



The Influence of Family Support on Depression Levels in Elderly People in Nursing Homes

Sandra Salsabila^{1,*}, Zwasta Pribadi Mahardhika², Afrizal Tw³

Universitas Yarsi, Jakarta, Indonesia

sandrasalsabila@gmail.com¹

^{*)}Corresponding author

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ABSTRACT

Older adults experience various changes that can increase vulnerability, especially when family support is lacking. In Islamic teachings, honouring and caring for parents is strongly emphasised, making insufficient family support not only a social concern but also a moral issue. This study aims to examine the influence of family support on depression levels among older adults in nursing homes. This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional design conducted in three nursing homes in Jakarta. The population consisted of 190 elderly residents, from which 58 respondents were selected using simple random sampling. Data were collected using validated questionnaires, namely the Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS) to measure depression levels and the Family Support Scale (FSS) to assess family support. Data analysis was performed using the Chi-square test, with the Mann-Whitney test applied when statistical assumptions were not fulfilled. The findings showed that the majority of respondents were female (76,3%), mostly aged 71-75 years (39,6%), and had higher levels of education (45%). Most elderly did not experience depression (84,5%), and more than half had good family support (56,9%). The analysis revealed that family support was associated with lower levels of depression. Older adults receiving good family support were found to have substantially lower levels of depression. These results underscore that family support is an essential factor in reducing the risk of depression among older adults.

INTRODUCTION

Ageing causes physical, psychological, and social changes that can increase the risk of various mental disorders, including depression (Pratama et al., 2023; Sari et al., 2021). The number of elderly people in Indonesia continues to grow, with the Ministry of Health reporting 27.1 million people aged 60 and above in 2021. According to the Central Statistics Agency, this population was estimated to reach 13.2% of the total population in 2023. These trends underscore why mental health among the elderly is becoming an increasingly important issue. (Suhartanti et al., 2023).

Depression is a common disorder in the elderly, especially those over 75 years old, and can impact physical and psychological functioning, such as sleep disturbances, decreased appetite, and even suicidal

ideation (Lesmana & Wirawan, 2023; Rahmadeni et al., 2020). Lack of family support is one factor that triggers depression, as older adults feel like a burden and are unable to contribute to the family. Therefore, family support is essential to reduce depression levels. (Firmansyah & Tadjudin, 2020; Rachmawati et al., 2023).

Ageing is a natural part of human life that involves three stages: childhood, adulthood, and old age (Hanafi et al., 2022). According to Law No. 13 of 1998 on Elderly Welfare, individuals aged 60 years and above are classified as elderly. As people age, older adults experience changes in physical, psychological, and social conditions that interact with one another (Pratama et al., 2023). These conditions can lead to various mental health problems, such as stress, depression, schizophrenia, insomnia, and other mental disorders (Sari et al., 2021).

According to the Indonesian Ministry of Health, in 2021 the elderly population in Indonesia accounted for 10% or approximately 27.1 million people of the total population (Suhartanti et al., 2023). Based on data from the Central Statistics Agency, the proportion of elderly people in Indonesia is estimated to reach 13.2% and is projected to increase to 25.5% by 2050 (Sari et al., 2021). Asia is the region experiencing the largest increase in the elderly population, with an estimated growth of around 82% (Lumowa & Rayanti, 2024).

One of the most common mental health disorders among the elderly is depression (Ichsan & Alpiyah, 2024). The prevalence of depression among older adults in Indonesia continues to increase with advancing age, with the highest incidence found in those over 75 years old (Syamsudin et al., 2023). One of the contributing factors to depression in the elderly is a lack of family support, which leads older adults to feel like a burden and unable to contribute to their families (Rachmawati et al., 2023). Physical impacts that may arise when elderly individuals experience depression include decreased appetite and weight loss, sleep and activity pattern disturbances, impaired thinking ability and difficulty making decisions, as well as recurrent thoughts of suicide (Mahajudin et al., 2022).

The problem of depression among the elderly has a higher prevalence compared to adolescents; in 2018, as many as 706,689 cases were recorded (Rachmawati et al., 2023). Therefore, family support is needed to reduce the prevalence of depression (Firmansyah & Tadjudin, 2020). Such support can provide older adults with feelings of love, appreciation, and attention (Sari et al., 2021).

From an Islamic perspective, **Birrul Walidain** (devotion to parents) is an obligation of worship that reflects gratitude for their sacrifices (Siregar & Aisyah, 2025). The Qur'an, in Surah Al-Isra [17]:23 and Surah Luqman [31]:14, emphasises the importance of being kind, respectful, and gentle toward parents, especially in old age (Herman, 2025). The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) also placed mothers in an honourable position and emphasised the importance of respecting parents and the elderly as a form of glorifying Allah SWT (Anwar, 2023; Marlina, 2024). The family plays a major role in maintaining the mental health of older adults through love, care, and companionship, which can prevent loneliness and foster inner peace, including through spiritual support such as listening to Qur'anic recitation (murottal), which has a calming effect on the heart (Padilah et al., 2024; Thaib, 2021).

Preliminary observations in several nursing homes in Jakarta indicate that although the basic needs of older adults have been met, psychosocial problems, particularly related to mental health, are still present. Some elderly individuals exhibit emotional symptoms such as feelings of loneliness, loss of social roles, and a decreased sense of meaning in life, which have the potential to develop into depression. This condition is exacerbated by limited interaction with family members, including infrequent visits, minimal communication, and a lack of sustained emotional support.

On the other hand, nursing home administrators do not yet have adequate empirical data regarding the extent to which family support continues to play a role in reducing the risk of depression among elderly residents. While some older adults still receive attention from their families, others experience a

disconnection from family relationships, resulting in variations in levels of support that have not been systematically mapped. This situation highlights a gap between the fulfilment of physical needs and psychosocial needs of the elderly, thereby underscoring the importance of conducting this study.

Several studies have reported that elderly who receive emotional, instrumental, and social support from their families tend to have lower levels of depression compared to those with minimal family support (Hao et al., 2023; Lee et al., 2022). Other studies have also found that elderly people living in nursing homes have a higher risk of depression due to limited social interaction and the reduced role of family in their daily lives (Sanga et al., 2022; Šare et al., 2021). However, most of these studies focus on comparisons between elderly individuals living in nursing homes and those living at home, or treat family support merely as a supporting variable without in-depth analysis within the nursing home setting.

The research gap lies in the limited number of empirical studies that specifically analyse the influence of family support on depression levels among elderly individuals residing in nursing homes. In addition, previous studies have generally not integrated the social and religious value context of Indonesian society as a framework for understanding the meaning and role of family support in the psychological well-being of the elderly.

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on analysing the relationship between family support and depression levels among elderly individuals living in nursing homes, as well as in integrating psychosocial perspectives with Islamic values through the concept of *birrul walidain* as a conceptual foundation. This approach provides a more contextual and comprehensive understanding of the role of family in maintaining the mental health of the elderly in nursing home settings.

This study aims to analyse the influence of family support on depression levels among elderly individuals living in nursing homes. Specifically, it seeks to identify the level of family support received by the elderly, describe depression levels among nursing home residents, and examine the relationship between family support and depression levels as a basis for formulating promotive and preventive mental health interventions for the elderly.

METHOD

This research used a quantitative design with a cross-sectional approach to assess the influence of family support on the level of depression in the elderly in three nursing homes, namely the Tresna Werdha Mulia 1 Social Home and the Sasana Tresna Home WerdaRIA Pembangunan, located in East Jakarta, and the Hajjah Hasmah Noor Foundation Nursing Home in West Jakarta. The study population comprised 190 elderly residents of the nursing homes, and a sample of 58 respondents was selected using simple random sampling, according to inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Data were collected using two questionnaires, the Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS) for depression levels and the Family Support Scale (FSS) to assess family support. Both instruments had demonstrated good validity and reliability in previous research. Data analysis used the Chi-Square test; if the assumptions are not met, the Mann-Whitney test is used. (Sari & Tasalim, 2024; Werdani & Prasetyani, 2023).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1
Respondent Characteristics

Characteristics	Frequency	Presentation
Gender		
Man	14	23,7%
Woman	44	76,3%
Age		
60-65	18	31%
66-70	17	29,3%
71-75	23	39,9%
Last education		
Did not attend school/did not finish elementary school	5	8,6%
Elementary School (SD)	7	12%
Secondary Education (Junior High School-Senior High School)	20	34,4%
Higher education (D3-S3)	26	45%
Length of stay in the orphanage		
≤ 10 years	50	86,2%
>10 years	8	13,7%

Based on Table 1, it was found that the majority of respondents were female (76.3%), with the largest age group being 71-75 years (39.6%). Meanwhile, the majority had higher education (45%) and had lived in a nursing home for ≤ 10 years (86.2%).

Table 2
Frequency Distribution of Family Support

Family Support Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Good	33	56,9%
Enough	16	27,6%
Not enough	9	15,5%
Total	58	100%

Based on Table 2, the majority of elderly people receive family support in the good category (56.9%), the sufficient category (27.6%), and the less category (15.5%). Based on Table 3, most respondents were not depressed (84.5%), while those with severe depression (1.7%).

Table 4 shows that most elderly individuals with good family support did not experience depression (36 respondents), with only 2 respondents experiencing mild depression and no cases of moderate or severe depression. In contrast, among elderly individuals with insufficient or poor family support, the proportion of depression was higher, as indicated by the presence of mild depression (5 respondents) as well as moderate to severe depression (2 respondents).

Table 3
Frequency Distribution of Depression Levels in the Elderly

Depression Level Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Not Depressed	49	84,5%
Mild Depression	7	12,1%
Moderate Depression	1	1,7%
Major Depression	1	1,7%
Total	58	100%

Table 4
The Influence of Family Support on Depression Levels

		<i>Geriatric Depression Scale</i>			Total
		Not depressed	Mild depression	Moderate & severe depression	
<i>Family Support Scale</i>	Good family support	36	2	0	32
	Sufficient family support and not enough	14	5	2	21
	Total	49	7	2	58

Discussion

This study shows that the majority of nursing home residents are elderly women aged 71-75 years with secondary or higher education. This aligns with research by Aruan et al., which explains that elderly women are more likely to reside in nursing homes because they are more able to express their emotions and seek help (Aruan et al., 2024). In addition, Mumulati et al. (2020) stated that education level plays a role in the ability of the elderly to adapt and maintain mental health.

Most of the elderly in this study received good family support. This finding aligns with a report by Hendayani and Afnuhazi, which found that family support can improve the well-being of elderly residents in nursing homes and help prevent depression (Dolorosa et al., 2022). Research by Gustianti et al. (2023) also showed that although loneliness is a triggering factor for depression, family support can provide a sense of security and a companion in living one's life.

The results of this study indicate that the majority of elderly people in nursing homes are not depressed, and only a small proportion experience mild to moderate depression. This finding differs from the study by Dolorosa et al. (2022), which found that the majority of respondents experienced moderate levels of depression, especially in the elderly with less family support. Research by Sofyan et al. (2023) stated that moderate depression was more common in elderly people living in nursing homes than in those living at home. This difference in patterns confirms that a lack of family support is a significant factor increasing the risk of depression in the elderly, especially those living in social care institutions.

Family support plays an important role in maintaining the mental health of the elderly, in line with Islamic teachings on *birrul walidain*, namely the obligation of children to do good, respect, and treat their parents with love (Saputra & Prayoga, 2023). Islam teaches not to speak harshly to parents and to treat them with respect, especially when they are old. The hadith of the Prophet SAW also states that honouring the elderly is part of glorifying Allah SWT (Anwar, 2023; Zulfa & Kharomen, 2025). Thus, family support not only has a significant psychological impact on the elderly but is also a moral and spiritual value highly emphasised in Islam.

CONCLUSIONS

This study concluded that family support had a significant influence on depression levels among elderly individuals living in nursing homes. Elderly residents who receive good family support tend to experience lower levels of depression, whereas those with insufficient to poor family support show a higher prevalence and severity of depressive symptoms. These findings confirmed that family support remains a crucial protective factor for mental health even when older adults reside in institutional care settings.

Future research is recommended to involve more respondents and include physical, social, and environmental variables to obtain more comprehensive results. Nursing homes should provide counselling programs for the elderly. Meanwhile, healthcare workers are encouraged to conduct routine screenings for depression in the elderly.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest related to the publication of this article.

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