

Readiness to Face Death in Elderly in Nursing Homes, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative research employs a phenomenological approach to investigate the readiness of elderly individuals to confront death. The study focuses on five elderly, aged 65 and above, residing in an elderly orphanage in Central Java, Indonesia. Data collection involved in-depth interviews guided by considerations of spiritual, social, psychological, and physical aspects. The analysis reveals multifaceted dimensions of psychological readiness among these elderly residents.

The informants emphasize the importance of acknowledging the inevitability of death as a fundamental aspect of their life journey, providing them with a unique perspective on mortality. They find meaning in their lives, fostering a sense of fulfillment and completeness, and contemplate the possibility of an afterlife, which offers comfort and solace. Importantly, they express a remarkable lack of fear when facing death, demonstrating a profound acceptance and equanimity. Religious and spiritual practices, particularly worship, play a pivotal role in providing comfort and tranquility.

This study's findings align with previous research and highlight the significance of life satisfaction, spirituality, and social connections in shaping elderly individuals' readiness to confront death. Additionally, physical well-being is recognized as a vital component of overall happiness in the context of aging. These insights shed light on the complex interplay of beliefs, meaning, and acceptance that contribute to the psychological readiness of elderly individuals to face the certainty of death.

Keywords: Elderly, Death Readiness, Psychological Resilience

INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, matters relating to old age are regulated in the Law on Elderly Welfare. Article 1, paragraph 2 of law no. 13 of 1998, which can be categorized as elderly, someone over 60 years old. An article review (Orimo et al., 2006) said that the elderly is defined as 65 years or more. Furthermore, the elderly were categorized into two groups: the early elderly (65 to 74 years) and the late elderly (over 75 years). Based on the Indonesian Central Statistics Agency (BPS), the results of the interim population projection for 2020-2023, currently, the percentage of the elderly population in Indonesia as of 2021 is 10.3% of the total. Elderly Population Statistics Results 2021 published by BPS Indonesia, as many as 42.22% of the elderly have experienced health complaints in the last month, and a half (22.48%) of their daily activities are disturbed or sick. Around 81.08% of the elderly self-medicate their health complaints, and 45.42% seek outpatient treatment. Only 5.26% of the elderly were hospitalized in the past year. Given the health conditions prone to disease, the elderly must behave healthily, such as diligently exercising and avoiding smoking. However, almost one in four (24.19%) elderly still smoked in the past month, of which 22.10% smoked daily. The statistical results do not explain the

psychological conditions experienced by the elderly.

Physical changes that cause a person to reduce life expectancy are called the aging process. This process is part of the whole aging process. Then in terms of development, the elderly will experience a decrease in various abilities that they once had, and physical changes such as changes in hair color, the appearance of wrinkles all over the body, memory loss, and eyesight, begin to experience nearsightedness and other physical health problems (Wong et al., 2002).

Getting old is a change that all living things must experience. Suardiman (2011) states that every human being can grow old at all levels of age and time. That part is a process of continuous biological change experienced by humans. The old age of the elderly is an essential part of the family, environment, and relatives. According to Hurlock (2012), In this condition, people begin to realize that there are signs of aging for them, but the desire to look younger appears when signs of aging appear.

Increasing age is the most crucial aging process in the elderly stage. The visible sign of an elderly who has entered the age of 60 years is, physiologically, the elderly will experience a decrease in physical condition, psychological conditions, and changes in social conditions. One of the characteristics of this phase, usually the elderly contemplate the nature of their life more continuously and try to get closer to God. The elderly often experience social problems in isolation from society due to decreased physical function. For example, the elderly are no longer used in companies and institutions because it is considered that the physical function of the elderly has weakened, as well as the way of speaking that is sometimes incomprehensible. The elderly also face psychological problems (Azizah, 2011)

According to Puspitasari & Maryanti (2021), the elderly have more religious-related activities. Zakiyah & Hasan (2015) stated that religion could meet some

essential psychological needs of the elderly in dealing with death, maintaining feelings of worth and importance in life, and accepting old age's shortcomings. A study shows that death in the elderly is an event and a warning that every human being must feel. The subject feels difficulty with the situation he will experience when being in agony later and is worried about dying in a state of "su'ul khotimah" or die badly (Muzdalipah et al., 2018).

Based on research from Naphtali et al. (2017) shows that the spiritual health and readiness of the elderly to face death are influenced by the meaning of life, the concept of religion and divinity, social interaction, the concept of health and illness, welfare and spirituality, and readiness to face death. Another study said that the readiness and unpreparedness of the elderly were motivated by the thought that death cannot be denied, past actions committed, and the desire to continue with loved ones (Fitria & Mulyana, 2021). The importance of research related to death readiness in the elderly is because a study says that death anxiety in the elderly affects psychological pressure of the elderly (Herdian & Qingrong, 2021).

MATERIALS & METHODS

This research used Qualitative method, according to the purpose of this study is to examine the readiness of the elderly to deal with death, therefore this research used phenomenology approach.

The research informants were five older people aged 65 years and over housed in an elderly orphanage in Central Java, Indonesia. Information regarding the demographics of the informants is shown in Table 1.

Code	Informant	age	Sex
RA	Informant 1	71	female
DM	Informant 2	79	Male
NS	Informant 3	77	Male
DD	Informant 4	65	female

We collected data using in-depth interviews with the help of an interview guide. The

preparation of the interview guide is based on spiritual, social, psychological, and physical aspects.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The results of the interviews were made in the form of verbatim transcripts, and then data reduction was carried out—data analysis using interactive analysis

RESULT

Certainly, let's delve deeper into the findings related to the psychological aspect of death readiness among elderly residents at the Banyumas elderly home in Indonesia. This aspect of psychological readiness proved to be a multifaceted and intricate facet of their perspectives on life and mortality.

First and foremost, the informants, namely DM, RA, NS, and DD, shared their insights on the importance of believing in the existence of death. To them, this belief served as a fundamental foundation in their approach to life. It wasn't merely a recognition of the inevitability of death, but rather a profound acknowledgment that it is an integral part of the human journey. This acknowledgment provided them with a unique perspective on their own mortality and the need to come to terms with it.

Moreover, these elderly individuals found meaning in their worldly life, which contributed significantly to their readiness to face death. This sense of purpose gave them a reason to continue living and cherishing the moments they had left. It empowered them to focus on the positive aspects of their lives, fostering a sense of fulfillment and completeness.

Interestingly, the informants also discussed their contemplation of life after death. This reflection on the possibility of an existence beyond this world was a source of comfort and solace for them. It provided a sense of continuity, a belief that their journey didn't end with physical death, and that there was something more awaiting them in the afterlife.

One remarkable commonality among these informants was their remarkable lack of fear when it came to facing death. They expressed a profound sense of surrender when confronted with the idea of mortality. It was as if they had made peace with death, welcoming it as a natural part of life's cycle. This acceptance not only diminished their fear but also allowed them to approach death with a degree of equanimity.

A significant aspect contributing to their psychological readiness was the role of religious and spiritual practices, particularly their experiences of worship. Engaging in religious activities, such as prayer and meditation, brought them immense comfort and tranquility. It was during these moments of devotion that they felt closest to their faith and most prepared to meet the end of their earthly journey.

Lastly, their belief in the existence of death, which was shared by RA, DM, NS, and DD, resonated with the research conducted by Hidayat (2012). According to Hidayat's findings, elderly individuals who are prepared to confront death often have a firm conviction that it will inevitably come. This certainty, in turn, empowers them to cope with and overcome their fear of death, serving as a constant reminder of the transient nature of life.

In summary, the psychological aspect of death readiness among elderly residents in the Banyumas elderly home in Indonesia is a complex interplay of beliefs, meaning, and acceptance. It's a testament to the resilience of the human spirit and the capacity to find purpose and peace even in the face of life's most profound certainty – death.

The following is a quotation from the interview results:

"What should our state of readiness be like? Whenever Allah decides to take me, I am ready. I am prepared, Allah, you can take me anytime. I have no fear at all facing death because there is God."

DD, 65 years old

"Death is determined by God... God is in control."

NS, 77 years old

"Death is not the end of life, but the beginning of a new life... Personally, whether I am ready or not, death is inevitable."

DM, 79 years old

"I surrender, whether I live long or pass away, as long as I feel at peace. I entrust everything to God... For me, death is not about now or tomorrow."

RA, 71 years old

DISCUSSION

Based on insights gathered from interviews with four informants, namely RA, NS, DM, and DD, the significance of life and death became apparent. As Papalia (2002) has suggested, the quality of life satisfaction plays a pivotal role in determining the readiness of the elderly to confront the inevitable, which is death. The fearlessness displayed by these informants aligns with the findings of Backer in 1982 (cited in Harapan et al., 2014), emphasizing that those elderly individuals who are prepared to face death have successfully surmounted their anxieties and fears associated with mortality. They have come to the realization that death is an inescapable aspect of the human experience.

The spiritual aspect among the elderly encompasses a variety of factors, including regular worship, a belief in death, infrequent reading of the Bible, limited knowledge of religious practices during their youth, a profound belief in the significance of death, and the correct practice of worship. Furthermore, they contemplate the existence of an afterlife and the implications of the next phase of existence. Establishing connections within their community, experiencing a sense of lacking in their religious devotion, and invoking God through dhikr are also integral aspects of their spirituality. This spiritual facet holds immense importance in addressing life's

challenges, as highlighted in the research conducted by Destarina et al. (2014). It is understood that a strong sense of spirituality can guide an individual in making well-considered decisions, fostering a deeper sense of purpose in life, extracting valuable lessons from life experiences, and engaging in constant self-reflection.

In terms of the guidance provided by the nursing home staff, it primarily centers around spiritual guidance, aligning with the experiences and preferences expressed by the four informants. This approach resonates with the research conducted by Destarina et al. (2014), which indicates that the elderly tend to devote a significant amount of their time to religious activities.

Regarding the social aspect, the elderly individuals interviewed emphasized the importance of nurturing relationships within their community, participating in social gatherings, and receiving special attention from others. These findings are consistent with the results reported by Ramadhani & Suwena (2020), indicating that the elderly play various roles within community organizations, often taking on administrative responsibilities, remaining actively engaged in family life, and continuing to participate in community activities.

Lastly, the physical aspects experienced by the informants—DM, DD, RA, and NS—are closely tied to the challenges associated with aging. These physical complaints have a notable impact on their ability to engage in worship and religious rituals. All the informants acknowledged that their current physical conditions were influenced by their past experiences, and they recognized the significance of physical well-being as a vital component of overall happiness. In line with the perspective of Sumiati et al. (2008), the happiness of the elderly is intricately linked to their physical, mental/spiritual, and social well-being. It is contingent upon feeling healthy in these dimensions, experiencing a sense of necessity, being loved, possessing self-esteem, and actively participating in life.

CONCLUSION

In the study of four informants, various factors influence the elderly's preparedness for death. Concerning the psychological aspect, it includes: a belief in and resignation to the inevitability of death, the perception that death could occur at any moment without fear, an acceptance of life as it is, the idea that life's end marks the beginning of a new existence, a resigned trust in divine will, the notion that death is a universal remembrance, and a lack of confidants for idea sharing. Spiritually, the informants are characterized by regular worship, a belief in an afterlife, sporadic Bible reading, uncertainty about past worship practices, diligent current worship, contemplation of life after death, building community relationships, feelings of inadequate worship, and remembering God through dhikr. Socially, the aspects include contemplation of the afterlife, community engagement, feelings of insufficient worship, practicing dhikr, receiving special treatment, anticipating others' reactions to their death, participating in social events, understanding death through experiences, enjoying special attention from others, and preparing for death-related social and personal aspects. Physically, the findings highlight changes in condition over time, contrasting feelings before and after entering an orphanage, and comparing past and present physical states.

Declaration by Authors

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