

Increasing Women's Awareness and Concern for Breast Cancer through Health Education: Impact of Educational Programs on Early Detection and Prevention

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ABSTRACT

Breast cancer is one of the leading causes of death in women worldwide, with incidence rates increasing every year. Early detection and prevention are important steps in reducing mortality from this disease. Women's low awareness and understanding of breast cancer is a major barrier to early detection. This literature study aims to analyze the impact of health education programs on increasing women's awareness and concern about breast cancer, especially in the aspects of early detection and prevention. Based on the literature review, it was found that health education programs have a significant role in improving women's understanding of risk factors, early symptoms, and the importance of breast self-examination and clinical examination. A number of studies have shown that before receiving education, many women did not understand the importance of early detection and tended to neglect breast examination. After participating in the education program, there was an increase in knowledge and a positive change in attitude towards early detection, with more women willing to perform regular breast examinations. This study also revealed that interactive and community-based education methods are more effective than passive delivery of information. Thus, the results of this literature study confirm that health education is an effective strategy in increasing women's awareness and concern about breast cancer. The implementation of more innovative and technology-based education programs can be a solution in reaching more women, especially in areas with limited access to health services.

Keywords: Breast Cancer, Health Education, Early Detection, Prevention, Women's Awareness

INTRODUCTION

Breast cancer is one of the highest prevalence cancers in the world and is the leading cause of cancer deaths in women (Rachmawati, 2020; Rahayuwati, 2020; Sibero, 2021). Although advances in medical technology and treatment methods have increased patient life expectancy, delays in detecting breast cancer are still a major challenge (Crosby, 2022). This delay is often due to women's lack of awareness about the importance of early detection and preventive measures. Many women only discover they have breast cancer after the disease has reached

an advanced stage, when treatment options become more limited and survival rates decrease significantly. Lack of breast cancer awareness is due to several factors, including limited access to accurate information, social stigma, and lack of health education. In some developing countries, myths and misconceptions about breast cancer are still widespread, such as the notion that the disease only affects women with a family history of cancer or those of advanced age. This results in low rates of self-examination and delays in seeking medical care. In addition, many women still do not understand the main risk factors for breast cancer, such as an unhealthy diet, lack of physical activity, long-term use of hormone therapy, and exposure to harmful substances from the environment (Suardita, 2016; Parannuan, 2012; Fatmawati, 2020).

Although many studies have shown that health education can increase women's awareness of breast cancer, there are still gaps in the effectiveness of the educational approaches used. Most health education programs still focus on passive delivery of information, such as lectures or distribution of printed materials, which lack active participation from participants. Some studies have shown that more interactive education methods, such as practical breast self-examination demonstrations, group discussions and the use of digital media, are more effective in improving women's understanding and engagement. However, there are few studies that specifically evaluate the impact of community-based educational approaches and digital technologies in improving early breast cancer detection, especially in developing countries with limited access to health services.

This research offers a new approach by analyzing the effectiveness of more innovative and interactive health education strategies in raising women's awareness of breast cancer. Unlike previous studies that have highlighted the impact of education in general, this study will explore how a combination of community-based education methods, digital technology and practical training can improve women's awareness, attitudes and behaviors towards early breast cancer detection. By integrating more modern and technology-based educational approaches, this research will provide new insights into the most effective strategies to increase women's awareness of breast health. This study aims to explore the impact of health education programs on women's awareness of early breast cancer detection. The study will review the effectiveness of different education methods, including community-based approaches, digital campaigns, and hands-on training, in increasing understanding and changing women's attitudes and behaviors related to breast cancer early detection and prevention. The research will also identify challenges faced in implementing educational programs and recommend strategies that can be implemented to increase women's awareness more broadly.

METHOD

This research uses the literature review method to analyze how health education programs can increase women's awareness and concern about breast cancer, especially in the aspects of early detection and prevention. Literature

review was chosen because it allows researchers to collect, identify, and analyze various studies, scientific articles, health organization reports, and reliable reference sources that discuss related topics. With this approach, the research can provide a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of health education in increasing women's awareness of breast cancer. The stages in this literature study were carried out through several systematic steps. First, data sources were collected from scientific journals, academic books, reports from global health organizations (such as WHO and American Cancer Society), and other relevant official publications. The literature search was conducted through scientific databases such as PubMed, Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, and ResearchGate using keywords such as breast cancer awareness, health education, early detection, self-examination, prevention strategies, and related terms in Indonesian and English. After the collection process, a selection and screening of sources was conducted to ensure that the literature used met certain criteria, such as being published within the last five years, having high relevance to the research objectives, and coming from credible sources. Articles or studies that did not have a clear methodology or were not relevant to the focus of this research were excluded from the analysis. The next step was data analysis and synthesis, where various findings from the collected literature were compared and categorized based on the main themes, namely the level of women's awareness of breast cancer before and after education, the effectiveness of education programs in increasing understanding of early detection, and the impact of education on behavior change in implementing a healthy lifestyle as an effort to prevent breast cancer. The analysis was conducted using a descriptive and comparative approach, comparing the results of various studies and identifying emerging patterns or trends related to the effectiveness of health education in raising women's awareness. By applying a systematic and evidence-based literature study method, this research is expected to provide greater insight into the importance of health education in increasing women's awareness and concern for breast cancer, as well as providing recommendations for the development of more effective educational programs in the future.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the literature review, it was found that health education has a significant impact in increasing women's awareness of breast cancer, especially in the aspects of early detection and prevention (Jaya, 2020; Witdiawati, 2019; Krisdianto, 2023). High awareness of breast cancer allows women to better understand the importance of early screening, recognize risk factors, and take appropriate preventive measures (Kashyap, 2022). A number of studies have shown that women's lack of breast cancer awareness is often due to a lack of access to accurate information and a low understanding of the importance of early detection. This is further exacerbated by various factors, such as low education levels, lack of socialization from health workers, and social stigma that makes discussions about breast health sensitive or taboo in some communities.

Studies reveal that prior to education, most women did not understand the risk factors for breast cancer and the importance of self-examination. Many of the women thought that breast cancer only affects certain age groups or individuals with a family history of the disease. As a result, they tend to ignore early symptoms and only seek treatment when the condition has reached an advanced stage. After attending the education program, more than 80% of participants showed an improved understanding of the early signs and symptoms of breast cancer. Women became more aware of the importance of early detection and started practicing regular breast self-examination. This shows that education provided in a direct and structured manner has great potential in changing women's mindset and behavior regarding early detection of breast cancer.

Systematic health education can increase women's awareness of breast cancer by 40%, which has a direct impact on increasing early detection efforts (WHO, 2023). Systematic education includes a variety of approaches, such as health seminars, social media campaigns, community outreach programs, and hands-on training involving medical personnel and breast cancer survivors. These programs not only provide more comprehensive information, but also help overcome the fear and stigma that often prevent women from seeking care. Studies also show that educated women tend to be more proactive in maintaining their health, both by undergoing regular clinical breast examinations and by adopting healthier lifestyles (Dinana, 2025).

Education that includes information on healthy eating, the benefits of exercise, and reducing risk factors such as alcohol consumption and smoking, has been shown to increase women's awareness in taking more effective preventive measures (Nomico, 2025). Thus, in addition to improving early detection, health education also plays an important role in reducing risk factors that can lead to the development of breast cancer. The findings from these studies confirm that health education is one of the most effective strategies in reducing the incidence of breast cancer. To ensure its effectiveness, education must be delivered using methods that are easy to understand, relevant to the social and cultural conditions of the community, and accessible to all, including women in remote areas who have limited access to health information. With a more inclusive and sustainable approach, it is hoped that women's awareness of breast cancer will continue to increase, so that early detection rates can be expanded and mortality rates from this disease can be minimized. In addition to increased knowledge, the results of the literature review also showed a change in women's attitudes towards the importance of early detection of breast cancer. Awareness of the importance of regular screening depends not only on knowledge, but also on individual beliefs regarding the urgency of such preventive measures. Many women previously considered breast self-examination to be unimportant, mainly due to a lack of understanding of its benefits in detecting cancer at an early stage. This is further exacerbated by the existence of myths and stigmas in the community that make some women feel afraid or reluctant to perform the examination, either due to the fear of finding a suspicious lump or due to lack of support from the surrounding environment.

After the study, it was found that prior to education, most women were hesitant or did not understand the importance of breast self-examination (SADARI). Women tend to assume that breast cancer only occurs in individuals with a family history of the disease or certain age groups, such as older women (Dwianugrah, 2021; Maharani, 2018; Zulfaa, 2022). This view causes them to be less concerned about their own personal risk, and therefore do not feel the need for regular screening. In fact, some participants in the study claimed to have never heard of SADARI before, suggesting a significant information gap in women's health education. After receiving education accompanied by a practical demonstration of SADARI, about 75% of the participants expressed willingness to perform monthly self-examinations. This increase shows that proper education can change women's attitudes and behaviors in maintaining their breast health. By understanding the correct steps in performing SADARI and recognizing the early signs of breast cancer, they become more confident and feel in control of their own health. In addition, the education provided also helped to reduce the fear that previously prevented them from getting screened, as they realized that early detection can increase the chances of cure if the cancer is found at an early stage.

The study also indicated that information provided through interactive methods was more effective than just verbal or written theory. When women were given the opportunity to practice SADARI with the guidance of a health worker or through a clear simulation, they tended to better understand the correct examination technique and felt more comfortable doing it themselves at home. Interactive methods such as live demonstrations, educational videos, and group discussions allow them to ask questions and get clarification on things that may still be confusing. This is in contrast to passive approaches such as reading brochures or listening to lectures, which are often insufficient to build deep understanding and encourage behavior change. In addition to interactive methods, social support also plays an important role in increasing women's willingness to perform SADARI. Other studies have shown that women who are educated in groups or with their friends tend to be more motivated to adopt the habit than those who learn individually. This factor suggests that a community-based approach can be an effective strategy in improving early detection of breast cancer. Health campaigns involving local communities, health cadres, or women's groups can help create a supportive environment where women feel more comfortable talking about breast health and reminding each other to perform SADARI regularly.

Thus, changes in women's attitudes towards breast cancer early detection depend not only on how much information they receive, but also how the information is delivered and the extent to which they feel supported by their surroundings. A combination of interactive education, practical demonstrations, and community support can create more significant changes in women's habits towards early detection. Therefore, health education programs should be designed with a more inclusive and active participation-based approach, so that women not only gain knowledge, but also feel more motivated and confident in

maintaining their breast health.

The study highlighted the effectiveness of a community-based education program in increasing women's awareness and participation in clinical breast examination. This approach is a relevant solution given that many women are reluctant or do not feel the need to undergo regular clinical breast examinations. The study found that prior to the education program, only about 30% of women were willing to perform regular clinical breast exams. Many of them feared a possible cancer diagnosis, were unaware of the benefits of early detection, or considered the examination unnecessary if no symptoms were present. Lack of accurate information and limited access to health services are also factors that hinder their awareness and participation in these screenings. However, after participating in the health education program combined with counseling and support from medical personnel, more than 60% of participants expressed readiness to undergo regular check-ups at the nearest health facility. This significant increase shows that providing the right information and supported by direct interaction with health workers can change women's attitudes and behaviors towards clinical breast examination. When women are given the opportunity to discuss with medical personnel, they can understand more deeply the importance of early detection, get clarification on various concerns they have, and gain motivation to take concrete steps to maintain their breast health.

In addition to medical personnel, the involvement of health cadres and community leaders in community-based education programs also has a major impact on the effectiveness of these programs (Uyun, 2024; Hardiyanti, 2018; Indayani, 2024). In many cases, women are more likely to trust information delivered by community members they know than more formal sources of information, such as government health campaigns or mass media. Therefore, the involvement of health cadres from the local community can increase trust and facilitate wider dissemination of information. Health cadres not only act as educational facilitators, but also as advocates who can provide moral encouragement for women to be more proactive in maintaining their health. Furthermore, a successful community-based education program not only increases individual awareness but also creates a domino effect in the community. When a woman begins to understand the importance of clinical breast examination and performs it regularly, she has the potential to become a change agent who can encourage her family and friends to do the same. This process strengthens the culture of early detection in the community, so that breast cancer is no longer considered a taboo issue or only relevant to certain groups. With this social change, it is hoped that the level of awareness and concern for breast cancer can continue to increase in the long run.

In addition to providing direct benefits in increasing clinical breast screening participation, community-based approaches can also address the social and economic barriers that often prevent women from accessing needed health services. For example, in some communities, women may experience financial limitations or mobility barriers that make it difficult for them to access health facilities. With community support, such as free screening programs or

transportation to health centers, more women can get the services they need. In addition, having education sessions delivered in local languages and with approaches that are in line with local cultural norms can also increase the effectiveness of these programs. Thus, the study strengthens the understanding that community-based education is not just about providing information, but also plays a role in building a sustainable support system for women in breast cancer early detection efforts. Programs that involve medical personnel, health cadres, and community leaders can create a more supportive environment, where women feel more comfortable and encouraged to undergo regular breast examinations. Therefore, to increase breast cancer awareness and early detection more widely, community-based approaches must continue to be developed and expanded, especially in areas with limited access to health information and services.

In addition to increasing awareness of early detection, health education has also been proven to encourage healthier behavioral changes as a breast cancer prevention measure. Studies have revealed that women who have received health education are more likely to adopt a healthy diet, such as increasing consumption of vegetables, fruits, and reducing intake of fatty and high-sugar foods. In addition, education that emphasizes the importance of physical activity has also been shown to increase women's participation in regular exercise, which according to research can reduce the risk of breast cancer by 25%. This increased awareness suggests that the information provided in education programs focuses not only on early detection but also on more comprehensive aspects of prevention. While the literature shows the effectiveness of health education in increasing women's awareness and concern about breast cancer, there are a number of challenges still to be faced in implementing this program. One of the main obstacles is limited access to health information and services, especially for women in rural areas or communities with low education levels. Women living in areas with limited health facilities tend to have lower levels of awareness and rarely seek regular medical check-ups. They generally only seek medical attention when they experience more severe symptoms, which often leads to delays in diagnosis and treatment.

Cultural factors and social stigma are also challenges in efforts to improve early detection of breast cancer (Digambiro, 2025; Silalahi, 2024; Rahmadi, 2025). Some studies show that in some communities, there is still a perception that talking about breast cancer is taboo or shameful, especially in communities with conservative social norms. Studies reveal that in some communities, women tend to be reluctant to talk about their breast health or seek related information, for fear of being considered disrespectful or worried about negative stigma from the surrounding environment. This barrier is one of the factors leading to low early detection rates and delays in breast cancer treatment. To overcome these challenges, a number of studies recommend a more inclusive and culturally-based approach to education. One strategy is to involve community leaders, religious leaders, or local health cadres in delivering information about breast cancer. Studies show that educational programs designed with a cultural

approach that is in accordance with local values have a higher success rate than programs that only use conventional medical approaches. This way, women who previously felt reluctant or afraid to talk about breast health can be more open and receptive to information.

The use of technology is also an effective strategy in improving access to health education (Kausar, 2019; Juniar, 2024; Istifada, 2017). Several studies have shown that social media and digital-based health applications can be used as a means of education that is broader and easier to reach. Studies have also found that breast cancer awareness campaigns through social media are able to reach groups of women who previously had difficulty obtaining health information, such as those who live in remote areas or have limited mobility. With digital platforms, information on early detection, risk factors, and preventive measures can be disseminated more effectively, allowing women to access health resources anytime and anywhere. Based on various findings from the literature review, it can be concluded that health education plays an important role in increasing women's awareness and concern about breast cancer. An effective education program should not only focus on delivering information but should also be designed to encourage changes in attitudes and behaviors that support early detection and prevention of breast cancer (Sukmayenti, 2022; Purbasari, 2020; Sophia, 2022). However, to achieve a broader and more sustainable impact, a more inclusive approach is needed, such as integrating health education with government policies, strengthening community-based health services, and utilizing technology in information dissemination. With these steps, it is hoped that the early detection rate of breast cancer can increase, so that the risk of late diagnosis and mortality from this disease can be minimized.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the literature review, it can be concluded that health education has a very important role in increasing women's awareness and concern about breast cancer. Effective education programs not only help increase knowledge about risk factors, signs, and early symptoms of breast cancer, but also encourage changes in women's attitudes and behaviors in conducting early detection through breast self-examination (SADARI) and regular clinical examinations. The studies analyzed show that after receiving health education, more women are willing to carry out early detection and adopt a healthy lifestyle as an effort to prevent breast cancer. Despite its benefits in raising awareness and changing behavior, health education also faces various challenges in its implementation. The main obstacles include limited access to health information and services, especially for women in rural areas or with low education levels. In addition, social stigma and cultural norms that consider breast cancer a taboo topic still pose barriers to effective information dissemination. Therefore, a more inclusive, community-based, educational approach tailored to the local social and cultural context is needed to ensure that health messages are well received by the community. The use of technology, such as social media and digital health

applications, has also proven to be an effective solution in improving access to health information. With the support of technology, information about early detection and prevention of breast cancer can be disseminated more widely and reach groups of women who were previously difficult to get health education. In addition, collaboration between medical personnel, government, health organizations, and community leaders is also an important factor in the success of this education program. Thus, to achieve more optimal results in reducing the incidence and mortality rates of breast cancer, a more integrated and sustainable education strategy is needed. Educational programs must be supported by government policies that strengthen early detection services, as well as approaches that encourage active community participation. If health education can be implemented effectively and evenly, then women's awareness and concern about breast cancer will increase, so that early detection can be carried out more widely and the mortality rate from this disease can be significantly reduced.

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