

The Effect Of Occupational Reminiscence Therapy On Depression Levels In The Elderly

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ABSTRACT

Depression is a common mental health problem among the elderly and often affects their quality of life. Reminiscence therapy, as a form of occupational therapy, has been proposed as a non-pharmacological intervention to reduce depressive symptoms by encouraging older adults to recall meaningful and positive past experiences. This study aimed to determine the effect of reminiscence therapy on the level of depression among the elderly in Embung Karung Hamlet, within the working area of Kopang Health Center, Central Lombok. The research design used was a pre-experimental approach with a one-group pre–post test. The sample consisted of 24 elderly individuals experiencing depression, with the level of depression measured using the Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS). The intervention was carried out in five structured sessions, covering childhood, adolescence, adulthood, family, and self-integrity reflection. The results showed that of the 24 elderly participants with depression, 21 experienced mild depression (87.5%) and 3 experienced moderate depression (12.5%). After reminiscence therapy, 14 elderly participants were categorized as normal (53.7%), and 10 experienced mild depression (47.3%). Based on the bivariate analysis table, using the paired sample t-test, the significance value obtained was $p = 0.000$, with $\alpha = 0.05$. This indicates that $p < \alpha$, meaning that the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted, and the null hypothesis (H_o) is rejected. In conclusion, reminiscence therapy as an occupational therapy intervention has a significant effect on reducing depression levels among the elderly in Embung Karung Hamlet, under the working area of Kopang Health Center, Central Lombok.

Keyword: Depression, Elderly, occupational therapy, Reminiscence therapy

1. BACKGROUND

Depression is a mental disorder characterized by persistent sadness, loss of pleasure and interest, feelings of guilt, and low self-esteem. Depression may also disrupt sleep and appetite, cause fatigue, and reduce concentration. The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that the prevalence of depressive disorders among older adults worldwide is 61.6% [2]. Data from the 2018 Indonesia Basic Health Research (Riskesdas) show that 6.1% of Indonesians aged 60 years and older experience depression, with West Nusa Tenggara Province reporting a prevalence of 8.8% [1]. Depression in the elderly often occurs alongside chronic physical conditions. Older adults may also develop depression as

they realize that they have lived most of their lives. They often feel abandoned and powerless in relation to their environment and frequently experience limitations in movement, activities, and thinking.

The consequences of depression in the elderly are severe. If left untreated, depression can further reduce quality of life, contribute to physical illness, substance abuse, alcohol and nicotine dependence, and worsen overall mental health [3]. Based on a previous study entitled *“The Effect of Batik Jumputan Occupational Therapy on Stress Levels in the Elderly at RW 13 Malangan, Umbulharjo, Yogyakarta in 2024”*, the results showed that occupational therapy significantly reduced stress levels in the elderly. This study will employ

occupational therapy as a form of psychotherapy to alleviate depressive symptoms. One form of psychotherapy that can be used to reduce depression levels in the elderly is reminiscence therapy.

This therapy consists of several approaches, including past-life interviews, recalling memories through photographs, music, or treasured objects from the past. Reminiscence therapy originates from geriatric psychiatry and is considered an effective non-pharmacological intervention that can be applied individually or in groups [4]. With its various advantages, reminiscence therapy is recommended as one of the non-pharmacological interventions for managing depression in the elderly, as it is not only effective but also safe, inexpensive, and capable of improving overall quality of life [5].

Elderly individuals with mild to moderate depression are the primary targets of this therapy, whereas in cases of severe depression or advanced dementia, reminiscence therapy may need to be modified or combined with other approaches.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a pre-experimental design with a one-group pretest–posttest approach. The study population consisted of elderly individuals experiencing mild to moderate depression.

A total of 24 participants were selected through purposive sampling based on inclusion criteria, namely willingness to participate and being 60 years of age or older.

The research instrument used was the 15-item Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS) questionnaire to measure depression levels. Data collection was conducted in three stages: (1) administration of the pretest, (2) implementation of reminiscence therapy, and (3) administration of the posttest. The

intervention was carried out in five structured sessions lasting 30–60 minutes each, covering childhood experiences, adolescence, adulthood, family, and self-integrity reflection.

Data were analyzed using SPSS software. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize demographic characteristics, while the paired sample t-test was employed to compare pretest and posttest depression scores. The significance level was set at $p < 0.05$.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The explanation of the research results has previously been presented in narrative and tabular formats, with univariate and bivariate analyses as well as p-values.

Table 1.

Depression levels among the elderly before the administration of reminiscence therapy

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Mild depression	21	87.5
Moderate depression	3	12,5
Total	24	100

The Table 1. presents the results of the univariate analysis, showing that 21 older adults (87.5%) experienced mild depression, while 3 older adults (12.5%) experienced moderate depression. This indicates that the prevalence of depression among the elderly in Dusun Embung Karung is relatively high.

Table 2.

Depression levels among the elderly after receiving reminiscence therapy intervention

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Normal	14	53,7
Mild depression	10	47,5
Total	24	100

Table 2. present the results after receiving reminiscence therapy, out of 24 respondents, 14

older adults (58.3%) showed normal levels of depression, while 10 older adults (41.7%) experienced mild depression.

Table 3.

Analysis of the Effect of Reminiscence Therapy

Variable	(Pretest)	(Posttest)	p-value
depression	87,5 mild depression 12,5 moderate depression	58,3 normal 41,7 mild depression	0.000

Overall, of the 24 respondents in the pretest, the majority were in the mild depression category, with 21 elderly participants (87.5%), followed by the moderate depression category with 3 participants (12.5%), and no respondents in the severe depression category. These results indicate that before the intervention, the number of elderly individuals experiencing depression was relatively high, predominantly in the mild depression category. This condition illustrates that, at the beginning of the study, the respondents on average experienced a significant level of depression, making intervention necessary to reduce depressive symptoms. This aligns with the general condition of elderly individuals, who are vulnerable to psychological problems due to the loss of a spouse, physical limitations, and social isolation. These factors contribute to the emergence of depressive symptoms.

After the intervention, based on the post-test results, most elderly participants were in the normal category (1–4), with 14 participants (58.3%), followed by the mild depression category (5–9) with 10 participants (41.7%). These results demonstrate that reminiscence therapy can help the elderly recall positive experiences, improve mood, enhance self-esteem, and strengthen social relationships with those around them. This indicates that recalling

pleasant past experiences can assist the elderly in rebuilding a sense of life purpose, increasing self-confidence, and fostering social connectedness.

The study results showed that during the pretest, 87.5% of participants were classified as having mild depression and 12.5% as having moderate depression, whereas in the posttest the scores decreased to 58.3% normal and 41.7% mild depression. The paired sample t-test revealed a significant difference ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$), indicating that reminiscence therapy significantly reduced depression levels among the elderly.

Reminiscence therapy is effective in reducing depression levels among the elderly because it helps them share positive past experiences, allowing them to feel more valued, reduce loneliness, increase social interaction with others, enhance self-acceptance, identify positive aspects, improve positive mood, and forget unpleasant events in their current lives. This is supported by previous studies showing significant differences in depression levels and social aspects among the elderly after undergoing reminiscence therapy. Older adults reported feeling more valued due to the memories they had experienced [4].

Reminiscence therapy consists of several forms, including past-life interviews, recalling memories through photographs, music, or cherished objects from the past. Originating from geriatric psychiatry, reminiscence therapy is considered an effective non-pharmacological intervention that can be applied individually or in groups [6]. This proves that occupational reminiscence therapy is effective in reducing depression levels in the elderly. The results of this study support previous findings indicating that reminiscence therapy is a safe, inexpensive, and effective non-pharmacological intervention for managing depression in older adults. [5].

The findings of this study suggest that

integrating reminiscence therapy into depression management may help reduce the prevalence of depression. Future studies could expand these findings by involving larger sample sizes, more diverse populations, and longitudinal designs to evaluate the sustainability of depression reduction among the elderly.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that reminiscence therapy significantly reduces depression levels in the elderly. By helping older adults recall positive past experiences, this therapy enhances self-worth, reduces loneliness, improves social interactions, and promotes overall psychological well-being. Reminiscence therapy is an effective, safe, and easily applicable non-pharmacological strategy, making it a valuable nursing intervention to optimize the mental health of elderly individuals in the community.

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