

# An Older Adults Perspective on the Impact of Spirituality Towards Pandemic COVID-19

*by* Berliany Venny Sipollo

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** This research aims to understand the perceptions of impact of spirituality towards pandemic COVID-19 from the perspective of the older adults, explores the themes of such perception older adults regarding spirituality in the pandemic COVID-19. **Methods:** This research is based on qualitative research in a phenomenological methodology. The research participants included older adults aged 60-90 living at home in Malang, Jawa Timur Provinces, Indonesia. Data collection methodologies included in-depth interviews and observation of participants. The data were analyzed in the phenomenological methodology by Colaizzi. **Results:** As a result of the research, it was found that all significant statements about the Indonesian older adults perception of spirituality in the pandemic COVID-19 fell within 10 categories with 2 major themes and 3 minor themes. The 2 major themes were: The COVID-19 pandemic is coming to an end and Spiritual improvement of the older adults. **Conclusion:** This study provides factor –factor to use on foundation to achieve spiritual need of older adults in the pandemic COVID-19.

**Key Words:** Older Adults, Spiritual, Perception, Qualitative research

### BACKGROUND

The influence of spirituality does not only affect the time of illness, but also affects the success, performance and quality of human life as well as the older adults. Spirituality is proven to be able to bring humans to success and make someone a powerful leader, fulfilling spirituality's needs is something that cannot be ignored. The need for spirituality has been shown to provide strength when facing threats or illnesses<sup>1</sup>. The relationship between spiritual awareness and emotional and mental health has a positive relationship, having spiritual or religious beliefs can help people to overcome and find meaning and gain peace of mind as they approach death<sup>2</sup>. Paying attention to the ultimately spiritual needs of the lives of both the healthy and the sick is fundamental to quality care<sup>3</sup>. A person with unmet spiritual needs is at increased risk of worse psychological outcomes, reduced quality of life, reduced spiritual peace, and an increased risk of depression. Spiritual needs are needs and hopes that lead to find meaning, purpose and value in their lives. such needs can be specifically religious<sup>4</sup> As upheld by Asian countries, especially in Indonesia, with the various beliefs of their people.

Indonesia is a nation that is plural in ethnicity, religion, race and class. This plurality has long been recognized by the founders of the nation and has become the hallmark of society in Indonesia. The main precept in the State of Indonesia is "God Almighty", this shows that spirituality is part of the Indonesian ideology. The influence of traditional beliefs and local religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity and Confucianism has in itself formed a unique concept of God (Yakino, Saudah, & W, 2019). Especially in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Godhead embraces all layers and groups, unites differences, strives together to support the PSBB (Large-Scale Social Restrictions) in order to break the chain of transmission. That is maturity and maturity in religious life, prioritizing active tolerance. Resilience is needed both physically and mentally in facing the COVID-19 Pandemic, because of the huge impact that is felt both from an economic, social and spiritual perspective for the Indonesian people.

One of the policies issued was PMK No.9 of 2020 concerning Guidelines for Large-Scale Social Restrictions in Handling COVID-19<sup>5</sup> in CHAPTER III Implementation of Large-Scale Social Restrictions Article 13, namely restrictions on religious activities, carried out in the form of religious activities carried out at home and limited family attendance, keeping everyone at a distance. All places of worship must be closed to the public; The burial of people who died not because of COVID-19 with the number present of not more than twenty people can be permitted by prioritizing efforts to prevent the spread of disease (breaking the chain of transmission). Existing policies and regulations limit the community in carrying out spiritual activities or worship. Nurse support is needed in dealing with the COVID-19 phenomenon, especially assessing the spiritual needs of the community.

The role of nurse in providing holistic care for the older adults, namely bio-psycho-socio-social and spiritual. Meeting the spiritual needs of the older adults can improve coping in dealing with difficult or challenging situations<sup>6</sup>. Especially during the COVID-19 pandemic the older adults fear of death is increasing due to contracting COVID-19, in this situation significant psychological adjustments must be made and using spiritual activities will be a very important part of coping. Spiritual care is an important part in the midst of a pandemic, serious or life-threatening illness, and especially the older adults who are at home who experience limited spiritual activities<sup>7</sup>. But before that nurses must first understand how the spiritual needs of the older adults in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic are described, so that they can plan and provide proper spiritual care<sup>8</sup>. A person who is spiritually intelligent is not only intelligent in terms of knowledge, but also has a high level of awareness about spirituality, so that it can make nurses more sensitive, reactive and responsive to the meaning and experiences of his life, and thus nurses tend to find it easier to have a positive attitude towards provision of spiritual care for the older adults<sup>1</sup>. Nurses who nurture their spirituality can find internal resources for caring through inner comfort, are more sensitive to the spiritual needs of the older adults, and have more effective coping with the stresses faced in providing nursing care<sup>9</sup>.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

### Research Design

This research uses a research design in the form of a phenomenological study to explore the description of the spiritual needs of the older adults during the COVID-19 pandemic. The meaning explored in this research is about feelings, readiness, hope, and challenges experienced by participants in meeting the spiritual needs of participants during this pandemic.

### Participants

Participants in this study were older adults people who experienced obstacles in fulfilling spiritual needs during the COVID-19 epidemic. The research inclusion criteria were as follows:

1. Older adults age above 60 years (proven by age on ID card)

2. There is no decline in cognitive function
3. Domiciled in Malang Raya (Malang city, Batu City, and Malang Regency)
4. Having difficulties and obstacles in fulfilling spiritual needs during the COVID-19 pandemic
5. Willing to be a participant (proven by filling in the informed consent)
6. Able to communicate well

#### **Data collection**

##### **1. Preparation**

In the preparation stage, it is carried out by arranging research permits. This management is carried out at the research department of STIKes Panti Waluya Malang. The arrangement of the correspondence includes a research permit letter and a cover letter to the research-related institution to be addressed.

##### **2. Implementation**

Researchers contact research participants and develop a trusting relationship between respondents and researchers. After a trusting relationship was established between the respondent and the researcher, the researcher entered into a contract to conduct in-depth interviews. These in-depth interviews can be carried out via long distance (Video Call) or through face-to-face meetings with due observance of health protocols during COVID-19. All conversations are recorded next and all conversations are written down. Data analysis was carried out to obtain meaning in this study.

#### **FINDINGS**

##### **Participants characteristic**

This study involved 10 elderly consisting of 5 men and 5 women. The six elderly were aged between 60 to 70 years and two were aged 70 to 80 years and two were older than 80 years. The last education of the elderly is a senior high school and six elderly are highly educated. Marital status with six elderly married and three widows and one unmarried. The five older adults are Christian, four catholic and one Muslim.

##### **Description of the Theme**

The experience of the older adults in fulfilling their spiritual needs during the COVID-19 pandemic in Malang was obtained through explorations conducted by researchers on participants using in-depth interviews. <sup>13</sup> In-depth interviews were conducted with all ten participants. The length of the interview for each participant ranged from 35-45 minutes according to the agreement at the beginning of the interview. There are two themes resulting from this study, where the analysis process uses thematic analysis by Stevens, Bordui and Weyde (1999). The results of the interpretation are obtained in the form of participant keywords that are collected and have the same meaning, then they are grouped into categories. The categories are grouped into sub themes which then develop sub themes. The two themes generated in this study describe the meaning of the older adults in fulfilling spiritual needs <sup>12</sup> during the COVID-19 pandemic in Malang: 1. <sup>12</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic is coming to an end; 2. Spiritual advancement of the older adults.

##### **1<sup>st</sup> Theme: The COVID-19 pandemic is coming to an end**

In the spiritual assessment of the elderly during the COVID-19 pandemic, the first theme was found, namely the COVID-19 pandemic is coming to an end. This theme consists of one sub-themes, namely (1) The COVID-19 Pandemic is over.

##### **Sub-theme: <sup>10</sup> The COVID-19 Pandemic is over**

The COVID-19 pandemic has a major impact on the joints of life, starting from the economy, education, society, national security and security.

Likewise in psychosocial life, building spiritual relationships is an important point in surviving the COVID-19 pandemic. In this theme, it consists of one sub-theme, namely the end of the COVID-19 pandemic. This was as conveyed by the fourth participant as follows: *"The hope is to quickly get rid of covid'19 so that worship will run smoothly, work will run smoothly, everything will run smoothly"*

With the direct restrictions on worship, the personal relationship between the older adults and God is more well-established. This is evidenced by the increase in the frequency of worship by the participants as follows: *"Pray so that it will disappear quickly. Then we can reunite with friends "*

## **2<sup>th</sup> Theme: Spiritual Improvement of the older adults**

In the spiritual assessment of the elderly during the COVID-19 pandemic, the second theme was found, namely the spiritual improvement of the elderly. This theme consists of two sub-themes, namely (1) increased prayer frequency and (2) closer to God.

### **Sub-theme: Increasing frequency of prayer**

The elderly participants experienced an increased frequency of prayer. The elderly are more surrendered to God with an increasing amount of time to pray. Elderly people ask God more like and increase the frequency of the following prayers:

"For a difference, personal prayer, maybe during a pandemic, ask God to get rid of the Covid-19 more, that's the prayer" (p1)

"If that night the midnight prayer, at 1 o'clock wake up midnight at a friend's house, then at 9 o'clock the prayer ... dhuhur prayer" (p2)

Participants also pray to God to be given health and spend more time praying as follows

"I pray that we are the same, because we ask God for the most effective medicine" (P6)

"Sometimes I lock the door, sis. Honestly, I usually like soap operas, it usually ends at 11 o'clock so I pray around 11 to 12 ... "(P8)

### **Sub-theme: Getting closer to God**

Increasing the frequency of prayers that the participants have can directly or indirectly draw closer to God. The closeness of oneself to God is evidenced by the prayers the elderly have for a long and healthy life, as follows:

"Well, I just praise it to be healthy, live long, that's how it is .." (p8)

In addition, elderly participants can increase their closeness to God both physically and mentally as follows:

"After the situation is like this we are getting closer to God .." (p9)

"Mind is getting closer to God ..." (P8)

Proximity to God is also proven by always praising God and having thoughts of repenting in getting closer to God as stated in the following terms:

"Sinners we must repent to God the longer we must be closer to God" (P5)

"To praise and glorify the name of God .." (P4)

The closeness to God is also through the act of always praying diligently because the elderly realize that they have a high risk, such as the following:

"I am expected to pray diligently at home because I am a group rather than what it is 1. High risk 2. Susceptible to disease ..." (P3)

## **DISCUSSION**

The older adults have unique respond of spirituality in the pandemic COVID-19. The spiritual activity of older adults that have to stop during pandemic COVID-19 such as praying together in the church or mosque, religion gathering and practicing choir together in the church, this situation made older adults have to cope and develop to achieve the spiritual need in many ways. The big hope from the older adults was the pandemic

COVID-19 is coming to an end, because the need to have connection between people in one religion becoming important support system for older adults. <sup>12</sup> Spiritual development is seen as a lifelong process which leads the older adults towards emotional fulfillment <sup>11</sup>

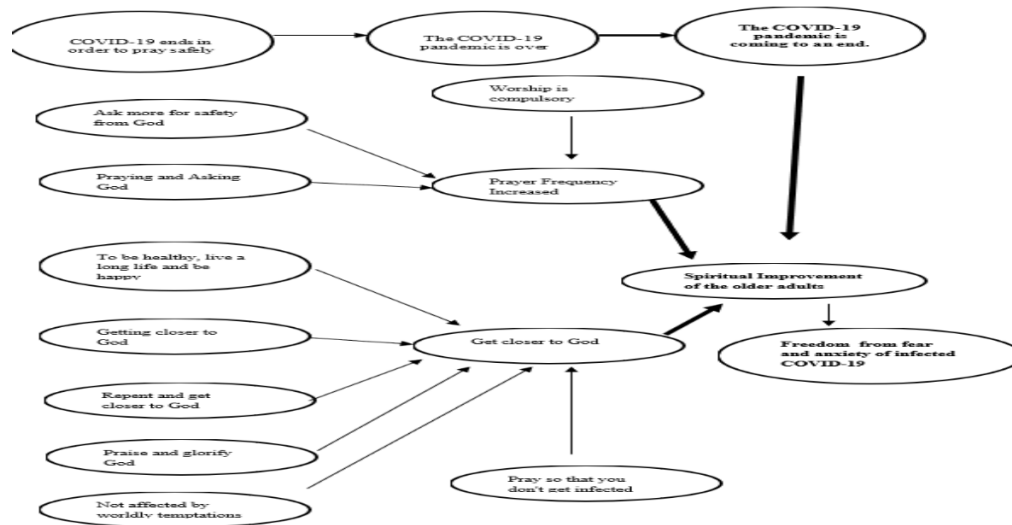
Spiritual care for the older adults is very important, because it can directly or indirectly affect the elderly physically and mentally<sup>12</sup>. The spirituality of the elderly is also very important in the level of health of the elderly themselves<sup>13</sup>. Because the spirituality of the elderly is very important, so that the spirituality of the elderly can be directly or not directly can affect the health of the elderly.

An increased level of spirituality can be seen from the increased prayer frequency. In this research, it is shown that the increasing frequency of prayer is experienced by the elderly. This increase in prayer frequency is evidenced by more time to pray to God. Apart from that, increasing the time for worship such as "prayer" and trying to be more intimate in worship. Worship according to his beliefs such as prayer can support the health of the elderly. Nurses can have a more vital role in supporting their spiritual side and based on the customs and customs of each elderly person. On the other hand praying also has benefits in the cognitive rehabilitative of the elderly <sup>14</sup>. Increasing the frequency of prayers the elderly have can reduce stress levels and can improve the bad effects experienced due to stress <sup>15</sup>. Even when worshipping, the elderly worship more at home because of the high risk of praying together during the COVID-19 pandemic <sup>16</sup>.

Getting closer to God is one form of increasing the spirituality of the elderly. Bringing himself closer to God is done because he thinks he will be given health and a long life. With the COVID-19 pandemic, the spiritual growth of the elderly has also increased, older adults is getting closer to God and has the desire to repent. The elderly also took advantage of the pandemic by praising God and worshipping a lot <sup>17</sup>. This perception of getting closer to God has a positive impact on the elderly, such as cognitive improvement <sup>14</sup>. Not only that, the benefits of prayer and getting closer to God can provide good coping for the elderly in facing stressors from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Relation between these two themes *a) The COVID-19 pandemic is coming to an end* and *(b) Spiritual improvement of the older adults* was showing activity changes for older adults. The COVID-19 pandemic becoming the impulsion for older adults to more increasing praying to God related to the religion. Through the closer to God made the older adults feel free from fear and anxiety to get infected COVID-19 and made feel more safe.

Figure 1



## CONCLUSION

In general, it can be concluded that the characteristics of the elderly based on interview data obtained from 10 elderly with average age 60-80 years old are obtained 2 themes which were (a) *The COVID-19 pandemic is coming to an end* and (b) *Spiritual improvement of the older adults*. These themes explain the pattern in the spirituality standing that leads to pandemic COVID-19 adaptation or coping among older adults as evident in their interview results.

The study result showed rich data regarding spirituality especially religiosity among Indonesian older adults, however, the need for extensive qualitative research in a large number of older adults through life review may further validate the result in this study.

## ETHICAL CLEARANCE

Ethical clearance approval was carried out at the STIKES Panti Waluya Malang institution of ethics on November 26, 2020 with number 70/784 / 407.229/ 2020.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Nil

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