



LESSONS FROM PADU WAU MAUMERE: EFFECTIVENESS OF HAPPINESS INTERVENTIONS IN REDUCING DEPRESSION AMONG OLDER ADULTS

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memberikan pelayanan intervensi kebahagiaan kepada Lansia yang mengalami depresi ringan sehingga dapat mengurangi tingkat depresi dan lansia dapat menjalani hari tua dengan penuh kebahagiaan. Pelaksanaan kegiatan magang mahasiswa yang dialukan pada lansia di Panti Kesejahteraan Sosial Lanjut Usia Padu Wau Maumere desa Watumilok, Kecamatan Kangae, Kabupaten Sikka. Waktu pelaksanaan kegiatan magang dilakukan selama 3 bulan, dimulai dari tanggal 02 September hingga 20 Desember 2024. Setelah melakukan observasi dan wawancara serta menyebarkan skala/alat ukur yang sesuai dengan permasalahan yang di temukan di lapangan, kemudian penulis menyusun intervensi yang efektif untuk mengatasi masalah yang dialami oleh lansia. Penulis menggunakan intervensi kebahagiaan karena dirasa paling efektif untuk diterapkan kepada lansia yang berada di panti dengan masalah depresi. Intervensi kebahagiaan dengan menggunakan 3 terapi yaitu terapi aktivitas kelompok, terapi tawa, dan terapi relaksasi. Pelaksanaan kegiatan intervensi ini dilakukan di Aula Panti Kesejahteraan Sosial Lanjut Usia Padu Wau Maumere selama tiga hari. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa Intervensi kebahagiaan yang diterapkan terbukti efektif dalam menurunkan tingkat depresi pada lansia di Panti Padu Wau Maumere dengan hasil *post test* menunjukkan bahwa dari sebagian responden yang mengalami depresi sedang dan ringan mengalami penurunan. Hal ini dibuktikan dengan uji data menggunakan uji Wilcoxon didapat nilai signifikan (p) $0,001 < 0,005$, sehingga perbedaan tersebut dapat dinyatakan signifikan secara statistik.

Kata Kunci: Lansia, Depresi dan Intervensi Kebahagiaan

Abstract

This study aims to provide happiness intervention services to the elderly who experience mild depression so as to reduce the level of depression and the elderly can live old age with happiness. The implementation of student internship activities carried out on the elderly at the Padu Wau Maumere Elderly Social Welfare Home, Watumilok village, Kangae District, Sikka Regency. The time of implementation of internship activities was carried out for 3 months, starting from September 02 to December 20, 2024. After conducting observations and interviews and distributing scales/measuring tools that are in accordance with the problems found in the field, then the author compiles effective interventions to overcome the problems experienced by the elderly. The author uses happiness

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intervention because it is considered the most effective to apply to elderly people who are in institutions with depression problems. Happiness intervention using 3 therapies, namely group activity therapy, laughter therapy, and relaxation therapy. The implementation of this intervention activity was carried out in the Hall of the Padu Wau Maumere Elderly Social Welfare Home for three days. The results of this study indicate that the applied happiness intervention is proven to be effective in reducing the level of depression in the elderly at Panti Padu Wau Maumere with the results of the post test showing that some respondents who experience moderate and mild depression have decreased. This is evidenced by data testing using the Wilcoxon test.

Keywords: elderly, depression and interventions

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INTRODUCTION

Old age is a continuous process that unfolds over time and represents the final stage of human development. It is an inevitable part of the human life cycle that every individual will experience. During this stage, various natural changes occur across physical, psychological, and social dimensions. According to Law No. 13 of 1998 (as cited in Akbar, 2019), an older adult is defined as an individual aged sixty years and above. Potential older adults are those who remain capable of engaging in productive activities that generate goods or services, while non-potential older adults are those who are unable to work and depend on others for their livelihood. At this final stage of life, many individuals hope to live peacefully with their children, grandchildren, and loved ones. However, not all older people can enjoy this ideal condition. In reality, many of them face problems such as loneliness, dissatisfaction with life, sadness due to not having children, and other personal difficulties. If left unaddressed, these issues can lead to mental health problems, with depression being one of the most common psychological disorders among older adults (Ibrahim, 2011).

Depression is a prevalent mental disorder that often arises from unrelieved stress. Many people underestimate depression, assuming it will disappear naturally without medical or psychological intervention. According to Kaplan (2020), depression is a condition that disrupts human functioning and is characterized by persistent sadness. Based on Beck's cognitive theory (1997, as cited in Al-Aziz, 2020), depression involves specific negative changes in mood—such as sadness and disappointment—along with a negative self-concept, self-punishment, regression, changes in vegetative functions, and abnormal activity levels. Similarly, Dirgayunita (2016) defines depression as an emotional disorder characterized by prolonged sadness, hopelessness, guilt, and a sense of worthlessness, all of which influence a person's motivation to perform daily activities and maintain interpersonal relationships. Family conflicts and an unfavorable environment can also serve as triggers for depression in old age. The consequences of depression include feelings of helplessness, irritability, sadness, and social withdrawal, which often lead to the perception of being unwanted or unneeded by others.

An observation conducted on sixty-one residents of a nursing home revealed that many elderly individuals were less active in participating in activities, showed low social interest, and

often appeared sad or tearful when talking about their families. Some expressed guilt over past events before entering the nursing home. Interviews with several participants, such as one identified as D.M., indicated that the participant frequently felt sad and cried when recalling family memories, participated in activities but lacked confidence to ask questions, and tended to surrender fully to God and the nursing home staff regarding future events. Although D.M. felt grateful to be in the facility, she also expressed sadness when thinking about her grandchildren and guilt for leaving them, believing that living separately would reduce the burden on her family. Other participants reported similar experiences, including sadness when remembering family, limited social interaction, difficulty sleeping, poor appetite, and feelings of hopelessness. They also expressed resignation to their circumstances, often entrusting their fate entirely to the institution to avoid burdening their families. Furthermore, assessments using the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) showed that a large proportion of the residents experienced mild to moderate levels of depression.

Based on these findings, efforts were made to address and reduce depression among the elderly residents of the Padu Wau Maumere Nursing Home through the implementation of a Happiness Intervention. According to Erich Fromm's concept of happiness (as cited in Dewi & Hidayat, 2024), true happiness is achieved through self-reliance and active, productive living rather than dependence on others. The Happiness Intervention includes several therapeutic techniques designed to stimulate feelings of joy and emotional balance, namely group activity therapy, laughter therapy, and deep-breathing relaxation therapy. These combined methods are considered effective for alleviating depressive symptoms among older adults because they target both emotional and physiological aspects of well-being.

Group activity therapy involves structured interaction among individuals from different backgrounds, aiming to strengthen interpersonal relationships and social engagement. Through this approach, participants can form new friendships, share experiences, and provide mutual support, which helps reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness. A study by Hidayati et al. (2020) demonstrated that group activity therapy significantly decreases depression levels in older adults by improving social connections and emotional expression. Laughter therapy, on the other hand, involves guided laughter exercises performed gradually to generate physical and psychological benefits. Laughing for five to ten minutes can stimulate the release of endorphins and serotonin—natural mood-enhancing hormones—as well as melatonin, which helps regulate sleep and mood. Research published in *Geriatrics and Gerontology International* (Dumbre, 2012) found that laughter therapy effectively alleviates depression, enhances social interaction, and promotes a more positive mindset.

Another effective component of the Happiness Intervention is deep-breathing relaxation therapy, which helps release tension and restore bodily and mental balance. This technique improves oxygen flow, enhances concentration, and induces calmness, ultimately leading to better sleep and reduced anxiety. Likah (2018) explains that deep breathing can relax muscles, foster inner peace, and reduce emotional distress. Similarly, Sukiswanto and Rohana reported that after undergoing deep-breathing relaxation, many respondents improved from mild depression to normal emotional states, describing feelings of comfort, reduced anxiety, and increased serenity.

Considering the observations and empirical findings, this study aims to examine the effectiveness of the Happiness Intervention in reducing depression among older adults at the Social Welfare Section for the Elderly, Padu Wau Maumere. By integrating group activity, laughter, and relaxation therapies, this intervention seeks to enhance emotional well-being, foster social

engagement, and improve the overall quality of life for elderly individuals living in institutional care.

METHODS

The internship program was conducted with elderly residents at the Padu Wau Maumere Social Welfare Institution for Older Adults, located in Watumilok Village, Kangae District, Sikka Regency. The internship took place over a period of three months, from September 2 to December 20, 2024. After conducting observations and interviews, as well as administering psychological assessment scales relevant to the problems identified in the field, the author developed an effective intervention to address the issues experienced by the elderly participants. The selected intervention was the Happiness Intervention, considered the most suitable and effective approach for elderly individuals in the institution who were experiencing symptoms of depression. This intervention incorporated three therapeutic methods: group activity therapy, laughter therapy, and relaxation therapy. The implementation of the intervention was carried out over three consecutive days in the hall of the Padu Wau Maumere Social Welfare Institution for Older Adults.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

a. Assessment Results

Based on the assessment conducted during the internship activities at the Padu Wau Maumere Nursing Home, it was found that the elderly residents experienced various problems in their daily lives, particularly in managing emotions and controlling intrusive thoughts that often arise from feelings of loneliness. This persistent loneliness had a significant impact on their psychological well-being, leading to symptoms of depression. Older adults living in the nursing home were highly vulnerable to depression because many felt rejected or abandoned by their families, considered themselves a burden, and experienced a deep sense of helplessness.

Observations and interviews conducted over a one-month period revealed that depression was the most common issue among residents of the Padu Wau Maumere Nursing Home. This finding was further supported by the results of the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI), which was administered to measure depressive symptoms. The assessment showed that 17 participants experienced varying levels of depression, ranging from mild mood disturbances to moderate and severe depression.

Based on these assessment results, the researcher designed an intervention program aimed at reducing depression among the elderly participants. The selected intervention was the Happiness Intervention, which aims to enhance an individual's happiness, well-being, and overall mental health. The intervention consisted of several structured activities, including group activity therapy, which encouraged residents to share opinions, exchange experiences, and interact socially to build positive relationships with others. In addition, relaxation therapy was implemented to help alleviate anxiety and stress, increase enthusiasm, and promote feelings of calmness and joy. This relaxation therapy was intended to help the elderly participants feel more at ease, reduce both physical and psychological tension, and foster emotional stability.

b. Experimental Results

Based on the results of the intervention, which consisted of three therapeutic stages—group activity therapy, laughter therapy, and relaxation therapy—it was found that the majority of the elderly participants experienced a decrease in their levels of depression. Among the 17

respondents, most showed a reduction in depressive symptoms, shifting from high or moderate levels of depression to lower levels after the intervention. The majority of participants initially demonstrated moderate to mild depression. Because the intervention was conducted in group settings, the elderly residents were able to communicate more openly, exchange opinions, and provide mutual emotional support, which contributed to the improvement of their psychological well-being.

A noticeable decline in depression levels was observed following the intervention among residents of the Padu Wau Maumere Social Welfare Institution for Older Adults. Out of the total participants, 14 subjects exhibited a decrease in depression scores between the pre-test and post-test assessments, while three subjects showed no significant change.

To statistically determine the difference in depression levels before and after the implementation of the Happiness Intervention, a Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was conducted using valid pre-test and post-test data. The results confirmed that there was a significant reduction in depression levels among the elderly participants following the intervention.

Table 1. Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test Results

Ranks				
		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Pos_test - Pre_test	Negative Ranks	14 ^a	7,50	105,00
	Positive Ranks	0 ^b	0,00	0,00
	Ties	3 ^c		
	Total	17		

Based on the results of the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test, the first output, labeled “Ranks,” presents three categories of results. The Negative Ranks indicate the differences representing a decrease in depression levels among the elderly participants. The Sum of Ranks value of 105.00 suggests a reduction in depression scores between the pre-test and post-test assessments. The Positive Ranks show a value of 0, meaning that no increase in depression levels was observed after the intervention. Meanwhile, the Ties value of 3 indicates that three participants exhibited no change in their depression scores between the pre-test and post-test measurements.

Table 2. Test Statistics for Pre-Test and Post-Test Depression Scores

Test Statistics ^a			
			Pos test - Pre test
		Z	-3.307 ^b
		Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	,001

Based on the results of the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test, the alternative hypothesis (H_a) was accepted with a significance level of $p = 0.001 < 0.05$. These findings indicate a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores. The post-test results showed lower depression scores compared to the pre-test, demonstrating that the Happiness Intervention had a positive effect in reducing depression levels among the elderly residents of the Padu Wau Maumere Social Welfare Institution for Older Adults.

Discussion

This study employed a quantitative experimental approach to examine the effectiveness of a training program designed to reduce depression among elderly residents at the Padu Wau Maumere Social Welfare Institution for Older Adults. The participants consisted of 17 older adults—7

women and 10 men—selected through purposive sampling to ensure that they met the inclusion criteria. During the intervention period, participants engaged in structured activities aligned with the objectives of the training. Pre-test and post-test assessments were conducted to measure changes in depression levels before and after the intervention.

Based on the results of data analysis using the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test, the Happiness Intervention Training implemented at the institution demonstrated a significant effect in reducing depression among the participants. This was evidenced by a p-value of $0.001 < 0.005$, indicating that the difference was statistically significant. The intervention effectively reduced depressive symptoms among the elderly residents of the Padu Wau Maumere Social Welfare Institution.

The Happiness Intervention is a structured program consisting of a series of activities aimed at enhancing individual happiness and psychological well-being. In this study, the intervention included three therapeutic stages—group activity therapy, laughter therapy, and relaxation therapy—administered to elderly participants experiencing depressive symptoms. The findings confirmed that this three-stage intervention was effective in reducing depression. These results are consistent with previous studies that have highlighted the efficacy of happiness-based interventions in lowering depression levels.

For instance, a study conducted by Hidayati et al. (2020) found that group activity therapy significantly reduced depression among older adults by promoting social interaction and emotional expression. Similarly, a case study by Sukiswanto and Rohana (2022) reported that after undergoing deep-breathing relaxation therapy, most respondents showed improvement, transitioning from mild depression to normal emotional states. Participants also reported increased comfort, reduced anxiety, a greater sense of tranquility, and improved physical relaxation.

The implementation of the Happiness Intervention at the Padu Wau Maumere Social Welfare Institution thus produced a meaningful reduction in depression levels, as evidenced by a significant decrease in the mean scores between the pre-test and post-test assessments. Supporting studies further emphasize that happiness-based interventions not only alleviate depressive symptoms but also strengthen positive social relationships among older adults. These findings suggest that similar programs can be successfully replicated in other elderly care communities to foster emotional well-being and improve overall quality of life.

SUMMARY

Conclusion

The Happiness Intervention implemented in this study proved to be effective in reducing depression levels among elderly residents at the Padu Wau Maumere Social Welfare Institution for Older Adults. The post-test results indicated that most participants who initially experienced moderate and mild depression showed a noticeable decrease in their depression levels. This finding was supported by the results of the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test, which produced a significance value of $p = 0.001 < 0.005$, indicating that the difference was statistically significant.

Suggestion

1. It is recommended that social welfare institutions and caregivers regularly implement Happiness Intervention programs or similar psychosocial activities to support the emotional health of older adults. Continuous engagement through group activities, laughter exercises, and relaxation techniques can help maintain positive mental health and reduce loneliness among residents.
2. Future studies should expand the sample size and include control groups to strengthen the generalizability of the findings. In addition, incorporating longitudinal designs could help

- examine the long-term effectiveness of happiness-based interventions in sustaining mental well-being among the elderly.
3. Policymakers in the field of social welfare and geriatric mental health are encouraged to integrate structured happiness-based interventions into institutional care programs. Such initiatives can serve as preventive and rehabilitative measures to improve life satisfaction, emotional stability, and the overall quality of life for older adults in Indonesia and beyond.

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