

BUILDING SPIRITUAL RESILIENCE IN THE ELDERLY THROUGH RELIGIOUS COUNSELING PROGRAMS: THE CASE OF MUHAMMADIYAH SENIOR CARE, PROBOLINGGO PROBOLINGGO

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Abstract

Muhammadiyah Senior Care Probolinggo has held the community service program in order to fulfil this need by providing Islamic religious guidance as intervention for elderly residents in an effort to improve mental health, spiritual well-being, and social quality of life. Direct engagements served as the main method of penetration, allowing elderly to immerse themselves in the details and experience profound actions during three aspects (aqidah, ibadah, and akhlaq). The participants were comforted in aqidah now after being introduced to the compassionate attributes of Allah, i.e. merciful, and their fears of death started alleviating slowly as a result. Sessions of worship were held along with instructions on how to perform salah and opportunities for congregational prayer and dhikr (remembrance of Allah), forming a bond between the residents spiritually, as well as socially. Guidance of Ethics was to advance a harmonic interaction among care-centre, frequently conflicts were going on, so to merge people within peace and respect.

Participatory Action Research (PAR) was applied in the study where the elderly residents actively participated as subjects of the guidance program. Three main phases — pre-guidance, guidance, and post-intervention — were followed in this methodology. The entire process consists of the initial stage by an observation and needs assessment by the guidance through previous meetings with the residence, then based on their history and condition material is designed that best suits them. This was held face to face both as a group and on individual basis in order for the material to be delivered at a pace that fits the capacity of participants. The group sessions were a good way to get people talking, and the individual sessions allowed for more depth and context. The last step was to evaluate the responses of participants and their progression to prepare a report that could be useful for similar programs.

Its success is also due to the fact that it was not mandatory, and elderly were motivated to participate. Adaptive techniques like visual and audio methods or personal support helped facilitate understanding, although variability in educational backgrounds or physical limitations posed challenges. Tell the story of Prophets regularly, to draw inspiration from such events, which would assist the adults in absorbing faith-based principles practically. Such beneficial service helps the hawa nafsu of the elderly so that their spirit life can be well maintained in creating a harmonious atmosphere to prepare for the final phase of their life, with the hope of giving rise to Husnul Khotimah. Such a model may offer hope for other similar institutions in the years to come.

Keywords: Community service, elderly care, Islamic spiritual guidance

INTRODUCTION

Aging is an inevitable phenomenon in human life, marked by significant changes in physical and biological functions. The decline in physical abilities often correlates with various health challenges that impact the quality of life among the elderly. Studies indicate that chronic conditions, more prevalent in older adults, are directly linked to mobility limitations, which, in turn, affect their overall health status (Widada et al., 2018). Additionally, factors like grip strength and functional capacity in daily activities contribute to functional mobility among seniors (Fioritto et al., 2020). Declining mobility can lead to social and economic dependency, reducing work productivity and presenting challenges for individuals entering old age (Corona et al., 2012).

The psychological and mental aspects of the elderly are also impacted by decreased physical function. Research suggests that mobility limitations can increase depressive symptoms, especially when the elderly start relying on others for daily activities (Hossain et al., 2021). The inability to engage in social and daily activities often results in feelings of helplessness and neglect, adversely affecting their mental health (Araújo et al., 2018). Furthermore, nutrition is crucial, as malnourished elderly individuals tend to experience greater functional limitations, exacerbating their psychological conditions (Joukl et al., 2022). From a social perspective, older adults frequently experience social isolation, which can worsen their psychological state and decrease their overall quality of life (Baptista et al., 2018). Limited access to public services and transportation further aggravates the situation, hindering their social participation (Silva et al., 2013). Therefore, developing strategies that support mobility and social engagement is essential to enhance their quality of life and reduce family burden (Zhang et al., 2022).

The elderly population in Indonesia currently accounts for about 7% of the total population. According to 2006 Susenas data from BPS, the elderly numbered 17,717,800 individuals or 7.19% of the total population. With rising life expectancy, this figure is expected to grow to 23,992,552 or 9.77% by 2010 and to continue increasing to 28,882,879 or 11.34% by 2020. Among this population, approximately 2,426,191 seniors (15%) are classified as abandoned, while 4,658,279 (28.8%) are vulnerable to abandonment (Kemenag, 2010).

As in many countries, Indonesia is experiencing an aging population trend. Here, individuals aged 60 and above are considered elderly, in line with the 1998 Law on Elderly Welfare (Law No. 13). Over recent decades, Indonesia's elderly population has grown rapidly: from 7.99 million in 1980 to 11.28 million in 1990, 14.44 million in 2000, and 18.04 million in 2010. This number is projected to reach 27.08 million by 2020, 33.69 million by 2025, 40.95 million by 2030, and 48.19 million by 2035.

The increase in Indonesia's elderly population is an urgent issue, with many choosing to live with family as an ideal solution to meet their needs, in line with cultural, social, and religious values that emphasize the importance of familial bonds. The presence of elderly family members strengthens family ties and reflects moral and social responsibility passed from generation to generation (Nisak et al., 2021; Royani & Ravi, 2022). Research shows that family support plays a significant role in elderly self-care, enhancing their quality of life (Saraswati, 2023; Supriadi, 2023). Families that provide care and affection help maintain elderly health, reduce physical and mental illness risks, and improve adherence to necessary health care (Ginting & Brahmana, 2019; Sutrisno, 2023).

The increasing number of elderly in Probolinggo will provide some benefits and difficulties. Healthy and productive older persons can become valuable resources with wisdom and experience to share with society. On the other hand, when their health deteriorates, the burden falls heavily on their families and communities especially due to healthcare spending and social support. This scenario emphasizes the urgent requirement of developing elder friendly environment to ensure their well being.

Nursing homes like Panti Tresna Werdha Muhammadiyah Probolinggo, try to provide the best for the senior citizens, through several programs: spiritual guidance, skills training and recreation. The aim of these initiatives is to keep them engaged in purposeful activities and build emotional resiliency, connections and skills. Broken down, spiritual guidance for instance is to deepen the teachings of religion with several activities such as Koran recitation, lectures and sholawat. Alternatively, skills training allows the seniors to be creative — occasional events in the community feature work made by elderly people and this brings them a great element of appreciation and productivity.

Based on the findings of this study, this article stresses a holistic approach toward mental well-being improvement in the elderly using spirituality-based Islamic counseling and guidance in nursing homes. In addition to physical health, this study presented an Islamic counseling model, which sought subsequently that would lead to mental and spiritual soundness of the elderly people. The uniqueness of this study that contributes added value—which has rarely been emphasized in previous studies—is connecting the two, making mental and spiritual well-being an integrated factor that supports physical resilience. The mental and emotional state of the elderly can be enlightened by combining spiritual guidance with life skills training, allowing effective health to have a holistic perspective.

Abstract: The community service program is designed to improve the mental health of elderly through Islamic counseling and Islamic guidance at Panti Tresna Werdha Muhammadiyah Probolinggo, Indonesia. This means attempting to work out the mental state seniors ought to be in much of the time by focusing on both profound and passionate development. The program not only provides some very specific skill-building, but prepares seniors with skills that are critical for living a more fulfilling life and making the most out of their later years. This project will not only benefit the elderly and impact families to have deeper care but also induces positive social influence of concern for elders in the community at large so as to enable a respectful environment.

COMMUNITY SERVICE METHODOLOGY

Community service methods are carried out in a Participatory Action Research (PAR) framework that actively engages elderly participants at Muhammadiyah Senior Care Probolinggo to make important and relevant contributions. The process consists of three systematic phases: Pre-Implementation, Implementation, and Final Stage in May 2023.

The Pre-Implementation Stage consisted of initial observations in which the state of the elderly was researched and their needs were analyzed. In this phase, site selection and permissions were done, as well as technical groundwork to set it up. Before embarking on the activities, a program guide was designed which included a proposal that prepared all equipment and logistics.

The focus of the Implementation Stage was on delivering a guidance program that emphasized personal interaction. During these scheduled sessions, the elderly were given spiritual and emotional support in an informal participatory manner. These sessions

provided additional instructional content along with emotional support to promote well-being of the participants.

Step 3: Documentation and Activity Evaluation (Final Stage) A report documenting what worked, what didn't and the impact of the program was compiled as retrospective review for planning similar programs in future. It is hoped that this PAR will contribute positively and in a sustainable way to the well-being of the elderly in Probolinggo.

COMMUNITY SERVICE OUTCOMES

The Islamic spiritual guidance method applied in this community service project aims to enhance the mental health of the elderly at Muhammadiyah Senior Care Probolinggo. The facilitator used a direct approach, conducting face-to-face communication, either in group or individual settings. This approach emphasizes the active engagement of the elderly and tailors the material to their comprehension levels to achieve optimal impact.

1. Group Method

The group guidance method: in this method, the facilitator works directly with the seniors, but they are small groups. They are based on Qur'an and Hadith materials, touching on fiqh, aqidah, and akhlaq. Due to the poor education level of elderly subjects in general, the facilitator uses simple and comprehensible language. There is also light humor in between to keep the spirits high, and boredom at bay, so that the elderly find it easy and encourage themselves to take part in each session. Such a collaborative method enhances the geriatric's spirituality along with friendships of nearby residents thus establishing mutual emotional sustenance



2. Individual Method

The individual guidance method uses personal, face-to-face communication to provide customized support. Which incorporates Qur'an recitation, where the reader reads Qur'anic verses and the elderly repeat after him. This method enables the facilitator to listen to appropriate pronunciation, maqraj (articulation) and tajweed (recitation rules), immediately correcting them as necessary. Because some elderly participants are not yet good at reading or recognising Arabic letters, the facilitator introduces all material slowly and patiently so that the able ones to read will catch up, and those who cannot read also gets most of them learned.

Besides the Qur'an recitation method, the individual method also has a question-and-answer dialog to deepen the elderly's understanding of religion. An open Q&A session on various religious matters of choice to attendees, guided by a facilitator. This gives an elder the opportunity to verbalize any confusion or questions he/she may have

and allows for a deeper, more individualized grasp of the material. Questions are answered right away by the facilitator, illustrating points to make sure they stick.

The Islamic spiritual guidance program which was implemented at Muhammadiyah Senior Care Probolinggo provides group and individual integrated approach which contemporaneously is directed to optimize the health of elderly mentally or spiritually in comprehensive manner (body, mind and spirit). This method creates a supportive setting which in turn helps the old inmates feel relaxed and happy



3. Islamic Religious Guidance Material

Some Human Elaboration Aqidah development is a basic part of Islamic topical guideline, especially identified with the profound confidence in Allah SWT. A faith foundation is crucial for the elderly to build a solid view about their belief system. This aqidah guidance material discusses piety towards Allah as well as the attributes of Allah and the pillars of faith (rukun iman) including belief in Allah, angels, holy scriptures, prophethood, afterlife and qadha and qadar.

To make it easier to understand these aqidah subjects, its style is based on Allah's descriptions: The Most Compassionate and the Most Merciful. Alleviation of old age terror and uneasiness arising from deadly sickness or painful incapacity to express; the expression about Allah's love and compassion is vacated within them — by filling up their ages with tranquillity and amelioration, easing the fright of death as well as dying crisis; they become refocused outside; especially amidst the ultimate by living days. Takes the learning in very simple, kind language so that elderly can grasp it.

Understanding the five pillars of faith allows the elderly to implement Islamic teachings into their daily lives, while also improving their character and memorizing religious teachings with focus. This rise of piety acts as bedrock to provide the seniors with a touch of peace from within and without, which is priceless in enabling them pass on their final years of life with tranquility. Because with more conviction and a peace within their soul, they can die without fear, live out their days living to the max; only to stand firm in believing as life closes its chapters on earth

a. Worship Guidance

Worship guidance because worship is a bridge that brings creatures closer to the Creator, and as we all know, nothing makes us more intimate than being in worship. As outlined by the hadith of the Prophet who describes that Islam is built on top of five pillars, this guidance covers what are considered fundamentals of this faith and practices, especially prayer (salat) and fasting (sawm). Older adults are advised to pray regularly and carry out dhikr (remembrance of Allah) regularly, so that they can strengthen their relationship with Allah and also obtain tranquility for themselves.

This section of the guidance contains information on proper movement and expression throughout your prayers, as well as what to recite, all while absorbing the meanings of that specific prayer. The facilitator break downs the real meaning of worship- that it is not just a mere physical exercise, but an obedience and servitude to Allah. Praying in congregation (salat jama'ah) Is one of the guidance points, thus elderly are asked to pray together. This not only increases their spiritual connection with Allah but also solidifies social ties among other residents, making for a more familiar and community atmosphere.

Through this guidance, it is hoped the elderly can understand worship better by not only being introduced to a proper process but also in understanding its message. They are taught to offer worship with khushu (devotion), making it a way of achieving peace in their hearts and coming closer to Allah



b. Morality Guidance

According to him, the morality guidance is to help the elderly cultivate a virtuous quality; elevate behavior in all walks of life; and create a conducive environment at the nursing home. Building good morals has left the elderly practice peace, charity and mutual respect for each other. Facilitators sometimes do spot small quarrels or differences amid the daily life of home, which urge them to intensify the lessons on morality to establish peace and togetherness among residents.

Facilitators point out the significance of speaking and acting respectfully ensuring not to do anything that might be hurtful and avoid mocking or gossiping around, during such sessions. During one session elderly resident asked the facilitator what Islam states about mockery or gossiping and how to treat people who do that. The facilitator had strongly indicated that such actions are prohibited in Islam because it creates animosity and prevents peace. The one doing the facilitation also advised that those who are mocked at and gossiped should be patient, forgive it and make dua for forgiveness from Allah.

This guidance will help teach the seniors to respect each and every one of them, to be honest with others and have patience so that everyone can live peacefully and happily in a nursing home. In addition to teaching good character, the elderly are encouraged to practice it in daily interactions, which contributes to establishing a supportive, loving, and harmonious community

DISCUSSION

The community service program at Muhammadiyah Senior Care Probolinggo aims to provide Islamic religious guidance that strengthens the mental, spiritual, and social quality of life for the elderly. This guidance is essential, as the elderly often face mental and spiritual challenges that can affect their quality of life. Studies show that appropriate social-religious guidance can help the elderly find peace and meaning in life, as well as foster positive social interactions (Hendriyenti, 2022; Sakirman, 2019). By focusing on aspects of *aqidah* (faith), *ibadah* (worship), and *akhlak* (morals), the program provides the necessary support for the elderly to live a more peaceful and meaningful life in their senior years.

Each stage of guidance is designed to deepen the elderly's religious understanding. This aligns with research indicating that routine religious activities can strengthen both faith and worship practices while fostering good character (Alnashr et al., 2022). In this context, the guidance provided at Muhammadiyah Senior Care Probolinggo includes activities such as religious study, group prayers, and other acts of worship that help the elderly feel closer to Allah and find peace in their lives (Hendriyenti, 2022). Additionally, moral guidance is a crucial focus, as good character aids the elderly in interacting better within their social environment (Huda, 2023). The program aims not only to strengthen the spiritual aspects but also to enhance the social quality of the elderly. Studies show that positive social interactions contribute to better mental health (Sakirman, 2019).

By involving the elderly in social and religious activities, they can build better relationships with others, which, in turn, can improve their overall quality of life (Sakirman, 2019; Hendriyenti, 2022). Therefore, a holistic approach to Islamic religious guidance at Muhammadiyah Senior Care Probolinggo is highly relevant and necessary to help the elderly live a more meaningful and prosperous life.

In the *aqidah* guidance, emphasis is placed on understanding Allah's attributes of Compassion and Mercy, as well as the pillars of faith. These elements provide a sense of security and tranquility for participants. Research shows that a deep understanding of God's attributes and the pillars of faith can help individuals, including the elderly, cope with anxiety and fear often associated with death (Bonelli et al., 2012; Weber & Pargament, 2014). By understanding that life is a journey towards Allah, the elderly can experience peace and meaning in their lives, which is crucial for their mental health (Bonelli et al., 2012).

The *aqidah* content is presented with simple and compassionate language, enabling the elderly to internalize faith concepts more effectively. Research indicates that an empathetic and communicative approach in religious education improves understanding and acceptance, especially among older adults who may struggle with complex concepts (Buchori et al., 2021; Dian, 2023). In this way, *aqidah* guidance serves not only as a knowledge transfer but also as a means to build strong emotional connections between the teacher and participants, which enhances their spiritual experience (Mokodenseho, 2023). Furthermore, effective *aqidah* guidance can contribute to the mental health of the elderly. Studies indicate that religiosity and religious practices help

individuals manage stress and provide essential social support in facing life challenges (Buchori et al., 2021; Pickard & Guo, 2008). In this context, *aqidah* guidance at Muhammadiyah Senior Care Probolinggo plays a crucial role in helping the elderly find peace and meaning in their lives while reducing anxiety they may experience (Germanò et al., 2017; Jg, 2006).

It is also one of the main workflows to streamline the worship as, worship in Islam, it is a spiritual link between an individual and Allah. Older individuals are taught the ethics of conducting prayers, urged to join group prayers and perform dhikr (remembrance of Allah). Apart from proved obedience, worship activities also strengthen the social bond between elderly thus developing a feeling of cohesiveness at home. For the first timers in worship, this is a new perspective honing which means that worship is something more than just an activity but also the way to be close to Allah and find solace.

Thus, the guidance that contains moral content above aims to shape a good attitude and behavior of the elderly, especially in their social life at home. It is common for minor friction to occur among residents, so moral guidance goes a long way. This content teaches the elderly that respect, kindness and patience with each other matters. Using Interaction (such as group discussions and simulations) during teachings also assist the elderly with its moral values more fun and right applicable when they keep practicing. Among the elderly, who are said to have expressed changes in behavior with fewer conflicts and less anger between family members

One key to the success of the *aqidah* guidance program at Muhammadiyah Senior Care Probolinggo is a non-discriminatory and non-coercive approach. This approach allows each elderly participant to join the guidance according to their readiness and willingness, without pressure. Studies show that approaches respecting individual choices can increase elderly engagement in religious and social programs (Miller et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2020). Allowing the elderly the freedom to choose fosters a sense of appreciation and motivation to participate, ultimately enhancing their mental and spiritual well-being (Basir & Musa, 2021; Wang et al., 2020).

Research also shows that initially reluctant elderly individuals can feel comfortable and eventually join when given the freedom to choose. A gentle approach that respects individual willingness has proven effective, especially among the elderly with special needs (Wang et al., 2020; Xing et al., 2018). In this context, social support and a positive environment contribute to better mental health among the elderly (Neumann et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2020). Thus, the non-discriminatory approach in *aqidah* guidance not only supports spiritual development but also plays a role in improving the overall quality of life of the elderly (Neumann et al., 2021; Xing et al., 2018).

However, challenges were encountered in implementing the program, such as varying educational backgrounds and physical limitations among some elderly participants. These challenges require adaptation in teaching methods, such as using visual and audio aids and adopting a more intensive individual approach. With the help of multimedia tools, content can be conveyed more clearly, while individual approaches

allow the facilitator to tailor methods to each participant's specific needs. This approach helps the elderly understand the content better, despite their limitations.

In addition, inspirational stories of the Prophets are routinely used as material. These stories provide real and relatable examples for the elderly. By learning about the struggles and good deeds of the Prophets, the elderly gain inspiration and concrete examples of living in accordance with Islamic teachings. These stories help them understand moral and faith values contextually, enabling them to apply the lessons learned in their daily lives.

Overall, this community service program has had a positive impact on the well-being of the elderly at Muhammadiyah Senior Care Probolinggo. This religious guidance enriches their understanding of faith while creating a more peaceful and harmonious environment within the home. The humanistic, adaptive, and non-coercive approach has proven effective in encouraging voluntary participation. This program provides valuable spiritual provisions for the elderly, allowing them to live their remaining years with greater tranquility, happiness, and submission to Allah SWT, with the hope of attaining a peaceful end (*husnul khotimah*).

CONCLUSION

The implementation of religious guidance program among the elderly at Muhammadiyah Senior Care Probolinggo is no exception, which is based on individual conditions as a consideration in carrying out activities without discrimination between humans because God knows best about men's readiness to accept guidance. It crafted a soft, non-coercive, and encouraging approach — ensuring that elderly participants felt respected and had an incentive to join in. Passionate high elderly were reported in the implementation of this program and also very beneficial for them, especially regarding worship, *aqidah* (faith), *akhlaq* (morals) as well as stories of the Prophets. The elderly had thanked and shown their delight with the new things they learned which are intended to be used as spiritual *baon* (provisions) in their twilight years.

Old age is a wonderful time to strengthen one belief, continue the journey of getting closer to Allah and preparing for the life after death. The moral compass offered them firm spiritual roots, as the elderly absorbed deep convictions about religiosity and godliness. The *aqidah* guidance which emphasized that Allah is the Most Compassionate and Merciful managed to provide reassurance that calms, thus minimizing fear in facing death. Moreover, worship guidance urged prayer regularity and *dhikr* which bring an acquaintance with God. As a result, moral guidance offered them an important framework that served as the determining factor for their behavior, enhancing interconnectedness between fellow nursing residents and establishing a positive ambience.

For future program development, several recommendations could enhance the effectiveness of the guidance:

1. Personalized Approach in Guidance

The guidance program would be more effective if teaching methods were tailored to individual needs, considering the diverse educational backgrounds and Quran reading

abilities of the elderly. Using phonetic learning methods and visual and audio aids could significantly improve understanding.

2. Strengthening Consistency in Worship Guidance

To make worship a part of daily routine, establishing a consistent group prayer schedule, along with simple but meaningful reminders for daily *dhikr* and prayers, is essential. Structured support in worship practices will help the elderly draw closer to God in their daily routines.

3. Interactive Learning for Moral Guidance

Increasing interactive methods, such as group discussions and simulations, can help the elderly better understand moral values. Open discussions also allow the elderly to share experiences, support each other, and learn from one another, fostering a harmonious social environment among residents.

4. Regular Prophetic Storytelling

Inspiring stories of the Prophets can serve as an effective teaching medium to instill values of *aqidah*, worship, and morals. This content can be delivered regularly or integrated with other topics, providing the elderly with real-life examples from the lives of the Prophets that they can apply.

5. Utilization of Simple Media and Technology

The use of simple visual and audio media, such as posters or audio recordings, can help reinforce the elderly's understanding, especially for topics requiring visual examples or guides, such as prayer and *dhikr* procedures.

Through a structured and adaptive approach, this Islamic religious guidance program aims to be a means for the elderly to deepen their faith, improve morals, and create a peaceful and harmonious environment within the nursing home. This program is expected to provide a solid foundation for the elderly to live their remaining years in peace, happiness, and submission to Allah SWT, so they may attain a blessed end (*husnul khotimah*).

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