Practical consciousness for avoiding elderly loneliness: Study in Surabaya City, East Java

Kesadaran praktis dalam menghindari kesepian pada lanjut usia: Studi di Kota Surabaya, Jawa Timur

Ayu Diah Amalia[✉]

Department of Social Science, Faculty of Social and Political Science, Universitas Airlangga
Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia – 60286
e-mail of corresponding author: ayudiahamalia83@gmail.com

Abstract

Social change has an impact on changes within the family in terms of problems and needs. Modernization, industrialization, and urbanization create new problems for the elderly, such as reduced care and neglect due to the loss of the service provider role for the elderly. These conditions lead to elderly social degradation, and loneliness. This study aims to explore the experience of loneliness in the elderly and practical consciousness in managing loneliness. This qualitative research uses social phenomenology approach, and 19 elderly informants joined the research. The results showed that some elderly informants did not feel lonely despite living alone, but some elderly people also felt lonely although living with family. Practical consciousness of the elderly provides a good understanding as a strategy for how the elderly evaluate, and understand the social context around them and manage the loneliness experienced. Loneliness can reduce the well-being of the elderly, it takes the role of various parties such as family, community, and state to solve this problem. This study concludes that practical awareness in the elderly is one of the intervention strategies to avoid loneliness in the elderly.

Keywords: practical consciousness; elderly loneliness; elderly well-being

Abstrak

Perubahan sosial berdampak pada perubahan didalam keluarga pada masalah dan kebutuhan. Modernisasi, industrialisasi dan urbanisasi menimbulkan berbagai permasalahan baru bagi lanjut usia, seperti berkurangnya perawatan dan pengabaian diakibatkan hilangnya peran service provider bagi lanjut usia. Kondisi tersebut menimbulkan degradasi sosial pada lansia dan kesepian. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi pengalaman kesepian pada lanjut usia dan kesadaran praktis dalam mengelola kesepian. Penelitian kualitatif ini menunggunakan pendekatan fenomenologi sosial dan melibatkan 19 informan lanjut usia. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan beberapa informan lansia tidak merasakan kesepian meskipun tinggal sendiri, namun beberapa lansia juga merasakan kesepian meskipun tinggal bersama keluarga. Lansia menanganggapi kesepian secara berbeda-beda dan subjektif. Kesadaran praktis lansia memberikan pemahaman yang baik sebagai strategi bagaimana lansia mengevaluasi, dan memahami konteks sosial di sekitarnya serta mengelola kesepian yang dialami. Kesepian dapat menurunkan kesejahteraan lansia, dibutuhkan peran dari berbagai pihak seperti keluarga, masyarakat, dan negara untuk menyelesaikan masalah ini. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa kesadaran praktis pada lansia merupakan salah satu strategi intervensi untuk menghindari kesepian pada lansia.

Kata kunci: kesadaran praktis; kesepian lanjut usia; kesejahteraan lansia

Introduction

The development of the physical environment, science, technological innovation, reorganization of work, and the impact of globalization and global capitalism affect the nature of the world in which we live. Industrialization has undermined the basis of the extended family and transformed it into the nuclear family, where family members exit the home production system and work in the mass production system. The small size of the family illustrates how the social changes associated with modernization undermine the position of the elderly (Quadagno 2002). Before industrialization, strong social norms bound the younger generation to care for the elderly. Societies became increasingly individualistic, and norms about elder care changed. In individualistic industrialized societies, caring for the elderly

is seen as a voluntary obligation that can be neglected without fear of social censure (Cornerly et al. 2021). Modernization and globalization, the capacity of this support system is slowly weakening and is not in a position to meet the basic needs of the elderly and they are left as neglected family members. The traditional sense of responsibility from the younger generation to the older generation has faded, all of this has caused misery for the condition of the elderly in society and caused problems (Nitin et al. 2016). The development of modernity is also a collapse of old forms of community leading to the disconnection of personal relationships in modern society. Under conditions of modernity, the level of space-time distancing is getting wider (Giddens 2014). Changes make older people more vulnerable. The vulnerability experienced by the elderly is displayed in the form of frailty, dependency, loss of autonomy, and loss of social relationships (Langmann 2023). In addition to some of the previously mentioned forms, the current trend of elderly vulnerability is loneliness. Social changes affect loneliness in the elderly due to reduced intergenerational connectedness, geographical mobility, and individualized communities (Fakoya et al. 2020).

In Indonesia, according to the Indonesian Republic of Law No. 13 of 1998, the elderly are the population aged 60 years and above (BPS Indonesia 2021). The number of elderly people in Indonesia continues to increase, based on the Indonesian Population Census in 2023 the number of elderly people in Indonesia amounted to 29 million (Kementerian Kesehatan Indonesia 2024). The increasing number of elderly, changes in the status of the elderly and changes in the nature of families and social networks in contemporary society will pose many problems. All these social changes contribute to increasing the vulnerability of the elderly to experience loneliness. Loneliness not only threatens the physical and mental health of the elderly but also undermines social harmony, which should be taken seriously (Zhao & Wu 2022). A study conducted by Yasnita et al. (2018) shows that neglect of the elderly in Indonesia is caused by several factors, namely; changes in family structure (extended family to nuclear family), and weakening social solidarity and public awareness, especially in urban communities, so that reconstruction and socialization to the community are needed in glorifying the elderly (Yasnita et al. 2018).

A typical phenomenon in the elderly as a period of development is social loneliness (Balogova et al. 2018). Loneliness has negative outcomes on elderly mental health (Cacioppo & Cacioppo 2018, McDaid & Park 2023, Ribeiro-Gonçalves et al. 2023). Loneliness is a public health problem that can lead to mortality, depression, anxiety, and cognitive impairment such as dementia (Elsayed et al. 2019, Donovan & Blazer 2020). Elderly loneliness can reduce health and well-being. Therefore, a study is needed on how the elderly interpret loneliness and how they live with and manage loneliness (Barbosa Neves et al. 2019). Some people may not feel lonely when alone, and may also feel lonely when surrounded by others. Loneliness is therefore a subjective meaning (Lapane et al. 2022).

With the decline in physical function, separation from work, separation from family, and the death of spouses and close friends, loneliness in the elderly will be seen (Su et al. 2024). Loneliness is higher in the elderly who have difficulties with self-care and functional capacity, as the elderly need to rely on others to help them with their activities of daily living. Loneliness in the elderly can be attributed to a decrease in social contact due to a decline in physical and mental functioning in daily life (Chow et al. 2021). The elderly experience of loneliness is influenced by various social and structural factors, such as household composition, geographical location, financial difficulties, social withdrawal, and access to transportation (Smith 2019).

The concept of loneliness is complex that has a significant impact on the psychosocial well-being of older people, and we need to emphasize the importance of addressing this issue in old age (Hazer & Boylu 2010). Loneliness, solitude, disability, health concerns, excessive fear, worries about being neglected or lacking care, fear of crowded spaces, dislocation, social isolation, and marginalization are several problematic aspects of life in old age. Among the numerous challenges faced by the elderly, loneliness is frequently identified as the most prevalent. It is important to recognize that loneliness is a deeply personal experience that elicits different responses from each individual. Furthermore, it serves as a measure of weak social connections and warrants significant attention. The term loneliness is defined by sociologist Peter Townsend as a form of social deprivation. Sociologist Jenny de Jong

Gierveld distinguishes between two types of loneliness: situational loneliness, which arises in response to particular situations or events, and chronic loneliness, which is characterized by a persistent state of loneliness. Loneliness is a complex and subjective experience that varies considerably among individuals, as each person interprets and assesses relationships in a unique manner, resulting in diverse responses. Additionally, the root causes of loneliness vary from person to person, although researchers have identified several risk factors associated with this phenomenon (Smith 2019). The elderly face social challenges as they become more socially differentiated, leading to feelings of loneliness due to a lack of social connections (Sadler et al. 2006). The study from Barbosa Neves et al. (2019) that loneliness is relational and related to old age (age, norms, status), personal problems, and illness. Therefore, they situate loneliness as a multidimensional phenomenon: related to structural dimensions e.g. old age and related to agent dimensions e.g. personal choices. Loneliness is their own responsibility to cope with and use individual and social strategies to cope and regulate loneliness (Barbosa Neves et al. 2019).

A previous studies on loneliness and consciousness was conducted by Mijuskovic (2019). Passive loneliness arises from external circumstances, such as the environment, culture, and situational and can be avoided. Loneliness is actively shaped by acts of reflexive self-consciousness (Kant) and transcendent intentionality (Husserl) and is, therefore, unavoidable. The dynamics of loneliness, whose spontaneous unconscious source weakens the unconscious (Mijuskovic 2019). One of the unusual conclusions in emphasizing the reflexive nature and transcendent intentionality of humans is that humans are always lonely (Ver Eecke 2020). In 2021, Ben Mujiskovic emphasizes the significance of a substantial sense of self in relation to the fear of loneliness and the desire for security. Without a solid self-identity, these feelings would hold no meaning. The self is self-contained and isolated, like a windowless room with no external influence or internal output. All of its actions are spontaneous, and its internal perceptions constantly shift, resulting in personal consciousness and self-awareness. This continuous temporal identity of the self leads to the entrapment of the soul within the subjective realm of lonely idealism (Mijuskovic 2022).

Machielse's (2017) study on social isolation, suggests the emergence and persistence of social isolation, and in possible solutions and improvements to the situation of socially isolated elderly. Machielse uses Giddens' theory of structuration to reveal how socially isolated older people perpetuate or even worsen the situation of older people. The concepts of practical and discursive consciousness, rules and resources, routines and unintended consequences of actions provide an understanding of the mechanisms underlying the emergence and persistence of social isolation. The emergence and persistence of social isolation is an unintended consequence of the patterns that agents follow in acting. Socially isolated older people act on the basis of their practical consciousness, thus moving further away from the goals they want to realize for themselves. This strategy often leaves them more isolated (Machielse 2017).

Agent capacity, the inclination is often towards solving problems independently. According to structuration theory, individuals are viewed as capable beings who possess the ability to interpret, assess, influence, and navigate social situations effectively. Competent agents are able to translate their intentions and motivations into tangible actions based on their practical and discursive consciousness. However, if individuals lack sufficient practical knowledge about their social environment, their interactions are likely to be unsuccessful. Many struggle to engage with others and lack the skills to establish and maintain meaningful relationships.

Giddens' concept of structuration theory sheds light on the strategies employed by older individuals who have experienced prolonged isolation and how these strategies perpetuate or even worsen their isolation. This theory helps to explain why some older adults remain chronically socially isolated despite interventions aimed at alleviating their loneliness. If individuals feel that events occur to them without any impact on their lives, their lack of self-efficacy makes it nearly impossible for them to actively confront problems and difficulties. Consequently, they resort to passive strategies such as emotional denial, avoidance, and withdrawal behaviors, further distancing themselves from society. By choosing to avoid conflicts, individuals inadvertently isolate themselves, further exacerbating their feelings of loneliness. However, the improvement of socially isolated elderly individuals can only be achieved if they are willing to break free from their comfortable routines and the sense of security that comes with it.

Imposing unrealistic expectations on behavioral changes can actually undermine their sense of safety. Instead, a pragmatic approach to problem-solving should be implemented as a first step, aiming to stabilize their current circumstances (Machielse & Duyndam 2020). Mijuskovic's study focuses on loneliness and consciousness, loneliness is actively shaped by acts of reflexive self-consciousness (Kant) and transcendent intentionality (Husserl). While machielse's study focuses on social isolation and consciousness in the viewpoint of Giddens' structuration theory. This study will discuss loneliness in the elderly in the viewpoint of Giddens' structuration theory, the concept of consciousness.

Giddens developed the concept of a societal system that relies on practical consciousness to maintain its integrity. Practical consciousness encompasses various elements such as consciousness, sensory perception, memory, and recollection. Memory, in this context, is considered as consciousness in relation to time and is influenced by the cultural forms present within a community. The subject or agent possesses a consciousness of their actions and the underlying reasons behind them, thus engaging in conscious activities. Discursive consciousness, on the other hand, involves the ability to articulate experiences using language, while unconsciousness refers to the inability to verbalize the motives behind actions.

Giddens explores the connection between memory and the unconscious, aiming to explain the latter through the lens of memory (Dmitrievna et al. 2014). Agents, although constrained by societal structures, utilize their understanding of the structural context when engaging in actions. However, their actions are also influenced by their innate abilities and their perception of available options and external limitations. The capabilities of agents are shaped by both practical consciousness and discursive consciousness. Practical consciousness encompasses the knowledge that agents possess to navigate everyday tasks, often so integrated into their lives that it goes unnoticed. Giddens acknowledges that actors possess various forms of knowledge, including practical, discursive, reflexive, and contextual knowledge. The extensive use of this knowledge leads to the institutionalization of structures. Reflexive monitoring of action is a constant element in everyday life, involving not only individual behavior but also the behavior of others. Actors not only monitor their own activities but also pay attention to the social and physical aspects of their environments. Practical consciousness, which structuralism tends to overlook, is a defining characteristic of human agents or subjects. These agents actively participate in social practice as actors.

The relationship between practical consciousness and rationalization of action is interconnected due to the fact that many of our daily activities are repetitive and do not require further explanation or justification. Giddens highlights the constant consciousness of actors, even if they are unable to articulate it directly. This emphasizes the actor's ability to comprehend their actions, in contrast to the structuralist belief that society and social structures operate independently from the actor. Although actors may not always be able to describe their actions, they are not unconscious. Instead, social actors possess a practical consciousness that consists of knowledge that is accepted and unquestioned, forming the foundation for routines and traditions. They possess a significant amount of knowledge about the social world, which they apply in their everyday social interactions. However, much of this knowledge is practical rather than theoretical. Nevertheless, this practical consciousness can be elevated to a discursive consciousness if actors reflect on what they are doing and how they are doing it. Structuration theory places great importance on the concept of routinization within practical consciousness. Routines are intimately linked to the ongoing development of an individual's personality as they navigate their daily activities. Additionally, routines play a vital role in the reproduction of societal institutions, which serve as the sole mechanism for sustaining these activities (Giddens 2016).

Loneliness in the elderly reduces the well-being of the elderly. It is very important to solve the problem of loneliness in the elderly, especially the problem of loneliness because it has an impact on mental aspects. By understanding how the elderly interpret loneliness and how the elderly can manage lonely situations, it will provide knowledge and as a strategy to avoid loneliness in the elderly and can design appropriate intervention programs for the elderly. This study aims to explore loneliness in the elderly, how participants feel, interpret, and manage loneliness and knowledge around the elderly environment.

Research Method

This qualitative research was conducted using the social phenomenology method. Social phenomenology is an approach in the field of sociology that aims to reveal what role humans play in producing social actions, social situations, and the social world. Alfred Schutz states that subjective meaning gives rise to an apparently objective social world. Social phenomenology explains the mutual interactions that occur during human action, situational structuring, and reality construction. Through this method, researchers try to understand the relationship between actions, situations, and realities that occur in society (Crossman 2020). Researchers cannot understand the meaning in any other way than with the actor's knowledge (Heiskala 2011). Consciousness activities such as experiencing, observing, thinking, remembering, and others. Alfred Schutz applied Max Weber's Interpretive Sociology's Husserlian phenomenological thinking by bringing back the concept of subjective meaning involved in the action process (Dreher & Santos 2017). Phenomenological sociology focuses primarily on the consciousness of meaningful action, social construction, especially communicative knowledge based on social reality, issues of intersubjectivity and understanding of others, and the world of life (Gugutzer 2020).

This study used a purposive technique, on research subjects totaling 19 elderly people in two villages in Surabaya City, East Java (Simomulyo Baru Village and Bulak Village). The research subjects were elderly people aged 60 years and over, both elderly women and elderly men. The youngest elderly participant was 60 years old and the oldest elderly participant was 81 years old. The selection of other criteria is the elderly living alone at home and the elderly living with family. This distinction is made to be able to see how the elderly are aware of their loneliness conditions both living alone and with family. There was only one male elderly participant due to data limitations. Data collection techniques were carried out by means of in-depth interviews with the elderly. Researchers also made observations of the surrounding environment, social relationships and physical conditions of the participants. This was done to synchronize the interview data with the actual conditions around the elderly. Researchers conducted interviews with the elderly twice, at different times, in 2022 and 2023. This consideration was made to find out the situation of the elderly's life, daily activities and whether there were changes in conditions in the elderly.

Phenomenology is used to explore the lived experiences of people in different phases of an individual's life. In this study, Colaizzi's data analysis technique was used to extract, organize, and analyze the data. By identifying important statements word by word in the transcripts and the meanings that have been formulated. From these formulated meanings, groupings of themes were made and ultimately helped in the development of a thematic map of the experience of loneliness in the elderly. Furthermore, extracting significant statements, categorizing, and understanding the essential meanings of the phenomenon. The descriptive phase occurs when the researcher comes to understand and define the phenomenon (Praveena & Sasikumar 2021). The phenomenological research design gathers descriptions and preserves the spontaneity of the subject's experience. The subject who has lived the reality of the subject under investigation is the only legitimate source of data that can be used by the researcher to access reality. Characterized by the division of text into units; the transformation of units into meanings expressed as phenomenological concepts; and the binding of transformed meanings into a general description of Experience.

The purpose of phenomenological research is not to produce a theory but to describe and understand the essence of a concept (Priest 2002). To ensure the research's quality, the researcher conducted interviews with participants on different occasions, either in person or over the phone. The consistency of interview data was checked in the first stage and compared with interviews conducted in the second stage. Additionally, interviews were also conducted with external parties such as children, neighbors, local community leaders, and elderly activists in the participants' living environment.

Result and Discussion

In contemporary society, the phenomenon of loneliness in the elderly represents a significant social issue that requires attention. The experience of loneliness among the elderly contributes to declining elderly health and well-being. The elderly participants in this study exhibit a range of subjective experiences and

interpretations of loneliness. Some elderly individuals do not perceive themselves as lonely, whereas others do. It is more probable that elderly participants who experience loneliness will also experience conflict. Conflict has been demonstrated to impair social interaction among the elderly, which in turn increases the prevalence of loneliness among this demographic. Those who do not experience loneliness tend to view it as a common phase of old age and accept the situation. They are aware of their situation of loneliness but do not question the underlying causes of this state. This is the practical consciousness of agents in the phenomenon of loneliness in the elderly. They interpret and manage lonely situations into meaningful situations with daily activities or routines so that feelings of loneliness can be avoided. Loneliness is not a matter of lack of social relationships; rather, it is a matter of how these loneliness are interpreted. This section will describe the elderly loneliness experience and the capacity of agents to change the situation.

Elderly loneliness experience: How participant feels and social contact

Referring to (Barbosa Neves et al. 2019), the experience of loneliness in the elderly can be observed by exploring how they feel, interpret, and manage loneliness. Some elderly do not feel lonely even though they live alone at home, but some elderly also experience loneliness even though they live with their families. In this case, the elderly interpret their loneliness subjectively and differently for each individual, and this is influenced by the social context around the elderly and their capacity to manage the situation.

Loneliness that occurs in elderly participants is situational loneliness, but some elderly experience chronic loneliness. Elderly who experience chronic loneliness are very vulnerable to mental and health disorders. As experienced by elderly RSL, LSI and SYT who live alone, they experience chronic loneliness after the death of their husbands, the absence of close family, and low social contact. In the case of informant RST, a closed personality character can also contribute to the prevalence of loneliness because they are more often at home and have less social contact. Informant LSI experiences chronic loneliness due to lack of social contact with family and neighbors. While informant SYT has no social contact with family. However, the family occupies an important position to prevent the elderly from the prevalence of loneliness, if family social contact is lost, the prevalence of loneliness increases, the family is the main source of support for the elderly who live alone. As the following interview quote, *"I have no one anymore, no children and husband, no one cares about me, yes I am lonely"* (Informant SYT). *"Loneliness is hard, I have no one to talk to, people may not be able to imagine how lonely it is, I cannot imagine loneliness like this, I experience loneliness, living alone, it is difficult, I sleep without anyone"* (Informant RSL). *"I am alone, my husband died in 2007. No one contacted me. Yes, it is lonely. The neighbors here are dewe-dewe (individualized). I do everything myself. I have grandchildren, but they never contact me."* (Informant LSI).

Loneliness is experienced not only by the elderly who live alone but also by those who live with their families. From the results of observations, the elderly who live with their families experience loneliness due to lack of social contact with family, differences between generations, and the busyness of family members. Some elderly participants experience loneliness when family members leave the elderly at a certain time, and the elderly just stay silent without doing activities outside the home, as experienced by informants KSR and HMS. In the case of informant HMS, who lives with family but experiences loneliness due to differences between generations with family members, hers daughter rarely spoke to her. Informant KSR experiences loneliness because of the illness, which limits her from making social contact outside the home.

> "I got injury in my leg, I can't walk far. Sometimes I sit here. If I'm tired I sleep and rest and I can't go anywhere. I'm lonely, my grandchildren play outside the house. There's no one to talk to. If my daughter goes to the market, I'm alone, and no one to take care of me." (Informant KSR).

> "I came out of my house, there was no one, *yo opo tolah-toleh* (looking here and there), the door of the neighbor's house was closed. So I went back into the house and went to sleep. Yes, I felt lonely." (Informant HMZ).

Amalia: "Practical consciousness for avoiding elderly loneliness"

Loneliness also occurs due to family confinement, where the elderly are not allowed to do activities outside the house and social interaction. Families do not have time to care for the elderly at certain times when most daughters work, and the reason for concern is if the elderly are active without family supervision. However, the impact is that the elderly experience loneliness. As happened to the following SHT informant

> "My daughter works. I am alone at home. I don't mind being alone. I also can't make contact by phone, and my daughter doesn't allow me to leave the house. Just being alone at home, lonely, and sitting here. Sitting around, *tenguk-tenguk* (sit quietly), not thinking about anything." (Informant SHT).

Elderly people do not feel lonely when they do many activities both inside and outside the home. Family is the main and closest source of social contact for the elderly, while neighbors are the secondary social contact for the elderly. The role of the family in addition to providing care for the elderly also provides mental strengthening for the elderly with emotional support. Currently, it is often found in modern society, where families can no longer provide full services for the elderly due to economic demands, and many daughters take on roles in industrialization. And there is a change in roles between generations, such as the role of the elderly who become caregivers for their grandchildren. For the elderly, the presence of grandchildren provides increased happiness, and grandchildren can entertain the elderly who no longer have a life partner. The elderly carry out grandchild care activities, replacing the role of daughters, such as looking after grandchildren while daughters are working. The role of the elderly who used to care for their children continues into old age. Although there are physical limitations in old age, the elderly enjoy caring for their grandchildren, and this can reduce loneliness in the elderly, as experienced by informant KMP, SML, SSI, and WST. *"I'm not lonely. I want to rest and sleep, but later my grandson will come because his mother is working (The grandson is being cared by the elderly)"* (Informant KMP). *"Not lonely, there were my grandchildren, my grandchildren entertained me, so I'm not lonely. If there are no activities with my grandchildren, I watch television and sleep. Never lonely"* (Informant SML). *"I don't feel lonely. Because there are my daughter and grandchildren, I am never alone. I am not afraid of being lonely, even if my daughter leave me for a while."* (Informant SSI).

> "I live with my son. I do activities like *momong cucu* (taking care of grandchildren), *umbah-umbah* (washing clothes). I rarely participate in outside activities. What will happen to my grandchildren if I leave the house? I'm happy with my grandchildren, I also like cooking and watching television" (Informant WST).

From the participant case, it is illustrated that loneliness can occur even though the elderly live with family, and what is more concerning is chronic loneliness, especially in the elderly who live alone. They cannot solve the loneliness problem and tend to worsen that situation, especially with family, neighbors, and communities. In modern society, social contact can actually be created without physical presence, through telecommunications technology. Currently, many social media applications can create digital interactions so the elderly can access information and communication. Loneliness can be overcome in various ways, including overcoming loneliness in the elderly themselves, because they are the ones who can understand their surroundings and their own capacity to manage the situation.

Practical consciousness and agent capacity to change the situation

Loneliness is just one outcome of a situation characterized by a small number of relationships (de Jong Gierveld et al. 2006). How agents express their state of loneliness depends on the processes that shape it, namely consciousness. Consciousness refers to a situation where agents focus on the things that happen around them to connect their activities with these things (Giddens 2016). The phenomenon of loneliness in the elderly is the subjectivity of the agent in evaluating and interpreting loneliness. The agent will realize his actions and the reasons for bringing up actions to create awareness activities (Dmitrievna et al. 2014).

In this study, several elderly participants had different meanings of loneliness. The meaning of loneliness is gathered from knowledge of the environment around the agent. The agent realizes the condition of loneliness and sorts out the action references for the consciousness activity. As the following excerpt

from the interview results *"Feeling lonely is not really. If I am lonely, I call the office, I call the Quran Recitation Group (Religion Group), I call my son and daughter-in-law (by handphone). Yes, whichever is convenient"*. (Informant DWI)*.* Another participant, YTI, 76 years old said interaction with others is key to avoiding elderly loneliness, as follows:

> "Not lonely. I have to do that (interaction). If I do not, I will get old quickly, say hello to anyone. If it's lonely, I just *inguk-inguk* (look), *nyopo-nyopo* (greet), and if it's *Rebo* (Wednesday), do gymnastics at RW (Residential Community)". (Informant YTI).

From the results of the participant interview indicate that the agent understands the condition of loneliness and loneliness, but the agent also knows the surrounding stimulus that can be a strength (capacity) to overcome the problem of loneliness. Recording the stimulus around the elderly is a good way as a strategy to strengthen the elderly in dealing with loneliness. The surrounding stimulus in this case, the social environment, family, and activities in the community are a source of support for the elderly. In this case, participants have sufficient knowledge to manage the situation of loneliness and loneliness experienced so that they apply certain action references as a strategy to avoid loneliness. The agent's action reference from the case is to make social connections, as social relationships are very important in providing social support for the elderly. Elderly people will feel happy by making social contact even though it comes from outside their immediate environment, such as residential and community relationships. As stated by Giddens (2016), agents utilize their knowledge of the structural context when they act. Being aware, in this case, means recording a series of surrounding stimuli, and memory can only be meaningful as a way of explaining the agent's knowledge and power (Giddens 2016). Agents are aware of the condition of loneliness by recording structural contexts such as environment, culture, norms and values as adequate knowledge so that agents can choose social actions as an agent's capacity to overcome the problem of loneliness.

Routine in daily activities both inside and outside the home is also a strategy for the elderly to avoid loneliness. Keeping themselves busy with daily activities at home or *umek* in Javanese which means not being able to stay still seems to reduce loneliness in the elderly. Agents have the capacity to control situations and interpret loneliness, including preferences for activities at home. Elderly people need to keep themselves busy so they do not get too lost in loneliness and solitude. With physical limitations, activities in the house are one solution to overcome boredom and avoid senile dementia in old age, as informant NRT did in the following interview excerpt.

> "I don't say it's lonely. I do anything. I also enjoy cooking and cleaning the garden. Yes, Quran Recitation (Religion Group), *PKK arisan* (Community Group). I joined it so that I have something to do. Ra popo (never mind) let me have something to do*, ra pikon* (in order not senile). Yes, it called *umek* (likes to do activities)". (Informant NRT).

From these answers, participants are competent and have the capacity to interpret, evaluate and manage social situations. They understand the condition of solitude and rationalize actions on the basis of knowledge by recording the surrounding stimulus. Here the agent has the capacity to translate intention & action into actual behavior based on practical consciousness. How agents perceive and think about their social situation is influenced by knowledge. Practical knowledge (ontological security) underlies the agent's consciousness of the condition of loneliness. In phenomenology, this is the area of personality that contains clusters of taken for granted knowledge. This cluster of taken-for-granted knowledge is the source of ontological security (Priyono 2016).

In this research, the agent's practical knowledge understands social situations such as self-knowledge, knowledge of the surrounding environment, knowledge of resources, and cultural knowledge. The agent can record the stimulus into knowledge or cognition. The agent's cognition, which is difficult to parse precisely, can affect the agent's consciousness without having to keep asking him/her why loneliness occurs. From the results of the study, agents have practical consciousness in viewing the condition of loneliness. Agents know, understand, interpret, and evaluate the condition of loneliness and carry out daily social practices but do not question why it happens and what to do with reflexive monitoring and

actionability. Practical consciousness refers to a collection of practical knowledge that cannot always be clearly deciphered. This practical consciousness is crucial to understanding how our various social actions and practices gradually become structures and how structures constrain and enable our social actions or practices (Priyono 2016).

Practical consciousness emphasizes the agent's knowledge capabilities. Social actors have greater practical consciousness, which consists of clear and rational knowledge that forms traditions and routines. They use their knowledge of the social world in their daily lives. However, much of that knowledge is practical. Since most of our daily activities are highly routine and require no further explanation or justification, practical consciousness and rationalization of action are related to each other. Giddens points out that actors know all the time, even if they cannot express it directly (Lippuner & Werlen 2009). Routines are sometimes able to overlook the condition of loneliness experienced. Routines are inseparable from agents, when agents carry out daily activities and with the institutions of society, routines will be reproduced continuously (Giddens 2016) as informant LIA did in the following interview excerpt *"I don't feel like I'm lonely now, I just enjoy living my life like before...".* (Informant LIA).

From this quote, the participant understands and has adequate knowledge about the conditions and situations of herself and her external environment. The agent has a practical consciousness of the condition of loneliness, and it is not always a continuous question of why to experience loneliness and how to overcome it. The agent has knowledge of the situation and embodies it in the rationalization of social actions and practices. These social practices will become social patterns and realities in society. Social practices are based on the agent's consciousness, the agent's consciousness is based on the agent's capacity and knowledge cluster. This knowledge is motivated by external and internal factors such as culture, socio-economics, agent characteristics and others. Practical consciousness consists of consciousness, sensory perception, memory, and recollection. Memory is considered a consciousness that develops historically and is related to the type of culture that exists in the community. The subject or agent will understand their actions, as well as the reasons that drive these actions to perform awareness activities (Dmitrievna et al. 2014).

In addition to knowledge, practical consciousness is based on the agent's memories and perceptions. The surrounding stimulus is internal and external knowledge such as perception, culture, social and economic. Which forms the activity of practical consciousness and its rationalization of social actions and practices which then become the social reality of society. From the results of the study, the majority of elderly informants tend not to feel lonely, practical knowledge can affect agent capacity and practical consciousness raises action references in reducing loneliness. Practical consciousness is influenced by practical knowledge and ontological security. Giddens shows the basic relationship between ontological security and mutual knowledge and how it leads to the routine character of social life. Ontological security is the desire of social agents to maintain a cognitively organized world of self and others. In an effort to maintain ontological security, agents engage in routine behaviors and avoid radical norm deviations (Chatterjee et al. 2019).

Loneliness is a concern, and is one of the social degradations that older adults experience in contemporary society. Loneliness in the elderly can further threaten the health and mental health of the elderly, ultimately resulting in a decrease in the well-being of the elderly. Modernization brings social changes in society. Social changes have an impact on the elderly as values and norms of care for the elderly fade and the needs of the elderly change following social changes in society. These changes cause vulnerability in the elderly, especially if the elderly have physical, mental and social relationship limitations. The elderly have the capacity to manage the social situation around them (practical consciousness) and play a role in the view of loneliness. Loneliness is the subjectivity of the agent, each agent has a different experience of loneliness. This study provides an explanation of how the elderly have sufficient practical knowledge and capacity to manage situations so that they do not feel lonely. Agents have adequate internal and external knowledge of their surroundings. So, they have strategies to manage the situation and reduce the sense of solitude and loneliness. Agents interpret loneliness differently and have reference actions to manage the situation into daily social practice. Practical consciousness can

shape the meaning of loneliness in the elderly. Almost all participants were able to manage their social situation by selecting actions that could avoid lonely conditions. Participants make social contact with their families intensively by communicating in daily activities both by telephone and talking directly with children and grandchildren, interacting and joining existing communities, such as greeting each other with neighbors, doing religious social activities, and joining the elderly community, as the interview excerpt below. Where participants are elderly men who live alone and carry out routines by undergoing religious activities, so that loneliness can be avoided, agents do not feel lonely and do not question why this happens to them. The routine of action preferences is a strategy to avoid loneliness in the elderly, like ABH (Male Elderly) doing everyday activities routinely outside his house as follows *"I come from the mosque, Quran training, ride a bicycle, and if it's far, I ride a motorcycle. Yasinan (Religion Activity) In the neighborhood"*. (Informant ABH).

Loneliness finds its roots in practical consciousness, serving as the fundamental basis for its meaning. In this context, consciousness diligently registers external stimuli and transforms it into social behavior. Individuals possess an innate understanding of their surroundings, engaging in daily activities without the need for explanation or justification. A significant portion of an individual's knowledge about the world and their subsequent actions exists in an unspoken form, embedded within their practical consciousness. Social actors rely on this practical consciousness, which encompasses unquestioned knowledge, as the bedrock for their routines and traditions (Lippuner & Werlen 2009).

> "Yes, often, Mrs. RT is the one who often asks how things are going, often shares, gives the widows here rice, noodles. Yes, *Guyub* (Collectivism). The people here are harmonious, sometimes in the morning they eat, Mrs. L and Mrs. W. We are cooks and invite us to have breakfast, like a family, all of them are good". (Informant AST).

Agents' actions, influenced by their consciousness and practical knowledge, manifest in habits and routines. These activity routines, such as religious practices, social interactions, and community engagement, shape participants' daily lives and contribute to the formation of traditions. These patterns in daily activities not only structure individuals' lives but also serve as a means to combat loneliness, allowing agents to strengthen their sense of self.

However, in this study, some participants also felt lonely, even though they had sufficient practical consciousness. Elderly people who experience loneliness are caused by several problems that follow them such as conflicts in the family and in their residential environment, intergenerational gaps and elderly neglect, and physical limitations such as disability and illness that limit the space for the elderly to interact with their environment. Conflict has an effect on increasing loneliness in elderly participants, conflict within the family greatly weakens the mental state of the elderly and exacerbates loneliness, as well as conflict with the residential environment (residential) can make the elderly alienated in their environment and increase loneliness. As experienced by participants MRT and EMI who have conflicts with family (son and siblings), conflicts with family make the elderly feel sad, upset, and angry and reduce the mental health of the elderly, as quoted in the following interview:

> "My son doesn't care about me. Never spoken to me. I am annoyed with my son. My son lives next to this house, and we rarely talk. Yes, it's lonely at home alone, here alone. But I know everyone in this *Perumnas* (residential). Everyone gets along well here. Neighbors see that the curtains are closed, they already know that I am not here (neighbor's attention)." (Informant MRT).

Unresolved conflicts and the absence of communication in the elderly lead to a loss of social and emotional support. This worsens the mental condition of the elderly, especially the elderly who live alone at home and the sense of loneliness will increase if the elderly do not have practical knowledge about the situation around her, as quoted from the following interview with EMI.

"I broke up with all my family. I've lost communication with them. Because of the inheritance. I live alone at home. My heart hurts. But it doesn't matter. I often cry how come it's like this? Yes, it's lonely, it's just that if I complain to myself, you have to be strong, you can't cry in your chest, just deal with what's there, you can't demand it because it's your destiny." (Informant EMI).

Physical limitations in the elderly such as the presence of illness and disabilities in the elderly also limit them from carrying out activities and social contacts. The elderly stay more at home and they tend not to make social contacts, so some informants feel lonely because their circle is only limited to people in their homes. AZK elderly participant who suffer eye disease unable to do any activities in the surrounding environment and only stay in front of his house. *"It's not too clear to see. Rarely leave the house, I can't leave the house, only korah-korah (wash dishes). Sometimes I stay outside the house, and someone greets me but I don't know him."* (Informant AZK).

According to Giddens' theory, individuals have the power to mold their own lives, influenced by the habits and routines they engage in on a daily basis and their aspiration for change. The significance of habits and routines cannot be overstated. The individual's ability to shape their social existence is evident throughout the process of becoming part of society. Through interactions with others, the individual constructs their own unique identity. This process of socialization, which continues throughout one's lifetime, establishes the foundation for a practical understanding of typical and identifiable patterns of interaction in everyday life.

Establishing a stable and enduring framework of social connections and relationships depends on possessing this understanding. The ingrained regulations and emotional and behavioral patterns that individuals adhere to in their everyday routines form the foundation of the ontological security system that is typically cultivated. This system of security entails having faith in the ongoing existence of the social surroundings and activities (Machielse & Duyndam 2020). The elderly in this study, living in a community that values collectivism, have the opportunity to combat loneliness through the support of their kinship networks. By actively participating in community traditions, these individuals possess the motivation and ability to transform their challenging circumstances into sources of strength, effectively avoiding feelings of loneliness. Engaging in daily routines, both individually and as part of the community, and nurturing social connections serve as effective strategies for combating loneliness among the elderly.

Loneliness in the elderly is triggered by various factors, including conflicts, differences between generations, and closed personality characteristics of individuals. Some individuals understand their loneliness and the factors that trigger it, but some elderly cannot understand it. All of this comes from the agent's consciousness. How is practical knowledge about the social context around the agent, adequate or inadequate? If the agent's practical knowledge is adequate, it will become an agent's capacity to manage situations of loneliness. Agent capacity is a self-strength to solve problems, especially the problem of loneliness in the elderly. The elderly who have sufficient capacity to record the surrounding stimulus become the strength to be able to turn a bad situation into a meaningful situation. Practical consciousness is very important for the elderly who experience loneliness, the existence of practical consciousness shapes the agent's preference to carry out social practices based on the evaluation of the agent's social context, turning it into a routine, so that the agent does not review why the unwanted condition occurs but changes the situation for the better.

Conclusion

Loneliness affects the mental condition and quality of life of the elderly. Loneliness is the subjectivity of the agent in interpreting the conditions and situations of solitude. The results of research in two locations in Surabaya City revealed that the 13 elderly participants did not experience loneliness, but 6 elderly participants felt lonely. In this study, loneliness is the meaning of the agent's consciousness of the situation. The agent's capacity to record and interpret the social context is a determining stimulus for the condition

of loneliness in the elderly. Practical consciousness of agents and routines can overcome the problem of loneliness in the elderly. Agents have practical knowledge that is applied in daily social practices. Practical consciousness is very important to understand the condition of loneliness in the elderly.

Loneliness in the elderly is one of the conditions for the decline in elderly welfare. It takes the role and contribution of various parties in this case the family, community, society and the state in social responsibility to reduce the problem and improve the welfare of the elderly. In understanding the problem of loneliness in the elderly, related parties need to explore the factors that underlie loneliness, so that social interventions for the elderly can be different but right on target. Policy makers and social workers need to pay attention to appropriate policies and interventions to address loneliness in the elderly by observing the background of the elderly and placing counseling services for the elderly in each community because the problem of loneliness in the elderly seems to receive less attention.

Some limitations in this study include the scope of the study was only conducted in two communities in the city of Surabaya, no measurements were made of the level of loneliness and factors that trigger loneliness in the elderly, and the impact not being able to be generalized. Future research may need to pay attention to these things so that it can further explore the level of loneliness and the social context that underlies loneliness in the elderly, and strategies for solving the problem of loneliness in the elderly.

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