Social Support and Level of Religiosity as Resilience Factors in Late Adult Widows

Nadia Salsabila Munawwarah 1, Siti Nurjana Gani 2, Diah Karmiyati 3

1 Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang, Indonesia
2 Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang, Indonesia
3 Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: Nadia Salsabila Munawwarah      E-mail: salsabilan97@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Widowed women who have just been abandoned by their partners need resilience. Resilience is a personality characteristic that a person can recover and adapt immediately after experiencing adversity. The resilience of a widow whose partner leaves her is influenced by several factors, including social support and religiosity. This research aims to find out whether social support and religiosity are factors that support the resilience of late adult widows. Systematic Literature Review (SLR) is the method applied in this research and results were found showing that social support and the level of religiosity play an important role in resilience mechanisms for dealing with the loss of a partner in late adulthood.

Keywords: Resilience, Religiosity, Social Support

INTRODUCTION

Widowed women or women without husbands are associated with those who live alone after marriage due to various reasons such as the death of their husband, divorce, and abandonment, then choose not to marry after that (Asadollahi, Karimpoor, Kaveh, & Ghahremani, 2022). One of the most serious reasons for widowhood is the death of a partner. The death of a partner is often considered the most painful but also unavoidable thing (Shin, Kim, & Park, 2018). However, losing a partner can bring feelings of loneliness to someone, especially for middle-aged and elderly people who are starting to become distant from other relatives (von Soest, Luhmann, Hansen, & Gerstorf, 2018).
In late adulthood, social ties are limited to close relatives such as spouses, children, grandchildren, siblings, and other trusted people (Recksiedler & Stawski, 2019). Even though social relations with several close relatives are good, this cannot be compared to the relationship between husband and wife who spend time together every day, so if one of them dies this could have serious consequences (King, Carr, & Taylor, 2021). Not only does it have an impact on social conditions, but the change from a woman’s status to a widow also affects her physical, economic, and socio-emotional health (Srivastava, Debnath, Shri, & Muhammad, 2021).

Considering that the impact of losing a partner is quite serious, it is considered necessary for a widow to increase her resilience (King et al., 2021). Resilience is defined as a characteristic of a person’s personality where she can adjust and adapt to difficult life circumstances effectively (Munoz et al. dalam Krok et al., 2021). In short, resilience is the extent to which a person can recover after experiencing difficulties (Oviedo et al., 2022). A person with a high level of resilience is believed to have a positive coping strategy consisting of good planning, acceptance, and reframing. A study on resilience conducted by Rackoff & Newman (2022) revealed that widows with high levels of acceptance had a greater reduction in the potential for depression.

The resilience of a widow is influenced by several factors including social support, marital happiness, psychological resilience, and demographics (Bennett, Morselli, Spahni, & Perrig-Chiello, 2020). One of the studies on resilience states that social support is the most important thing in helping to increase the resilience of a widow (Hendrickson et al., 2018). The social support received from the people closest to them helps widows overcome the loneliness they feel after losing their partner, thereby increasing their resilience (King et al., 2021).

Meanwhile, Vitorino et al. (2018) it is explained that other fundamental factors are considered capable of influencing resilience, namely religiosity. Religiosity can be defined as the depth of a person’s belief or belief which is expressed by carrying out religious activities such as worship, praying, and reading holy books (Dewi, Madjid, & Fauzan, 2020). A person with a high level of religiosity has a low tendency to experience stress, depression, and other mental disorders (Lace, Evans, Merz, & Handal, 2020). In a study it was said that bereavement events such as the loss of a child or loved one can give a long feeling of downturn, but individuals who have a good level of religiosity will be able to find the meaning and purpose of religion which makes them feel close to its creator, this is what makes the individual more optimistic in facing all challenges in life (Rudaz, Ledermann, & Grzywacz, 2020a).

As we get older, feelings of loneliness and anxiety also increase and the ability to cope with stress also decreases, especially in late adulthood. Therefore, in this study the author wants to find out whether social support and level of religiosity can be factors that support resilience abilities in late adulthood widows, considering that social support and religiosity are important aspects in improving well-being in late adulthood (Cherniak, Mikulincer, Shaver, & Granqvist, 2021).
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The type of research used in this research is the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method. The use of the SLR method aims to increase depth in reviewing and summarizing research (Tutik Sri Hariyati, n.d.). So, it could be said that the Systematic Review method is a research methodology that is carried out by collecting research on a particular topic and then analyzing it to get answers to the research questions (Ratu & Tondok, n.d.). The review planning was made by the authors (NSM, SNG, DK) starting with creating research questions using the SPIDER formulation (Sample, Phenomenon of Interest, Design, Evaluation, Research Type).

The research question in this review is, can social support and level of religiosity be factors that influence the resilience abilities of widows in late adulthood? The literature search was limited to articles published from 2017-2022 using the keywords, Resilience Widowhood, Resilience and Religious, Resilience Late Adulthood, Resilience and Social Support. Article searches were carried out in several databases, namely, Taylor & Francis Online, Springer, Sagepub, Google Scholar, Pubmed.gov, and MDPI. The author determines the limitations of this review, namely: (1) the journal discusses social support and religiosity as a resilience factor, (2) the subject is the elderly (late adults), and (3) the journal is in English.

After searching for journals using predetermined keywords, the next stage is to check all the journals that have been obtained for duplication by the author using Rayyan and Mendeley. The author screened all journals that had passed the duplication check based on the title and abstract. The journals that pass the screening are then analyzed based on the full text of the journal. After selecting the 71 journals found, 12 journals were found that met the inclusion criteria set by the author. The journal selection flow can be seen in graphic Figure 1.
RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The screening results of the 12 journals obtained revealed that First, 5 journals explained that social support is a resilience factor in widows, Second, 5 journals explained religiosity as a supporting factor for resilience and third, 2 journals explained that religiosity can increase well-being in late adulthood. The journal summary results obtained can be seen in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Writer</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Predictor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Myriam Rudaz, et al. (2020)</td>
<td>250 English-speaking widows in the United States (aged 25-74 years)</td>
<td>A high level of religiosity has a positive effect on the growth of adult widows and increases coping abilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Frances M. Hawes, et al. (2022)</td>
<td>Elderly ≥50 years</td>
<td>A high level of religiosity can reduce the level of depression in widows who live alone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Monday Abiola and Michael Ndisika (2022)</td>
<td>15 widows (interview)</td>
<td>Religiosity is a coping strategy for widows and can divert attention from loss and readiness to start a new relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Luz M. Garcini <em>et al.</em> (2021)</td>
<td>Effective coping strategies are produced through adequate social support, especially from family, spiritual, and religious practices.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Elena Caroline Weitzel <em>et al.</em> (2022)</td>
<td>Leipzig residents are aged 18-79 years Social support is positively related to resilience.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Yuksel Can Oz <em>et al.</em> (2022)</td>
<td>19 elderly people aged over 65 years Spirituality/religiosity plays an important role in overcoming difficulties and finding the meaning of life for the elderly.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Terin T. Sytsma <em>et al.</em> (2018)</td>
<td>22 elderly people aged 80 years and over Having a religious community can provide strong social support for older adults and can increase the meaning and purpose of their lives.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Hendrickson, Z. <em>et al.</em> (2017)</td>
<td>4 widows (two widows in their 30s and the rest in their 40s and 50s) Social support and social participation are the keys to the resilience of widows.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>King, B.M. <em>et al.</em> (2020)</td>
<td>United States adults aged 51 years and older (widowed ex-wives of veterans and nonveterans) However, individuals who feel they receive high levels of social support from friends tend to be more effective in dealing with feelings of deep loss such as those who are widowed.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Bui, E <em>et al.</em> (2017)</td>
<td>Old adult widow Several SMART-3RP components target many of these (resilience) needs (e.g., social support, stress awareness, and coping skills).</td>
<td></td>
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<td>12.</td>
<td>Lim-Soh, J.W. (2021)</td>
<td>Sample limited to older adults (Age 60 years and over) Increased social participation after bereavement increases the resilience of widows through the social support they receive.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results of a review of 12 journals show that losing a partner is a very difficult experience for most people and can take a long time to grieve. Widowhood occurs more often in late adulthood and is a life event that is quite difficult to go through (Rudaz, Ledermann, & Grzywacz, 2020b). Experiencing deep sadness is one of the normal responses felt when losing a partner. However, often deep sadness will cause a person to experience depression and an unstable mental state (Hawes, Tavares, Ronneberg, & Miller, 2022). To overcome this, it is necessary to increase resilience and the ability to recover from the grief experienced or what is also called resilience. It is known that various factors can increase resilience abilities in widows, including social support and the level of religiosity.

Social support is the most important factor in improving well-being and mental health (Weitzel et al., 2022). With social support, feelings of loneliness after being left by a partner can be reduced so that the resilience process can be more optimal (King et al., 2021). Therefore, a widow must get social support from the people around her. Most late adults obtain social support from close relatives such as children, grandchildren, siblings, and other trusted people (Recksiedler & Stawski, 2019). Apart from that, late adult widows can also get social support from their husband’s family, because by establishing a good relationship, both parties who are still grieving can strengthen each other and can help with the adjustment process (Yasien-Esmael, Eshel, & Rubin, 2018).

A study examining the resilience of widows in Nepal states that social support is the main key that determines the success of a widow’s resilience (Hendrickson et al., 2018). However, the loss of a loved one can cause intense physiological stress and can have a negative impact on an individual’s physical and mental health (Ennis & Majid, 2020). Therefore, the role of social support is considered very important in efforts to increase resilience, because resilience has a positive effect on mental health and helps a person avoid stress (Li et al., 2021). Moving on from the social support factor which is known to be very influential on resilience, it turns out another factor was found which was no less influential, namely religiosity.

In one study involving widows in Latino areas, United States, it was stated that religiosity and adequate social support were the best strategies for dealing with grief. In his research, it was also said that Latina widows had a higher level of religiosity than widowers (Garcini, et al., 2021). The level of religiosity also plays a positive role in increasing the personal growth of widows whose partners have died. Personal growth is often associated with positive coping mechanisms. Religiosity also has a close relationship with emotional well-being. It is said that someone with a high level of religiosity will not easily worry and experience depression (Hawes et al., 2022).

Spirituality also plays an important role in guiding the lives of late adults and can help them overcome negative feelings and clarify the meaning of their lives (Can Oz, Duran, & Dogan, 2022). In late adulthood, connection to a religious community can provide support and strong social relationships and increase the ability to cope with physical illness and life stress (Sytsma et al., 2018). So, social support and level of
religiosity act as resilience mechanisms for dealing with the loss of a partner in late adulthood (Hawes et al., 2022).

CONCLUSION

Resilience as a mechanism for recovering from the grief of losing a partner has various factors, including social support and religiosity. Social support was found to be the most influential supporting factor in resilience abilities. Meanwhile, apart from influencing resilience, religiosity also has a big role in improving well-being in late adulthood. Increasing prosperity in late adulthood can also be a factor in increasing life expectancy. Therefore, these findings show that humans as social and religious creatures, regardless of age, will always need spiritual support and other social roles to help their growth and resilience.

Efforts to increase attention to health conditions and mental stability in late adulthood, especially widows, are a common task, considering that feelings of loneliness and the tendency to experience stress often increase in late adulthood. Increasing spiritual aspects such as spirituality/religiosity are also needed as a factor in increasing resilience. However, the role of family and relatives as a form of social support is the most important factor that influences resilience abilities.

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