

Social Support and Loneliness: The Correlation Studies in the Elderly

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Abstract— *Being old is a phase of life experienced by humans. The longer a person's age, in line with increasing age, the body will experience a decline physically and psychologically. This makes the elderly limited in interacting with other people and their social environment so that they are vulnerable to experiencing loneliness. The existence of social support from people around will make individuals with old age feel accepted and valued. This study aims to determine the relationship between social support and loneliness in the elderly. Using a correlational quantitative research type, this study involved 96 elderly people at the UPT Social Services for the Elderly Social Service of the Binjai Social Service, North Sumatra Province, who were selected using a purposive sampling technique. The data collection instrument uses a social support scale and a loneliness scale. The data analysis technique used is product moment correlation from Karl Pearson. The results showed that the correlation coefficient $r_{xy} = -0.654$ with a significance value of $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ means that there is a negative relationship between social support and loneliness. With these results, the hypothesis in this study can be accepted. The effective contribution of social support affects loneliness by 42.7%, which is indicated by the value of the determinant coefficient $r^2 = 0.427$. As for other factors of 57.3% such as age, gender, marital status, and socioeconomic status. Based on the results of hypothetical and empirical calculations, social support is classified as moderate with an average hypothetical value of 47.5 greater than an average empirical value of 46.67, and loneliness is classified as low with an average hypothetical value of 67.5 which is greater than the average empirical value of 44.07.*

Keywords— *Social support, loneliness, elderly.*

I. INTRODUCTION

In the life span, humans have a series of developmental tasks, obstacles and changes that are different at each stage. It lasts from the prenatal period to old age, passing through interconnected and irreversible stages. Each stage of development will have an impact on subsequent developments, including the elderly period. According to Hurlock (2004), individuals can be said to be elderly after moving to the age of 60 years or more.

Erikson (in Santrock, 2012) states that the elderly are in the process of developing integrity versus despair. At this stage the elderly tend to reflect on the times they have passed and remember various successes or failures, some elderly people see many events, choose peace, and some also look at their past with despair regretting important opportunities missed or desires that have not been fulfilled. fulfilled (Karina, 2021).

The natural aging process in the elderly affects physical and psychological decline (Azizah and Rahayu, 2016). According to Fitri (2011), declining health conditions and physical strength cause the elderly to gradually withdraw from the surrounding community, resulting in reduced social interaction.

The existence of physical limitations, causes the elderly to also think that their presence is difficult for the people around them. Therefore, it is not uncommon to find some elderly who choose to live in nursing homes, because the stigma of getting old will potentially be a source of pressure in the lives of the elderly. and has an impact on the emergence of feelings of abandonment, the emergence of feelings of being left out, not being needed anymore, not being sincere in accepting new realities such as illnesses that do not go away, death of a partner, are some of the common inconveniences experienced by the elderly that they have to deal with.

The most common psychological problem in the elderly is loneliness. Loneliness is a feeling of alienation (isolated or lonely), a feeling of being left out, isolated from other people, because you feel different from other people (Lina in Ningsih & Setyowati, 2020). Therefore, old age and loneliness are the most common features that occur in the elderly. Social support is a factor that influences feelings of loneliness (Brehm, 2002). According to Sarafino (2014), social support can come from the individuals themselves, such as; family, close friends, and colleagues or friends of the same age.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Weiss (in Baron & Byrne, 2005), loneliness is not caused by loneliness, but is caused by the unfulfillment of the need for a relationship or a definite set of relationships, or because of the unavailability of the relationship that the individual needs. Loneliness is when individuals feel that no one can understand them well, feel isolated, and no individual can be used as an escape when they are needed or when they are stressed (Santrock, 2002).

According to Irman (2019), there are several behavioral characteristics of the elderly who are identified as experiencing loneliness, namely:

- a. The emergence of maladaptive behavior, such as; silent with a blank stare, isolating himself, irritable, teary eyes, moving his lips as if he had something to say.
- b. The existence of nonverbal behavior such as; blank stare, gloomy, unpredictable expression, disconnected when spoken to.

There are three aspects of loneliness put forward by Russel (in Batara & Kristianingsih, 2020), including:

- a. *Lonely trait*, there are more stable patterns of feelings of loneliness that sometimes change in certain situations, or individuals who experience loneliness because of their personality, individuals who have less trust, and lack of trust in strangers.

- b. *Social desirability lonelines*, namely the occurrence of loneliness because individuals do not get the desired social life in the life in their environment.
- c. *Depression lonelines*, namely the occurrence of loneliness due to disruption of individual feelings such as feeling sad, depressed, unenthusiastic, feeling worthless and centered on the failures experienced by individuals.

Brehm (2002) mentions several factors that cause loneliness, including age, gender, marital status, socioeconomic status, and social support. Malecki & Demaray (in Putri, 2021) define social support as a form of physical and psychological comfort provided by friends and family. DSocial support refers to comfort, attention, appreciation or the availability of assistance to individuals from other people or a group (Pradana & Kustanti, 2018).

According to Sarafino & Smith (2014) social support has aspects consisting of:

- a. Emotional support, namely in the form of caring for individuals, attention, and empathy, so as to make individuals feel comfortable, and loved.
- b. Informative support, namely in the form of providing advice, advice, information that functions to assist individuals in making difficult decisions in their work.
- c. Instrumental support, namely in the form of direct assistance, such as lending or giving money to individuals or helping individuals in completing their tasks.
- d. Appreciation support, namely in the form of positive assessments or awards to individuals, approval of individual ideas or opinions, encouragement and positive comparisons with others.
- e. Social network support, namely providing a feeling of individual membership in groups that have similar interests and social activities.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study uses a correlational quantitative research type that aims to find relationships between variables. The population in this study was the elderly at the UPT Social Services for the Elderly Social Service of the Binjai Social Service, North Sumatra Province, with 156 people. The sampling technique used purposive sampling. *Purposive sampling* is a data collection technique used to determine research samples with certain considerations so that the data obtained can be more representative (Sugiyono, 2019). The sample in the study was 96 elderly people who had several criteria including; elderly aged 60-74 years, elderly in good health to be involved in research, and elderly who in 1 year have had no more than 3 family visits, which were obtained based on information from the UPT. Collecting data in this study used a psychological scale in the form of a loneliness scale and a social support scale compiled using the Likert scale method. The loneliness scale was compiled by researchers based on the aspects put forward by Russel (in Batara & Kristianingsih, 2020), namely trait loneliness, social desirability loneliness, and depression loneliness. While the scale of social support is compiled based on the aspects of social support proposed by Sarafino & Smith (2014), namely emotional support, informative support, instrumental support, appreciation

support, and social network support. The data analysis method used is Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient analysis. Overall data analysis was performed using the IBM SPSS Statistics software program version 25.0 for Windows. The data analysis method used is Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient analysis. Overall data analysis was performed using the IBM SPSS Statistics software program version 25.0 for Windows. The data analysis method used is Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient analysis. Overall data analysis was performed using the IBM SPSS Statistics software program version 25.0 for Windows.

IV. RESULT

1. Normality test

The normality test of the distribution was analyzed using the normality test for the distribution of research data using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test for Normality technique with $p > 0.05$ which can be seen in the following table.

TABLE 1. Normality Test Calculation Results

Variable	K-SZ	P	Information
Social Support	0.075	0.200	Normal
Loneliness	0.079	0.159	Normal

Criteria: if $P(\text{sig}) > 0.05$ then the distribution is normal

Information:

K-SZ : Kolmogorov-Smirnov significance index

Q : Significance

2. Linearity Test

Based on the linearity test, it is known that the P deviation from linearity is different > 0.05 . The following is a summary table of the results of the linearity test calculations.

TABLE 2. Linearity Test Calculation Results

Correlational	F	P	Information
Social Support and Loneliness	0.835	0.655	Linear

Criteria: if P Deviation from Linearity > 0.05 then it is declared linear

Information:

F : Linearity Coefficient

Q : Significance

3. Correlation Hypothesis Test

Based on the results of calculations using the Pearson Product Moment correlation analysis technique, it was found that there was a relationship between social support and loneliness where the correlation coefficient (r_{xy}) was -0.654 with a significant value level of $p = 0.000$ ($p < 0.05$). This means that the research hypothesis is accepted, namely there is a significant negative relationship between social support and loneliness. The coefficient of determination (r^2) of the relationship between variables is $r^2 = 0.427$. This shows that social support contributes to loneliness by 42.7%. The table below is a summary of the results of the correlation hypothesis test analysis.

TABLE 3. Results of Correlation Hypothesis Test Analysis

Statistics	Coefficient (r_{xy})	P	Koef.Det. (r^2)	BE%	Information
X-Y	-0.654	0.000	0.427	42.7%	Significant

Criteria: if $P(\text{sig}) < 0.05$ then there is a relationship

Information:

X : Social Support

Y : Loneliness

- (rxy) : The coefficient of the relationship between X and Y
- (r²) : The coefficient determinant of X with respect to Y
- P : The probability of an error
- BE% : Weight of the effective contribution of X to Y in percent

4. Hypothetical and Empirical Mean Calculation Results

a. Hypothetical Means

The social support variable has 19 items formatted with a Likert scale, each item has 4 alternative answers with the lowest score 1 and the highest score 4, then the hypothetical mean is $\{(19 \times 1) + (19 \times 4)\} : 2 = 47.5$. While the lonely variable has 27 item items formatted with a Likert scale, each item has 4 alternative answers with the lowest score 1 and the highest score 4, so the hypothetical mean is $\{(27 \times 1) + (27 \times 4)\} : 2 = 67.5$.

b. Empirical Means

Based on data analysis, the social support variable has an empirical mean of 46.67 while the lonely variable has an empirical mean of 44.07.

c. Criteria

The following is the condition of social support and loneliness of the elderly at the UPT Social Services for Elderly Social Service Binjai Province of North Sumatra by making a comparison between the mean/empirical average value and the hypothetical mean/average value by taking into account the number of SD.

TABLE 4. Results of Calculation of Hypothetical Mean and Empirical Mean

Variable	SD	Means		Information
		Hypothetical	Empirical	
Social Support	4,986	47.5	46.67	Currently
Loneliness	8,940	67.5	44.07	Low

V. DISCUSSION

The results of data analysis show that there is a negative relationship between social support and loneliness, which can be seen from the correlation value $r_{xy} = -0.654$ with a significant level of 0.000 ($P < 0.05$). The hypothesis in this study is accepted, which means that the higher the social support, the lower the loneliness and conversely, the lower the social support, the higher the loneliness. The determinant coefficient is a value of $r^2 = 0.427$, indicating that social support contributes to loneliness by 42.7%. This also shows that there are other factors of 57.3% such as age, gender, marital status, and socioeconomic status. Based on the calculation of the two average values (hypothetical and empirical), social support is classified as moderate with an average hypothetical value of 47,5 greater than the empirical average value of 46,67 and the SD of social support is 4,986, and loneliness is low with a hypothetical average value of 67.5 greater than the empirical average value of 44.07 and the SD of loneliness is 8,940.

Social support has a relationship with loneliness, which shows that individuals who get satisfaction are individuals who receive a lot of social support from people who have meaningful relationships with individuals (Itryah 2009). The provision of social support that is obtained by the elderly at the UPT Social Services for the Elderly Social Service of the Binjai Social Service of North Sumatra Province comes from the UPT extended family, namely the management and staff, as well as outside communities who carry out community service, visits

and the community who carry out social service activities. Brehm (2002) states that social support is seen as helping the elderly overcome and reduce feelings of loneliness, individuals who receive limited social support are likely to experience loneliness, while individuals who get better social support feel less lonely. This means that the social support that is owned also influences the individual in reducing the loneliness that is felt.

When the elderly receive high social support, they can overcome and deal with the problem of developing ego integrity versus despair which is closely related to loneliness (Han et al., 2015). If the elderly receive low social support, then the elderly will experience difficulties in passing through the ego integrity versus despair development stage. Older adults who are unable to pass through the ego integrity stage will experience despair, in which they will feel unable to accept the impact of their developmental stage, thereby creating a feeling of loneliness (Kim et al., 2020). This is in line with research conducted by Ross and Rosser in (Tian, 2014), where individuals with good social support are characterized by the ability of individuals to describe themselves more positively, because of the way they receive social support by perceiving it as a social resource that they can use to meet their needs.

Loneliness that is classified as low or high is usually influenced by the presence or absence of any close friends or family, feeling different from other elderly people, and often changing places of residence which affect loneliness (Sonderby, 2013). In line with research conducted by Wardani (2015) mentions the characteristics of individuals who experience loneliness, namely having problems in viewing their own existence, such as feeling useless or worthless, feeling failed and bored in living life, feeling down, feeling alone or alienated, feeling no one understands, feeling uncared for and loved, and other negative feelings. Ways to deal with loneliness in the elderly can be done by yourself or by others. Some things that can be done by the elderly in dealing with loneliness by themselves are being friendly, visiting peers, doing useful activities, participating in community activities, and fostering new relationships with other people (National Population and Family Planning Agency in Murdanita, 2018)

The elderly are advised to express their individual feelings about the conditions they are experiencing, be open with the feelings they are experiencing or want to share the feelings they are experiencing, it is hoped that they will participate in useful activities, carry out storytelling activities with other elderly people, provide for the elderly to listen to each other's stories, participate in community activities, and establish new relationships with other people and should adapt to everything they are experiencing at this time so that what they want can be understood by the environment around them, making the elderly able to get out of the problem of loneliness. For UPTs that manage the elderly, both from government and non-government agencies are advised to provide social support and improve the quality of service for the elderly by optimizing the distribution of social support evenly so that it can reduce the loneliness felt by the elderly and so that the elderly can also have life motivation and enthusiasm needed in living their old age, providing psychological counseling so that psychological problems can be resolved including loneliness when the elderly

are away from the main family either because of their choice or because they are entrusted.

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