

The Psychosocial & Financial Challenges Faced by Caregivers of Cancer Patients

Ummarah Zafar Farid, Muhammad Umair, Laeba binte Saleem, Tahira Zubair, Soma Hafeez, Naveed Ahmed
Department of Medical Oncology, PNS Shifa Hospital, Karachi, Pakistan

BACKGROUND

As cancer care shifts to the outpatient setting, family caregivers — the “second patient” — absorb heavy emotional, social and financial demands. Quantitative evidence from resource-constrained settings like Pakistan is limited.

OBJECTIVE

To determine the psychosocial and economic burden among caregivers of cancer patients at a tertiary-care oncology unit, and test its association with caregiver gender and relationship to the patient.

150

Caregivers enrolled

37.9 ±12.8

Mean ZBI score — mild-to-moderate burden

39.3%

Reported moderate-to-severe burden

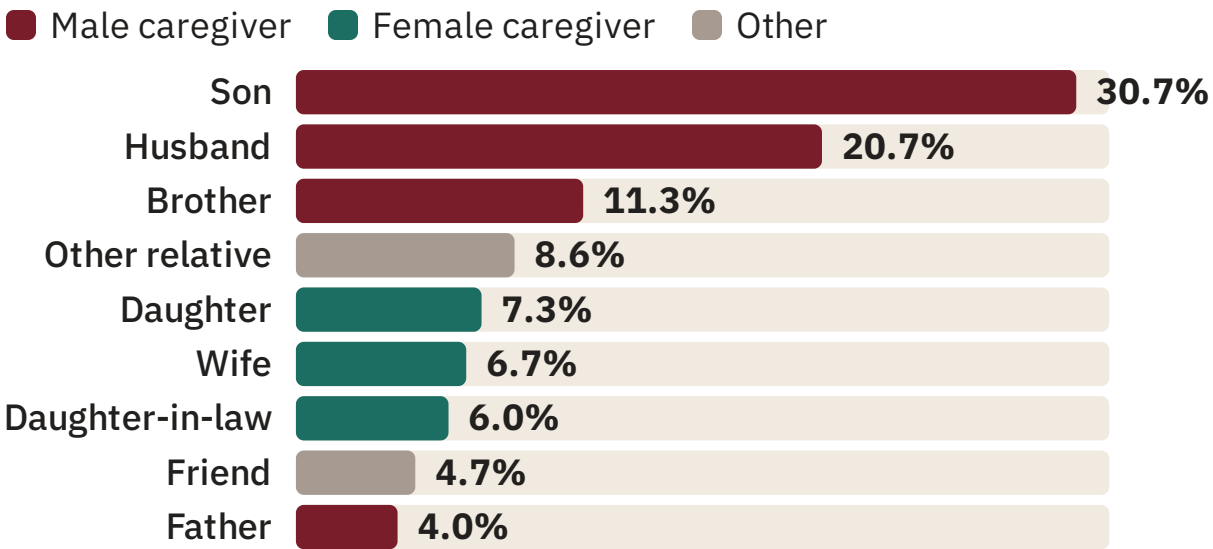
78.7%

Caregivers were male

METHODS

Design	Cross-sectional study
Setting	Oncology IPD & OPD, PNS Shifa Hospital — tertiary care, Karachi
Period	Jun – Dec 2025 (6 months)
Sampling	Consecutive, non-probability · n = 150
Instrument	Zarit Burden Interview (ZBI-22), 5-pt Likert, 0–88 · Cronbach’s α = 0.81
Analysis	SPSS · descriptive stats · χ² test, p < 0.05

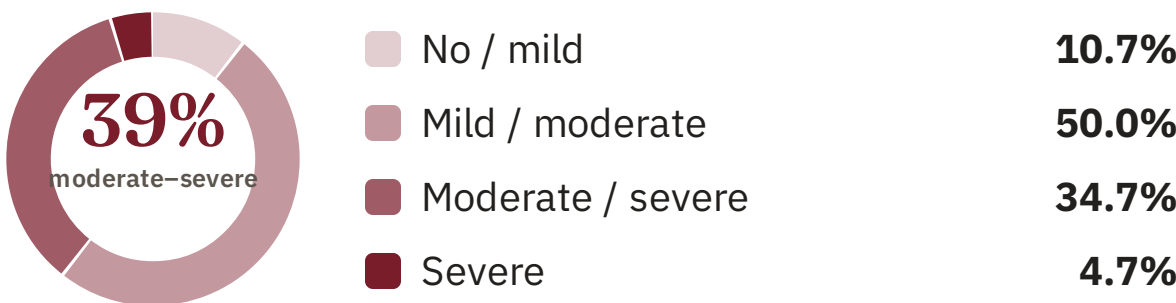
Who is the caregiver?



RESULTS

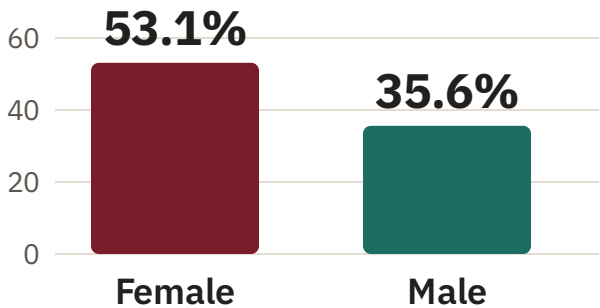
Distribution of caregiver burden

Zarit Burden Interview categories (n = 150)



Moderate-to-severe burden, by gender

Share of caregivers within each group



Female caregivers trended higher — χ² = 3.24, p = 0.072 (not significant)

Caregivers carry a substantial, hidden burden

Nearly two in five caregivers reported moderate-to-severe strain. The high mean ZBI reflects limited systemic support, high out-of-pocket costs and fragmented services. Burden was independent of kinship, yet female caregivers appeared more vulnerable — pointing to universal, not relationship-bound, distress.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Routine caregiver screening with validated tools (ZBI) in oncology
- Integrated psychosocial & financial counselling and welfare support
- Targeted attention to high-risk female caregivers
- Policy reform recognising caregivers as partners in cancer care

SELECTED REFERENCES

1. Sung H, et al. Global Cancer Statistics 2020: GLOBOCAN estimates. *CA Cancer J Clin.* 2021;71(3):209–49.

2. Onyeneho CA, Ilesanmi RE. Burden of care among family caregivers of cancer patients. *Asia-Pac J Oncol Nurs.* 2021;8(3):330–6.

3. Karimi Moghaddam Z, et al. Caregiving burden, depression & anxiety in caregivers of cancer patients. *Front Psychol.* 2023;14:1059605.

4. Kitaw TA, et al. The financial toxicity of cancer: global burden & risk factors. *BMJ Glob Health.* 2025;10(2).

KEYWORDS

- Cancer caregivers
- Caregiver burden
- Psychosocial burden
- Zarit Burden Interview
- Pakistan

Correspondence: u.faridz@gmail.com

Ethics approval: ERC/2024/ONCO/68