

BARRIERS FACED BY THE CANCER SURVIVORS IN THE WORKPLACE WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO TAMILNADU

Dr. M. Dhanabhakym

Professor and Dean,

Department of Commerce, Bharathiar University

M.Saranya

Project Assistant

RUSA 2.0- Bharathiar Cancer Theranostics Research Centre(BCTRC)

Department of Commerce, Bharathiar University

Abstract:

Cancer survivors face many problems when they return to work after their diagnosis and treatment. The present study explores the factors associated with the barriers faced by the cancer survivors in the workplace. The sample size is 642 respondents who were working in different organizations in Tamilnadu. The respondents constitute the cancer survivors working in Tamilnadu. In this study Judgmental sampling is adopted, a non-probability sampling technique is used for the selection of respondents. The results show that there were seven factors extracted from the parameters using Exploratory Factor Analysis(EFA), the reliability is also checked for the scale items using IBM SPSS. It was found that sampling adequacy is adequate and interrelationship among the variables is significant. Thus, the study helps the organization to overcome the barriers and to develop some strategies to create an inclusive workplace for the cancer survivors in the workplace.

Keywords: Cancer Survivors at workplace, Barriers, Diagnosis, Return to Work and Workplace Discrimination.

Introduction:

Cancer Survivors at the workplace after the diagnosis and treatment has been increasing nowadays. The person's work life is affected at different degrees due to the diagnosis and treatment. The study describes the problems faced by the cancer survivors in the workplace when they are back to their work after their diagnosis and treatment. Most of the cancer survivors are resuming their work after diagnosis for several reasons such as financial need, self-esteem, to live their life independently and many more.

Many of the organizations have their own policies such as work from home, company benefits, relocation policy, rehabilitation programmes etc, which benefit the cancer survivors when they return to work after diagnosis. The factors that are associated with the barriers faced by the cancer survivors are identified. It is significant for the employers to understand about the cancer survivors after treatment and create an inclusive workplace.

Review of Literature:

Debbie Kane *et al.* (2020)¹ explored the experiences of cancer survivors remaining in the workforce or transitioning back into the workforce following treatment. Using an exploratory qualitative design, eight individual interviews were conducted with participants undergoing treatment, all of whom were employed prior to their cancer diagnosis. Participants revealed that work provided them with a sense of normalcy, purpose, and personal identity. Future research needs to further explore how the healthcare team and employer can promote supportive work environments and increase cancer survivors' awareness.

Shim, H. *et al.* (2019)² studied the perception of cancer survivor's ability to return to work after treatment by the occupational health physician in Korea. It employed cross sectional study to examine the perspectives of cancer survivors return to work after treatment. From the 337 participants, only 44 participants responded through mail. Survey method is used in online mode. It states that the respondents found difficult to communicate with the cancer survivors, and also found substantial to communicate with them. With reference to the association of patient rehabilitation with workplaces, 48.9% said that workplaces provide inadequate

support. This study gives us only the preliminary data about the perspectives of cancer survivors in workplace after treatment which helps to elaborate the study in another perspective.

Saskia F.A Duijts *et al.* (2013)³ studied the ongoing physical and/or psychosocial problems related to functioning of employees with a history of cancer, beyond their return to work. Both qualitative and quantitative studies were included. The search identified 8979 articles. 64 were retrieved for full text screening, of which 30 met the inclusion criteria. A total of 20 studies reported quantitative and 10 studies reported qualitative results. The majority of studies assessed psychosocial problems in cancer survivors at work. Cognitive limitations, coping issues, fatigue, depression, and anxiety were reported to influence work ability. Physical problems, such as difficulties with lifting and treatment-induced menopausal symptoms, were frequently described to affect functioning at work. On-going physical and/or psychosocial problems are present in occupationally active cancer survivors, which may cause serious difficulties at work. The results of this study may be used as input for developing supportive interventions for these survivors.

Sietske J Tamminga *et al.* (2012)⁴ studied the breast cancer survivors' views and factors that influence the return to work process and factors experienced as barriers to and facilitators of the return-to-work process. Twelve breast cancer survivors participated in semi-structured interviews. They used the World Health Organization's International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health as a conceptual framework. It was found that work

environmental factors, such as support from a supervisor, importance of work, and physical or psychological side-effects, influenced by RTW. Barriers included temperament and personality functions, while facilitators comprised taking care of one's health, skills/coping and support from family and healthcare professionals. To enhance RTW interventions should focus on barriers and facilitators and better guidance from healthcare professionals.

Anja Mehnert and Angela de Boer (2012)⁵ studied employment challenges for cancer survivors. There is a considerable body of evidence about the adverse effects of cancer and cancer treatments on employment, work ability, work performance, and work satisfaction among cancer survivors. There is also a growing consensus that cancer survivorship research needs to address the large variety of short-term and long-

term work-related problems and that programs to support return to work and employment should be developed and integrated into the follow-up survivorship care of cancer patients. The area of work disability has emerged as an international field with research from areas throughout the globe. In this article, the authors provide an overview of the current state of scientific research in these areas and further provide a cancer survivorship and work model that integrates significant individual cancer-related, treatment-related, and work-related factors and outcomes.

Mehnert A. (2011)⁶ performed a systematic literature review to identify current knowledge about employment in cancer survivors. Sixty-four studies met inclusion criteria. Factors significantly associated with a greater likelihood of being employed or returning to work were perceived employer accommodation, flexible working arrangements, counselling, training and rehabilitation services, younger age and cancer sites of younger individuals, higher levels of education, male gender, less physical symptoms, lower length of sick leave and continuity of care. Cancer survivors had a significantly increased risk for unemployment, early retirement and were less likely to be re-employed. A high proportion of patients experienced at least temporary changes in work schedules, work hours, wages, and a decline in workability compared to non-cancer groups.

Objectives of the study:

1. To explore the factors associated with barriers faced by cancer survivors in the workplace.
2. To check the reliability and measure the interrelation between the factors associated with barriers faced by cancer survivors in the workplace.

Research Methodology:

Research Design: The study is descriptive and empirical in nature. The study is descriptive as it explains the characteristics of various problems faced by the cancer survivors in the modern working environment. The researcher analyses the significant difference of the cancer survivors based on the demographic background. The study is empirical since the results are based on hypothesis testing and direct observation of the researcher.

Area of the study: The study concerns the barriers faced by the cancer survivors at their workplace in Tamilnadu.

Sampling Design: The sample size of the study is 642 respondents who were working in different organizations in Tamilnadu. The respondents constitute the cancer survivors working in Tamilnadu. It includes cancer survivors at work irrespective of the organization. In this study Judgmental sampling is adopted, a non-probability sampling technique is used for the selection of respondents.

Source and collection of data: The data will be collected from primary sources. The primary source includes the cancer survivors working in select IT companies in Tamil Nadu. The data will be collected with the help of structured questionnaires. The questionnaire will be pretested to ensure reliability and validity of the research instrument.

Design of research instrument: Besides demographic information, the research instrument consists of the statement about the barriers faced by the cancer survivors in the workplace. It was measured using the five point Likert scale to factorize the problems faced by the cancer survivors.

Tools used: Exploratory factor analysis is used to explore the factors leading to barriers faced by the cancer survivors at the workplace.

Results and discussions:

Reliability analysis on the factors associated with the barriers faced by the cancer survivors in the workplace

Reliability analysis is to check the internal consistency of the constructs in the research Instrument. Internal Consistency is to measure the scale reliability by analyzing the commonness of a set of variables which measure each item and researcher should ensure the measurement of scale that provides the same result overtime and over researches. Cronbach's Alpha is used to test the internal consistency in measuring the research instrument.

Table 1: Reliability analysis on the factors associated with the barriers faced by the cancer survivors in the workplace

| Reliability Statistics | | |
|------------------------|--|------------|
| Cronbach's Alpha | Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items | N of Items |
| .972 | .972 | 21 |

The above table 1. shows the result of internal consistency which is used to test the reliability of the scale variables in the research instrument. It found that Cronbach's alpha for all the items of barriers faced by the cancer survivors is 0.972 which is higher than 0.7. So, all the items in the instrument are reliable and fit for further process of analysis.

Table 2: KMO and Bartlett's Test on the factors associated with the barriers faced by the cancer survivors in the workplace

| KMO and Bartlett's Test | | |
|--|--------------------|-----------|
| Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy. | | .980 |
| Bartlett's Test of Sphericity | Approx. Chi-Square | 11080.191 |
| | df | 210 |
| | Sig. | .000 |

Source: Computed from primary data

The above table 2. reveals the result of two tests namely, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity to test whether the relationship among the variables is significant or not. To verify the sample adequacy through Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy and the value is 0.980 which is higher than 0.8, So the factor analysis for the selected constructs are found to be appropriate. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is used to analyse the interrelationship between the variables, the test is found to be significant by having the value as 0.000 which represents the selected variables are statistically significant. Hence the researcher makes sure about the adequate sampling and interrelationship among the variables. So the data is considered for further analysis.

Exploring the factors associated with the barriers faced by the cancer survivors in the workplace

Exploratory Factor Analysis(EFA) is a statistical tool used to explore the underlying factors which are associated with the barriers faced by the cancer survivors in the workplace by applying the Principal Component method using varimax rotation.

Table 3: Clustering of factors associated with the barriers faced by the cancer survivors in the workplace

| Items | Factor name | Value |
|---|--|-------|
| Overloaded daily work task(BWL1) | Workload 10.880 % of Variance | .738 |
| Insecurity about future work tasks(BWL2) | | .723 |
| No flexible working hours(BFB1) | Fringe benefits 9.897% of Variance | .629 |
| No sufficient sick leave benefits(BFB2) | | .737 |
| Rigid rules and regulations on work shift(BCP1) | | .474 |

| | | |
|--|--|------|
| No promotion(BCP2) | Company policy 9.771% of Variance | .689 |
| Negatively influenced about Return to Work (BCP3) | | .580 |
| Lack of confidence (BPF1) | Psychological factor 10.195% of Variance | .664 |
| Low self-esteem(BPF2) | | .595 |
| Can't complete the task given to me on time(BPF3) | | .608 |
| Often Tiredness(BC1) | Capability 10.628% of Variance | .716 |
| Feeling powerless in my work(BC2) | | .546 |
| No standard safety equipment for cancer survivors(BEF1) | Environmental factor 12.277% of Variance | .598 |
| Feeling isolated after my cancer treatment(BEF2) | | .588 |
| People with health problems are not treated well in the organization(BEF3) | | .569 |
| Can't feel like a normal person among them(BEF4) | | .474 |
| Lack of positive energy in the organization(BSS1) | Social support | .465 |
| Colleagues are not supportive(BSS2) | | .633 |
| Not comfortable disclosing the cancer | | .490 |

| | | |
|---|---------------------|------|
| diagnosis with my co-workers(BSS3) | 15.858% of Variance | |
| No good relations with all my co-worker after the diagnosis(BSS4) | | .627 |
| Not valued by my colleagues(BSS5) | | .774 |

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

The above table 3. reveals that from the 21 parameters of factors associated with the barriers faced by the cancer survivors in the workplace, seven factors were extracted and these factors explain the total variance of barriers faced by the cancer survivors in the workplace of about 79.505 percent. The factors such as Workload, Fringe Benefits, Company policy, Psychological factors, Capability, Environmental factors and Social support. The 2 parameters of barriers BWL1, BWL2 are grouped as Workload Factor with 10.880 % of Variance and then other 2 parameters of barriers are grouped together as Fringe Benefits factor with 9.897% of Variance. The other 3 parameters of barriers are grouped as company policy with 9.771% of Variance and then 3 parameters of barriers are grouped as psychological factor with 10.195% of Variance. Another 3 parameters are grouped together as capability factor with 10.628% of Variance and then other 4 parameters are grouped together as Environmental factors with 12.277% of Variance. Finally, the last 5 parameters are grouped together as Social support with 15.858% of Variance. It is found that factors having strong association among the parameters by the loading pattern. So all the constructs are ensured with the barriers faced by the cancer survivors in the workplace.

Practical implications:

The study provides insights about the problems faced by the cancer survivors once they return to work after the diagnosis and treatment. This study helps the employers to better understand about the cancer survivors in the workplace. Some of the common barriers faced by the cancer survivors in the workplace are workplace discrimination, lack of social support, Insufficient benefits and many more. Due to such problems cancer survivors don't open up about their cancer to the colleagues and employer. Based on the findings the

employers can modify the policies and create a positive environment to the cancer survivors in the workplace after return to work.

Conclusion:

The study concluded that the researcher developed 21 items to explore the constructs and it is tested for reliability, sample adequacy and interrelationship among the variables using the statistical tools. It is found that the research instrument used in this study is reliable. Using the Exploratory Factor Analysis, the factors were found, they are Workload, Fringe Benefits, Company policy, Psychological factors, Capability, Environmental factors and Social support. The study also revealed that the factor analysis for selected constructs are found to be appropriate and are statistically significant. It provides insights for the employers about creating a positive environment for the cancer survivors in the workplace. Thus, the study suggests that the organization should have concern on the cancer survivors when they Return to Work after their diagnosis to overcome such barriers and to develop inclusive strategies for the cancer survivors in the workplace.

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