

How Meaning of Life Correlates with Emptiness Syndrome of Minangkabau Elderly Women

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Keywords:

Meaning of Life
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ABSTRACT

The matrilineal culture in Minangkabau, West Sumatra, is a culture that is thick with emancipation values and the teachings of feminism. The matrilineal kinship system contains the importance of gender equality and justice, both philosophically and in terms of implementation. However, in reality, there has been a shift in the pattern of social responsibility towards women's parents who should have the position of *bundo kanduang*. The change in the way of social responsibility is marked by the number of parents being put into nursing homes. Psychological conditions related to emptiness syndrome and self-significance in elderly women need to be analyzed. This study involved 40 elderly women who live in social institutions in West Sumatra. This study concluded that there was a significant negative relationship (P value = 0.011) between the meaning of life and emptiness syndrome, which was a -0.396 Pearson correlation.

Key Words: Matrilineal, Emptiness Syndrome, Meaning of Life

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1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's population structure is old population structure. The elderly population is more than 7% [1]. An increase in elderly people can cause complex problems [2]. This is in line with [3], which revealed that elderly people could cause problems if the proportion of the population aged 60 years and over exceeds 15%. This happens because they will be very dependent on the work obtained by the productive age population. The relatively rapid growth of the elderly population certainly demands more serious attention.

West Sumatra is one of the provinces with a significant elderly population growth rate [4]. The numbers of elderly population increase year by year [5]. Elderly women in West Sumatra are considered protected by the conventional system, namely

the matrilineal system. The matrilineal kinship system is a lineage seen from the mother's heritage. The matrilineal culture in Minangkabau, West Sumatra, is a culture that is thick with emancipation values and the teachings of feminism. The matrilineal kinship system contains the importance of gender equality and justice, both philosophically and in terms of implementation. Men are placed as protectors and supervisors who are represented as *mamak*, while women have access to property ownership. Meanwhile, in decision-making, both men and women should have equal access. Minangkabau women, apart from being the successors of the descendants, are also heirs to heirlooms and the holder of the key to the rumah gadang, which is the place to live together. They are called *bundo kanduang*. In simple terms, *bundo kanduang* is a non-formal leader for all women, their children, and grandchildren. The position of women in Minangkabau society has a very elevated position, so the reality of elderly women in the matrilineal kinship system in Minangkabau is different from other women in general [6]. Elderly women in Minangkabau society have an honorable position and a vital role. They are expected to still be able to do much in household and community life as mentors and advisors because they have had a long life experience. Therefore, traditionally, elderly women in Minangkabau matrilineal society should not live in vain in their old age.

Families in Minangkabau are divided into two types: nuclear and extended families. The nuclear family consists of a husband, wife, and children. At the same time, the extended family is called the *saparuik* family (one genetic line), consisting of *mamak* (mother's siblings), sisters, and nephews (children of sisters). The management of elderly parents is the responsibility of the children and nephews. If you do not have children, the *saparuik* family carries the burden. However, if the *Saparuik* family does not exist, then the management is carried out by an ethnic family. Furthermore, if there is no ethnic family, the responsibility is carried out by the family in the village [7]. Values and norms in Minangkabau society require families to consistently provide services to their parents. These values, standards, and rules are sourced from customs and enhanced by Islamic teachings. In QS Luqman verse 14, Allah says that "*And We commanded man (to do good) to his two parents; his mother conceived him in a state of increasing weakness, and weaned him in two years, be grateful to your two parents and me, to Me is your return.*" Thus, it is a disgrace to the family if parents, especially mothers who are *bundo kanduang*, are not taken care of by their children or nephews because Minangkabau customs are very thick with Islamic teachings.

There has been a shift in the pattern of social responsibility toward women's parents who should have the position of *bundo kanduang*. The way of parental care social responsibility, which in its implementation should be done in the middle of the family itself, but currently, many parents are put in social homes. Not surprisingly, social home residents have increased [8]. Afrida's research [9] reveals an alleged shift in Minangkabau society and culture. Many family members do not care to support their parents, most of whom have no source of livelihood [10].

A common condition in elderly women is the emergence of Empty Nest Syndrome. Empty Nest Syndrome or empty nest syndrome is when children move into adulthood and start building a new family so they are busy with their own business [11]. Empty nest syndrome refers to feelings of depression, loss, and sadness that parents experience at being separated from their children for various reasons. Women will be more affected than men, so a mother will be more affected than a father. This is also revealed in the research of [12], which revealed that the level of female emptiness

syndrome was higher than that of men. This is because children are everything to a mother's life. After their children leave the family home and stop playing the role of mothers, they will lose their purpose in life and are more likely to suffer from Empty Nest Syndrome [13]. Empty nest syndrome cannot be seen physically [14]. However, this syndrome is the main manifestation of physical and mental symptoms influenced by social support, gender, marital status, income, and other socio-demographic factors [15]. The causes of empty nest syndrome are 1) Loneliness, namely feelings of being alienated, isolated, and isolated from others. Loneliness will appear if a person is overlooked by the people around him; 2) Anxiety, namely neuritic helplessness, insecurity, immaturity, and inability to face the demands of environmental realities, difficulties, and pressures of daily life; 3) Depression, namely sadness and worry for a long time accompanied by feelings of being unappreciated. The causes of depression are lack of positive reinforcement, perceived helplessness, negative thinking, and weak self-regulation; 4) Sadness, which is an emotional feeling that occurs when someone loses something that cannot be replaced; and 5) Loss, which is an actual or potential situation that an individual can experience when there is a change in life or separation from something that previously existed, either partially or completely [16].

The social and physical environment of social institutions is certainly very different from the home environment. These social and physical changes can cause stress in the elderly [17]. The existence of elderly women in social institutions will cause various changes in their lives, so it will impact how elderly women understand the meaning of their lives [18]. Viktor Frankl, a neurologist and psychiatrist of Jewish descent in Austria, discovered the meaning of life. Frankl revealed that the meaning of life is a motivation that encourages an individual to do useful activities. In contrast, a useful life is a life that continuously gives meaning to oneself and others [19]. The meaning of life comes from oneself, so humans can struggle to realize their potential [20]. There are three aspects of the meaning of life: 1) The freedom of will, referred to here, is not absolute. Humans have freedom but still must be balanced by a sense of responsibility so that it is not arbitrary; 2) The will to meaning, the desire of an individual to become a useful and valuable person for himself, his family, and the environment; and 3) The meaning of life, which is an assumption that is considered important, valid and coveted and gives an exceptional value to someone. Individuals who can find the meaning of life in every activity they do will have a life purpose (life purpose), an existential vacuum, a more controlled life (life control), trying to find meaning (will to meaning), accepting death (death acceptance), seeking new goals (goal seeking)[21]. Therefore, elderly women who have meaningful lives will be able to live comfortably and happily [22].

Empty nest syndrome and the meaning of life of elderly women living in social institutions in West Sumatra are important to analyze. The results of this study are expected to be a reference for managers of social institutions in maintaining the mental health of elderly women who live in social institutions.

2. METHOD

This research uses a quantitative approach. Quantitative research with survey data collection techniques. A quantitative approach using an instrument in the form of a psychological scale is used to see the psychological condition of elderly women, which includes the meaning of life and empty nest syndrome.

Respondents involved in this study were 40 elderly women living in social institutions in West Sumatra. The criterion of old age is more than 60 years [23]. The social institutions involved in this study were the Tresna Werdha Social Institution Kasih Sayang Ibu Batusangkar (19 respondents), Tresna Werdha Social Institution Sabai Nan Aluih Sicincin (13 respondents), Tresna Werdha Target Institution "Jasa Ibu" Situjuh Limo Nagari Kabupaten 50 Kota (8 respondent). These three social institutions were chosen because they accommodate the most elderly women in West Sumatra. The number of respondents involved from each social institution was based on the respondents' willingness.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Human life undergoes a process of change from prenatal to the elderly until death. Each of these stages will influence the individual himself. Old age begins at the age of 60 years and ends with death. At this age, the elderly experience various changes, including reduced strength and health, which will affect their psychological condition of the elderly. This is also experienced by elderly women in West Sumatra who spend the rest of their lives in social institutions/ social homes. The results obtained about the psychological condition of elderly women, namely from the aspect of the meaning of life and emptiness syndrome (empty nest syndrome), are as follows:

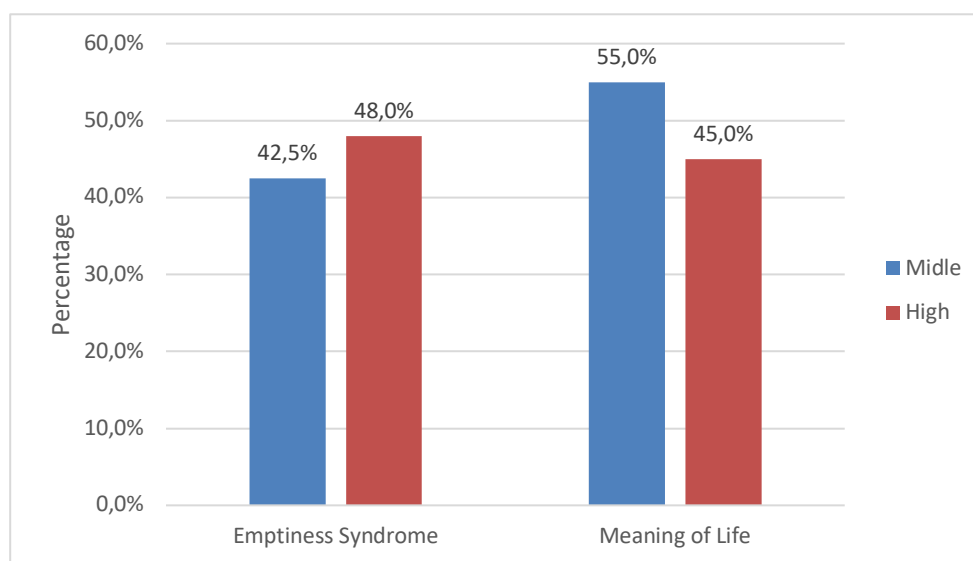


Figure 1 Psychological condition of The Meaning of Life and Emptiness Syndrom in General

From the results of descriptive analysis, it was concluded that overall as many as 55% of elderly women had a moderate level of a meaningful life, and 45% of elderly women had a high level of meaningfulness of life. Meanwhile, when viewed in terms of the level of emptiness syndrome, as many as 57.5% of elderly women experienced a high level of empty nest syndrome, and the remaining 42.5% experienced a moderate level of empty nest syndrome

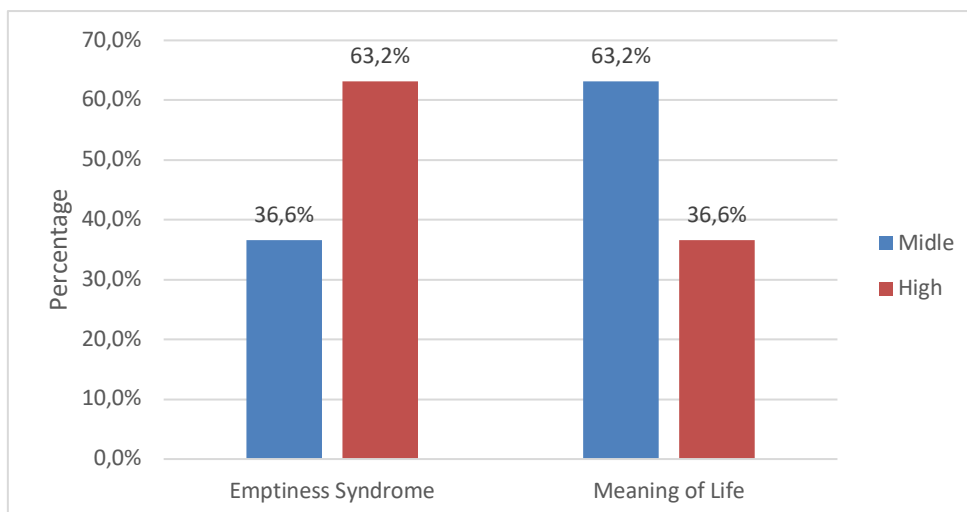


Figure 2 Psychological condition of The Meaning of Life and Emptiness Syndrom in Batu Sangkar

As many as 63.2% of elderly women in PSTW Batusangkar have a moderate level of meaningfulness, and 36.8% of elderly women have a high level of meaningfulness of life. Meanwhile, when viewed in terms of emptiness syndrome, as many as 63.2% of elderly women experienced a high level of emptiness syndrome, and the remaining 36.8% had a moderate level. Of the 19 elderly women who were sampled, as many as 12 elderly women were willing to be interviewed in depth. Of the 12 elderly women, 11 of them are widows. Eight elderly women entered social institutions of their own accord, while the remaining four entered social institutions due to family encouragement (the children ordered 2 people). Regarding children, four people have no children, and eight people have children but are busy (working, wandering, or moving out of town following their husbands). From the data supported by in-depth interviews, it is logical that 63.2% of elderly women in PSTW Batusangkar experience a high level of emptiness syndrome.

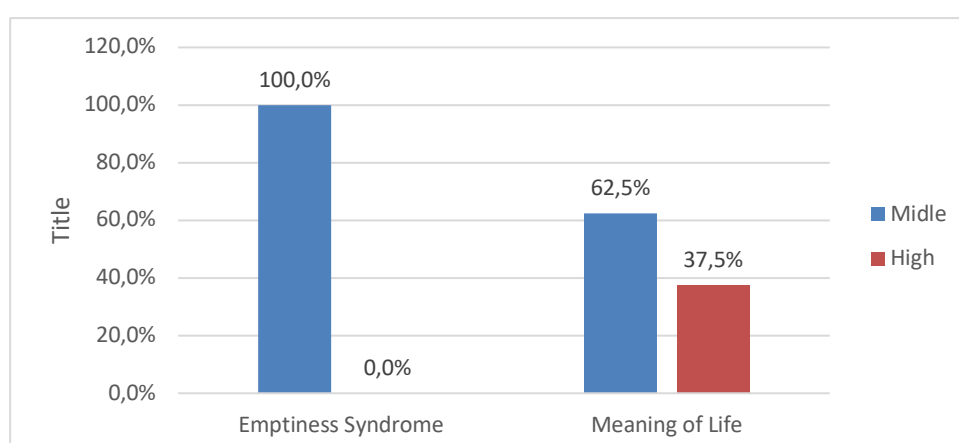


Figure 3 Psychological condition of The Meaning of Life and Emptiness Syndrom in PSTW Situjuh

As many as 62.5% of elderly women in PSTW Situjuh have a moderate level of meaningfulness of life, and 37.5% of elderly women have a high level of meaningfulness

of life. Meanwhile, in terms of emptiness syndrome, eight elderly women at PSTW Situjuh experienced moderate levels of emptiness syndrome. They are all widows, 6 of them have no children, one person has a child but is busy. In comparison, one elderly person has a child who is unwilling to take care of himself. 2 elderly women entered the social institution of their own accord. At the same time, their sister ordered the remaining four and two ordered by neighbors.

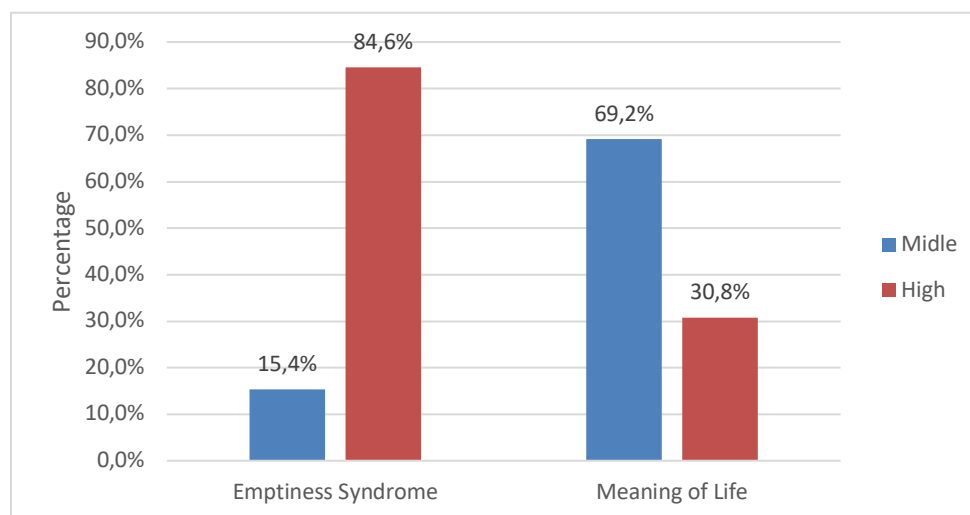


Figure 4 Psychological condition of The Meaning of Life and Emptiness Syndrom in PSTW Sicincin

69.2% of elderly women in PSTW Sicincin have a moderate level of meaningfulness, and 30.8% of elderly women have a high level of meaningfulness of life. Meanwhile, 11 elderly women at PSTW Situjuh experienced high levels of emptiness syndrome, and two elderly women experienced moderate levels of emptiness syndrome. They are all widows, 6 have no children, and the remaining 7 have children but are busy. All elderly women in Sicincin PSTW entered the social institution of their own accord, 8 of whom felt lonely because they were at home. At the same time, the remaining four wanted to focus more on worship and preparing for the afterlife.

Furthermore, to see the relationship between the variables of meaningfulness of life and emptiness syndrome in elderly women, Pearson's correlation will be used by first conducting a normality test. With a sample size of 40 respondents, the normality test can be carried out using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, which is as follows:

VARIABLES	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test		
	Statistics	df	Sig.
EMPTYNESS_SYNDROM	0,120	40	0,147
MEANING OF LIFE	0,068	40	0,200

Figure 5 Normality Test

Based on the normality test in the output of Figure 5, it was concluded that the data on the meaningfulness of life and the emptiness syndrome were normally distributed because of the significant value of the two variables. Therefore Pearson

correlation measurements could be made using the Pearson product moment. The test results are as follows:

	MEANING OF LIFE	
EMPTYNESS_SYNDROM	Pearson Correlation	-0,396
	Sig.	0,011

Figure 6 Correlation Pearson

Emptiness Syndrome and the Meaning of Life in the elderly have a significant negative correlation of -0.396. Thus it can be concluded that the higher the level of meaningfulness of life, the lower the level of emptiness syndrome experienced by elderly women in social institutions. So to suppress emptiness syndrome in elderly women is to help elderly women to find and increase their sense of usefulness in life. Factors that can encourage the elderly to be able to find and increase the usefulness of life is to carry out activities that have been programmed by social institutions, for example, those that PSTW Batusangkar has carried out, namely Religious Mental Guidance, Health Guidance, SKJ for the Elderly, and Recreational Activities. The social institution is expected to always encourage elderly women to be more active in participating in these activities. In addition, encouragement from family and peers is also very necessary so that the elderly have more meaning in life. Even though the elderly live in social institutions, family support and affection are still very much needed to reduce emptiness syndrome [24] and increase the meaning of life [25].

4. CONCLUSION

The variable of meaningfulness of life was significantly related to the Emptiness Syndrome in elderly women in Padang, which was 0.396. Social institutions must encourage the elderly to carry out activities programmed to increase the sense of meaning in the lives of elderly women. Further research is necessary to look for other variables that have a significant effect in suppressing the level of emptiness syndrome in elderly women living in West Sumatra's social institutions.

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