



The Role of Social Relationships in Reducing Depression Symptoms Among Elderly Residents in Social Institutions: A Descriptive Study

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ABSTRACT / ABSTRAK

Depression is a common mental illness among older people. Earlier research has proven that poor social support is a major risk indicator for later-life depression. The present research has a goal of analyzing the relationship between support from friends and depressive symptoms among older people living at social institutions. A descriptive correlational design was used with a total sampling method. The population subjected to the research was 44 older people who lived at the Tresna Werdha Social Home Wisma Kartika Yatira. A structured questionnaire to rate support from friends was applied, containing validated items to assess both perceived and provided support. The results indicated that 25 respondents had moderate levels of support from their friends, whereas 19 had poor levels of support from their friends. Regarding depression, 23 respondents had no signs of depression, and 21 had slight signs of depression. There was a statistically significant relationship between support from their friends and depression ($r = 0,722$, $p = 0.000$). The evidence indicates that levels of support from their friends are linked with higher levels of depressive signs. From the findings, a proposal is made to adopt the SMB (Sharing Motivation Together) intervention—a peer-based intervention aimed at promoting mutual encouragement, emotional attachment, and activity among older persons at institutional settings.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia has one of the successful health improvements with the rising life expectancy. With that, there has been a substantial growth in the population of the 60-year-olds and older, which has positioned Indonesia as a country with an aging population since 2015. An aging population is a situation where the number of older people is on the rise in a nation or a region. As stipulated by the Republic of Indonesia Ministry of Health (2018), there were 19.6 million older persons (7.8%) during 2017, which grew to 20.5 million (8.5%) during 2018. The population is expected to be 27.08 million during 2020, 33.69 million during 2025, 40.95 million during 2030, and 48.19 million during 2035 (Yanti et al., 2019).

Economic growth, aging population, and life expectancy have resulted in various challenges to the health and society at large (Pali, 2016). Elderly people are, according to Suharyanto (2014), usually affected by several issues and may need to be cared for by their

families for medical treatment and everyday tasks. But most families cannot take full care (Nurul et al., 2022). This is compounded by family composition changes, for example, children deciding to live away from their parents or being engaged with their jobs, meaning less time for attention to their elderly parents (Riyan, 2011; Nurul et al., 2022). As stated by Syamsudin (2008), the shift within the family normally results in old people being put in social care homes or nursing homes. Nursing homes are centers for the care and improvement of the elderly, instituted by the government (Pali, 2016). Nevertheless, most of them do not have diverse and regular activity programs, which may culminate in boredom and add to the risk of psychological disorders like depression (Heristi, 2017). Depression is a severe mental condition involving persistent sadness, hopelessness, and lack of interest in everyday life (Mayo Clinic, 2018). Depression influences health directly by breaking sleep, lowering hunger, and restricting physical activity, which may result in complications like weight loss and overall health decline. The national survey of 2018 found that the risk of depression is higher with advancing age: 6.5% for people from 55 to 64, 8.0% for people from 65 to 74, and 8.9% for those older than 75 years old (Yanti et al., 2019).

Some of the factors that cause depression among the elderly are lack of support from family, the loss of a husband/wife or friends, illness, feeling of worthlessness, purposelessness, loneliness, and lack of appreciation (MediLexicon International, 2020). Social support is the most important of them, as it helps the elderly get their vitality back and feel cared for (Indahsah, 2017). Support may be provided by children, family, friends, or neighbors who stay close by (Amanda et al., 2021). Support from one's own friends is extra important because they act as buffers from stress, role models for coping, and sources of heightened self-efficacy (Amanda et al., 2021). Against such a backdrop, the present study seeks to look at how the support from friends is associated with depression in old persons residing in nursing homes."

METHOD

This quantitative study, using a descriptive correlational design with a cross-sectional approach, involved 44 older persons living at the Tresna Werdha Social Nursing Home Wisma Kartini Yatira. Participants were sought using total sampling. Two validated instruments—a modified version of the social support questionnaire originally developed by Cobb, Sydney, & Perlman (1974), adapted by Heristi (2017), and the Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9) for evaluating depressed symptoms—originally developed by Spitzer et al. (1999) and modified by Nurul (2014)—were used in structured interviews to gather data. Variable distribution was described using univariate analysis; bivariate analysis examined relationships using the Spearman rank test. Under reference number 27/KEPK/EC/IV/2023 ethical clearance was obtained.

RESULTS

Below are the perceptions of the relationship between social support from friends and depression:

Table 1 shows that the majority of respondents were between 60 and 70 years old, accounting for 26 individuals (59%). Furthermore, a higher proportion of respondents were female, comprising 28 individuals (64%).

Table 1. Frequency Distribution of Respondents Characteristics

Characteristics		n = 44	%
Age (years)	60-70	26	59
	70-80	18	41
Gender	Man	16	36
	Woman	28	64

Table 2. Respondents' Responses Regarding Social Support from Friends

No	Friends Social Support	n	%
1	Tall	0	0
2	Keep	25	57
3	Low	19	43
Total		44	100

According to Table 3, most respondents (57%) reported a medium level of social support from friends. However, 43% of respondents still experienced low social support.

Table 3. Respondents' Responses to Depression Variables

No	Depression	n	%
1	Major Depression	0	0
2	Moderate Depression	0	0
3	Mild Depression	0	0
4	Symptoms of Mild Depression	21	48
5	No Symptoms of Depression	23	52
Total		44	100

As shown in Table 4, 52% of respondents had no symptoms of depression, while 48% experienced mild depressive symptoms.

Table 4. Spearman Rank Test Results – Relationship Between Friends' Social Support and Depression

Friends Social Support	Depression		Total	P Value	Correlation Coefficient		
	Symptoms of Mild Depression	No Symptoms of Depression					
Low	13	68,4	6	31,6	19	0.000	0.722
Keep	8	32,0	17	68,0	25		
Total	21	47,7	23	52,3	44		

The results of the Spearman Rank correlation test, conducted using SPSS 24.0, indicate a significant positive relationship between social support from friends and depression in the elderly at PSTW Wisma Kartika Yatira.

A significant correlation was found between social support and depression ($r = 0.722$, $p = 0.000$). Since the p-value (0.000) is less than the significance threshold of 0.05, the null

hypothesis (H_0) is rejected, supporting the alternative hypothesis (H_1) that higher social support from friends is associated with lower levels of depression.

DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the research conducted by PSTW Wisma Kartika Yatira, 25 respondents received moderate social support, this is because most of the respondents at PSTW Wisma Kartika as many as 26 people aged 60-70 years where they still have excellent physical condition, can interact well and can still do daily activities, with many of these interactions make a person get enough social support. Supported by Fitria, Yeni & Maulidia, Rahmawati (2018), stated that by interacting frequently actively and regularly, they will have the opportunity to expand social networks, build stronger relationships and feel more cared for, this is what causes social support for a person to be good (Fitria, Yeni & Maulidia, Rahmawati. 2018).

In the research conducted by the researcher, there were also 19 respondents who had low social support, this is because some of the respondents, as many as 18 people aged 70-80 years, have physical and psychological limitations because as they get older, it will cause various changes in their bodies that will make it difficult to socialize. Also supported by the statement of Manoux (2008), some of the evolutions that will be realized in the elderly are psychological changes such as deteriorating memory skills, decreased language skills and slow reaction time, so that it will affect their social aspects (Kim, M., Lee, J., & Kim, Y. 2015). In addition, according to Cornwell, E. Y., & Waite, L. J. (2009), the social aspects affected include social networks becoming small, feeling alienated from their friends and difficulty maintaining social relationships (Choi, N. G., & Kim, J. 2017).

Based on the findings at PSTW Wisma Kartika Yatira, as many as 23 respondents were found to have no symptoms of depression, this is because most of the respondents as many as 26 people aged 60-70 years, where at that age they can do activities independently and still have enough physical ability to meet their basic daily needs, this will make a person not always dependent on others and make him feel more confident in running his life Every day this makes the incidence rate of depression low. Also supported by Prabawati, Rulita Ririn (2013), stated that the higher the level of confidence a person, the lower the incidence of depression experienced by that person (Prabawati, Rulita Ririn 2013).

In the study conducted by researchers as many as 21 respondents with mild depressive symptoms, this mild depression symptom is the beginning of a serious mental condition, this statement is supported by Pratiwi, Diptya Ratri and Oriza, Imelda Ika Dian (2022), that mild depression symptoms have a real effect in relation to the standardization of a person's life and individual productivity, mild depression symptoms can affect various aspects of life, including social relations, work and general welfare (Pratiwi, Diptya Ratri and Oriza, Imelda Ika Dian 2022). According to Van Droogenbroeck et al. (2018), women score higher than men for the occurrence of psychological distress, anxiety, and depression. At PSTW Wisma Kartika Yatira, 28 women make up the majority of the population, which is the cause of high symptoms of mild depression (Fitria, Yeni & Maulidia, Rahmawati. 2018).

The correlation between peer social support and depression was significant, with an alpha value of 0.000 being less than 0.05. There was also a prominent association between friends' social support and depression, with a positive correlation coefficient value of 0.722. This means that the more social support a friend provides, the less likely people are to experience depression or vice versa. According to research by Indahsah (2017), the elderly with a higher level of social support than their peers have a lower level of depression while vice versa, the elderly with a lower level of social support have a higher level of depression (Indahsah, Wahyu Nur. 2017).

According to the results of this study, 43% of the elderly respondents had low degrees of social support from friends, while more than half of them (57%), got moderate degrees. Regarding mental health, 48% of the respondents showed mild depressed symptoms while more than half of them (52%) showed no symptoms at all. With a $r = 0.722$, $p = 0.000$ the Spearman Rank correlation test revealed a notable positive link between social support from friends and depression levels in the elderly. Higher degrees of social support are therefore linked to less depressed symptoms and conversely, lower degrees of social support are linked to more depressed symptoms. These results suggest that among the elderly, social support systems should be strengthened especially by means of community-based peer interaction. The SMB (Sharing Motivation Together) approach—a peer-led project aiming at encouraging collective motivation, emotional support, and social involvement among older persons—is one suggested strategy. This approach might help the elderly to have better psychological well-being and lower their depressed symptoms by motivating common experiences and mutual support.

CONCLUSION

More than half of the social support is moderate and less than half is low, more than half have no symptoms of depression and less than half have mild depressive symptoms, there is a relationship between social support of friends and depression in the elderly.

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