. This result is not in line with the research conducted by Fitriyanto<sup>9</sup> in his research that people believe in diseases caused by witchcraft because the community where the research is car-

ried out is still thick with customs or supernatural rituals. Human belief in the unseen occurs because of human awareness of the existence of an invisible nature that cannot be seen by human vision and common sense.

### **The purpose and meaning of life**

The study results in terms of the purpose and meaning of the patient's life explained that they were in this world for nothing other than worshipping God because God is the one who created the earth and everything in it. In addition, patients revealed that the purpose of life apart from worshipping Allah is that they can get a happy life in this world and the hereafter. This result is in line with research conducted by Zulkifli<sup>10</sup>, the living creature in this world who creates is God, so that we as his people are obliged to carry out all the commands that must be carried out because humankind will be held accountable for the actions committed in the world.<sup>11</sup>

### **Self-acceptance process**

The study results showed that patients felt embarrassed when they first had this disease due to an abnormal voice condition like most people who were the result of it. This result is in line with research conducted by Satyaning-tyas and Abdullah<sup>11</sup>. Someone who has a physical disability can accept his situation without feeling ashamed, even though it takes longer to accept his situation.

The patient has experienced despair caused by changes in physical conditions and changes in roles in his family. This result is in line with research conducted by Yusuf *et al.*<sup>5</sup> in patients with chronic diseases such as cancer will have a negative emotional response such as feeling

hopeless because they think that the disease has a slim hope of being cured.

Goleman<sup>12</sup> defines self-awareness as a person's ability to know what will be felt at a time and use it as a way to make decisions. This study indicates that the patient knows that his current illness impacts his previous bad behavior. The patient said that before the illness, he was a smoker, and after being given the disease, the patient realized that this disease was the impact of his smoking behavior. Research conducted by Dariyo<sup>13</sup> supports this; someone who has awareness about what has been done will affect the acceptance of his illness.

The results showed that the patient felt grateful after being given the disease. The patient considered that his current illness was a warning from God. QS supports this. Al-Baqarah:155-157:

*"And verily ye shall be tempted, with a little fear, hunger, lack of wealth, soul and fruits. Moreover, give glad tidings to the patient. That is, people who, when disaster strikes, say "Inna lillabi wa Inna ilaihi raajiuun." They are the ones who receive perfect blessings and mercy from their Lord, and they are the ones who are guided "(QS. Al-Baqarah: 155-157)*

### **Commitment to worship**

The results obtained on the theme of commitment to worship get information about the commitment to worship before illness and commitment to worship after an illness. The patient said that before being sick, he was active in carrying out worship by praying five times a day, fasting, and performing tahajjud prayer. According to research conducted by Arifudin<sup>14</sup>, Prayer is not just an order or obligation that we must carry out, but prayer is also



helpful as a mental and physical healer when we are sick. In addition, prayer can be used as a benchmark for worship. Later in the afterlife, the first thing to examine is prayer.<sup>15</sup>

In the study results on worship after illness, the patient said that in the sunnah prayer, namely tahajjud, the number of rakaat performed was reduced. The patient said that the lack of the number of rakaat performed was due to his physical condition. This condition is in line with research conducted by Nuraisyah<sup>16</sup> that the problematic implementation of fardhu prayers is caused by physical problems. Prayer is an activity that must be done, and Allah SWT never burdens someone to worship Him all according to the ability of his people.

### The Peace

The research results obtained the theme of peace, which includes interaction with family, social interaction, family spiritual support, feeling after worship, feeling comfortable and solving problems.

Research shows that families rarely communicate with patients due to decreased hearing function, making it challenging to communicate with patients. This result is in line with research conducted by Yunus<sup>17</sup> that on patient post-treatment, head and neck cancer in the form of radiation therapy will decrease the patient's hearing, which will disrupt communication patterns both within the family and in the surrounding environment.

Furthermore, the patient says it is rare to do social interaction. The patient only socializes when he has a need. This condition is in line with research conducted by Sitio *et al.*<sup>18</sup> physical

conditions and therapy due to cancer can cause changes in social interactions.

The results of the patient's study said that if they had a problem, a discussion would be held to solve it or find a way to solve it. According to research conducted by Mukhid<sup>19</sup>, Islam has encouraged humankind to preserve deliberation because deliberation is one of God's commands conveyed to the Prophet and can be used as a foundation in today's modern life.

The results of the research are that patients say they have done worship activities, but if they forget to do worship activities, their children and wives always remind their patients to worship. This result is in line with research conducted by Sujana *et al.*<sup>20</sup> explain that spirituality is a need that every individual has, which aims to motivate and maintain harmony with the outside world.

The results obtained in the theme of feeling after worship said that if the patient were forced not to carry out prayer activities, the patient would feel disappointed. On the other hand, the patient said he felt peace and tranquility after doing worship activities. According to research conducted by Maharudin<sup>21</sup>, prayers performed with sincere intentions and hearts will make the soul and mind calmer because prayer is a place for one's communication with Allah SWT.

### CONCLUSION

This study shows that the spiritual needs of patients with nasopharyngeal cancer are suitable, and there are changes in every dimension of their spirituality. The results of this study obtained six themes that describe the spiritual needs of patients, namely: faith, life goals, self-

acceptance, peace, commitment to worship, and inhibiting factors in worship.

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