

# Social Support from Family and Peers in Elderly as Effort in Improving the Psychological Well-being during Covid-19 Pandemic at Surabaya

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## Abstract

Social support is important in improving the health of the elderly. The spread of Covid-19 can reduce the physical and mental condition of the elderly. The purpose of this study was to analyze the social support of family and fellow elderly in the elderly as an effort to improve their psychological well-being during the Covid-19 period.

This research was a survey research, based on its character, it is an analytical description with a cross sectional design. The population is all elderly in Surabaya and Madura areas. The sample was 305 partly elderly from 3 cities of Surabaya, Pamekasan, and Sumenep chosen through random sampling technique. The independent variable was social support, which is the social support from family and friends, while the dependent variable was the level of psychological well-being of the elderly. The research instrument in determining the social support from family, the social support from peer and the level of psychological well-being was questionnaire. Meanwhile, the data analysis was conducted by using logistic regression.

The results of peer support obtained  $p = 0.127$ ; Family support obtained  $p = 0.000$ ;  $R^2$  was 0.080, indicating that the family social support affected the psychological well-being of the elderly. It is expected that the elderly can improve their health during the Covid-19 pandemic by carrying out positive activities both at home and in the community. Family support and health services for the elderly are needed in improving the psychological well-being of the elderly. Psychological well-being must always be improved so that the health of the elderly can be achieved and the elderly can pass through the pandemic well. This requires government participation and policies to make it happen.

**Keywords:** *Elderly, Psychological well-being, Covid-19, Social Support*

## Introduction

The elderly is an age group that is susceptible to changes due to the aging process. These changes create problems that can affect the life quality of the elderly. One of the problems that are often encountered by the elderly apart from the physiological problems is problems related to mental or psychological health. Some of the changes in life that must be faced

by elderly people in particular are a potential source of pressure in life due to the stigma of being old which is matters related to weakness, helplessness, and the emergence of various diseases.<sup>1</sup> Covid-19 is an acute infectious disease that infects the respiratory system and kills humans throughout the world and becomes a global pandemic in 2020. This disease is caused by a new type of coronavirus called SARS-CoV-2. The high number of mortality cases compared to recovered cases due to covid-19 infection makes Indonesia as one of the countries with the highest fatality rate due to covid-19 in the world, reaching 9.11%.

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In the current pandemic era, the elderly group is the group most at risk of experiencing severity/morbidity and mortality due to Covid-19 disease. The mortality data due to Covid-19 in several other countries shows an increase with increasing age, such as in China in which the number of mortality in the population aged 60-69 years was 3.6%, aged 70-79 years old was 8% and aged over 80 years old was 14.8%. This is because the elderly (geriatric) patients generally have various comorbidities, such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, hypertension and others. This is in line with Indonesia, where the mortality rate increases with increasing age, in which the population aged 45-54 years was 8%, 55-64 years old was 14% and 65 years and over was 22%. For this reason, prevention of transmission through promotional and preventive efforts to elderly groups is very important, whether it is at the family, community and health facility levels.<sup>2</sup>

According to 2019 elderly statistics, the percentage of the elderly population has continued to increase in the last few decades. In 2019, the percentage of the elderly reached 9.6 percent (25.66 million people) of which the female elderly was (10.10 percent) 1% more compared to the male elderly (9.10 percent). If you look at the health conditions of the elderly which can affect the severity of being infected with COVID-19, elderly statistical data states that one in four elderly people in Indonesia is sick. The morbidity rate for the elderly population is 26.20 percent, which means that there are 26 to 27 sick elderly out of 100 elderly.<sup>3</sup>

Data from the 2016-2018 East Java Health Office in the work area of Public Health Center in Surabaya, East Java, it was known that at least 60 - 50% of the elderly can receive health services. The condition of the Covid-19 pandemic causes all elderly activities cannot be carried out maximally and is limited because the elderly are a vulnerable group in this Covid transmission. Based on the preliminary studies, the elderly activities at the Integrated Healthcare Center are not implemented during pandemic in Surabaya and Madura, almost 80% of the elderly activity is to stay at home, and 45% of elderly withdrew because of the condition of this pandemic. The condition of the elderly has an impact on the mental health of the elderly. One

of the causes of mental health in the elderly is the lack of family assistance in going through daily life during pandemic. Several studies have shown that psychological or mental health is the most important factor affecting the quality of life of the elderly. The main key to achieve psychological well-being is mental health. Elderly who have the ability to accept their own psychological condition and enjoy life at the old age have a better quality of life than the elderly people who do not have this ability. Mental health problems can have a big impact on the elderly, including reducing the ability of the elderly to carry out their daily activities, reducing their independence and quality of life. Being healthy and staying active during Pandemic means that we must improve the health status of the elderly so that they have the opportunity to be able to participate in social life, share experiences and thoughts aimed at improving the quality of life of the elderly. So the aspects that can be developed are preventive efforts so that the aging process (degenerative) can be lived in a healthy state. On the other hand, old people who experience health problems need to be medicated (rehabilitative) in order to be able to carry out their daily life independently. Therefore, promotional and preventive efforts in improving the health of the elderly need to be done. So that the elderly can be active in undergoing this pandemic.<sup>4</sup>

## Method

The purpose of this study was to analyze the social support (family and peers) in an effort to improve the mental health of the elderly during Covid-19 Pandemic in Surabaya area. This research was a survey research, in which based on its nature, it was an analytic description with a cross sectional design. The independent variable was social support consisting of (support from family and peers), while the dependent variable was the level of mental health of the elderly. The population was all elderly in Surabaya and Madura areas. The sample was the elderly in the 3 regions of Surabaya, Pamekasan and Sumenep obtaining 305 Elderly chosen through random sampling technique. The research instrument for social support and the level of mental health was by using a questionnaire. This research was conducted through interview by using a structured questionnaire. The variables of family and peer support were assessed

using an instrument consisting of 10 questions from each support and categorized into two, those are high family support and low family support. Meanwhile the psychological well-being variable was rated using wellbeing psychological modification from Ryff (1989) consisting of 36 questions, covering the purpose of life, self-acceptance, positive relations

with others, autonomy, environmental social, and personal growth. The answer to the instrument used a Likert scale, then scoring was done and summed up. After that, it was transformed into a scale of 0 – 100 and categorized into three of good, sufficient and less well-being. Furthermore, to determine the effect of each variable was by using logistic regression.

**Result**

**Tabel 1 Respondents' Characteristics**

Age (Years)			
	60-65	225	73.7
	66-71	47	15.4
	72-77	22	7.21
	78-83	11	3.6
Profession			
	Work	202	66.2
	Did not work	103	33.8
History of disease			
	History of hypertension, diabetes mellitus, heart disease, and osteoarthritis	176	57.7
	Did not have a history of disease	128	42

Based on the table above, it is known that most of the respondents aged 60-65 years, 66.2%, still had a job, and 57.7% had a history of illness

**Tabel 2 The social support for the elderly during Pandemic**

Support among the elderly			
	High	144	47.2
	Low	161	52.8
Family support			
	High	264	86.6
	Low	41	13.4
		305	100

Based on the table above, it is known that 52.8% of the support among the elderly was categorized as low support, while family support for the elderly during the pandemic was in the high category by 86.6%.

**Table 3 The Effect of Social Support on the Psychological Well-Being of the Elderly**

	Psychological well-being of the elderly								
		Good	n	Enough	N	Less			
<b>Peer support</b>									
	High	12	8.3	76	52.8	56	38.9	144	
	Low	28	29.8	60	31	63	39	161	
<b>Family support</b>									
	High	183	69.3	81	30.7	-	-	264	
	Low	2	4.9	26	63.4	13	31.7	41	
Logistic regression: peer support obtained p = 0.127; Family support obtained p = 0.000; R square 0.080									

The influence of family support with a value of p = 0.00, so it is stated that there is an effect of family support on the psychological well-being of the elderly during a pandemic.

### Discussion

The characteristics of Respondents which is the old age factor becomes a marker. Living longer does not mean living in good health. Previous research has found that increasing age is also accompanied by an increased tendency to get sick and have physical limitations (disability) due to a drastic decrease in physical abilities.<sup>5-6</sup> Increasing age also tends to be followed by the emergence of various chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension and heart disease. New York University (NYU) researchers in their research found that age and chronic diseases, especially cardiovascular disease, diabetes and obesity are factors that can make the infection rate of COVID-19 patients stronger. In addition, the elderly is also stated to be a population group which is vulnerable to various emergency conditions, especially in disaster conditions, including disasters due to disease outbreaks. There are various reasons why the elderly are considered as a vulnerable group to disasters. Some experts agree that age is the dominant factor that causes the elderly to be vulnerable (Buckle,

1998-99; Fernandez et al, 2002; Smith et al, 2009).<sup>7-9</sup> However, there are several other important variables that must also be seen as factors that cause the elderly to become vulnerable, such as physical condition, health status and economic status.<sup>7</sup> The impact of a pandemic with an isolation for the elderly becomes a serious matter. In addition, the elderly are also at high risk of cardiovascular, autoimmune, neuro-cognitive diseases and mental health that some researchers stated social isolation has an impact on depression and anxiety.<sup>10</sup>

Therefore, in a COVID-19 pandemic situation, it is not surprising that there are many suggestions to keep the elderly safe to avoid the dangers of COVID-19 through maintaining distance and not visiting the elderly after traveling from areas that have been infected by COVID-19. In fact, recently the suggestion of not returning home is often associated as a form of affection for the elderly (parents) so that they do not become carriers of a virus that can infect the elderly in their hometown.<sup>11</sup>

Support from family and friends of the same age (elderly people) during the Covid 19 pandemic is an important aspect of the life of the elderly in carrying out this condition. Elderly experience anxiety and fear in facing a pandemic. Fear and anxiety also have an impact on physical health, including weakness and loss of appetite. Based on the research of Sun et al 2020, it is stated that everyone has a coping mechanism in dealing with stress in undergoing a pandemic, for that it needs support from all parties. Based on the results of the study, it is known that some elderly people have high family support. High family support is in the form of providing an explanation about the spread of the corona virus, and taking precautions so as not to contract this virus. Prevention that can be applied by the elderly is to carry out activities according to health protocols, which are washing hands, wearing masks and maintaining distance. In addition to the above, family support for the elderly is in the form of giving them time to discuss in facing this pandemic. Based on a research project, the elderly tend to have high anxiety, so family assistance is still needed.<sup>12</sup> The elderly as a vulnerable group, of course, really need support from family and society so that the health and quality of life of the elderly during the Covid-19 pandemic can be maintained as optimally as possible.<sup>2</sup>

Peer support, during a pandemic, limited the elderly to do group activities. Group activity in the elderly is not recommended. The condition of the elderly who are prone to contracting the disease requires reducing the crowd.<sup>13</sup> Government policy with the covid pandemic has also been implemented by closing Integrated Healthcare Center (Posyandu) activities for the elderly. All are government efforts to keep the elderly in safe conditions and not at risk of transmission. Based on the results of the study, it is known that peer support is very lacking in the elderly during the pandemic. This happens because the interaction of the elderly with other elderly people in the environment is also limited. Some support with peers in the elderly, among others, by communicating via telephone. Elderly limited relationship was not only due to the elderly themselves, but also due to the lack of resources. Based on the results of the psychological experience of nurses taking caring for COVID-19 patients, it was found that negative

emotions appeared in the early stages consisting of fatigue, discomfort, and helplessness caused by high work intensity, fear and anxiety, and concern for patients and family members. Second, self-coping styles include psychological and life adjustments, altruistic actions, team support, and rational cognition. Third, there is pressure on the patient, which includes increasing love and gratitude, developing professional responsibility, and self-reflection. So it can be said that positive emotions coincide with negative emotions.<sup>10</sup>

The psychological well-being of the elderly during a pandemic. The psychological well-being of the elderly shows mostly in the moderate and good categories. This can be fulfilled because during the pandemic, the family still provides support during the pandemic period. Social relations are part of the psychological well-being of the elderly.<sup>14</sup> Elderly who can have a positive relationship with family can improve their psychological well-being in addition to self-acceptance. The elderly who have positive self-acceptance can manage the stress that is part of what happens in life to get more psychological well-being. Psychological well-being must be supported by mental health, which is not only without mental illness. Positive mental health involves feelings of psychological well-being that go hand in hand with personal health.<sup>15</sup> There are many things that can be done by the elderly with limited interactions outside the home, including doing spiritual activities at home, sports activities at home and developing themselves with their families.

The effect of family support in an effort to improve psychological health in this study found that there is a significant relationship. Elderly who have high psychological well-being are known to have high support from their respective families, while elderly people who do not get support from their families have low psychological health. This was found in the elderly who live alone or the elderly who get family visits within a week. Happiness and positive emotions are one of the keys to achieving psychological well-being. Positive emotions help individuals recover from these respiratory diseases. Elderly efforts to improve their psychological health during a pandemic really need other parties such as neighbors, and health workers, including health cadres

in the health service area. A pandemic will not have a big impact if every individual, especially the elderly, has immunity both physically and mentally. Therefore, it is important to create an order in society to achieve good psychological well-being in order to be resilient in facing pandemic conditions. Based on Banerjee<sup>16</sup> stated that the results of the study showed that most of the elderly population had a satisfying social support network, while certain groups who did not have (accessible) social support sources are important things to pay attention to. The results are particularly valuable for planning sustainable care policies, as well as planning for future coronavirus crisis interventions.

### Conclusion

The pandemic period in the elderly is a condition that affects psychological health. The mechanism for dealing with stress caused by psychological pressure will have an impact on psychological well-being. Family support is very influential for the elderly in undergoing the Pandemic period and achieving psychological well-being. An elderly health service policy is needed so that the elderly can go through the Covid-19 Pandemic.

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