

# Social Representations Of Breast Cancer And Breast Cancer Survivors Among The Working Population In France

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## 1-INTRODUCTION

- Breast cancer is a major public health concern in France. Its incidence in 2017 was 58,968 new cases, representing the leading form of cancer in women (Jéhannin-Ligier et al., 2017).
- Medical and technological have contributed to a net survival rate of 83% at 10 years for women aged 45-54. As a result, more and more patients are returning to work after treatment or remaining in employment while undergoing treatment (Cowppli-Bony et al., 2016).
- Despite these advances, cancer survivors still have to deal with severe occupational consequences. The factors by which breast cancer affects employability are numerous, among them negative representation of the disease, negative interactions with co-workers and lack of social support at work (Cho et al., 2013).
- In this perspective, this work proposes to study the social representation of breast cancer survivors and their disease in the working population in France.
- However, knowing the global social representation of breast cancer survivors and breast cancer does not allow us to fully grasp the process by which a socially constructed representation is transcribed into individual attitudes and behaviours, it requires to highlight one or more processes at the intra-individual level.
- For this reason, two mediating variables were manipulated: 1) psychosocial involvement in breast cancer and 2) workplace spirituality. The choice of workplace spirituality is justified by its growing interest in creating a work environment that can remedy hostility (James, Miles & Mullins, 2011).

## 2-METHODOLOGY

- **Hypotheses:**
  - The hypotheses were operationalised according to the structural approach of social representations (Abric, 1994). In this view, two representations are different if their central cores are different.
  - This study aims to evaluate whether there is a difference in the core of the social representation of "breast cancer survivor" and "breast cancer" according to the presence or absence of psychosocial involvement in breast cancer and workplace spirituality. The operational hypothesis tested seeks to show that individuals with a strong psychosocial involvement and/or workplace spirituality will have different social representations from those who do not.
  - Thus, attitudinal valence is expected to be significantly different in participants with high psychosocial involvement and/or workplace spirituality.
- **Tools:**
  - The free association task was used to identify. The data collected were subjected to a prototypical analysis using EVOCATION software (Vergès, 2003). This analysis is based on a classification of the associated terms according to their average rank of appearance and their frequency.
  - Scales to measure psychosocial involvement and WPS have been validated with factorial studies in France before implementation.

## 3-RESULTS

- The final sample included a total of 164 participants aged 18 to 64 years (M=35.29, SD=12.41).

SR central cores "breast cancer"

Control gp	Strong WPS
Woman	Woman
Disease	Severe
Operation	Concern
Death	Disease
	Death
	Fear
	Tumeur

Strong PI	Strong WPS+PI
Woman	Woman
Disease	Severe
Operation	Disease
Recidive	Death
	Feminity

SR central cores "Breast cancer survivor"

Control gp	Strong WPS
Good_news	Support
Cancer	Courage
Chemotherapy	Difficulty
Courage	Fatigue
Strength	Joy
Poor	Relief
Healing	Healing

Strong PI	Strong WPS+PI
Support	Welfare
Hope	Courage
Fatigue	Help
Healing	Healing
Concern	Joy
Joy	
Life	

- The results of the prototypical analysis reveal four different social representations of "breast cancer" and "breast cancer survivor".
- Significant differences in attitudinal valences are observed for the inducing word "breast cancer" between the experimental groups ( $F(3,161)=94.93$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Thus, significant differences in attitudinal valences are observed for the second following inducing word "breast cancer survivor" across experimental groups. ( $F(3,161)=101.8$ ,  $p<.001$ ).

## 4-DISCUSSION/CONCLUSION

- It is important to point out that the traits used to describe survivors are not in line with the skills valued in the current working world. With the positive and negative ambivalence of stereotypes, survivors are seen as courageous, but they are also seen as less likely to be able to withstand pressure, hardship and workload. This perception can be detrimental to the profile of the modern employee.
- Help-related terms appear in the groups with a high score in psychosocial involvement and WPS. This result confirms what the literature has shown about the effect of these variables on subjects' behavioural intentions.
- The significant role of psychosocial involvement suggests that a solution must be found for managers who do not know how to reintegrate their employees with breast cancer. This can be done by implementing pilot awareness-raising actions that increase their level of identification, perceived action and knowledge about breast cancer.
- WPS also inspires solutions for organisations that are unable to deal with the problems of stigma. For example, they can be reminded of the importance of meaning-based management and its impact in terms of reducing uncertainty and regulating emotions.