

The Impact of Coresidence with the Children on the Relationship between Perceived Closeness and Psychological Well-being of the Elderly

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Abstract

Introduction: The influence of coresidence with children is reported to be both beneficial and detrimental on the psychological well-being of the elderly. We investigated whether perceived closeness with their children could be correlated with psychological well-being among the elderly. **Subjects and Methods:** A correlational analysis was performed involving two variables. Relationship Closeness Inventory (RCI) was used to measure perceived closeness of the elderly with their children. Ryff's Scales of Psychological Well-Being (RSPWB) was used to measure psychological well-being in elderly participants. RCI and RSPWB were collated from 102 elderly participants (60–89 years old) who lived with their children. **Results:** We observed that the relationship between perceived closeness and psychological well-being of the elderly had a negative correlation. Despite that fact, we also observed that the type of living arrangement variably influenced the perceived closeness and psychological well-being. Specifically, the elderly who lived in a household with grandchildren's had a higher psychological well-being. **Conclusion:** This study did not observe any positive correlation between perceived closeness and psychological well-being of the elderly. Hence, close relationship with their children alone is unlikely to influence psychological well-being among the elderly.

Keywords: Coresidence, elderly, perceived closeness, psychological well-being

INTRODUCTION

As of 2014,^[1] 61.69% of the elderly populations in Indonesia were head of a household with the responsibility to support their family members. Due to this responsibility, they also experience significant physical and cognitive decline limiting their activities.^[2] As the head of the household, they are responsible for various family requirements, including meeting financial and psychological needs. These demands can cause their psychological well-being to decline.^[3]

Psychological well-being is a condition wherein an individual can accept who he/she is and build a positive relationship with others for his/her self-development.^[4] Specifically, autonomy, environmental mastery, and self-acceptance are dimensions that play a significant role in supporting the condition of good psychological well-being. To maintain their psychological well-being, most elderly in developing countries live with their children.^[5] Living with children can help the elderly increase their psychological well-being by being able to assist them in

maintaining their health, increasing life satisfaction, improving emotional well-being, decreasing depression levels, and strengthening family relationships.^[6-8] However, living with children can also harm the elderly. For example, their health can suffer because they provide a lot of financial and physical support for their children. Family conflicts can also escalate with increased interactions between the elderly and their children. Furthermore, autonomy can be disrupted because of how children choose to care for their family members.^[5,9]

Previous studies that investigated elderly psychological well-being for those who coreside with their children focused more on cultural differences between family members,^[10-12] fulfillment of physical and financial needs,^[5,9,13] and individual

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factors, such as gender and marital status.^[14,15] The perception of closeness with family members plays an essential role in determining the comfort level when living with someone. Perceived closeness is an individual's ability to understand his/her relationship with others and its impact.^[16] With a high level of closeness, individuals can share positive feelings or feel emotionally connected, so they are eventually able to provide and maintain a reciprocal positive response. When living with children, the elderly have more interaction with them. This interaction can go well if the elderly feel close to their children. We found two previous studies, which showed that perceived closeness correlated with psychological well-being in the elderly.^[17,18] However, the research population in this study was not the elderly who coreside with their children. Therefore, the current study aimed to determine the relationship between perceived closeness and the psychological well-being of the elderly who live with their children.

SUBJECTS AND METHODS

Study design

We used a cross-sectional study to understand correlation between perceived closeness and psychological well-being.

Participant

Elderly^[19] (at least 60 years old) individuals who lived with their children for at least 1 year and were able to communicate in Bahasa Indonesia were included in this study. We used nonprobability sampling and convenience sampling to recruit participants in this study. We enrolled 102 participants with an age range of 60–89 years. To find participants, we contacted several friends who lived with the elderly in their homes. We also visited places that usually hold activities for the elderly, including sports fields where the elderly do gymnastics, health centers (Puskesmas and Posbindu), and sites of religious activities.

Research procedure

To examine the relationship between the two variables, we used two self-report questionnaires, namely the Relationship Closeness Inventory (RCI) and the Ryff's Scales of Psychological Well-Being. We translated the original questionnaires to Bahasa Indonesia and performed a readability test with some individuals who had the same characteristics as our participants. We also used expert judgment to ensure that the instruments were feasible. Next, we did a trial with elderly citizens who met the criteria for participation. From the reliability and validity tests, we found that some items in our questionnaires were not reliable or valid. Therefore, we revised the translation to make it more suitable for our research objectives. Next, we collected data over 3 weeks from April to May 2017. We assisted any participants who needed help in completing the questionnaires. If the participant was more comfortable completing the questionnaire with the help of their caregiver, we provided a briefing to the caregiver, so they could correctly help. For this reason, we created a booklet for caregivers with instructions for completing the questionnaire.

Statistical analysis

Data analysis was performed with IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, Version 17.0 (SPSS, Inc., Chicago, IL, USA). After we cleared the data, we used descriptive statistical analysis techniques, Pearson's correlation, independent samples *t*-test, and analysis of variance to analyze the results of the study.

RESULTS

The participants in this study included elderly who were at least 60 years old and who lived with their children. Of the 105 original participants, we analyzed the data of 102 participants because three participants did not complete all the items in the questionnaires. The participants' age range was 60–89 years. Most of the participants (35.3%) were between 60 and 65 years old, whereas only 2% were between 86 and 89 years old. Table 1 shows further information about demographic data.

We observed that perceived closeness and psychological well-being had a negative correlation, but it was not statistically significant ($r = -0.114$, $n = 102$, $P = 0.253$). Indicating that the closer the elderly feel their relationship is with their coresidential children, the lower their psychological well-being. Furthermore, our results also show that the three dimensions of perceived closeness do not have a significant relationship with psychological well-being [Table 2]. However, the frequency dimension of perceived closeness had a negative correlation

Table 1: Demographic data of participants

	Category	<i>n</i> (%)
Sex	Male	37 (36.3)
	Female	65 (63.7)
Education qualification	Elementary school	15 (14.7)
	Junior high school	14 (13.7)
	Senior high school	37 (36.3)
	University	33 (32.4)
	Others (e.g., vocational school)	3 (2.9)
Household expenditure per month	Rp 500,000-Rp 1,000,000	18 (17.6)
	Rp 1,000,000-Rp 3,000,000	42 (41.2)
	Rp 3,000,000-Rp 5,000,000	31 (30.4)
	> Rp 5,000,000	11 (10.8)
Marital status	Single	0
	Married	61 (59.8)
	Divorced	3 (2.9)
	Widow/widower	38 (37.3)
Type of living arrangement	Son	7 (6.9)
	Daughter	2 (2)
	Son and daughter	2 (2)
	Spouse and children	24 (23.5)
	Spouse, children, son/daughter-in-law, and grandchildren	19 (18.6)
	Spouse, children, son/daughter-in-law	2 (2)
	Spouse, children, and grandchildren	5 (4.9)
	Children and son/daughter-in-law	1 (1)
	Children, son/daughter-in-law, and grandchildren	27 (26.4)
	Children and grandchildren	13 (12.8)

with psychological well-being, indicating a higher frequency of activities carried out with the children corresponded to lower psychological well-being. We also observed that two factors, which related significantly to perceived closeness, were education and type of living arrangement [Table 3].

We analyzed the type of living arrangement, which had a significant impact on psychological well-being [Table 4]. The elderly who did not have a spouse showed a lower sense of psychological well-being than elderly participants who still had a spouse. Furthermore, those who lived with a son/daughter-in-law had a lower sense of psychological well-being than the elderly whose households did not include them. Furthermore, the elderly who lived with children and

grandchildren had a higher sense of psychological well-being than the elderly who lived only with their children [Table 4].

DISCUSSION

Previous studies have shown that perceived closeness has a positive relationship with psychological well-being, determining that the closer the elderly feel to their children, the higher is their sense of psychological well-being.^[17,18] Contrary to the previous studies, this study observed that a stronger sense of perceived closeness correlated to a lower sense of psychological well-being. We believe that this result may have arisen because proximity to their children can interfere with an elderly's autonomy and make them feel dependent on other people. Being independent is one of the keys for the elderly to maintain their feelings of psychological well-being.^[20,21] When the attention given by the children disrupts their autonomy, their psychological well-being can be lower. The attention of the children can make the elderly feel helpless and unable to take care of their own lives.

We also observed that frequency was one of the dimensions of perceived closeness, and it has a negative correlation with

Table 2: Correlation between perceived closeness dimension and psychological well-being

Dimension of perceived closeness	Psychological well-being	Significant (P)
Frequency	-0.119	0.235
Diversity	0.101	0.311
Strength	0.010	0.919

Table 3: Perceived closeness and demographic factors

Demographic factors	Category	n	Mean	F	Significant
Education	Elementary school	15	621.07	4.528	0.002*
	Junior high school	14	708.14		
	Senior high school	37	419.62		
	University	33	423.61		
	Others (e.g., vocational school)	3	624.33		
Type of living arrangement	Son	7	636.43	2.932	0.004*
	Daughter	2	458		
	Son and daughter	2	957		
	Spouse and children	24	419.58		
	Spouse, children, son/daughter-in-law, and grandchildren	1	261		
	Spouse, children, son/daughter-in-law	2	1058		
	Spouse, children, and grandchildren	5	389.60		
	Children and son/daughter-in-law	19	374.74		
	Children, son/daughter-in-law, and grandchildren	27	529.74		
	Children and grandchildren	13	577.31		

* $P < 0.05$

Table 4: Psychological well-being based on type of living arrangement

Demographic factors	Category	n	Mean	F	Significant
Type of living arrangements	Son	7	72.71	2.178	0.031*
	Daughter	2	84.50		
	Son and daughter	2	88.50		
	Spouse and children	24	84.75		
	Spouse, children, son/daughter-in-law, and grandchildren	1	87		
	Spouse, children, son/daughter-in-law	2	83		
	Spouse, children, and grandchildren	5	84.20		
	Children and son/daughter-in-law	19	81.21		
	Children, son/daughter-in-law, and grandchildren	27	81.89		
	Children and grandchildren	13	83		

* $P < 0.05$

psychological well-being. With an increase in activities carried out by the elderly together with their children comes a lower sense of psychological well-being. This result is different from previous studies that showed that joint activities could improve the psychological well-being of the elderly, which can lead to improved social relations with their families. Because a good relationship is one of the dimensions of psychological well-being,^[22] it is essential for them to make good connections with other people to maintain their well-being, especially family who coreside with them. This difference may occur because the elderly do consider not only the social relationships that are interwoven but also the quality of the relationship. The better the quality of the relationship that exists, the better the psychological well-being of an individual.

The participants in this research who did not have spouses seemed to rely on their children to fulfill emotional and financial needs. As for emotional needs, they also experience greater happiness when they live with grandchildren. This result is in line with a previous study, which showed that living with children and grandchildren can increase a sense of psychological well-being.^[15] Grandchildren can help improve feelings of well-being because interaction with them can increase a sense of independence and life purpose for the grandparents,^[20,21] which are crucial dimensions of psychological well-being. Taking care of grandchildren can add meaning and purpose to life, which is often lost when someone ages, especially when a spouse has passed away.^[23]

Based on our analysis of living arrangements, living with a son/daughter-in-law can be a hindrance to maintaining a sense of psychological well-being. It could be because married children tend to have difficulties being fair in providing financial assistance to their parents. On the one hand, children have a responsibility to ensure their parents' welfare, but on the other hand, they are also required to take care of their children and spouse. When they are unable to meet all of these demands, it may create conflict between elderly parents and a son/daughter-in-law.^[5]

There are some limitations to this research. The translation process of the instruments in this study was quite challenging. The RCI items were difficult to translate because finding appropriate corresponding words in Bahasa Indonesia was challenging. For example, "went on an outing" and "outdoors recreation" can be translated in the same way, with a phrase such as "going for a jaunt." Furthermore, some items were not suitable for the culture in Indonesia, such as "went to an auction/art show" or "went to a bar." Both of these would be unusual activities for the elderly in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

This study was not able to find a significant relationship between perceived closeness and the psychological well-being of elderly participants who lived with their children. However, this study shows that a close relationship between the elderly

and their children cannot necessarily maintain psychological well-being.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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