

The Relationship Between Social Interaction and Elderly Happiness in a Social Center for the Elderly

Desi Puspita Sari, Suryati Suryati*, Emi Puspita Dewi
 Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah Palembang, Indonesia
 ✉ Corresponding Author: suryati_uin@radenfatah.ac.id*

	ABSTRACT
<p>ARTICLE INFO: Received April 04, 2025</p> <p>Revised May 05, 2025</p> <p>Accepted June 15, 2025</p> <p>KEYWORDS: Elderly, Happiness, Social Interaction</p>	<p>This study is entitled The Relationship between Social Interaction and Happiness of the Elderly at the Harapan Kita Palembang Social Home for the Elderly. The background of this study explains that the elderly often face various problems such as decreased physical abilities and health, and a lack of attention from those closest to them, so that social interaction becomes very important for their well-being and happiness. The study will focus on the relationship between social interaction and happiness of the elderly at the Harapan Kita Palembang Social Home for the Elderly. Good social interaction can help the elderly feel useful, healthy, and get support from their surroundings. The formulation of the problem in this study is how the Relationship between Social Interaction and Happiness of the Elderly at the Harapan Kita Palembang Social Home for the Elderly. The research method used is a type of quantitative research using a correlational approach, data collection techniques using questionnaires, interviews, and documentation. The results of the study showed that social interaction has a significant influence on the level of happiness of the elderly. The analysis shows a strong positive correlation between social interaction and happiness of the elderly, with a determination coefficient of 56%, while the remaining 44% is influenced by other factors not studied. This shows that social interaction routines can have a positive impact on the elderly in overcoming problems involving happiness, such as getting closer to each other, providing inner peace, and maturing thinking to face problems. Thus, it can be concluded that social interaction plays an important role in improving the quality of life of the elderly in the shelter.</p>

INTRODUCTION

The human life cycle must experience a development process both physically and psychologically. The phase of human development is generally divided into five stages, namely infants, children, adolescents, adults, and the elderly. Elderly is the term for the last stage of the aging process; all people who live long will experience the process of getting old, and old age is the last period of human life. Elderly is the last stage of development in the human life process, beginning from infancy, childhood, adulthood, and finally old age (Papalia, 2008).

In the context of aging and human development, the Qur'an offers profound insight into the natural cycle of life. Surat Yasin verse 68 illustrates a theological perspective on the aging process, stating: "And he to whom We grant long life We reverse in creation; so will they not understand?" (Qur'an, 36:68). This verse suggests that as individuals reach old age, they often experience a return to a dependent and weakened state, resembling aspects of their early life. From an Islamic worldview,

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this transformation is not merely biological but serves as a reminder of human vulnerability and the divine order of creation (Yusoff & Ebrahimi, 2017). It invites reflection on the temporary nature of strength, autonomy, and vitality, emphasizing that the process of aging is both a physical and spiritual journey, intended to foster humility and deeper awareness of one's dependence on God. Such a perspective aligns with contemporary understandings in gerontology, which recognize the cognitive and physical regressions that can occur in later life, while adding a theological dimension that underscores the moral and existential implications of aging (Asutay et al., 2021).

Usually, in old age, people will face various problems such as decreased physical abilities, decreased activity, frequent health problems, lack of attention or being abandoned by those closest to them such as husband, wife, children who have died or even being deliberately abandoned by the family because they are unable to take care of the elderly, which causes them to lose their enthusiasm, so the elderly need social interaction (Blakemore et al., 2010).

Each person has different factors that bring them happiness (Kim & Choi, 2023). These factors include money, marital status, social life, age, health, education, climate, race, gender, and even religion or the level of religiosity of a person (Carlile, 2020). According to Aristotle, only those who are satisfied with themselves and what they have can be happy (Bekker et al., 2022). In other words, happiness is related to the feeling of satisfaction that exists within a person. Lazarus said that happiness is a form of interaction between humans and their environment (Ahmadi, 2023). In this case, a person can be happy alone and for himself, but on the other hand, he can also be happy for others and for others.

Social interaction is a relationship between two or more individuals where the behavior of one individual influences, changes, and improves the behavior of the other individual, and vice versa (Abroms, 2019). Social interaction is an important element in community life. The prerequisites for social interaction are social contact and communication. Without these conditions, social interaction will not exist. Although social interaction can have a positive impact, it cannot be denied that social interaction can also have a negative impact.

There is interaction, information is exchanged between individuals, events influence each other, and actions occur. Thibault and Kelly define interaction as an event that influences each other when two or more people are together, they create results for each other, or communicate with each other.

Social interaction is the process by which people communicate and influence each other's thoughts and actions (Prabowo, 2021). Social interaction is the process by which people communicate and influence each other in thoughts and actions. Communication as a practice has existed since the creation of mankind, and humans use communication to carry out social activities. Social interaction is a relationship between one individual and another. Humans can influence others and vice versa. Therefore, there is a reciprocal relationship. The relationship can be a relationship between individuals, between individuals and groups, or between groups (Muarifah et al., 2023).

Humans basically cannot live alone without the presence of other people, so the interaction of each individual with a group or vice versa is not only a process of mutual influence, but also a need that must be met (Anam et al., 2019).

Literature Review

According to Singgih, social interaction is a relationship between two or more individuals in which one's behavior influences, changes, or improves the behavior of others and vice versa. Gillin said that social interaction concerns relationships between individuals, between individuals and groups, or between groups (Singgih, 2014). Something happens between two or more people when they enter into a relationship and influence each other in that relationship, trying to improve or change each other's attitudes, behavior, and feelings.

According to Lent et al. (2000), social interaction is a process in which individuals engaged in communication mutually influence each other's thoughts and actions. It is a dynamic relationship that occurs between individuals, between groups, or between individuals and groups, characterized by reciprocal influence. Similarly, Romieh et al. (2023) defines social interaction as a relationship involving two or more individuals, wherein the behavior of one person affects or alters the behavior of another. Social interaction is thus understood as a reciprocal exchange in which messages are conveyed, elicit responses, and lead to changes or influence in the participants involved.

From the theoretical explanation above, it is clear that social interaction describes a reciprocal relationship in the form of mutually influencing actions between individuals, individuals and groups, and groups and groups. A relationship is a social interaction if it has two or more actors, there is communication between actors, there is a time dimension that includes the past, present, and future, and there are goals that must be achieved. Social interaction in Islam is the same as friendship (Rubin et al., 2004).

Social interaction in the elderly has been explained by Schulz and Allen through the theory of longevity based on social networks, which argues that social interaction has a significant impact on health and aging (Khousa & Atif, 2017). Social interaction allows the elderly to think positively and optimistically about life. Through social interaction, the elderly continue to see themselves as useful to the people around them. The elderly can stay healthy and receive support from themselves and the people around them. Social interaction can be achieved through this interaction they will be happy.

According to Bjørnøy Urke et al. (2022), happy people tend to be more adaptable and more successful in health, problem solving, social life, and other areas. Several factors influence the well-being of the elderly, including wealth, family, social support, religion, and recreational activities. The focus is on social factors in the form of social interaction, which is one of the factors studied to determine well-being.

According to Bob Garon, happiness is an inner attitude, and true happiness is something we all have: human satisfaction can be happy when we are satisfied with the environment in which we live (Garon, 1984). The secret of happiness is gratitude. Happy people are good at being grateful, and people who are not able to be grateful cannot be happy. Anything that destroys gratitude destroys happiness. Happiness is a state of well-being and contentment, a pleasant feeling of satisfaction that occurs when certain individual needs and desires are met.

According to Seligman, happiness is a person's state and ability to feel positive emotions in the past, future, and present life. Seligman's concept of happiness emphasizes positive aspects or good values (Seligman & Reichenberg, 2010). The goodness in question here is not based on normative religious values, but on socially agreed-upon goodness. Diener and Argyle define happiness as a form of general life satisfaction, whether or not there is a positive influence (Kesebir & Diener, 2008). On the other hand, Sanchez-Lopez Mdel et al. (2012) define happiness as a positive emotion that is subjectively evaluated, and each individual experiences happiness differently depending on their perspective. Happiness is a subjective concept because everyone has different standards of happiness.

The Relationship Between Social Interaction and Elderly Well-Being

Social interaction is the process by which individuals communicate and influence the thoughts and actions of others (Romieh et al., 2023). Communication has existed since the emergence of humans, and humans use communication to carry out social activities (DeVito, 2017). Social interaction affects a person's soul, including their level of happiness. Fadilla said that people who have good social interactions will be happier, but people who rarely interact with others tend to feel lonely and unaccepted (Aristantya & Helmi, 2019).

Individuals who actively interact in their environment will be able to increase positive emotions, thereby increasing happiness. According to Seligman (2004), happiness is a state where a person experiences more pleasant events than what actually happens, and they forget more bad events. There are several factors that influence happiness in humans, one of which is social interaction. This is in accordance with the results of research conducted by Fitriyani & Budiman (2021) which states that social interaction in the elderly will create feelings of happiness because the elderly feel that they are still valued by their surroundings and for the elderly who engage in social interaction will have many friends or relations so that they can do activities together, with this shared activity will increase the sense of happiness in the elderly. People who interact positively with their environment can increase their positive emotions, resulting in greater happiness (Desiningrum et al., 2019).

According to Seligman, happiness is a state where a person experiences more pleasant events and forgets more bad events than what actually happens. There are several factors that influence human well-being, one of which is social interaction. This is in accordance with the findings of Haskett & Willoughby (2007) that social interaction brings a sense of well-being to the elderly. This is because the elderly feel valued by the environment, and the elderly who participate in social activities. I have many friends and relatives, so I can do activities with them. These joint activities improve the well-being of the elderly.

Some elderly people may feel a little lonely, which can then affect their comfort in living their daily lives. They may face challenges in finding happiness as others do. Therefore, for some people, old age may be considered a less pleasant period for several reasons, one of which is the fear that may haunt the elderly. Based on the results of initial interviews conducted by researchers with several elderly people at nursing home in Palembang, it was found that there were problems with their happiness they had. Based on interviews conducted with several residents of the Harapan Kita Palembang Elderly Social Home, it appears that many elderly people in the home experience feelings of loneliness and sadness due to a lack of social interaction with family and friends. For example, Grandmother SR expressed her feelings of sadness because she could not gather with her family and felt lonely, even though the environment of the home treated her well.

Grandma A, although initially relieved to live in the orphanage, then felt sad when she remembered her husband, who had died, and felt lonely without any family to visit. Meanwhile, IN's grandmother, who suffers from dementia, also feels lonely because her family rarely visits her, even though her family decided to put her in a nursing home to get better care. These stories show how a lack of social interaction with family can affect the elderly's sense of happiness. The sadness and loneliness they feel can be exacerbated by limited social environments, even if they are in a safe and well-maintained environment such as a social home. Based on the background above, the author is interested in conducting research with the research title "The Relationship between Social Interaction and the Happiness of the Elderly at the Harapan Kita Palembang Social Home for the Elderly".

METHODS

Design

The research employed a correlational quantitative design aimed at examining the degree of closeness in the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Specifically, the study investigated how social interaction, as the independent variable, correlates with the happiness of the elderly, which served as the dependent variable. This design was chosen to allow the researcher to observe naturally occurring relationships without manipulating the variables involved, as recommended by Sugiyono (2013).

Participant and Procedure

Participants in this study consisted of 52 elderly individuals selected through purposive sampling, which involved choosing respondents based on specific inclusion criteria relevant to the

research objectives. Data collection was conducted by distributing a structured questionnaire, designed in the form of a Likert scale, to capture the participants' responses. This procedure allowed for efficient gathering of quantitative data in a consistent and standardized manner.

Instruments

The instrument used in the study was adapted from Sutarjo's thesis (2014) and measured both social interaction and the happiness of elderly individuals. The questionnaire included a mix of favorable (supportive) and unfavorable (non-supportive) items, with four response options provided to reduce the likelihood of neutral or indecisive answers. Instrument validity was tested using the Pearson Product-Moment correlation technique through the IBM SPSS Statistics software version 26 for Windows. To determine reliability, the Cronbach's Alpha method was used, where a value greater than 0.60 indicated that the instrument was considered consistent and dependable.

Data Analysis

The data analysis began with a series of assumption tests to ensure the appropriateness of the statistical methods. These included tests for normality using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, linearity using the ANOVA method, homogeneity using the test of homogeneity of variances, and a determinant test conducted via the model summary output. Once these assumptions were confirmed, the primary analysis was carried out using the Pearson Product-Moment correlation technique to identify and measure the strength and direction of the relationship between social interaction and elderly happiness.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

In this study, the technique used to measure the validation test is SPSS 26. Judging from the calculation of the validation test given, there are 27 questions that have been answered and completed by 52 respondents. One way to find out invalid and valid questions, researchers must first know r_{table} . With the formula r_{table} is $df = N - 2$ so $59 - 2 = 50$, with a significance of 5% so that $r_{table} = 0,2732$.

In measuring reliability using Cronbach's Alpha, it can be said to be reliable if the Cronbach's alpha value ($r_{count} > \text{critical value}$ (0.6) and if the Cronbach's alpha value ($r_{count} < \text{critical value}$ (0.6), then the questionnaire items are said to be unreliable as follows:

Table 1. Reliability Test Results x and y

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Item
,939	12
,921	15

Based on table 1 above, the results of the reliability analysis using the Cronbach's Alpha x technique are $0.939 > 0.60$, then Cronbach's Alpha y is $0.921 > 0.6,0$ which can be declared reliable. With $r_{table} = 2732$ from the results of the reliability of x 0.939 and the reliability of y 0.921, so it can be concluded that the question item is reliable ($r_{table} > r_{count}$).

Table 2. Results of normality, linearity, and homogeneity tests

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0,200
ANOVA Table	Sig. Deviation from linearity	0,170
Test of homogeneity of variances	Based On Mean	0,123

Based on the results of the normality test with the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test, the Sig. value is $0.200 > 0.05$; then the residual value in this study is stated to be normally distributed. Next, based on the results of the linearity test with the ANOVA test, the Sig. Deviation from Linearity value is $0.170 > 0.05$; then it can be said that there is a linear relationship between variables x and y . Next, based on the results of the homogeneity test, namely $0.123 > 0.05$, it can be said that there is a homogeneous relationship between the two variables x and y . Because the results of the normality, linearity, and homogeneity tests in this study have met the prerequisites, the next step is to test the hypothesis using the Pearson Product-Moment correlation technique. The results of the hypothesis test can be seen in the following table 3.

Table 3. Correlation test

Variables	Correlational	
	Pearson correlational	Sig. (2-tailed)
Social Interaction	0,751	0,000
Happiness of the Elderly	0,751	0.000

Based on the results of the analysis described above, it was found that the variable (X), Social interaction, has a significant effect on the variable (Y), Happiness of the Elderly at the Harapan Kita Palembang Elderly Social Home. This is shown from the results of the product moment correlation analysis of 0.751 compared to the rtable of a significant level of 5% $N = 52$ of 0.2732. So the large rcount of the rtable, it can be concluded that the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected and (H_a) is accepted. With a determination coefficient of 56.4% (rounded to 56%) or 56%, it has a positive effect, meaning that the higher the elderly interact socially, the higher the level of happiness of the elderly. While 44% are factors that influence the Y variable from other factors that were not studied by the researcher. Those that were not studied include personality factors, socio-cognitive factors, environmental factors, and individual conditions.

In addition, the regression equation $Y = 9.673 + 0.928 X$ was also obtained. This equation is in accordance with the simple linear regression formula, namely $Y = a + bX$, where Y is the symbol of the dependent variable, a is a constant, and b is the regression coefficient for the independent variable (X).

Constant of 9.673: meaning if the value of social interaction (X) is 0, then the value of elderly happiness (Y) is negative, which is 9.673. The regression coefficient of the elderly happiness variable is 0.928: meaning if prayer increases by 1, then the happiness of the elderly (Y) will increase by 0.928. The coefficient is positive, meaning that there is a positive relationship between the social interaction variable (X) and the elderly happiness variable (Y); the higher the social interaction, the higher the happiness of the elderly. Thus, it can be concluded that social interaction has a strong relationship to influence on the happiness of the elderly, where the routine of carrying out social interactions proves that the elderly have quite high happiness.

After the researcher conducted direct research by distributing questionnaires submitted to the elderly at the Harapan Kita Social Home for the Elderly in Palembang, and filled out by the students, the objectives put forward in this study were to answer the following problem formulations:

The results of the study indicate a significant influence of social interaction on the happiness of the elderly at the Harapan Kita Palembang elderly orphanage. This is evidenced by the correlation coefficient (r) value of 0.751, which reflects a strong positive relationship between the two variables. To determine the magnitude of this influence, the coefficient of determination (r^2) was calculated by squaring the correlation value and converting it into a percentage. The calculation ($0.751^2 \times 100\%$) yields 56.4%, which means that 56% of the variation in elderly happiness can be explained by their level of social interaction.

From the calculation results above, it can be concluded that there is an influence of variable X on variable Y of 56%, and the remaining 44% is influenced by other factors not studied by the researcher. The influence given by social interaction on the happiness of the elderly at the Harapan Kita Palembang elderly orphanage, with routine social interaction, can provide maturity in overcoming problems involving the happiness of the elderly. This happens because social interaction can bring people closer together, provide

inner peace, and can mature the thinking of students so that they are not influenced by their problems. The form of social interaction that is often carried out by the elderly is by interacting with fellow friends at the orphanage and actively participating in social activities or joint activities in the orphanage. Comparison with Previous Findings: This study shows that social interaction has a significant influence on the happiness of the elderly at the Harapan Kita Palembang Social Home for the Elderly, with a correlation coefficient of 0.751 and a determination coefficient of 56%.

Discussion

These results are consistent with the research of Zahratul (2022) at the UPTD Rumoh Seujahtra Geunaseh Sayang, Banda Aceh, which found a significant positive correlation between social interaction and happiness of the elderly. This finding is in line with the research of Dina (2022), which showed that social interaction and a sense of humor contributed significantly to the happiness of the elderly in Surabaya with an R^2 value of 0.355. This indicates that, in addition to social interaction, other factors such as a sense of humor also affect the happiness of the elderly. Research by Suarya (2016) also showed that social interaction is important for achieving life satisfaction in the elderly.

Although this study focuses more on life satisfaction, these results support the finding that active social involvement improves well-being. Maria Ulfa Sitompul's thesis added that there is a positive relationship between social interaction and happiness, with a correlation coefficient of 0.472. Although lower than the findings in Palembang, both studies show a positive relationship between social interaction and happiness. The journal by Astrida Budiarti and colleagues confirms that social interaction is related to decreased levels of loneliness and increased quality of life in the elderly. These findings strengthen the conclusion that more social interaction reduces loneliness and improves quality of life, indicating the importance of social interaction in the psychological well-being of the elderly.

This study, along with previous studies, confirms that social interaction is an important factor that significantly contributes to the happiness and well-being of older adults. Increasing opportunities for older adults to interact socially, whether in a residential or community setting, can provide substantial psychological and emotional benefits, helping to improve their overall quality of life. This highlights the importance of programs that support and facilitate social interaction among older adults.

These findings align with previous studies that also emphasized the importance of social relationships in elderly happiness and well-being. Research in various elderly care centers across Indonesia has consistently shown that older adults who are more socially active tend to be happier and more emotionally resilient. While some studies also point to other contributing factors such as humor or life satisfaction, the consistent thread remains the positive impact of social engagement. Social interaction has also been found to help reduce loneliness and improve the overall quality of life among older individuals, underlining its role as a key component in promoting mental and emotional health.

This study supports the broader understanding that meaningful interaction is not merely beneficial but essential for the psychological well-being of older adults. Encouraging and facilitating opportunities for the elderly to engage in social relationships whether through group activities, supportive conversations, or communal living can significantly enhance their life experience. Institutions and communities are therefore encouraged to develop and support programs that prioritize social inclusion as a way to promote happiness, mental health, and a sense of fulfillment in later life.

Implication

The findings of this study reveal that social interaction significantly contributes to the happiness of the elderly at the Harapan Kita elderly orphanage in Palembang. Elderly individuals who are more

socially engaged tend to experience greater emotional well-being, a stronger sense of belonging, and reduced feelings of loneliness. Regular interaction with peers and caregivers helps foster a supportive environment that enhances life satisfaction. These results emphasize that meaningful social relationships play a key role in shaping the psychological well-being of older adults, making social engagement an essential factor in promoting happiness during old age.

Limitation

This study has certain limitations that may affect the interpretation of the results. It was conducted at only one elderly orphanage with a small number of participants, making it difficult to apply the findings to all elderly populations, especially those living in different environments or regions. The use of purposive sampling means the participants were selected based on specific criteria, which may lead to biased results and reduce the overall representativeness of the sample. Furthermore, the data was collected using self-reported questionnaires, which can be influenced by the tendency of respondents to give socially acceptable answers rather than their true feelings. Lastly, since the study was cross-sectional, it only captures a snapshot in time and cannot determine whether social interaction directly causes increased happiness in the elderly it only shows that a relationship exists between the two.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research conducted on the elderly at the Harapan Kita Palembang Elderly Social Home, it was found that social interaction has a significant influence on the level of happiness of the elderly. The analysis shows a strong positive correlation between social interaction and happiness of the elderly, with a determination coefficient of 56%, while the remaining 44% is influenced by other factors that were not studied. This shows that routine social interaction can have a positive impact on the elderly in overcoming problems involving happiness, such as getting closer to each other, providing inner peace, and maturing thinking to face problems. Thus, it can be concluded that social interaction plays an important role in improving the quality of life of the elderly at home.

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