



## Women's Perception of Body Image after Mastectomy: Qualitative Review

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### ABSTRACT

Mastectomy action will have an impact on physical changes and perceptions of changes that lead to the response given by women with breast cancer. Body image is something that a person has in thinking about his or her body appearance. This study aims to synthesize and explore the scientific literature on women's perceptions of body image experienced after mastectomy. The study used 4 databases, namely PubMed, Science Direct, Google Scholar and EBSCO. The main keywords were "Perception", "Body image", "Mastectomy", "Qualitative Research". Article searches were carried out according to PRISMA guidelines. The findings in this study contain 3 main themes from 7 articles. Research findings include negative perceptions, positive perceptions, and change over time. This perception can arise from the time the patient receives information regarding the mastectomy plan of action until after the mastectomy. This can change over time until a woman with a mastectomy can accept the changes in her current condition.

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## Persepsi Wanita terhadap Citra Tubuh setelah Mastektomi: Tinjauan Kualitatif

#### Kata kunci:

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### ABSTRAK

Tindakan mastektomi akan berdampak pada perubahan fisik dan persepsi terhadap perubahan yang mengarah pada respon yang diberikan wanita penderita kanker payudara. Citra tubuh adalah sesuatu yang dimiliki seseorang dalam memikirkan mengenai penampilan tubuhnya. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menggali dan mensintesis literatur ilmiah tentang persepsi wanita terhadap citra tubuh yang dialami setelah mastektomi. Tinjauan ini menggunakan 4 database yaitu PubMed, Science Direct, Google Scholar dan EBSCO. Kata kunci utama adalah "persepsi", "Citra tubuh", "Mastektomi", "Penelitian Kualitatif". Pencarian artikel dilakukan sesuai dengan pedoman PRISMA. Temuan dalam penelitian ini memuat 3 tema utama dari 7 artikel. Temuan penelitian termasuk persepsi negative, persepsi positif, dan berubah seiring waktu. Persepsi ini dapat muncul sejak pasien menerima informasi terkait rencana tindakan mastektomi hingga setelah mastektomi. Hal ini dapat berubah seiring waktu hingga wanita dengan mastektomi dapat menerima perubahan kondisinya saat ini.

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**INTRODUCTION**

Breast cancer is the cells in the breast tissue divide abnormally, uncontrollably which will cause a lump or mass (Iddrisu et al., 2020). The type of cancer that is the number one killer in the world in women is breast cancer (Javid et al., 2013). Based on data from the Global Cancer Observatory, 2020 from the World Health Organization (WHO) shows the latest cases of breast cancer globally are in the first place as many as 2,261,419 cases (11.7%), Asia being the highest order for five consecutive years (Globocan, 2021). Indonesia was ranked first in 2020 with 65,858 new cases (16.6%) (Globocan, 2020). This problem is a very serious matter and needs more attention from various parties.

Breast cancer is a very complex health problem and needs to be addressed thoroughly. Mastectomy is one of the most common procedures and needs a lot of consideration (Timman et al., 2017). Mastectomy is an invasive procedure by removing part or all of the breast caused by breast cancer (Grogan & Mehan, 2016). Some women only need a quadrantectomy, which is the removal of a quarter of the breast, or a lumpectomy, which removes only the tumor or a small area around it (Björkman et al., 2016). Mastectomy will cause physical changes in the patient so that it has an impact on his body image. This will cause the patient to find it difficult to accept his situation, feel inferior, feel ashamed because he thinks he is no longer perfect as a woman. So it will make not confident to meet other people and need time to adjust to being able to accept the situation (Lazaraviciute & Chaturvedi, 2017).

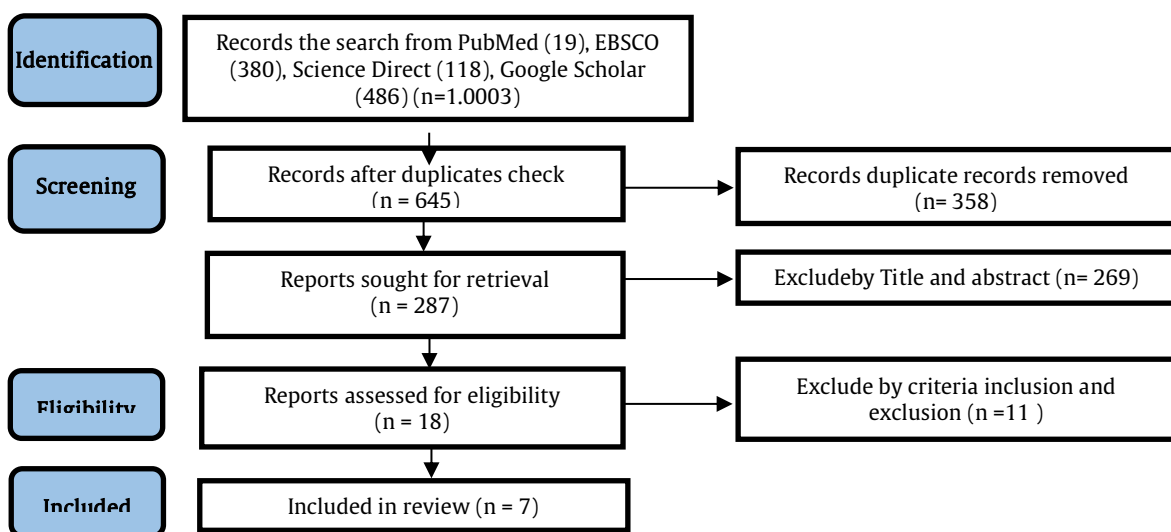
Physical changes can cause different feelings so that it shows an attitude of rejection of the new physical appearance. Body image is a collection of attitudes of a person, consciously or unconsciously, to the state of his body, including past or current perceptions, about the shape, structure, and function of the body that can be influenced by personal views and others (Kocan & Gursoy, 2016). Things that can appear in individuals who experience body image disorders are seen from their attitudes and behaviors such as refusing, seeing, touching body parts that have changed, not accepting changes, refusing explanations for body changes, negative perceptions of body changes, and expressing loss and despair (Anderson et al., 2017).

Acceptance after mastectomy of the physical changes can be influenced by the individual's perception of him. So that the acceptance process will be easier if you can understand the physical changes experienced positively (Grogan & Mehan, 2016). This makes individual perception the key to acceptance of the changes in body image they receive. Women who undergo a mastectomy can experience significant changes in their bodies, this can affect their level of mental well-being and quality of life. Therefore, it is necessary to deepen the perception that can arise in women after undergoing a mastectomy against changes in body image experienced.

**METHOD**

The articles included in the review are articles about the perception of post-mastectomy women on the physical changes they experience. This review will discuss articles that use qualitative methods with various approaches, such as descriptive, phenomenological, case reports, ethnography, and grounded theory. These reviews are not limited to a particular region or country and are conducted in a health center or in the community. The literature search in this study used four databases: PubMed, Science Direct, Google Scholar and EBSCO. The keywords in this review include "Perception" and "Body Image" and "Mastectomy" AND "Qualitative Research OR Qualitative OR Ethnography". The publication period is limited to cover articles published from 2016 to 2021. This study examines cases of breast cancer who underwent a mastectomy in the last five years to see the perception of changes in body image they experienced. Articles in English only, full text, articles with qualitative methods, and topics related to women's perception of body image after mastectomy. The exclusion criteria for this article included articles with incomplete research methods, articles for which the full text was not available, and articles that did not discuss perceptions after mastectomy.

After finding the article, the author will conduct an analysis by reading the title and abstract first and then determining the article that fits the predetermined inclusion criteria. Then the author reads the article as a whole so that it can be explained based on the PRISMA chart below.



**Figure 1. PRISMA FlowChart**

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 7 articles were reviewed, discussing women's perceptions about the body image after mastectomy. After reviewing the articles, the authors identified women's perceptions about the body image experienced after

mastectomy. Based on the 7 articles analyzed, it resulted in 3 main themes. The resulting themes represent women's perceptions about the body image after mastectomy, as shown in table1. The themes found have a relationship between one theme and another.

**Table 1.**  
**Characteristics of the included literature**

Author & Year	Title	Purpose	Characteristics of Respondents	Research Design	Result
Menon & O' Mahony, (2019)	Women's body image following mastectomy: Snap shots of their daily lives	To explore women's perceptions of body image after mastectomy for breast cancer and thus seeks to identify the best ways to support women in this regard.	Women over eighteen years of age who underwent mastectomy (either unilateral, bilateral with or without breast reconstruction) within the last two years.	Descriptive qualitative research	Changes in body image have affected daily life, perception of body image, relationships with partners, and the need for information and support.
Leunissen et al., (2016)	Exploring novel dimensions of body experience after breast reconstruction.	To explore the women experience about their bodies post breast reconstruction in everyday.	woman who had breast reconstruction for the past 3 years at a university medical center in the Netherlands.	A qualitative, descriptive phenomenological design	Six themes were found, namely changes in the body that are felt and touched, the body in action, the sexual body, the cosmetic body, awareness, and self-feeling.
Olasehinde et al., (2019)	Life Without a Breast: Exploring the Experiences of Young Nigerian Women After Mastectomy for Breast Cancer	To understand the fears of women who refuse treatment and explored the impact of mastectomy on the psychosocial life of women	Women under 45 years who have had a mastectomy in a Nigerian teaching hospital.	Using qualitative methods with in-depth narrative interviews	The six themes that emerged were the decision to have a mastectomy, changes in body image, relationship with husband and sexual life, social support, and coping with life after mastectomy.
Herring et al., (2019)	Women's initial experiences of their appearance after mastectomy and/or breast reconstruction: A qualitative study	To explore the long-term impact of changes experienced on body image and quality of life	Women aged 18 years and over, speaking English, and who have had a mastectomy without reconstruction	Qualitative approach	The results obtained four themes, namely readiness and support, thoughts and emotions, loss and sadness, and reactions of others
Kocan & Gursoy, (2016)	Body Image of Women with Breast Cancer After Mastectomy: A Qualitative Research	To explore in depth the influence of a woman's body image after undergoing a mastectomy.	Women with primary breast cancer who have undergone unilateral modified radical mastectomy, have not had breast reconstruction, have not received systematic treatment, age 18-60 years, speak Turkish	Qualitative descriptive study	The main theme outcomes were breast meaning, mastectomy and self, changes in body image, and social life.
Iddrisu et al., (2020)	Psychological and physical effects of breast cancer diagnosis and treatment on young Ghanaian women: A qualitative study	To explore the psychological and physical experiences of women with breast cancer in the metropolitan city of Accra	Women diagnosed with breast cancer and have undergone multiple treatments, adults from 28 to 45 years old	Qualitative exploratory descriptive design	The results of the three themes that emerged were the effect of treatment on body image, the physical effect of breast cancer, and the emotional effect of the diagnosis and treatment of breast cancer.
Glasse et al., (2018)	Perceived influence of psychological consultation on psychological well-being, body image, and	To explore the psychological consultation given to women before bilateral prophylactic mastectomy	Women with breast cancer and undergoing BPM before the age of 35.	Qualitative with phenomenological design	The three themes that emerged were psychological adjustment, satisfaction with intimacy, and body image.

Author & Year	Title	Purpose	Characteristics of Respondents	Research Design	Result
	intimacy following bilateral prophylactic mastectomy: A qualitative analysis				

Based on the above review, the physical changes that occur after mastectomy greatly affect individual perceptions. The perceptions that emerged from several reviews formed the same 3 themes.

### Negative Perception

Changes in body shape that cannot be avoided by women after mastectomy will affect self-perception as a whole woman (Ishak et al., 2018). Changes that can occur include blaming yourself, feeling ashamed, and having feelings of ungratefulness. This will form a negative perception of the individual for changes in body shape and includes the desire and anxiety that occurs in him (Pedersen et al., 2016). A woman's dissatisfaction with her body image after mastectomy is an individual's belief about her appearance that does not meet her personal standards so she judges her body low. This negative perception is usually indicated by the rejection of the physical changes experienced so that it will have an impact on the continuation of the treatment that must be undertaken (Herring et al., 2019; Iddrisu et al., 2020a; Olasehinde et al., 2019). So with these changes can affect a negative self-assessment.

### Positive Perception

Individuals who have a positive perception of their body image are satisfied or happy with their body shape and physical appearance which are supported by high beliefs so that they can increase consumptive behavior (Leunissen et al., 2016). Women who have improved their psychological well-being before undergoing a mastectomy are more likely to perceive positive changes in body image (Glassey et al., 2018). This is due to the influence of the support that has been given before the action. The support that is formed comes from individuals, families, peers, and the community (Herring et al., 2019). Women can perceive changes in themselves having preparation for possible actions to be taken. So that the psychology of women with mastectomy will be much more well-formed and can provide a much better response compared to women who do not prepare and even improve psychologically before the procedure.

### Change Over Time

Perceptions that occur can change over time. The self-rejection response is the beginning of a negative self-assessment, but it can instantly change the response for the individual. These changes can occur at any time. Several stages will be experienced by women after mastectomy based on the Kubler-Ross theory until finally, the individual can accept the physical changes they experience (Archangelo et al., 2019; Kowalczyk et al., 2019; Lewis-Smith et al., 2020). This will be more influential if the support received can make the individual more receptive to the change.

### LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

In our review, there was consideration in the selection of the literature for degrading this scientific study. In addition, set times and language restrictions may affect research reviews and the exclusion of some topics. simplicity of research studies, sample size and heterogeneity are also concerns based on their quality.

### CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Significant changes in the body can occur in women who have undergone a mastectomy that can affect their mental well-being and quality of life. The perception of women after mastectomy about body image experienced after a physical change is important for further development. The perception of every woman after a mastectomy is different, the perception that often arises is a negative perception of her current body condition. This perception will change over time, so it is necessary to explore the depth of perception related to the condition of women after mastectomy.

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The authors report there is no conflict of interest. The authors themselves will be responsible for the content and writing of the paper.

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