

## Literature Review

### Benefits of Spirituality for the Elderly: A Literatur Review

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#### Abstract

**Background:** Aging is the final phase in the human life cycle; elderly people are at risk to face the problem as an impact loss of their roles.

**Objective:** This study aimed to know that spirituality has an impact on providing the ability to face and accept the changes that occur with age.

**Methods:** This literature review aimed to find out the benefits of spirituality for healthy elderly lives. Data Sources: This study searched articles published between 2010 to 2020, full-text and free articles. The search keywords consisted of “function” and “spirituality” and “elderly”. Review Methods: This literature review was conducted using analysis of the selected articles based on the inclusion criteria such full-text articles that were discussed about the benefits of spirituality for the elderly, published in the last 10 years.

**Result:** Spirituality has an impact on influencing the incidence of depression; the main source of support for physical and psychosocial health, increasing self-awareness that they are no longer young and death will surely come for them; source of life force; coping strategies that help overcome difficult times in the elderly’s life.

**Conclusion:** Spirituality has a positive impact on the elderly in terms of physical and mental well-being.

## INTRODUCTION

Aging is the final phase in the human life cycle (Fatimah, 2010). Changes in industrial society’s social values regarding the elderly have caused a decline in respect and appreciation for the elderly (Nugroho, 2008). Aging is usually associated with the loss of roles, so they are at risk for experiencing depression, reduced social interaction, low self-esteem, decreased physical function and self-confidence (Miller, 2012). Treatment that may be given to deal with the problems for elderly can be in the form of pharmacotherapy and psychotherapy.

Cited from the Health System Research Bulletin (Djaja, 2012), currently worldwide there are around 600 million people aged 60 years and over. This number will double by 2025 and will surely reach 2 billion by 2050 of which the majority are in developing countries based on data released by WHO, 2012. Countries such as Europe and Japan which have high incomes are experiencing an increase in the number of elderly people starting earlier. The State of Indonesia in 1971 recorded that

there were 5.31 million elderly people, and continued to increase in 2000 to as many as 14.44 million elderly and to 18.04 million in 2010. The number of elderly women is higher than number of elderly men. The percentage of the elderly population in Indonesia of 7.59% indicates that Indonesia has entered an old structured population era because the population aged 60 years and over has exceeded the 7% figure (Djaja, 2012). The increase in the number of elderly people causes problems, including increasing health costs and increasing the need for housing and special housing facilities. These problems affect the lives of the elderly who do not have the provision of life, work or income and live alone and face the fear experience in living their lives (Nugroho, 2008).

The increasing number of elderly people in our country with the problems they face such as depression, reduced social interaction, low self-esteem, decreased physical function and self-confidence (Miller, 2012) and experience fear in living their lives (Nugroho, 2008) requires proper management. The relationship between spirituality and various dimensions of health and quality of life among the elderly has been extensively examined during the past decade (Udhayakumar & Ilango, 2012) and to face with their problems. Spiritual care is a way of helping older people in their search for hope and meaning, especially as they face issues of grief, loss and uncertainty (Udhayakumar & Ilango, 2012). This phenomenon shows relationship matter between spirituality and various dimensions of health. This study was structured to find out the benefits, meaning and value of spirituality in the life of the elderly.

## **METHODS**

This article used a literature review that summarizes several research studies that were determined based on certain themes. The literature search was carried out from June to August 2021. The data used in this study was secondary data obtained from reputable journal articles both nationally and internationally with predetermined themes throughout the period 2010 to 2020, which can be downloaded in the form of full-text and free articles. The search keywords for the literature study consisted of “function” and “spirituality” and “elderly”. The literature review was carried out through the following methods: the first step was a search strategy where researchers search for journal articles that can be obtained in full-text and free from an online database and obtain as many as 176 articles with the keywords "spirituality" and "elderly". The following keywords were used, namely "function" and “spirituality” and "elderly" which received 9 articles. The next step was selection criteria used inclusion and exclusion criteria from research articles, so the articles reviewed were only those that discussed the benefits, meaning and value of spirituality for the elderly and got 4 qualitative research types and get the meaning about spirituality for the elderly and 1 quantitative research. For the various studies, spirituality interventions have been carried out not only for the elderly but also for elderly caregivers and people with chronic diseases in the final stages. The next step in this literature review was a Quality assessment, which was not only looking for articles based on their titles but also looking at the abstracts, contents and conclusions of previous articles to conduct a literature review

based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria that have been determined by the researcher. Inclusion criteria articles include full-text articles that are appropriate about spirituality and its benefits for the elderly, published in the last 10 years, and exclusion criteria articles were full-text that do not match the search. Publication exceeding were 10 years.

## RESULTS

The search results for related articles that have been carried out using the keywords "function" and "spirituality" and "elderly" have found 5 articles that match the criteria for a literature review. This literature review consists of 4 qualitative studies and 1 quantitative research, with the hope of being able to gain a deeper meaning about spirituality for healthy elderly lives.

In the making process of a literature review, there are 5 articles related to spirituality and the benefits felt by the elderly such below:

No	Author	Title	Subject	Method	Result
1	Rahimi, Anoosheh, Ahmadi, & Foroughan, (2013)	Exploring spirituality in Iranian Healthy Elderly People: A Qualitative content analysis	17 Research respondents aged 65-86 years	Qualitative research	3 themes, namely; spiritual health, spiritual beliefs and practices of religiosity.
2	Malone, J., & Dadswell, A. (2018).	The Role of Religion, Spirituality and/or Belief in Positive Ageing for Older Adults.	14 study participants aged 63 to 92 years	Qualitative research	The results are: a positive influence one has as a source of strength, comfort and hope in times of need; the sense of community and belonging it can provide, the risk of loneliness and social isolation; and the possibility to incorporate religion, spirituality and/or beliefs into a more holistic approach to the health, well-being and life of adults
3	Silva, Moreira-Almeida, & Castro, 2018	Elderly Caring for the Elderly: Spirituality as Tension Relief.	10 elderly respondents	Qualitative research	3 themes, namely: participants use religious coping to deal with bad situations that arise in their lives; they hold sacred the power to continue to age, and caring for other seniors at home.
4	Guerrero-Castaneda, Menezes, Prado, & Galindo-Soto, (2019)	Spirituality and Religiosity for the Transcendent of the elderly being	11 elderly respondents	Qualitative research	The research results on the meaning of spirituality and religiosity are: as a source of strength, parents feel protected, overcome difficult situations and achieve fulfilment; both support an understanding of their historicity by realizing enlightenment and understanding of spiritual experiences in old age.
5	Taghiabadi, Kavosi, Mirhafez,	The association between death	190 respondents	This study used descriptive-	the mean spiritual experiences score was $78.04 \pm 8.7$ , indicating a high level of spiritual

Keshvari, & Mehrabi, (2017)	anxiety with spiritual experiences and life satisfaction in elderly people.	analytical study with Daily Spiritual Experiences Scale (DSES) was used to assess spirituality and Life Satisfaction Index (LSI) revised by Wood and Shifor	experiences among participants, and the mean score of life satisfaction was 14.2±5.9, indicating that a medium level of life satisfaction exists among participants. A significant positive association between spiritual experiences and life satisfaction ( $r=0.2$ , $p<0.05$ ), a significant negative association between spiritual experiences and death anxiety ( $r=-0.184$ , $p<0.05$ ) and a significant negative relationship between life satisfaction and death anxiety ( $r=-0.2$ , $p<0.05$ ) was found.
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## DISCUSSION

This literature review identified spirituality to have an impact on influencing the incidence of depression; the main source of support for physical and psychosocial health, which plays a role in reducing mental distress and triggering individual peace and hope; increasing self-awareness that they are no longer young and death will surely come to them; source of life force; coping strategies that help overcome difficult times in the elderly's life.

Spirituality and the incidence of depression explained by the article (Azmi, Emilyani, Jafar, & Sumartini, 2021), results show that spirituality has benefits in reducing depression levels of the elderly. Depression experienced by the elderly is influenced by many factors such as genetic, environmental, biochemical and psychological factors (Irawan, 2013). Aging is seen by some as power, authority, wisdom and respect, for others, it is seen as a forced retirement that leads to a state of dependence, loss of charm and physical strength. For most people, aging implies physiological and psychosocial changes that are reflected in reduced income, lower activity, and consequential loss of position, both in the family and in society (Pathath, 2017), it may cause depression for the elderly. The usual treatment given to depression is generally pharmacotherapy and psychotherapy which aims to help the elderly understand how to deal with the factors that cause depression (Irawan, 2013). Actually, spirituality is the main source of support to reduce mental distress and trigger inner peace and hope according to (Rahimi, Anoosheh, Ahmadi, & Foroughan, 2013); as we age, it turns out that spirituality provides positive strength to live life in a satisfying way (Malone & Dadswell, 2018); spiritual empowerment for the elderly who live in the Islamic Boarding School (*pondok pesantren* in Bahasa) keeps the them active in carrying out their status and role in the new community; the elderly can interact with their community environment, increase the awareness that they are no longer young and death will surely pick them up (Agustina, 2020); religiosity is used as the main coping strategy to face and undergo the aging process (Silva, Moreira-Almeida, & Castro, 2018).

The main source of support for physical and psychosocial health, which plays a role in reducing mental distress and triggering individual peace and hope supported by the research conducted by (Rahimi, Anoosheh, Ahmadi, & Foroughan, 2013). 17 research respondents aged 65-86 years participated in the study. The qualitative research resulted in 3 themes, namely, spiritual health, spiritual beliefs and practices of religiosity. Prayer plays an important role in the life of the elderly in Iran and is associated with the meaning of life and spiritual health. Spirituality has an impact on the health and life of the elderly and is a major source of support for physical and psychosocial health, which plays a role in reducing mental distress and triggering inner peace and hope.

Themes about increased self-awareness that they are no longer young and death will surely come to them supported by (Agustina, 2020). There are 5 respondents at the old boarding school Payaman, Magelang resulted in 6 themes about spirituality for the elderly. These themes include: giving a feeling of peace when dealing with death, getting closer to God the creator, increasing the elderly's belief in their religion, being able to read the Qur'an, developing a sense of humanity, establishing new types of relationships in the new elderly community, namely, islamic boarding school with both priest (*kyai* in Bahasa) and colleagues living together. The research conclusion show that spiritual empowerment for the elderly who live in the Islamic boarding school keeps the them active in carrying out their status and role in the new community, the elderly can interact with their community environment, increasing the awareness of the elderly that they are no longer young and death will surely come to them. The study results (Naftali, Ranimpi, & Anwar, 2017) supported themes about increasing self-awareness that they are no longer young and death will surely come to them. The spiritual health and readiness of the elderly in facing 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. Based on the study results, the elderly living at home and the elderly living in orphanages have differences in social interaction, religious and divine concepts. Meanwhile, in the face of death, both at home or the in orphanages, the readiness of the elderly is influenced by several factors, namely the understanding of death, the experience of loss, the desired place when facing death, the person who will accompany when death and the destination after death, while the unpreparedness of the elderly in the face of death is influenced by actions taken during the elderly living as well as family factors such as still wanting to live longer with family.

A theme about the source of life force and coping strategies that help overcome difficult times in the life of the elderly conducted by (Guerrero-Castaneda, Menezes, Prado, & Galindo-Soto, 2019). Eleven elderly respondents participated in the research to know about the unity of meaning in the awareness of a higher power for transcendence. The research results on the meaning of spirituality and religiosity are: as a source of strength, parents feel protected, overcome difficult situations and achieve fulfilment; both support an understanding of their historicity by realizing enlightenment and understanding of spiritual experiences in old age. Another role of spirituality, religiosity and belief for the elderly is shown by (Malone & Dadswell, 2018). Fourteen study participants aged 63 to 92 years

participated in the study. The results are: a positive influence one has as a source of strength, comfort and hope in times of need; the sense of community and belonging that can provide the risk of loneliness and social isolation; and the possibility to incorporate religion, spirituality and/or beliefs into a more holistic approach to the health, well-being and life of older adults. The role of religion, spirituality, and/or belief in the lives of elderly can help them to be positively living their lives in a fulfilling way (Taghiabadi, Kavosi, Mirhafez, Keshvari, & Mehrabi, 2017). The results showed that there was a relationship between life satisfaction and anxiety about facing death and the direct relationship between spiritual experiences and death anxiety. In the end, the spiritual experience and the peak of satisfaction with the elderly's life itself are used to withstand stressors during the difficult times faced by the elderly and improve their quality of life (Taghiabadi, Kavosi, Mirhafez, Keshvari, & Mehrabi, 2017). Spirituality has a positive impact in terms of physical and mental well-being. Elderly people who have a good spiritual life are generally more resilient in dealing with stress, suicide, depression, anxiety, smoking and alcoholism. Another benefit is that older people become more satisfied with their lives and feel greater well-being (Udhayakumar & Ilango, 2012).

## **LIMITATION**

Further research that can be carried out as a follow-up study from this literature review is to determine interventions related to spirituality for the elderly.

## **Conclusion**

Spirituality for the elderly has a positive impact in terms of physical and mental well-being in their lives. Elderly people who have a good spiritual life generally feel satisfied with their lives, undergo the aging process with feelings of gratitude and are more resilient in the face of aging and death. The feeling of living in prosperity is also the impact of spiritual life for the elderly.

The nurses's role in assisting a kind of spirituality intervention in the life of the elderly must still pay attention to life both in terms of physical, bio, psycho and spiritual, so that the elderly can live in prosperity, live this life and prepare them to face death without fear.

## **AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION**

Maria Theresia Arie Lilyana: Conceptualization, methodology, writing-original draft, supervision, formal analysis, investigation and writing-review and editing made.

Made Indra Ayu Astarini: Visualization, project administration, software, validation, resources, data duration, and funding acquisition

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## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors have consented and no conflicting interests.

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