Elderly Anxiety During the Covid-19 Pandemic in Mibo Banda Aceh

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Abstract. The degenerative aging process creates problems in old age, resulting in physical, cognitive, social, and sexual changes. Anxiety in the elderly is one of the emotional issues that the elderly frequently experience, characterized by physiological stimulation, unpleasant sensations, and a feeling that something negative may happen. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the elderly's anxiety reduced health conditions because the elderly had difficulty accessing family support due to distance limits, mainly if a family member was infected with the COVID-19 virus or the family experienced a crisis such as job loss. The Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS) was used in this study to assess the level of anxiety experienced by the 34 elderly respondents in Mibo, Banda Raya District, Banda Aceh. According to the findings, 44% of the elderly had mild anxiety, 33% experienced moderate anxiety, and 21% suffered severe anxiety. Several elderly may experience anxiety as their health deteriorates, while others do not. During the COVID-19 pandemic, anxiety among the elderly was caused by various losses, notably the loss of family intimacy. During this stressful time, the elderly require care, protection, and assistance in providing friendly health facilities to meet the elderly's specific needs in order to prevent increased anxiety levels.

Keywords: Anxiety · Elderly · Pandemic · Covid 19

1 Introduction

The elderly are among vulnerable groups who experience a progressive change physically and psychologically. A decline in organ function characterizes the aging process that occurs with age. The Elderly typically experience decreased endurance, cognitive function, and muscular weakness. In the elderly, body function disorders are typically caused by weakened body resistance due to aging, although they can also be caused by diseases (Hatmanti and Yunita 2019).

The degenerative aging process causes issues in old age, resulting in physical, cognitive, social, and sexual changes. Anxiety is one of the most prevalent emotional problems that the elderly face, and it is characterized by physiological stimulation, unpleasant sensations, and a worry that something terrible may happen. Anxiety is described by the American Psychological Association (2019) as an emotional condition characterized by tension, anxious thoughts, and physical changes such as increased blood pressure, tremors, headaches, and others.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the elderly were one of the high-risk categories who were most vulnerable to the impacts of the virus. The increasing number of elderly morbidity and death was caused not only by degenerative factors in which the elderly suffered a decrease in body resistance but also by the elderly's level of dependency on others to fulfill their needs. Because of this reliance, there is a greater risk of transmitting Covid-19. Another reason is the elderly's cognitive impairment, which results in poor compliance with the implementation of health protocols.

The psychological impact felt by the elderly during this pandemic is the existence of social restrictions that result in the elderly losing the ability to carry out activities together with family members, friends, and communities. Moreover, anxiety over the end of this non-natural disaster and the impact of quarantine on the elderly and their families causes the elderly to feel lonely, angry, and confused (Walarine K.V. 2020). Based on this condition, the researchers are interested in conducting this research to describe anxiety levels in the elderly in Mibo, Banda Raya District, Banda Aceh.

2   Method

The descriptive research design was used to describe anxiety in the elderly. In this study, 34 elderly were selected as the respondents, and the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS) questionnaire was used to assess the anxiety level of the elderly, with anxiety level measurement results as follows:

a) Mild anxiety = 8–9,
b) Moderate anxiety 10–14,
c) Severe anxiety 15–19,
d) Extremely Severe > 20.

The anxiety responses measured were as follows:

0: None or never,
1: corresponds to some extent or occasionally,
2: Often,
3: Very corresponds or almost every day.

3   Results

Table 1 shows the frequency distribution of respondents' characteristics and anxiety levels in the elderly in Mibo, Banda Aceh.

Based on Table 1, most respondents were female (62%) and aged 66–74 (31%). There were 18 married respondents (53%), and most of the elderly were housewives (35%). Interestingly, the elderly proportion of respondents who live with family members and respondents who live alone were equal (50:50) (Table 2).

Table 1. Frequency Distribution of Respondents Characteristics and Anxiety Levels in the Elderly in Mibo, Banda Aceh (n = 34).

Respondent Characteristics	Anxiety Levels								Total	
	Mild		Moderate		Severe		Extremely severe			
Sex	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**
Female	10	30	5	15	5	15	1	2	21	62
Male	5	17	6	18	2	7	0	0	13	38
Total	**15**	**44**	**11**	**33**	**7**	**21**	**1**	**2**	**34**	**100**
Age										
45- 54 years old	2	7	5	15	1	2	1	2	9	26
55–65 years old	3	9	1	2	2	6	0	0	6	17
66–74 years old	5	15	4	12	1	2	0	0	10	31
75- 90 years old	5	15	1	2	3	9	0	0	9	26
Total	**15**	**44**	**11**	**33**	**7**	**21**	**1**	**2**	**34**	**100**
Occupation										
Housewife	5	15	5	15	2	2	0	0	12	35
Teacher	5	15	2	7	2	2	0	0	9	26
Civil Servant	3	9	2	7	2	2	1	2	8	24
Retired/Pensioner	2	7	2	7	1	0	0	0	5	15
Total	**15**	**44**	**11**	**33**	**7**	**21**	**1**	**3**	**34**	**100**
Marital Status										
Married	9	26	5	15	3	9	1	2	18	53
Divorce	2	6	3	9	2	6	0	0	7	21
Widow/widower	4	12	3	9	2	6	0	0	9	26
Total	**15**	**44**	**11**	**33**	**7**	**21**	**1**	**2**	**34**	**100**
Living (with)										
alone	7	21	5	15	4	12	1	2	17	50
Family	8	24	6	17	3	9	0	0	17	50
Total	**15**	**44**	**11**	**33**	**7**	**21**	**1**	**2**	**34**	**100**

Table 2. Distribution Frequency of Respondents Anxiety Levels in the Elderly in Mibo, Banda Aceh (n = 34).

Anxiety Levels	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Mild	15	44
Moderate	11	33
Severe	7	21
Extremely severe	1	2
Total	**34**	**100**

Based on Table 2, it was found that 15 respondents or 44% experience anxiety at mild level, while 21% experienced anxiety at a severe anxiety and 2% experienced anxiety at a Extremely severe level of anxiety.

4 Discussion

According to the study findings, most respondents (62%) were female since most of the respondents encountered during the research were mothers with mild anxiety (30%). According to the interview results, respondents did not easily accept news regarding covid 19 other than official information sources, which influenced respondents' attitudes about dealing with the consequences of the covid 19 pandemic. With the community's efforts to obtain accurate information regarding Covid 19, inaccurate information or hoaxes will be avoided (Rathore and Farooq 2020).

The respondent's beliefs, Islam, also contributed to the respondent's minor anxiety. According to Islam, all diseases have a cure, and that disaster is a test from Allah SWT. The coronavirus outbreak is a challenge to bring people closer to Allah. In order to prevent disease transmission, Islam also promotes the concepts 'lockdown' and 'social distancing'. According to scholars, this phenomenon is known as Tho'un, a pandemic that makes the population ill and vulnerable to infection (Supriana 2020).

The study result indicated that 35% of the elderly were housewives, and only 15% had moderate anxiety. This low figure is since housewives could continue with their normal activities throughout the pandemic since they had maintained a healthy lifestyle during the covid-19 outbreak. Respondents with the correct information and attitudes toward health and the ability to implement them effectively promote healthy lifestyle behavior. According to Notoatmojo (2005), the establishment of healthy behavior is caused by knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors or practices. Applying these three aspects correctly will enhance self-management, allowing someone to go through a stressful situation and vice versa.

The anxiety level of the elderly who still have a living spouse is in the mild category (26%). These findings suggest that life partners support the elderly in coping with the impacts of the covid 19 epidemic. Optimistic spouses demonstrate mutual support between husband and wife in addressing the consequences of the pandemic, both in terms of financial economy and emotional support.

Beliefs determine a married couple's positive attitude about the implications of their behavior. According to Ramdhani (2011), belief is related to a person's subjective appraisal of his surroundings and his comprehension of himself and his surroundings. This understanding is achieved by associating certain behaviors with the various benefits and losses that individuals may obtain if involved in them. Having a life partner who is positive in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic allows the elderly to learn together, improve gratitude, and increase stress coping and self-control so the elderly will not get frustrated easily. This is supported by the results of Mustary's research (2020) where one of the theories of behavioral planning is the perception of behavioral control which is shown in the form of an attitude of being able to control or deal with the difficulties experienced by partners living in a marriage.

Meanwhile, 24% of the elderly living with their families are under mild stress. The form of an extended family is one of the characteristics of Indonesian people in general. This family type has a significant impact on society's attitudes about a variety of issues, including the COVID-19 outbreak. In this pandemic, family strength was measured by mutual respect and affection, commitment, constructive communication, quality time, spiritual well-being, and the capacity to cope with stress and crises well (Dew et al., 2017).

Families are crucial in protecting, socializing, and encouraging family members to follow health protocols such as hand washing, wearing masks, avoiding crowding, and not going out frequently. As a result, to limit the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, family roles such as protection, socialization, and education must be strengthened. Family members' closeness, communication, and mutual support must be improved so individuals can develop adaptation positive coping mechanisms and problem-solving abilities to protect families from crises and pressures. According to Rochimah, F.A. (2020) mental health must be owned by individuals in the family so that they can grow and develop positively so that a person feels healthy and happy with himself so that he is able to face challenges in life.

5 Conclusions

The Covid-19 outbreak has taken many lives and significantly influenced people's lives, particularly the elderly. The level of anxiety experienced by the elderly considerably influences their lives, particularly those who do not have support from spouses or family. The elderly ability to handle anxiety is a valuable skill for the old in terms of improving their quality of life. The elderly are better prepared to cope with the effects of COVID-19 with the help of many support systems, including families.

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