



RESILIENCE AMID ADVERSITY: EXPLORING THE LIVED EXPERIENCES AND UNMET NEEDS OF CANCER SURVIVORS IN NIGERIA

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Oral Rapid E-Poster
Survivorship I
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Introduction

Cancer remains a leading cause of death globally, but survivors—especially in LMICs—face deep emotional, social, and systemic burdens that are rarely addressed in care models.

Aims

To explore the lived experiences of Nigerian cancer survivors and identify emotional, informational, and systemic gaps in post-treatment care.

Methods

This exploratory qualitative study employed semi-structured, in-depth interviews with thirteen cancer survivors—eleven residing in Nigeria and two abroad—selected through purposive sampling to capture diverse experiences.

- Interviews were conducted in two stages via Zoom in October 2024.
- Data were audio-recorded, transcribed, anonymized and thematically analyzed, following Braun and Clarke’s method.
- Coding was independently conducted by researcher pairs, with third-party arbitration resolving disagreements.
- Findings were synthesized into a narrative, incorporating participants’ direct quotes to ensure authenticity.

Results

Variable		N
Mean age (Range)		42.8 (34-56) years
Gender	Male	2
	Female	11
Employment Status	Unemployed	3
	Self-employed	5
	Employed	5
Cancer Type	Breast	7
	Colorectal	2
	Burkitt lymphoma	1
	Sarcomatoid carcinoma	1
	Cervical	1
	Brain	1
Cancer treatment	Chemotherapy	10
	Surgery	10
	Radiotherapy	8
	Radiosurgery	1
	Cryotherapy	1
	Craniotherapy	1
	Immunotherapy	1
	Physiotherapy	1
Level of Education	Tertiary	13

Table 1. Participants demographics

Theme	Findings
Emotional and Psychological Impact	Shock, denial, sadness, and anger were common initial reactions. Fear, Anxiety and Panic attacks of recurrence was pervasive.
Psychological Coping Strategies	Faith and optimism were emotional anchors. Family and friends provided emotional and financial support. Self-motivation played a vital role.
Financial and Logistical Challenges	High treatment costs, geographical barriers and limited resources prevented adequate care for many participants.
Social Impact	Societal stigma, low social esteem and lack of social engagement led to mental health struggles and isolation.
Healthcare Inefficiencies	Delays in diagnosis and fragmented care systems worsened outcomes.
Post-Treatment Issues	Survivors faced costly medications, inadequate follow-up care, and lack of community support.
Recommendations for healthcare improvements	Empathy and professionalism to improve patient experience. Investment into human capital and infrastructure, government accountability and policies to support reintegration.

Figure 1: Key findings



Figure 2: Barriers to Care → What Stands in the Way

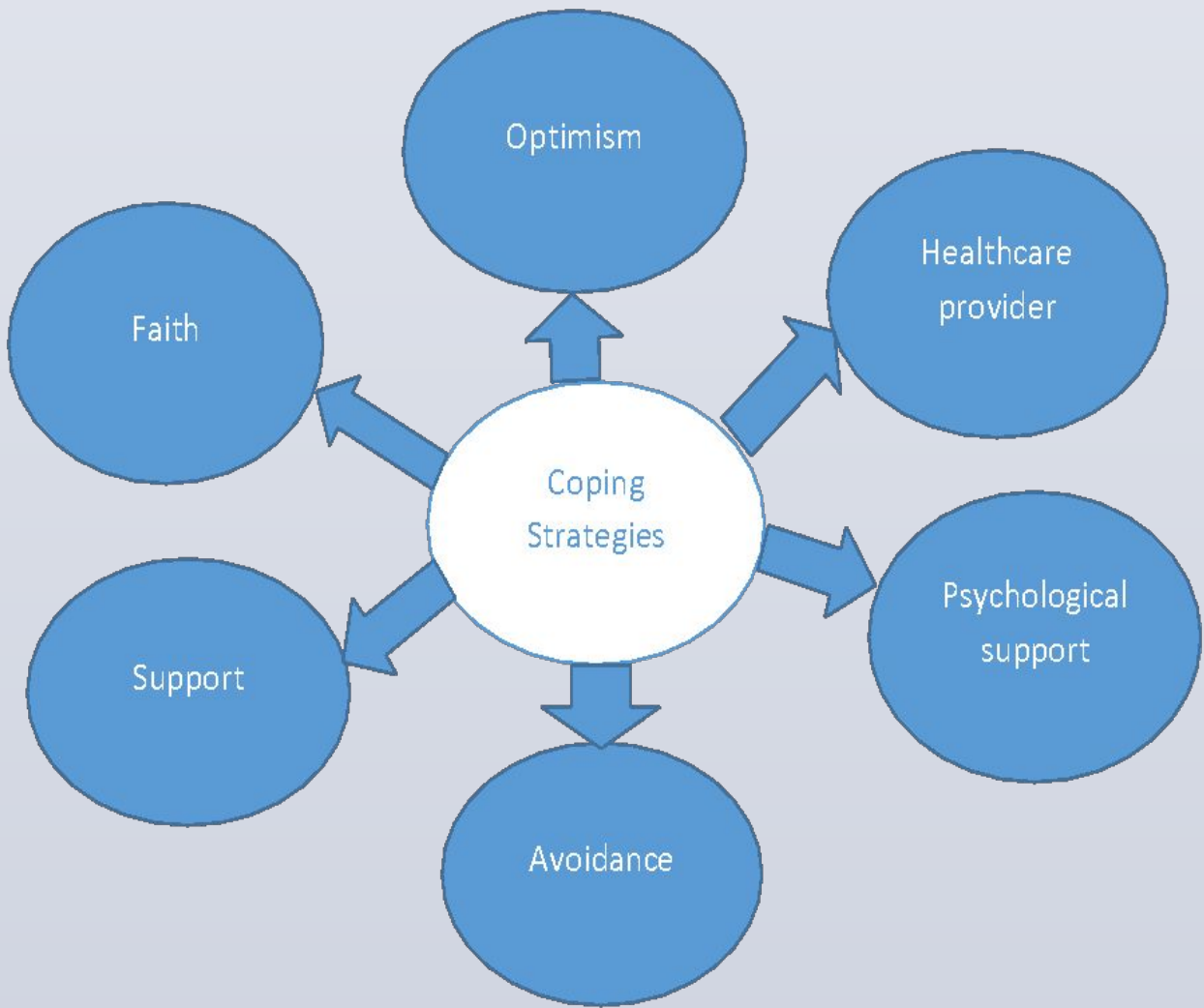


Fig 3: Coping Strategies

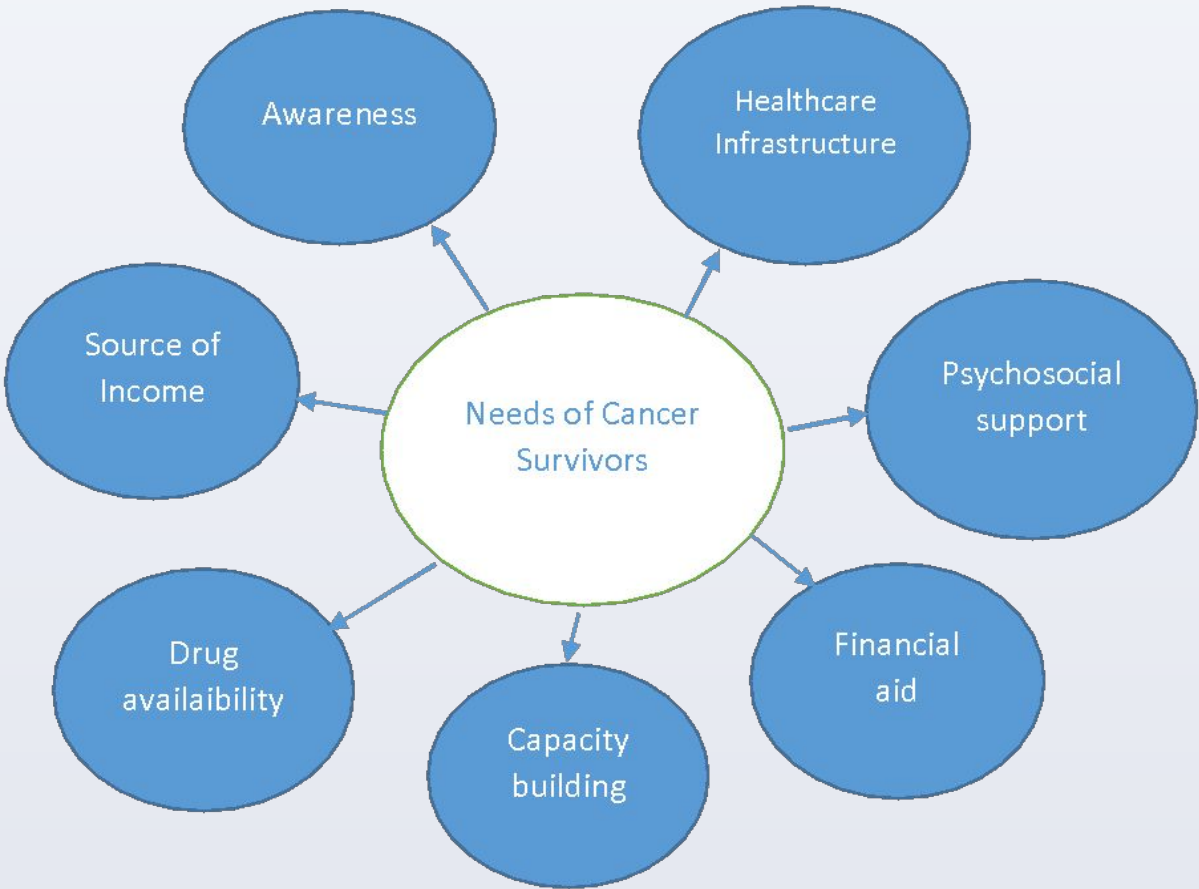


Figure 4. What Survivors Still Need

Discussion

The survivors’ experiences reveal a complex cancer journey shaped by trauma, resilience, and systemic shortcomings.

These insights highlight the need for comprehensive interventions addressing emotional, social, and healthcare system challenges.

Closing these gaps through targeted policies, advocacy, and patient-centered care can significantly improve the quality of survivorship, promoting dignity and holistic well-being for those living beyond cancer.

Conclusion

These findings call for urgent, context-sensitive strategies that address psychosocial support, healthcare access, and survivor reintegration in LMICs. Aligning policy, advocacy, and care delivery with survivors’ lived realities is critical to improving post-treatment outcomes

References

Cochrane, A., Woods, S., Dunne, S., & Gallagher, P. (2022). Unmet supportive care needs associated with quality of life for people with lung cancer: A systematic review of the evidence 2007–2020. *European Journal of Cancer Care*, 31(1), e13525. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ecc.13525>