

The Impact of Intimate Relationship (a Qualitative Research)

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Abstract

Background and Purpose: Outside Indonesia, older adults intimate relationship is increasingly common, mainly because the incidence of single older adults continues to increase. Elderly in Intimate Relationship reported more positive impacts, but also negative impacts like the community stigma. Therefore, this research is aim to know the positive and negative impacts of elderly intimate relationship. **Method:** A qualitative phenomenological study on the elderly population of Panti Surya Nursing House in Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia. The subjects were taken by purposive sampling technique, who meet the inclusion criteria then subjected to intensive interview and diary record for about total 6-12 weeks (6-12 sessions with a duration of 30-45 minutes each session). **Results:** there were 5 subjects who met the inclusion criteria, consisting of 2 men and 3 women. There is 1 subject who is excluded because his status is still married. From the subjects, we found the positive impacts of their intimate relationships as feeling loved, trusted, and receiving kindness (building self-image), getting pleasure/happiness, economic assistance (clothing, food), and other findings such as creating a sense of fraternity and finding someone as an intermediary. Also, the negative impacts as negative assumptions from the environment, also any shareless feeling. **Conclusion:** it was found that the positive impacts of elderly intimate relationship even more than negative impacts. This can lead to achieving or improving the stages of Ego Integrity or reducing their regret in life (Despair), which was marked by feelings of satisfaction with their lives, as well as focusing on building positive relationships with partner (according to Erik Erickson's Psychosocial Theory). This can provide understanding for professionals and families to support and assist the elderly through their new relationships so that can achieve optimalization of mental health and quality of life in elderly, while still adjusting to norms and local culture norms.

Keywords: Elderly; intimate relationship; well-being; relationship impacts; ego integrity.

1. Introduction

Healthy Aging is the focus target of World Health Organization (WHO) in 2015 – 2030, for the elderly to remain a resource for their families, communities and economies (WHO, 2019). Outside Indonesia, older adults intimate relationship is increasingly common, mainly because the incidence of single older adults continues to increase. Data from the National Social Life, Health, and Aging Project 2005-2006, of 3,005

individuals aged 57-85 years, about 14% of single people are in relationships and only 8% in cohabitation (living together). However, in Indonesia, because it is still framed by local religious and cultural factors, not all types of elderly relationship occur. Most of Indonesian people always think that elderly should increase their religiosity, more social connectiveness but doesn't mean having intimate relationship with opposite gender. In Indonesian culture, having positive social relations (in community and also responsible for others) has been marked as fundamental to well-being (Maulana et al., 2021). Elderly start to have intimate relationship because of loneliness and desire for a friend (Huang et al., 2019; Lou Ciolfi et al., 2017; Watson & Stelle, 2011). Carr's (2004) research suggests that new intimate relationships may be a coping mechanism for loneliness in single elderly (Bildtgard & Oberg, 2017; Haase & Shiot, 2019; Hiller, 2018; Hoffman et al., 2021; Imamura et al., 2019; Morlett Paredes et al., 2021; Watson & Stelle, 2011; Wright & Brown, 2017).

Older adults tend to find relationships which they feel comfort and support each other (emotional well-being) (Cohen-Mansfield et al., 2016). Elderly in intimate relationships reported more social benefits, better health, more social connectedness, better self image, and lower depressive symptoms because their basic relational needs accomplished. All these lead to better achieving to Ego-integrity stage of Erik Erikson's. However, the stigma from the community, especially from their environment, causes the elderly close themselves from new relationships, while loneliness persists, leading to depression. Therefore, new qualitative research is needed to know deeply the positive and negative impacts of elderly intimate relationship (Anderson, 2016; Bender et al., 2017; Kahija, 2017; Kharicha et al., 2021; Kleinstaub, 2017; Kranick et al., 2011; Lou Ciolfi et al., 2017; Noel-Miller, 2011; Perry et al., 2015; Sin et al., 2018).

2. Methods

This study is a qualitative phenomenological study on the elderly population of Panti Surya Nursing House in Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia. The Ethical Clearances was published in May 11st, 2000 by Faculty of Medicine, Airlangga University, with the number 112/ EC/ KEPK/ FKUA/ 2020.

This research used a Qualitative method because it focused at elderly Intimate relationships which has no specific standard measurement. So that, this research unavailable to be quantitative.

The research subjects were taken by purposive sampling technique. The data analytical techniques by IPA (Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis) according to the inclusion criteria: (1) Subjects are single / widowed / widower. (2) Male/female subjects, aged >65 years. (3) The subject has a close relationship/dating with the residents of the same orphanage. (4) The MMSE (Mini Mental State Examination) score is above 20. (5) The subject can communicate in Indonesian. (6) Subjects are willing to participate in the study and sign an informed consent form. Subjects who meet the inclusion criteria are subjected to the in-depth interview and diary record. In-depth interviews were conducted for about 6-12 weeks (6-12 sessions with a duration of 30-45 minutes each).

After the subjects taken in-depth interview, we used IPA to directly interpreted the transcripts, made initial noting with important exploratory comment, then we made emergent theme with specific group words and superordinate theme. Finally we looked for pattern across cases among the subjects.

3. Results

There were 5 subjects who met the inclusion criteria, consisting of 2 men and 3 women. There is 1 subject

who is excluded because his status is still married. (See. **Table 1**)

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Subjects

	Subject A	Subject B	Subject C	Subject D	Subject E	Subject F (excluded)
Name (initial)	HI	TA	HM	SL	WD	SW
Age (year)	83	84	88	77	80	83
Gender	Female	Female	Male	Female	Male	Male
Religion	Christian	Christian	Christian	Buddha	Christian	Catholic
Nationality	Indonesia	Indonesia	Indonesia	Indonesia	Indonesia	Indonesia
Marital Status	Widow (dead)	Widow (dead)	Widow (dead)	Widow (divorced)	Widow (divorced)	Married
Last Education	Bachelor of Education	4 th grade, Elementary school	2 nd grade, Elementary school	High School	High School	Bachelor of Journalistic
Last Employee	Elementary school Teacher	Entrepreneur	Entrepreneur	Nanny Nurse	Entrepreneur	Tax Consultant
History of Mental Illness	None	Depression	None	None	- Depression - Auditorik haluccinatio on	- Depression
Phyysical Disorder	None	None	- Fall risk - Severe Hearing Loss - Prostat Disease	- Fall risk (post fracture) - Diabetes - Parkinson disease	- History of post fracture femur Dextra	None
Hometown	Probolinggo	Surabaya	Gempol	Surabaya	Surabaya	Surabaya
Time Living at Nursing House (years)	10	9	15	3,5	9	3,5
MMSE	29	29	29	28	26	27

The subject taken by indepth interview until we have clear manuscript of interview. Researcher made initial note with exploratory comment, then grouping the theme and found pattern across cases.

The results found the impact in the subject's life through their relationships, the main findings obtained that there are many positive things such as being a loved-trusted person, getting pleasure, happiness, peaceness, fraternity, and someone as an intermediary; also economic assistance (food, clothing). Besides there are some negative things that are also obtained such as negative assumptions from the environment, also any shareless feeling (new discovery) (see **Figure 1**).

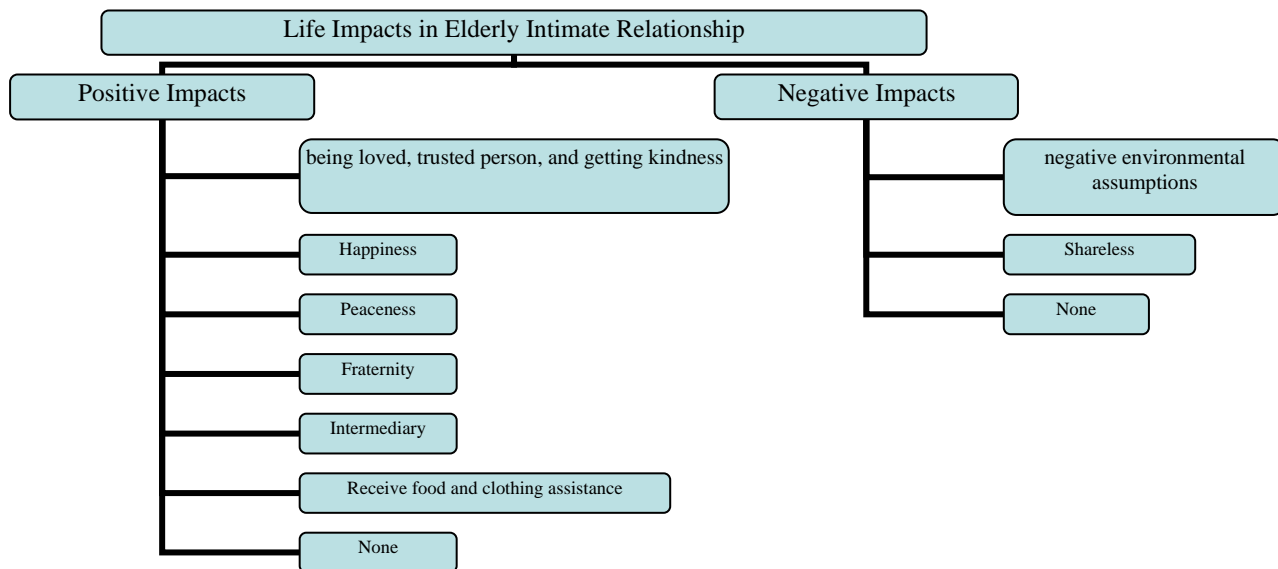


Figure 1. The Life Impacts in Elderly Intimate Relationships

4. Discussion

The positive impact was declared by most of the subjects, such as feeling loved, trusted, and getting kindness, peaceness, happiness, fraternity, and someone as an intermediary, also getting food and clothing assistance.

New partnership relationships (courtship) contribute to improving self-image and youth behaviors, such as walking with hand in hand. Elderly people feel young again, experience romantic feelings and build self-image like young adults (Huang et al., 2019). This statement is consistent with subject A who declared herself as a loved-trusted person.

- "I become a trusted person of him, he loves me, he also protects me."

Spouse support can buffer feelings of frustration, sadness, worry, and negative moods, thereby increasing women's feelings of calm (Carr et al., 2017). In addition, it was also reported that the purpose of intimate relationship is having fun (Watson & Stelle, 2011). This is similar with subject B's statement who felt peace, calm, happy when together with her relationship.

- "I feel peace, calm, happy when beside him."

Compared to non-relationship, elderly relationships tend to feel younger, have more economic resources, are in better health, and enjoy greater social ties. Economic resources vary among partnership statuses and can affect psychological well-being. However, the impact of economic resources and health appears to be more pronounced for men (Noel-Miller, 2011; Susan L. Brown, 2013; Watson & Stelle, 2011). Regarding the positive impacts in the elderly relationship, there are several new findings, such as a sense of fraternity

(expressed by subjects C and E) and someone as an intermediary (subject E)

- "I call her 'sister' that I can adopted as sister, my feet" (subject C)
- "Just like real brother and sister... For me, she is my intermediary to talk. For her, zero." (subject E)

For the negative impact, the subjects stated that they received negative environmental assumptions such as gossip (subject B), and a lack of sharing (subject E). The problem of prejudice from others in the elderly's environment is the reason why they tend to hide their relationships to avoid gossip (Huang et al., 2019). This is in accordance with what was expressed by subject B. While the feelings of shareless expressed by subject E are new findings obtained from the negative impact of the elderly relationship.

- "Yes please, so it can't be negative gossip, not being talked" (subject B)
- "if about money, difficult, she won't lend me, she won't give." (subject E)

From the various impacts expressed by the subjects, it appears that the positive impacts outweigh the negative ones. The positive impacts obtained by the subjects such as feeling loved, trusted, and receiving kindness (building self-image), getting pleasure/happiness, economic assistance (clothing, food), and other findings such as creating a sense of fraternity and finding someone as an intermediary. All these make them have more self-image as adults and focus on their old life in happily and calmly.

In addition, the previous relationship contributed in the elderly new relationships. Subject C and D stated that they had approximately the same level of satisfaction, so that they were able to fill the void of current intimate relationships, also give the meaning to life (subject A). Subject A stated that the current relationship is reminiscent of the previous relationship's satisfaction.

The last developmental stage of an elderly person (60 years) is "Integrity vs. Despair". Integrity is how a person feels satisfied looking at his past life, and feels that he is living a better life more broadly, with who he is or what he does (Sadock, 2017). Ego integrity is an integration of the life cycle of older adults (elderly) who are nearing the end of their lives, which emphasizes the focus on building relationships with others, with the aim of maturity and harmonious life until the end of life. Thus, there is a growing need to enhance ego integrity in the elderly who spend the last days of their lives in nursing homes. (Lim & Chang, 2018)

Ego-Integrity refers to accepting and integrating the past and the present, involving make peace with regrets, hatred, can resolve and forgive the past conflicts. Success at this stage leads to wisdom and a feeling of well-being, while failure leads to regret and despair. Ego-integrity is positively related to increasing life satisfaction. In this phase, the main function is evaluative vs productive, more about "being" than "doing" (Bugajska, 2017; Dezutter et al., 2019; Yaffe, 2019).

Elderly in Intimate relationships have longing to have a partner because of loneliness and desire for a friend, also new intimate relationship may be a coping mechanism to overcome loneliness in the elderly (Bildtgaard & Oberg, 2017)(Wright & Brown, 2017).

5. Conclusion

The positive impacts obtained from the intimate relationship are feeling loved, trusted, and receiving kindness (building self-image), getting pleasure/happiness, economic assistance (clothing, food), and other findings such as creating a sense of fraternity and finding someone as an intermediary. In this study, the courtship relationships established by the subjects were able to assist in achieving or improving the stages of Ego Integrity or reducing feelings of regret in life (Despair), which was marked by feelings of satisfaction with their lives (including in previous intimate relationships), as well as focusing on building positive relationships with partner, with the aim of maturity and harmonious life until the end of life (according to Erik Erickson's Psychosocial Theory). By achieving the elderly's ego integrity as a result in establishing new relationships in later life, it can provide understanding for professionals and families to support and assist the elderly through their new relationships so that can achieve optimalization of mental health and quality of life in elderly, while still adjusting to norms and local culture norms.

Author Contributions : Conceptualization, K.M.A, M.M.M, and W.H.; Methodology, K.M.A, M.M.M, and W.H.; Formal Analysis, K.M.A.; Investigation, K.M.A, M.M.M, and W.H.; Data Curation, K.M.A, M.M.M, and W.H.; Writing—Original Draft Preparation, K.M.A.; Writing—Review and Editing, K.M.A, M.M.M, and W.H.; Project Administration, K.M.A, M.M.M, and W.H.; Funding Acquisition, K.M.A. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Funding: The author(s) received no external funding for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Ethical clearance was not applicable for this study.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: Data sharing not applicable

Acknowledgments: none

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest related to this manuscript.

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