

# MEANING OF SOCIAL INTERACTION IN PANDEMIC FOR ELDERLY

*By Maria et al*

**Original Research Article: Qualitative Research**

**MEANING OF SOCIAL INTERACTION IN PANDEMIC COVID-19 FOR ELDERLY**

**Maria Theresia Arie Lilyana<sup>1\*</sup>, Made Indra Ayu Astarini<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Nursing Faculty Widya Mandala  
Catholic University Surabaya

**\*Correspondence:**

**Maria Theresia Arie Lilyana**

Nursing Faculty Widya Mandala  
Catholic University Surabaya  
Bhaskara Barat No.12 Road,  
RT.008/RW.02, Kalisari, Mulyorejo,  
Surabaya, Jawa Timur 60112  
Email: [ari@ukwms.ac.id](mailto:ari@ukwms.ac.id)

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**Abstract**

**Background:** The elderly belongs to the marginal cause not profitable and just be burden for productive age even though they still have an opportunity to growth as their old. Social interaction gave the meaning for elderly in their end of live. Limited social interaction, as a policy to decrease morbidity and mortality caused by Covid-19 interfered that activity for elderly.

**Objectives:** The aim of the study was to description the elderly experience when limited social interaction become a policy during pandemic Covid-19.

**Methods:** Research design used phenomenology to explore elderly's experience when limited social interaction become a policy during the pandemic Covid-19. Data collected by interview until data saturated, 10 participants conducted in this research, data was analyse used thematic analysis by reading the transcript verbatim.

**Results:** Limited social interaction for elderly in this study give the theme: the form of social interaction in the elderly, the feelings experienced by limiting social interaction and the benefits of social interaction for the elderly.

**Conclusion:** Limited social interaction had an impact as feeling unhappy, boredom and sense of longing. Without the good intervention, it will interfere with the health and quality of life of the elderly

**Keywords:** Social Interaction, Limited, Covid-19, Elderly

**INTRODUCTION**

The population of elderly in Indonesia is 270.203.917 people and around 26.842.920 (Statistik, 2020). Increasing age has impacts and problems for individual itself, both biological, physical, psychological and social changes. The changes have an impact on all aspect of life, including health (Fatimah, 2010). Psychological changes that experienced by the

elderly will result in the elderly slowly withdraw from relationship with the surrounding community, so that it can affect the interaction social. Reduced social interaction in the elderly can cause feelings isolated, so the elderly feeling alone and at the end become depression, it can be affected the quality of life of the elderly (Dina Andesty, 2018), especially in pandemic Covid-19 with the regulation

according limited social activity and interaction with the other.

The Indonesian government made a policy to limited social activity to reduce Covid-19 infection especially for elderly. The Covid-19 pandemic that has occurred in our country has caused the elderly to become vulnerable group. Weakened immunity in the elderly caused elderly in higher risk infected by virus Covid-19 and need intensive care. Covid-19 that happening in China caused the death rate for the elderly increasing 20%, especially in those over 55 years of age. (Monika, 2022). The goal of our government policy is decreased the morbidity and mortality because of Covid-19 especially for the vulnerable group. Our government policy to limited social interaction especially for elderly have an impact to give special care attention, so the elderly can live productively through their role in society (Fatimah, 2010), and have a good quality of life.

The elderly belongs to the marginal, with stereotypes that consider old age not profitable and just be burden for productive age (Sriyanto, 2012) make elderly feel helpless and useless. Quoted from (Christina Yuliasuti, 2017) the issues associated with the elderly such as: some of elderly were neglected, in addition they had no life provision, occupation or income, and they were living alone. Nurse and the care giver should have the ability to treat and appreciate the growth and development experienced by the elderly, also support the elderly to adapted with health and life crisis especially when Covid-19 pandemic happened in our country. Goal of this intervention is achievement of psychosocially healthy elderly. This condition will appear in the ability to adapt with the change that occurs as the aging process, so the elderly will be able to feel happiness, peace and satisfaction with their lives (Fatimah, 2010).

**Objective(s):** The aim of the study was to description the elderly experience when limited social interaction become a policy during pandemic Covid-19.

## METHODS

### *Study Design*

Research design used phenomenology to explore elderly's experience the meaning of limited social interaction during the pandemic Covid-19. 10 respondents participated in this research, consisting of 3 male and 7 female respondents. Category of research respondents: aged over 60 years old, not experiencing cognitive disorders such as dementia.

### **19** *Setting*

This research was conducted in the working area of the church of St. Vincentius a Paulo, Surabaya. Research time starts in early April to May 2022.

### *Research Subject*

Respondents who participated in the study were seniors age at least 60 years old, living in the working area of the church of St. Vincentius a Paulo Surabaya, willing to participate in this research. Exclusion criteria respondents were: elderly with chronic disease who are not active in social activities in the community and in the church community due to bed rest or limited physical movement.

Participants recruitment was carried out with the help of local environmental administrators to ask their willingness to participated in this research. Participants who are willing, will be interviewed for data collection until data saturated. Participants who participated in this study were 10 people consisting of 3 male and 7 female, age 60 to 75 years old.

### *Data Collection*

Data was collected through interviews using an interviews guide and a voice recorder to record the answer for 30-45 minute, and field notes.

### *Data<sup>23</sup> analysis*

Data collection was done by interview using a voice recorder. Data were typed into verbatim transcript and read several time and

thematic analysis have done, so that we get a theme as a result of of the research.

#### *Ethical Consideration*

The ethical consideration in this research is the permit application to the church. Freedom principal in this research is gave the chance to participants for participate or not in this research. Application for ethical justice were give the participants to get the same opportunity to participate in this research.

### **RESULTS**

Participants in this study aged 60 to 75 years old, consist 10 people. 3 male participants and 7 female participants. The participant lives in the working area of the church of St. Vincentius a Paulo Surabaya.

The results of the theme analysis from the research data obtained 3 themes, namely: the form of social interaction in the elderly, the feelings experienced by limiting social interaction and the benefits of social interaction for the elderly. This theme will be explained later.

The theme of the form of elderly social interaction was obtained based on the question whether the participants had activities outside the home that could be done independently. Some answers were obtained follows:

"I am getting old...long...long time ago.... Now, I don't have a job ma'am. If.. I don't have an activity...i don't have money to support my daily needs. I can fulfil my daily needs when I have a job as motorcycle taxi online." (participant 3)

"Yeah.....I'm always go to the market, or exercise or going to my friend's house like mam Leony's, and I can communicate with the others. Now (in pandemic Covid-19)... I can't do that, cause I'm afraid, if I'm going out I become ill,,,yeah, for now...we can go out and go to the market with a little bit fear." (participant 4)

"If an activity in my village... in my region only for gathering with the other." (participant 5)

"I miss, because I can't hang out with friends,...I wonder how...it feels like something is missing. Usually once a month there is a prayer gathering..." (participant 7)

The theme of feelings experienced by limiting social interaction is obtained from questions about how you feel with restrictions on social activities that are usually done. The answers obtained are as follows:

"I'm feeling not good....my children forbidden me to go out..." (participant 4)

"If stay at home alone....it make me bored." (participant 5)

"Yes..i'm feeling..if...I stay far away from my friend, my brother or sister and there is no a time for gathering with the other it feels not good. The important is feeling sad" (participant 9)

The theme of the benefits of social interaction for the elderly is obtained based on questions about the benefits of social interaction for the elderly. The answers obtained include:

"As humans we need to socialization, because we can't live alone. That activity makes as exchange opinion, exchange ideas and pour out everything in our heart and get the solution if possible. And...gathering activity make me feeling happy...i think that activity make me happy" (participant 5)

"Personally for me it is very helpful. The positive effect are we can meet with other, exchange opinion, can do this or that..." (participant 6)

"Many thing...feeling happy...and, if we can see each other and make a joke with my friends, it makes me happy. If I only stay alone at home...only in and out in my home. If I'm bored..i will pray use rosario or wash my clothes..." (participant 7)

### **DISCUSSION**

Based on the themes that have been found, the themes will be discussed as follows:

The themes of the forms of elderly social interaction that are generally carried out by seniors who have entered retirement are prayer activities according to their community, elderly

activities in the existing community and daily activities such as going to the market and gathering with friends of their age to communicate their daily problems.

Research shows that social interactions such as religious activities have an impact on feeling happy because that activities can make new friends, get new knowledge and share knowledge to the others (Santi Sulandari, 2016).

Research study conducted by (Trisnawati P. Samper, 2017) to 32 elderly at BPLU Senja Cerah Province North Sulawesi shows that most participants on good social interaction; quality of life mostly on high quality of life. It means there is a relationship between interaction social welfare with the quality of life of the elderly

The theme of feelings experienced by limiting social interaction is obtained from questions about how you feel with restrictions on social activities that are usually done. Participants said limitation of social activity causes feelings of unhappy, boredom and a sense of longing to meet with peers. Quoted from participant 9 "Yes..i'm feeling..if...I stay far away from my friend, my brother or sister and there is no a time for gathering with the other it feels not good. The important is feeling sad" (participant 9). The elderly belongs to the marginal, with stereotypes that consider old age not profitable and just be burden for productive age (Sriyanto, 2012). Feeling as marginal community caused old and limited social interaction with the other make elderly unhappy, boredom and sense of longing especially when pandemic Covid-19 happened in our country. The study conducted by (Atika Safira Ramadhani, 2020) elderly who had a chance to actualized themselves in community activity, and supported from family and community can increase self-confidence old age itself. As is acknowledgment from family and society. Social interaction gives the chance for elderly to get the new friend and development themselves.

The theme of the benefits of social interaction for the elderly was obtained based

on questions about the benefits of social interaction for the elderly.

Quoted from participant 5 "As humans we need to socialization, because we can't live alone. That activity makes make an opportunity to exchange opinion, exchange ideas and pour out everything in our heart and get the solution if possible. And...gathering activity make me feeling happy....i think that activity make me happy". It means there is benefit for elderly to make social interaction with the others. Social interaction provides the opportunity to meet other people, exchange opinions and share personal problems even if they do not find a solution

The results of the study (Syamsuddin, 2017) indicate that the elderly at PSTW Minaula Kendari carry out social functioning through the field of culture, knowledge and skills as well as spiritual and moral values of life. Roles which is run by the elderly provides positive contribution to society in the context of educate the younger generation not only intellectual but also social as a goal nation and state. Through activities, they has contributed to preserving the noble values in a society in particular Kendari people. Actually, elderly still have contribution to the other when they do social interaction with the other.

The elderly belongs to the marginal, with stereotypes that consider old age not profitable and just be burden for productive age. Assume that's not true, old man has potential in him. Through Elderly empowerment can actualize themselves so that can use to the fullest all abilities and potential in the elderly. Self-actualization in the elderly has a purpose make the elderly healthy, active, independent, productive and have quality good life (Sriyanto, 2012). It means that social interaction can give the benefit for elderly to have quality good life and actualized themselves.

This study limitations: only take participant form one community who live in working area the church of St.Vincentius a Paulo Surabaya.

## CONCLUSION

The elderly are a group that is considered powerless and a burden, but the elderly who still have a function in the life of social interaction actually still have values that can be shared with others.

Limited social interaction when pandemic Covid-19 happened in our country gives an unpleasant meaning to the elderly so that it can have an impact on their health status and quality of life.

## SUGGESTIONS

Social interaction for the elderly still has significant value for the elderly, so it is hoped that a safe and comfortable form of social interaction can be applied to the elderly.

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## DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTEREST

The results of this study do not have a conflict of interest.

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## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

### Maria Theresia Arie Lilyana:

Data collection and verbatim transcripts, discussion

### Made Indra Ayu Astarini:

Supporting articles for discussion and discussion

## ORCID

### Author 1

Maria Theresia Arie Lilyana: 0000-00021567-0838

### Author 2

Made Indra Ayu Astarini: 0000-0001-86876254

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