



The Role of Spirituality in the Success of Elderly Developmental Tasks: Integrity vs Despair Stage at Wisma Harapan Asri

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Abstract. This study aims to explore the role of spirituality in the completion of psychosocial developmental tasks of the elderly at the stage of integrity versus hopelessness as described in Erik Erikson's theory. A qualitative approach with a phenomenological design was used to understand the meaning of the spiritual experiences of the elderly living in Wisma Harapan Asri. Data collection techniques were conducted through semi-structured interviews and observation, then analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. The results of the thematic analysis show that spirituality plays an important role in achieving self-integrity, as seen from self-acceptance, wisdom, meaning of life, and readiness to face death. Participants indicated that the practice of worship, closeness to God, and reflection on the meaning of life helped them manage physical limitations, feelings of loneliness, and existential uncertainty. The findings confirm that spirituality is not just a religious activity, but a foundation of psychological resilience that strengthens older adults' mental well-being and acceptance of the past and end of life. This study contributes to gerontological psychology by emphasizing the importance of psychospiritual interventions in supporting older adults in institutional settings.

Keywords: Spirituality, Integrity Vs Despair, Elderly.

1. Introduction

The increase in the number of elderly people in Indonesia has shown a significant increasing trend in recent decades [1]. Based on data from the Central Statistics Agency, Indonesia is expected to enter an era of aging population in 2030 when more than 15% of its population will be over 60 years old. This growth not only has an impact on the health and social service system, but also poses complex psychological and spiritual challenges, especially in terms of adapting to changes in physical, social, and role functions in the family and society. In old age, individuals experience decreased physical condition, increased risk of chronic disease, loss of partners or peers, and limited social activities. The combination of these factors often gives rise to feelings of loneliness, helplessness, and a crisis of the meaning of life, which can have an impact on the individual's inability to achieve healthy psychosocial development tasks. As stated by Fusar-poli et al. [2], the elderly often experience deep inner conflict between acceptance of past life and failure to find sustainable meaning, which ultimately gives rise to psychological stress and existential distress.

Within the framework of Erik Erikson's psychosocial development theory, the final stage of human life is known as the integrity versus despair phase. At this stage, individuals are faced with the task of reflecting on past lives and constructing meaning from those experiences. Successful completion of this stage will result in a feeling of integrity, namely acceptance and peace with the life that has been lived. Conversely, failure to complete it will lead individuals to feelings of despair, regret, and fear of death. Reischer et al. [3] emphasizes that the integrity phase not only reflects the end of the

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psychosocial development process, but is also an existential test of the individual's entire life, where failure to reach this stage is not a personal failure, but can be the result of social and cultural systems that fail to provide adequate meaning and spiritual support for the elderly.

In this context, spirituality plays a crucial role as an internal force that allows the elderly to build meaning, overcome loneliness, and accept change and death more peacefully. Spirituality is not limited to religious practices, but includes a sense of connection with something greater than oneself, existential contemplation, and a search for a deeper meaning in life. Miquel et al. [4] states that spirituality has a significant contribution to aging well because it provides an interpretive framework for the elderly to understand their life experiences, integrate failures and successes, and build hope even in declining physical and social conditions. Spirituality becomes a source of psychological resilience that allows individuals to respond to old age not as an existential decline, but as a period of transcendence and wisdom.

However, the reality on the ground shows that many elderly people have not been able to access or build spirituality meaningfully. Many still experience a crisis of the meaning of life, depression, and fear of death, especially among those who do not have adequate social or religious support systems. Borges et al. [5] found that the quality of life of the elderly is significantly related to the level of spirituality they have, and the lack of a spiritual dimension in the lives of the elderly has been shown to increase vulnerability to psychological distress. Therefore, it is important to examine more deeply the role of spirituality in helping the elderly manage developmental tasks at the integrity vs. despair stage.

This research is very relevant in the context of Indonesian society which is facing demographic changes and value crisis, especially in terms of support for the elderly. By delving deeper into how spirituality contributes to successful completion of the integrity stage, this study aims to provide a theoretical and empirical basis for the development of effective psychospiritual interventions for the elderly population in various social settings. Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development is the main foundation for understanding the dynamics of individual development throughout the life span, with a focus on the resolution of conflicts between the two poles that emerge at each stage. In the eighth stage, namely the integrity vs. despair stage, older individuals are faced with the challenge of reassessing the entire life that has been lived. Those who succeed in achieving integrity will feel satisfaction, inner peace, and acceptance of the reality of death. Conversely, those who fail will be filled with regret, a sense of meaninglessness, and existential fear. Ljungholm et al. [6] emphasized that the achievement of integrity is greatly influenced by the context of residence, social support, and the quality of interpersonal relationships, and that older adults in nursing homes who do not have access to meaningful interactions are more susceptible to despair.

Spirituality, derived from the Latin word, *spiritus*, meaning "breath of life", refers to a way of being and experiencing that arises from an awareness of the transcendental aspect, and is characterized by a number of values related to the individual's relationship to himself, others, the universe, life, and an entity considered to be the Supreme Being [7]. Spirituality also reflects a relationship involving various dimensions that aim to maintain balance and harmony with the surrounding environment, as well as helping individuals deal with emotional stress, physical disorders, and uncertainty about death [8]. According to Tavares et al. [9], spirituality has several important components. The first component is the transcendent dimension, where spiritual individuals have a belief based on their personal experience that life includes a transcendent dimension.

This belief can take various forms, ranging from religious belief in God Almighty to the psychological understanding that the transcendent dimension is a natural extension of consciousness into the subconscious or Higher Self. Regardless of the form or model used to describe other dimensions, spiritual individuals believe in something more than just visible reality. They believe in the existence of an unseen world, and believe that a harmonious relationship and adjustment with that world brings benefits. Direct experience of this transcendent dimension, often referred to as a "peak experience" by Maslow, can provide inner strength and meaning for spiritual individuals.

Spirituality also includes the meaning and purpose of life, which reflects the belief that one's existence has a clear meaning and direction. In the process of searching for this meaning, spiritual individuals have usually filled the existential void with an authentic understanding that life is meaningful. The next component is the mission in life, namely that spiritual people have a sense of "calling". They feel a sense of responsibility towards life, a calling to be answered, a mission to be completed, or in some cases, even a destiny to be fulfilled. Spiritual people are "motivated" and understand that in "losing life", one will "find it". In addition, there is also a component of the sanctity of life, where individuals view all aspects of life as sacred, even in non-religious contexts. This is in line with the attitude of valuing material values proportionally.

Spiritual people may value wealth and possessions, but do not make them the main source of satisfaction, because they realize that spiritual fulfillment cannot be replaced by worldly things. Another component is altruism, namely concern for the suffering of others and a commitment to love and social justice. Spiritual people feel connected to others and have a sense of responsibility towards humanity. They also have idealism, namely a commitment to high ideals and a strong desire to improve the world. Awareness of the tragic is also part of spirituality, where individuals are fully aware of the reality of suffering and death, but instead deepen their sense of gratitude and appreciation for life. Finally, the fruits of spirituality become important markers of true spiritual existence, namely in the real positive impact on the individual's relationship with themselves, others, nature, life, and the Supreme Being.

In relation to elderly psychology, spirituality has been shown to be a protective factor against various mental disorders such as depression and anxiety, as well as a buffer against loss of social and physical function. Kaleta and Mróz [10] suggested that spirituality functions as an important mediator between depressive symptoms and subjective well-being in the elderly, showing that individuals with deep spirituality are able to maintain quality of life despite experiencing psychological distress. In the integrity vs. despair phase, spirituality allows the elderly to reconstruct their life narrative with a more positive perspective, accept failure as part of the learning process, and develop a transcendent view of death. Research on the relationship between spirituality and elderly well-being has consistently found that the spiritual dimension plays an important role in helping the elderly overcome psychosocial challenges in old age.

Hassen et al. [11] in their research emphasized the importance of adult Christian religious education (PAK Dewasa) in fostering spiritual awareness in middle adulthood, as a provision in facing existential crises in old age. The results of this study indicate that strengthening spiritual values since middle age contributes significantly to an individual's ability to navigate old age with serenity and deep meaning in life. Bolger and Prickett [12] took a pastoral approach to explore how spirituality functions as a psychological force in helping the elderly find meaning in life amid physical and social limitations. They found that elderly who were active in spiritual activities showed higher levels of life satisfaction and were better prepared to face death. These results support the assumption that the

integration of life experiences and acceptance of the end of life are greatly influenced by the quality of an individual's spirituality. Research by Kenning et al. [13] highlights the importance of intergenerational communities as a medium for developing elderly spirituality. She found that sharing life experiences between generations not only strengthens the sense of social connectedness but also significantly increases the meaning of life for the elderly. Such communities become fertile ground for spiritual growth through dialogue, reflection, and cross-age learning, which directly impacts the strengthening of the sense of integrity in the elderly.

Research on the elderly and psychological well-being in Indonesia has shown that spiritual aspects have an important contribution in maintaining mental health and quality of life in old age. Kang and kim [14] stated that spirituality is one of the main components of the psychological well-being of the elderly, because it helps the elderly form the meaning of life and accept the reality of physical limitations and the proximity to death. This shows that spirituality not only functions as an emotional support, but also as a source of psychological strength in dealing with the existential crisis that is common in old age. Another study by Esteban et al. [15] found a significant relationship between the level of spirituality and symptoms of depression in the elderly. The higher the level of spirituality of a person, the lower the tendency to experience depression. This shows that the role of spirituality as a protector against common psychological disorders experienced in the final stages of life. Meanwhile,

Komariah et al. [16] highlighted the effectiveness of dhikr therapy in improving the psychological well-being of the elderly, which strengthens the view that spiritual practices contribute directly to inner peace and acceptance of one's condition. The majority of studies still focus on the relationship between spirituality and mental health in the elderly and tend to view spirituality as a formal religious activity. There are not many studies that focus on in-depth exploration of personal and narrative spiritual experiences and their direct relationship to the achievement of developmental tasks at the integrity vs. despair stage according to Erikson. In fact, this aspect is very important to understand how the elderly deeply interpret their lives when they are old. Therefore, a qualitative approach is taken to fill the gap by exploring how spirituality plays a role in supporting the successful completion of tasks at the integrity vs. despair stage of the elderly. This study aims to explore how spirituality supports the elderly in finding life meaning, achieving self-acceptance, and completing the integrity versus despair stage of development.

2. Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design, this design was chosen with the aim of exploring the meaning and role of elderly spirituality and how experience contributes to the achievement of self-integrity. The participants of this study were elderly people living in Wisma Harapan Asri. Primary data collection was carried out through semi-structured interviews based on aspects of spirituality and Erikson's psychological development stages of integrity vs. despair. The aspects of spirituality were put forward by Wildman et al. [17] which consist of aspects of transcendence, meaning and purpose of life, mission in life, sanctity of life, material values, altruism, idealism, awareness of the tragic, and the fruits of spirituality.

In addition, observations were also made as secondary data on the behavior, expressions, and emotional conditions of respondents during the interview. The data that had been collected were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques consisting of the following steps: Reading transcripts of interview results, organizing similar codes,

identifying emerging themes, selecting quotes that represent the theme and connecting them to research questions.

3. Result and Discussion

Based on the results of interviews with four elderly informants at the Harapan Asri homestead consisting of MP (80th) who is Buddhist, S (85th) who is Catholic, OS (80th) who is Catholic, and SD (78th) who is Catholic. All participants said that they practice worship and prayer every day such as reading the rosary every morning, praying for children and grandchildren, and praying in church every day, this is also reinforced by the condition of the orphanage which carries out routine worship activities in the Catholic faith. Participants feel that their advanced age, closeness to God is the most important. The elderly emphasize the importance of a transcendental relationship with God. As explained by participant S who stated, "every moment feels close to God" and also participant O who said, "at this age we must remember God more often" which they believe that worship is a way for them to prepare themselves to face death "my current task is to maximize preparation for death later".

The elderly who participated in this study had various health conditions, some were still able to carry out activities well, but there were also those who had difficulty hearing, used wheelchairs and those who could now only lie on the bed. However, physical limitations were not an obstacle in carrying out worship. In the psychosocial development stage of the elderly, the conflict experienced is integrity versus despair as stated by Erik Erikson. At this stage, the elderly are faced with reflection on past lives. The success of this reflection is marked by self-acceptance and peace (integrity), while its failure will lead to feelings of regret and fear of death (despair) [18]. From the interview results, several achievements in the development conflict at the integrity vs. despair stage can be seen:

a) Self-acceptance

Acceptance of the past life journey

"I feel that what's past is past, no need to think about it anymore, what's important is that we live it now with the best we can." (SD)

In addition, acceptance regarding the increasingly weak physical condition

"if you want to look back if you can, there are still times but sometimes don't think too long. For old people, that's not good, right? If you're still young, you can still do it, in the past you were happy, now it's hard. If old people think like that, their blood pressure will go up, they'll get diabetes and various diseases, it's better to avoid it.." (OS)

b) Wisdom

As indicated by the OS who wants to share knowledge:

"I want to give my knowledge to people, everyone... that's not all, there's a lot we can do, we have to share it." (OS)

c) The meaning of life's journey

Some participants said that living in this boarding house was not their decision but from their closest family, they tried to enjoy and accept the condition and find some ways or strategies to overcome the discomfort of living in the boarding house. Participants reflected on their lives and felt:

"quite satisfied with the life I live and I am grateful" (S)

Joint worship activities in the shelter provide a sense of togetherness. As said by participant S:

"Yes, I'm happy here, there are many friends so I'm not alone."

d) Accept limitations

Although (M) felt lonely

"lonely and couldn't stand living in the orphanage" (M)

he was able to adapt to the conditions of the orphanage and find a solution to his discomfort, besides that it also concerned the acceptance of physical limitations that made him unable to do activities and carry out worship at Church because of his physical condition (OS) and accepting the limitation that now he is elderly and his physical condition is not like before so now it is better to enjoy life and not think about what has happened too deeply:

"if you want to look back if you can, sometimes there is still but sometimes don't think too long. For old people that's not good, right? If you're still young you can still do it, in the past you were happy, now it's hard. If old people think like that, eh, their blood pressure will go up, later they will get diabetes and various diseases, it's better to avoid it...."

Based on the interview results, spirituality holds several important meanings in the daily lives of the elderly. Participants consistently emphasized that spiritual life is the most essential aspect of old age, as reflected in the statement of participant S:

"I feel close to God every moment. (S)"

This statement shows how spiritual connection provides a sense of peace and is the main source of inner peace. This finding is in line with the opinion of Greenblatt-Kimron et al. [19] that deep spirituality helps the elderly achieve psychological well-being and give meaning to life experiences in their entirety. Despite experiencing physical limitations such as using a wheelchair or having difficulty hearing, the participants remained active in carrying out religious practices. This reflects that spirituality functions as a driving force that transcends physical constraints. As expressed by an OS participant:

"At this age, we have to remember God more often. We don't know when we will be called, it could be fast or slow. So, I need to continue to prepare myself, so that my heart is calm" (OS).

This quote shows how spirituality facilitates acceptance of death and becomes a source of existential calm, as described in Santrock's research and reinforced by Best et al. [20] which shows the importance of spirituality in elderly care approaching the end of life. Self-acceptance was also a major aspect achieved by the participants. Participant SD said,

"I feel that what's done is done, no need to think about it anymore, what's important is that we live it now with the best we can." This statement reflects an attitude of reconciliation towards the past and a focus on the present, which is an indicator of successful resolution of the integrity vs. despair conflict. Erikson called this ability a form of "end-of-life wisdom. (SD)"

In addition, there is a shift in life values from materialism to spiritual transcendence. Mrs. SDj stated, "When I was young, I thought material things were important. Now, the most important thing is that I can enjoy my age, and then my job is just to worship." This

shows a reorientation of values towards spirituality as explained by Lindseth and Norberg [21], that spirituality helps the elderly find new meaning that does not depend on worldly achievements.

Another important finding in Ukeachusim et al. [22] research is how spirituality helps the elderly overcome feelings of loneliness due to separation from family. Although living in a nursing home is not a personal desire, the participants still try to accept the situation and interpret the condition positively. As expressed by participant S, "Yes, I'm happy here, there are lots of friends, so I'm not alone". Joint spiritual activities such as daily mass and community prayers actually create a sense of togetherness and solidarity. Whear et al. [23] stated that cross-generational or collective group interactions have a significant impact on strengthening the spirituality and quality of life of the elderly.

Spirituality is also a means of maintaining emotional connections with family. In the words of participant SD:

"The purpose of life now is to pray for family, especially children and grandchildren" (SD).

Prayer activities are not only a religious routine but also a way of maintaining connection, reflecting that spirituality transcends physical and social boundaries. In dealing with life's regrets, spirituality is also an important foundation. SD expressed that he had regrets about his relationship with his brother, but he emphasized,

"I made it a life lesson, not to make me depressed" (SD).

This approach shows the process of transcending past failures and supports the achievement of integrity as stated by Aristidou et al. [24], that spirituality helps the elderly reconstruct life experiences positively.

In terms of readiness to face death, participant O said:

"Every human being will definitely be called by God. Not only old age, but many younger than me are also called first" (O)

This statement reflects a high level of acceptance of death, in accordance with the final stage of Kübler-Ross's theory, namely acceptance, which is strengthened by the spiritual context in the perspective of the elderly. The results of this study show that spirituality facilitates the achievement of various aspects of self-integrity in the elderly, including self-acceptance, wisdom, meaning of life, and readiness for the end of life. This finding is in line with Jididi et al. [25] who emphasized that spirituality plays a role as a psychological protector in old age. Spirituality in the life of the elderly is not just a religious activity, but becomes the main foundation in building psychological resilience, a sense of connection, and existential integrity. Therefore, it is highly recommended that the psychospiritual approach be an integral part of the elderly assistance program, especially in formal institutions such as nursing homes or senior homes.

Based on the results of interviews with the elderly at Wisma Asri, there are a number of important implications for gerontological psychology, especially in understanding the role of spirituality in the process of healthy and meaningful aging. Spirituality helps people manage the difficulties that come with aging, such as loneliness caused by separation from family, loss of a partner or friend, and increased physical limitations. Their psychological resilience is ultimately strengthened by spirituality, which offers a sense of connection with God and a greater meaning in life. This implies that as part of a comprehensive strategy to improve emotional well-being, psychological interventions for the elderly can successfully incorporate spiritual elements, such as

shared religious rituals, spiritual counseling, or spiritual reflection groups, according to gerontological psychology. This approach not only strengthens the mental health of the elderly but also helps them live their old age more peacefully and meaningfully.

Table 1. Summary of Interview Results on the Meaning of Spirituality among the Elderly at

Initials (Age)	Religion	Physical Condition	Spiritual Activities	Meaning of Spirituality & Reflections
MP (80 y.o.)	Buddhist	Feels lonely, able to adapt	Routine worship at home, unable to attend church due to physical condition	Feels lonely but tries to accept physical limitations. Focuses on inner peace and acceptance of death.
S (85 y.o.)	Catholic	Relatively active	Daily rosary prayers, regular mass attendance, prayers for family	Feels close to God at all times, happy living in the homestead due to the presence of friends, accepts life with gratitude, recognizes the importance of spirituality for peace and death preparedness.
OS (80 y.o.)	Catholic	Hearing difficulties, sometimes uses a wheelchair	Daily prayers and reflections, shares knowledge with others, participates in communal mass	Acknowledges the need to grow closer to God with age, desires to share wisdom, accepts physical limitations, avoids dwelling on the past to prevent stress and illness.
SD (78 y.o.)	Catholic	Bedridden	Prays for children and grandchildren, engages in spiritual reflection	Accepts the past and current condition, emphasizes prayer for family, turns past regrets into life lessons, experiences a shift in values from materialism to spirituality.

The interview results showed their achievement in the integrity stage, where they were able to accept their history, face their current physical limitations, and calmly prepare themselves for death. The participants showed wisdom in dealing with challenges, regrets, and life transitions in addition to reflecting on their lives realistically. By providing a framework of meaning that allows individuals to see life as a complete journey, uninterrupted by regrets or despair, spirituality plays an important role in this process. These findings have implications for gerontological psychology, including the importance of combining spiritual contemplation and narrative approaches in professional practice. Psychologists can help older adults find constructive solutions to psychosocial crises by providing them with psychological assistance that allows them to share their life stories, assess their values, and find spiritual meaning. This method can also help people achieve inner peace towards the end of their lives and avoid symptoms of depression, failure, or existential fear that are common in old age.

4. Conclusion

This study confirms and strengthens the understanding of the importance of spirituality as a crucial aspect for the mental well-being and adaptation of elderly living in nursing homes, where the practice of worship and belief in God serve as primary coping strategies in the face of physical and social limitations, a source of new meaning and purpose in life, an emotional bridge with family, and a foundation for a sense of peace and readiness for death. The findings specifically indicate that spirituality facilitates the achievement of self-integrity at Erikson's developmental stage through constructive reflection, acceptance of self and the past, and a shift in values from material to spiritual,

while adding significance to the gerontological psychology literature by positioning spirituality as a supporter in completing the developmental tasks of old age, especially in institutional settings. Although providing valuable insights, the limitations of the study on the number and diversity of informants (religion, culture, place of residence) limit generalization, so it is recommended that further research with larger and more diverse samples, mixed methods, and deeper exploration of spirituality dimensions including potential conflicts, to gain a more comprehensive understanding.

5. Declaration

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