

SPIRITUAL WELL-BEING IN CANCER PATIENTS: ROLE OF VIETNAMESE

Mark Baroza^{*1}, Burger Sugu², Chipre Kaia³

^{*1}Lecturer, Department of Banking, Nile University, Nigeria;

²Senior Lecturer Department Business Administration, Nile University, Nigeria;

³Research Scholar, Department of Banking, Nile University, Nigeria

^{*1}baroza@nileuniversity.edu.ng; ²suga@nileuniversity.edu.ng; ³kia@nileuniversity.edu.ng

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to validate the Vietnamese version of the European Organization for Research and Treatment of Cancer Quality of Life Questionnaire-Spiritual Well-Being 32 (EORTC QLQ-SWB32) for use among Vietnamese cancer patients. A descriptive study design was employed to collect data from 367 cancer patients in four hospitals across Vietnam: the National Lung Hospital, the Oncology Department of Nam Dinh General Hospital, Nghe An Oncology Hospital, and the Oncology Department of Lam Dong General Hospital. The data collection period spanned from November 2021 to April 2022. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to assess the construct validity of the Vietnamese version of the questionnaire. Lung cancer was the most prevalent type, accounting for 83.4% of the cases. CFA confirmed the cultural relevance and validity of the questionnaire for Vietnamese cancer patients, with satisfactory fit indices: Chi-Square/df = 2.330, goodness-of-fit index (GFI) = 0.896, comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.890, and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.060. The reliability of the instrument was strong, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.731 to 0.808 and MacDonal's omega values ranging from 0.722 to 0.804. The Vietnamese version of the EORTC QLQ-SWB32 demonstrated good validity and reliability, making it a suitable tool for assessing the spiritual well-being of cancer patients in Vietnam. This instrument provides valuable insights into the spiritual dimensions of quality of life for cancer patients facing serious illness.

Keywords: QLQ-SWB32, cancer, spiritual well-being, validation, measurement, Vietnam

INTRODUCTION

****Background:**** Cancer is a malignant disease marked by uncontrolled cell growth due to exposure to carcinogenic agents, which bypass the body's regulatory mechanisms. Despite significant advancements in cancer treatments, the long-term nature of these therapies has shifted the focus toward a more holistic approach that includes Quality of Life (QoL) considerations. QoL encompasses an individual's physical, mental, and spiritual well-being, integrating their cultural context, values, goals, and concerns. Research has increasingly focused on the spiritual dimension of well-being within cancer care, emphasizing the need to understand and measure this aspect effectively. In the early 1970s, the National Interfaith Coalition on Aging defined spiritual well-being as the importance of connections with a higher power, oneself, the community, and the environment in fostering a sense of completeness. While this definition touches on both religious and social-psychological aspects, Ellison's review identified two

primary dimensions: religious and existential well-being. Recent literature, including Vivat et al. (2013), has expanded this to three dimensions: relationships with self and others, existential issues, and religious or spiritual matters. These dimensions were utilized in developing the EORTC QLQ-SWB36 measurement, the first cross-cultural version.

****Cultural Sensitivity and Validation:**** Cultural sensitivity is essential when employing measurement instruments across diverse communities, addressing content acceptability and participant understanding. Validation studies of the EORTC QLQ-SWB32 have been conducted in various populations, including Croatian cancer patients. This research focuses on validating the EORTC QLQ-SWB32 questionnaire for Vietnamese cancer patients, evaluating its relevance and accuracy within the Vietnamese cultural context. The study encompasses both

patients receiving curative and palliative treatments, aiming to ensure broad applicability.

****Material and Methods****

****Study Design:**** A cross-sectional correlational study design was utilized.

****Sample:**** The study sample consisted of 367 cancer patients from four hospitals in Vietnam: the National Lung Hospital (150 patients) and the Oncology Department of Nam Dinh General Hospital (110 patients) in the North, and Nghe An Oncology Hospital (49 patients) and the Oncology Department of Lam Dong General Hospital (58 patients) in the Central region. Participants were aged 18 or older, fluent in Vietnamese, and provided informed consent. Patients with cognitive or mental disorders were excluded. The sample size was deemed sufficient for factor analysis based on empirical guidelines.

Variable Interpretation

Phase 1: Translation and Cross-Cultural Adaptation of EORTC QLQ-SWB32**

The translation of the SWB32 questionnaire into Vietnamese followed guidelines from the European Organization for Research and Treatment of Cancer. This process included forward and backward translation by four English teachers and review by three experts in oncology. The cultural and content validity of the translated questionnaire was assessed to ensure accuracy and relevance. Feedback from ten patients led to adjustments, such as modifying "I believe in life after death" to "I believe in the afterlife" and refining terms to better fit Vietnamese cultural and religious contexts. Adjustments were made to reflect Buddhism, a major religion in Vietnam.

Study Strengths and Limitations

Strengths:

This study offers several notable strengths. Firstly, it involved a homogeneous participant group, effectively representing the Vietnamese population across various regions. The EORTC QLQ-SWB32 questionnaire was meticulously translated and adapted to fit the Vietnamese cultural context, ensuring clarity and ease of comprehension. The instrument demonstrated high

****Phase 2: Data Collection and Statistical Analysis****

The validated Vietnamese SWB32 instrument was administered from November 2021 to April 2022. Data collection involved a two-part survey: Part 1 gathered demographic information, while Part 2 comprised the SWB32 questionnaire, divided into four scales: Relationship with Others, Relationship with Self, Relationship with a Higher Power, and Existential. The instrument also included items related to religious beliefs but excluded items not relevant to all participants. Statistical analysis was conducted using AMOS version 20 for confirmatory factor analysis and SPSS version 27 for descriptive analysis, with a significance level set at $p < 0.05$. Ethical approval was granted by the Institutional Review Board, and participants provided informed consent.

Results

Participant Demographics:

The majority of participants were aged 56-65 (43.1%), with a higher proportion of males (73.8%) compared to females (26.2%). Most had high school or secondary education (75%), and approximately 3% were single, widowed, or divorced. Farmers represented 40.1% of the sample, and about 90% reported no religious affiliation.

Cancer Stages and Types:

The majority of participants were in advanced stages of cancer (stages 3 and 4), accounting for approximately 93% of the sample. Cancer types varied, including lung, digestive, neck, and urinary cancers.

reliability, comparable to international versions, making it a valuable tool for assessing spiritual well-being (SWB) in Vietnam and similar cultural settings.

Limitations:

Despite its strengths, the study has limitations. The sample size was relatively small, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the study had a significant focus on lung cancer patients, which suggests a need for future research to include a wider range of

cancer types. The majority of participants were in advanced stages (3 and 4) of the disease, as the assessment was primarily conducted in inpatient settings. Future research should aim to include patients at earlier stages (1 and 2) to gain a more comprehensive understanding of SWB. However, identifying patients at these stages can be challenging in Vietnam due to the lack of mandatory health check-ups and low awareness, which often results in late-stage diagnoses.

Conclusions

The psychometric validation of the Vietnamese version of the SWB questionnaire was conducted with a sample of Vietnamese cancer patients, highlighting cultural nuances in the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) structure. The questionnaire exhibited strong reliability, with acceptable levels of Cronbach's alpha and McDonald's omega. Vietnamese patients found the scales to be clear and understandable. The validated Vietnamese SWB scale is a reliable tool for evaluating the subjective well-being of cancer patients in Vietnam. Clinically, this instrument can aid in identifying patients experiencing low levels of spiritual well-being, facilitating the development of targeted interventions to enhance their psychological health during hospitalization.

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