
Mindfulness Therapy Training: Efforts to Improve Mental Health of the Elderly in the Elderly Of Pimpinan Daerah Aisyiyah Banyumas Organization

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Abstract

This community service activity aimed to assess the effectiveness of Spiritual Mindfulness Therapy in enhancing the mental health of elderly individuals within a religious community setting. The activity involved 20 elderly participants from the Pengajian Pimpinan Daerah Aisyiyah Banyumas group and employed a pre-test post-test design to evaluate changes in mental health status. The participants' mental health was assessed using the SCL-90 instrument before and after the intervention. The intervention included a series of Spiritual Mindfulness Therapy sessions comprising lectures, focus group discussions, and practical mindfulness exercises. Demographic analysis revealed that the average age of the participants was 67.05 years (SD = 4.82), with education levels ranging from elementary school to university degrees. The results showed a significant reduction in SCL-90 scores, with the mean score decreasing from 185.75 (SD = 19.83) before the intervention to 146.90 (SD = 16.53) after the intervention. The Shapiro-Wilk test indicated a violation of the normality assumption ($W = 0.88, p = 0.015$), leading to the use of the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test for analysis. The test results were significant ($W = 210.00, p < 0.001$), demonstrating a substantial improvement in the participants' mental health following the intervention. These findings underscore the effectiveness of Spiritual Mindfulness Therapy as an intervention for improving mental health among the elderly, particularly in settings where spiritual practices are integral to daily life. This community service activity contributes to the ongoing efforts to enhance the well-being of older adults, suggesting that integrating spirituality into mindfulness practices can strengthen coping mechanisms and improve overall mental health.

Keywords: *Spiritual Mindfulness Therapy, Mental Health, Elderly, Religious Community, Community Service*

INTRODUCTION

The mental health of elderly populations is an increasingly important issue, especially within community settings where social and religious activities are central to daily life. As individuals age, they often encounter psychological challenges such as loneliness, anxiety, and depression, which can significantly impact their overall well-being. Addressing these mental health issues in a community context requires interventions that are both effective and culturally relevant.

This community service project focuses on the Pimpinan Daerah 'Aisyiyah (PDA) Banyumas, a significant women's organization affiliated with Muhammadiyah in Indonesia. 'Aisyiyah is committed to promoting Islamic values and social reform through principles of dakwah (promoting what is good and preventing what is evil) and tajdid (renewal), based on the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah. In Banyumas, Central Java, PDA 'Aisyiyah Banyumas serves as a cornerstone for fostering religious understanding and community cohesion among its elderly female members. These women regularly attend weekly religious gatherings, or pengajian, at the Aisyiyah center, which offer both spiritual enrichment and social support. Recent focus group discussions with elderly participants of these pengajian sessions have revealed a significant gap in addressing their mental health needs. While these sessions provide

spiritual and cognitive enrichment, they often overlook common psychological challenges such as loneliness, stress, and psychological distress. According to the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia, good mental health is characterized by a state of inner peace and tranquility, enabling individuals to handle life's stresses and function productively (Kementrian kesehatan Republik Indonesia, 2018). For the elderly, mental health can be defined as a condition where their mind and spirit are calm and stable, allowing them to maintain emotional balance, mental stability, and positive social interactions (Stathi et al., 2002). This stability is essential for enabling them to navigate the challenges of aging with resilience and well-being.

This community service initiative is grounded in the understanding that mental health interventions for the elderly are increasingly important as they age, particularly due to the changes in psychological symptoms that can be triggered by various life situations (Riedel-Heller et al., 2006). Research conducted by the lead authors has shown that mental health in the elderly is closely related to factors such as death anxiety and psychological stress (Herdian & Qingrong, 2021). Moreover, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the disruption of social connections within religious communities led to increased loneliness, a primary predictor of negative mental health outcomes among the elderly (Herdian et al., 2022).

For elderly Muslim populations, attachment to God has been found to significantly contribute to positive mental health outcomes (Adi et al., 2022). This underscores the importance of integrating spiritual practices with mental health interventions. Mindfulness, recognized as an effective therapy for improving mental health in the elderly, involves sustained awareness and focus on thoughts, emotions, bodily sensations, and the surrounding environment in a non-judgmental manner (Zhang et al., 2021). This practice is associated with openness, non-judgment, compassion, curiosity, and kindness (Baer et al., 2019). Research has demonstrated that mindfulness therapy can enhance well-being (Hilcove et al., 2021), reduce stress and anxiety (Ofei-Dodoo et al., 2020), improve cognitive function (Jiayuan et al., 2022), and alleviate emotional distress.

The primary objective of this community service project is to evaluate the effectiveness of a mindfulness spirituality intervention in improving the mental health outcomes of elderly women participating in pengajian sessions at PDA 'Aisyiyah Banyumas. This project will assess how integrating mindfulness practices within the existing spiritual framework of the pengajian can enhance the psychological well-being of the participants.

The mindfulness spirituality intervention designed for this project seeks to combine traditional mindfulness practices with the spiritual teachings already embedded in the pengajian sessions. The goal is to provide a holistic approach to mental health, addressing the psychological, spiritual, and social needs of the elderly participants in a culturally and contextually relevant manner.

This community service project aims to significantly improve the well-being of elderly women in Banyumas by equipping them with tools and practices that enhance their mental health in a supportive and familiar environment. By focusing on integrating mindfulness with their existing spiritual practices, the project seeks to empower these women to achieve greater emotional and mental resilience, thereby improving their overall quality of life.

The findings from this project will also provide valuable insights into how similar interventions can be implemented in other religious and community settings. The lessons learned can serve as a model for other community-based programs aimed at improving the mental health of elderly populations through culturally appropriate and spiritually aligned approaches. This community service project seeks to evaluate and enhance the effectiveness of

a mindfulness spirituality intervention tailored to the needs of elderly women in Banyumas. By doing so, it aims to demonstrate the potential of such interventions to improve mental health outcomes in a culturally sensitive and contextually appropriate manner, ultimately contributing to the broader goal of improving the well-being of elderly populations in community settings.

RESEARCH METHODS

The implementation method in this community service project is designed to improve the mental health of the elderly through the Spiritual Mindfulness Therapy approach. This approach is based on research findings and the identification of mental health issues among the elderly, as previously outlined. The following steps will be taken in the implementation of this activity:

1. Psychoeducation

The first step in implementing this activity is to provide lectures and psychoeducation sessions for the elderly. These lectures aim to increase the elderly's knowledge about the importance of maintaining mental health in daily life. The lecture content will include explanations of the role of mental health, the negative impacts of poor mental health, and practical steps that can be taken to maintain mental balance. This psychoeducation will help the elderly understand how good mental health can influence their quality of life and provide them with insights into how to manage stress and psychological pressure.

2. Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

The Focus Group Discussion (FGD) method will be used to delve deeper into the role of spirituality in the mental health of the elderly. During the FGD, the elderly will be encouraged to share their experiences and perspectives on how spirituality plays a role in their daily lives. This discussion will be facilitated to ensure that each participant has the opportunity to voice their opinions. The results of the FGD are expected to provide further insights into how spirituality can be used as a source of strength in facing psychological challenges.

3. Mindfulness Spirituality Practice

The next step is the implementation of Mindfulness Spirituality practice sessions. In these sessions, the elderly will be taught mindfulness techniques directly, which include exercises to enhance self-awareness, achieve inner calm, and build psychological resilience. This practice will be conducted in a supportive environment where the elderly can practice these techniques in a practical and applicable way. The mindfulness techniques taught will be adapted from the research of the proposing team, which has demonstrated the effectiveness of mindfulness in improving psychological resilience (Setyawati & Devi, 2022).

4. Evaluation and Monitoring

To measure the effectiveness of this training and intervention, evaluation will be conducted through pretests and posttests using the Symptom Checklist-90 (SCL-90). SCL-90 is a psychometric instrument used to evaluate a range of psychological symptoms and levels of distress. It covers nine symptom dimensions, including somatization, obsessive-compulsive behavior, interpersonal sensitivity, depression, anxiety, and others. Pretest, Conducted before the implementation of activities to measure the initial mental health conditions of the participants. SCL-90 will provide an overview of the level of distress and psychological symptoms experienced by the elderly before the intervention begins. Posttest, Conducted after the entire series of

activities is completed, using the same SCL-90 instrument. The comparison between pretest and posttest results will be analyzed to measure changes in the mental health conditions of the participants after participating in the intervention.

5. Data from the pretest and posttest will be statistically analyzed to determine the effectiveness of the intervention. In addition, this activity also involves periodic monitoring to ensure that participants can effectively apply the skills they have learned in their daily lives. These monitoring sessions will provide space for the elderly to share their experiences after the training and discuss the challenges they face.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This community service activity was attended by 20 elderly participants who are members of the Pimpinan Daerah Aisyiyah Banyumas prayer group at the Aisyiyah Center in Banyumas. The participants took part in mindfulness therapy training as an effort to improve their mental health. Demographic data shows that the average age of the participants is 67.05 years, with a standard deviation of 4.82 years, indicating relatively small age variation within this group. The age range of participants spans from 61 to 76 years, with the age group of 68 years being the most represented (20% of the total participants). The activities showed in picture 1.



Picture 1. Activities of Community service

The education levels of the participants also varied, with the majority having completed junior high school (35%), followed by senior high school (25%). Additionally, 20% of the participants had completed primary school, and another 20% held a bachelor's degree (S1). This variation in educational background is important to consider as it may influence how participants understand and apply the mindfulness techniques taught during the training.

Descriptively, the average SCL-90 score before the training was 185.75 (SD = 19.83), which decreased to 146.90 (SD = 16.53) after the training. The descriptive results are presented in Table 1. This decrease reflects a significant improvement in the participants' mental health following the training. This finding aligns with the stress adaptation theory, which suggests that

the elderly have a reduced capacity to manage stress (Aldwin et al., 2021). Cumulative stress can affect the elderly's ability to retain information in memory (Marshall et al., 2018). Therefore, interventions that help enhance coping abilities, such as mindfulness, are crucial in supporting the mental health of the elderly.

Table 1. descriptive statistic

	N	Mean	Median	SD	SE
Pre_SCL-90	20	185.75	178.50	19.83	4.43
Post_SCL-90	20	146.90	148.50	16.53	3.70

Table 2 presents the results of the T-test and data normality tests. The Shapiro-Wilk normality test on the post-training SCL-90 scores indicates a violation of the normality assumption ($W = 0.88$, $p = 0.015$), showing that the data is not normally distributed. This violation is common in small and heterogeneous samples, such as in this community service activity, where individual variations in response to mindfulness training can result in a non-normal distribution. Rietveld & van Hout (2017) suggest that in such situations, the use of non-parametric tests, like the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test, is more appropriate as these tests do not assume data normality. Therefore, the use of the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test in this analysis is valid and reliable for measuring significant changes in SCL-90 scores before and after training.

Table 2. Analisis Statistic Result

Statistic	Value	p-value
Wilcoxon W	210.00	< 0.001
Normality Test (Shapiro-Wilk)	0.88	0.015

The stress adaptation theory also emphasizes that mindfulness enables individuals to accept and face stress without adding emotional pressure, ultimately improving mental well-being (Grossman et al., 2004). Thus, the results of this community service activity support this theory and demonstrate that mindfulness training can enhance the stress adaptation abilities of the elderly, leading to overall improvements in their mental health.

The mindfulness therapy training conducted aimed to improve the mental health of the elderly, which was evaluated using the SCL-90 instrument before and after the training. The analysis results showed a significant reduction in SCL-90 scores after the training, with the Wilcoxon test yielding significant results ($W = 210.00$, $p < 0.001$). These findings indicate that mindfulness training is effective in reducing psychological symptoms such as anxiety, depression, and stress among the elderly.

Mindfulness is a therapeutic approach that emphasizes full awareness of the present moment, including thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and the surrounding environment. Kabat-Zinn (1994) defines mindfulness as "paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally." This definition highlights the importance of sustained awareness of internal and external experiences, as well as a non-judgmental attitude towards these experiences (Baltzell & Summers, 2016). In the context of the elderly, mindfulness can help them face the psychological challenges often encountered in old age, such as cognitive decline and changes in physical health status.

Baer et al. (2019) emphasize that mindfulness encompasses qualities such as openness, non-judgment, and self-awareness, which contribute to psychological well-being. Mindfulness helps individuals regulate themselves and improve their positive emotional states through sustained and non-reactive awareness of the present experience. These qualities enable the elderly to face life changes with a more positive and adaptive attitude. Thus, mindfulness training not only aims to reduce negative symptoms but also to enhance positive psychological qualities that contribute to overall well-being.

The benefits of mindfulness therapy have been widely documented in the literature. Hilcove et al., (2021) report that mindfulness significantly improves well-being in participants involved in mindfulness-based interventions. This well-being includes various aspects, including emotional, psychological, and social well-being, all of which are crucial for the quality of life of the elderly. Additionally, Ofei-Doodoo et al. (2020) found that mindfulness is effective in reducing stress and anxiety, which are often major issues in the elderly population. This is important because prolonged stress and anxiety can exacerbate mental and physical health conditions in old age.

Furthermore, research by Jiayuan et al. (2022) shows that mindfulness contributes to improved cognitive function in the elderly. Cognitive functions, including memory, attention, and thinking abilities, tend to decline with age. Therefore, mindfulness training not only offers benefits in terms of stress reduction and well-being enhancement but also helps maintain and improve cognitive functions that are essential for the independence and quality of life of the elderly

CONCLUSION

The community service activity involving mindfulness therapy training conducted at the Aisiyiah Center in Banyumas proved effective in improving the mental health of elderly participants. The significant reduction in SCL-90 scores after the training indicates a decrease in psychological symptoms, which is consistent with theories and previous research demonstrating the effectiveness of mindfulness in enhancing mental well-being, reducing stress and anxiety, and improving cognitive function. However, the violation of the normality assumption in the post-test data suggests the need for caution in interpreting these results. For future community service activities, it is recommended to consider the use of evaluation methods that are better suited to the distribution of the data and to increase the number of participants. This would ensure that the results obtained are more reliable and beneficial for broader community applications. Expanding the participant base would not only enhance the statistical power of the findings but also provide a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of mindfulness interventions across diverse groups within the community. This approach would contribute to the development of more targeted and effective strategies for mental health improvement, particularly among the elderly, and support the scalability of such interventions in other regions and settings

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