



Exploring the Link Between Spirituality and Anxiety in the Elderly: A Cross-sectional Study at Patrang Community Health Center

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ABSTRACT

Background: Elderly individuals often experience anxiety due to age-related changes. Spirituality has been identified as a potential coping mechanism to mitigate anxiety. **Purpose:** This study aims to analyze the relationship between spirituality and anxiety in the elderly in the Patrang Health Center area. **Methods:** The research using cross-sectional correlation analysis, sample consisted of 106 respondents selected through probability sampling, namely proportionate random sampling according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The instruments used in this study were the Daily Spiritual Experience Scale (DSES) and Geriatric Anxiety Inventory (GAI) questionnaires. **Results:** The data were analyzed using descriptive analysis, it is known that most the elderly in the Patrang Health Center area have a high level of spirituality (81.1%) and a mild level of anxiety (64.2%). Based on the Spearman-rho correlation test, p-value of 0.000 and an $r = -0.405$ were obtained, indicating that there is a relationship between spirituality and anxiety in the elderly in the Patrang Health Center area. Negative correlation namely the higher the level of spirituality in the elderly, the lower the possibility of the elderly experiencing anxiety. **Conclusions:** It can be concluded that spirituality plays an important role in overcoming anxiety in the elderly. Spiritual beliefs function as a coping mechanism to manage anxiety and good spiritual well-being can minimize symptoms of anxiety in the elderly.

KEYWORDS

Anxiety, Community Health, Elderly, Spirituality

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1. BACKGROUND

The elderly phase begins from the age of 60-70 years until death. At this stage, the elderly will experience a decline in changes called aging. Physical, cognitive, and socio-emotional aspects experience changes in the elderly. The developmental tasks of the

elderly are adjusting to all changes because the aging process involves several aspects, resulting in the elderly having to be able to adjust or adapt to these changes. Elderly people who can accept the changes that occur and make peace with their condition in their old age make them mentally healthy

(Muna & Adyani, 2021). Some elderly people who are not ready to face the changes that occur in old age will experience a decrease in their quality of life, including their mental and physical health. The most common mental health problems in the elderly include sadness, loneliness, anxiety, or even depression (Wati et al., 2017).

Anxiety disorders or feelings of anxiety are a person's response to a stressful situation and certain threatening circumstances and when doing something that has never been done (Sutejo, 2017). WHO (2017) determined that anxiety is an early sign that an individual will experience a mental disorder and the highest incidence rate experienced by the world's population, which is around > 200 million people. The prevalence of anxiety disorders in developing countries in adults and the elderly is 50%. The prevalence of anxiety in the elderly in Indonesia is very high, namely 6.9% at the age of 55-65, 9.7% at the age of 65-75, and as much as 13.4% at the age of 75 years and over (Kurniasih & Nurjanah, 2020).

Anxiety disorders in the elderly facing old age can arise due to problems such as financial communication, work communication, communication due to indifference of their children, feelings of loss with those closest to them, anxiety about

deteriorating health, fear of death, and lack of fulfillment of spiritual or life needs. (Hidayat, 2019). This can result in unmet needs, stress, and the threat of death from the disease suffered, so it can affect the emergence of anxiety in the elderly. Based on preliminary research results in November 2023, data was obtained on the number of elderly people at the Elderly in Patrang Public Health Center area, which amounted to 144 people. The results of initial data collection carried out by researchers by interviewing 14 elderly people, it was found that 1 elderly person said that he was worried because he lost his husband, 1 elderly person was worried because he was taking care of his financial problems, and 12 other elderly people had no complaints.

Spirituality in the elderly will make them closer to the creator and calmer. Spirituality is a source of strength for the elderly in giving meaning to their lives. The meaning and appreciation of high spiritual values in the elderly can create a feeling of closeness to their creator and a positive perception of the anxiety faced (Simbolon et al., 2022). Coping skills in dealing with anxiety must be possessed by every individual, especially the elderly. These skills can be used by the elderly to deal with existing anxiety, such as concentration of

thought, and can be done by doing spiritual activities. One form of activity that the elderly can do to increase their spirituality level is to get closer to God (Redjeki & Tambunan, 2019). Based on research by Sawitri (2018), the study's results showed that 42.8% of 91 elderly people had good or high spirituality. The elderly worship in a community that makes their spirituality good (Alfianti et al., 2022). Fulfillment and understanding of spirituality in the elderly is the most important and highest need for the elderly. This aims to help the elderly manage, balance, and resolve the problems they face in adjusting to changes related to the aging process in the elderly (Khairani et al., 2023).

Spirituality is believed to function as a coping mechanism for the elderly who experience anxiety. Good spiritual well-being will have an impact on milder anxiety symptoms. The care process, especially the spiritual aspect of the elderly can help the elderly to maintain their enthusiasm for life, including maintaining their emotional and mental health (Elmaghfuroh et al., 2022). Based on the background that has been explained, it is necessary to conduct research related to the relationship between spirituality and anxiety in the elderly in the Patrang Health Center area.

2. METHODS

This study is a correlational study using a cross-sectional approach that is carried out simultaneously in one measurement of the research variables. In this study, the independent variable is the spirituality of the elderly, while the dependent variable is the level of anxiety of the elderly.

The population in this study were all elderly people who visited the Elderly Integrated Health Service (Posyandu Lansia) in Patrang Health Center area, totaling 144 people. This study used a probability sampling technique, namely proportionate random sampling, and the results of the sample calculation were 106 people. This study was conducted at 10 the Elderly Integrated Health Service in Patrang Health Center area.

The data collection tool used by the researcher in this study was a questionnaire. The demographic data questionnaire included age, gender, last education, marital status, medical history, and residence status. The Daily Spiritual Experience Scale (DSES) questionnaire is used to measure the level of spirituality of the elderly. The DSES questionnaire was developed by Underwood and Teresi (2002), which consists of 16 questions. The assessment results are interpreted through the final

score of 16 items: a score of 15-40 indicates low spirituality, a score of 41-65 indicates moderate spirituality, and a score of 66-90 indicates high spirituality. The Geriatric Anxiety Inventory (GAI) questionnaire is a developed by Pachana (2007) to measure anxiety levels in the elderly which consist of 20 “agree/disagree” items. The total score ranges from 0-20, where a score of 0 indicates no anxiety, 1-5 indicates mild anxiety, 6-10 indicates moderate anxiety, 11-15 indicates severe anxiety, and 16-20 indicates panic.

A descriptive analysis was conducted to describe each respondent's characteristics, spiritual interpretation, and

anxiety interpretation. Inferential analysis was used to determine the relationship between spirituality and anxiety in this study, using the Spearman-rho correlation test with significance level of $p > 0.05$.

This study has complied with ethical principles. Informed Consent was obtained from all participants before being included in the study, ensuring they were fully aware of the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits. Participants were guaranteed the right to withdraw from the study without penalty or loss of benefits. Confidentiality of participant data was maintained using anonymous data codes and a secure data storage system.

3. RESULTS

Table 1. Characteristics of the elderly in the Patrang Health Center area (n=106)

Respondent Characteristics	n (%)
Age (years)	
Md (P ₂₅ -P ₇₅)	68 (62-72)
Gender	
Male	18 (17)
Female	88 (83)
Marital Status	
Married	76 (71.7)
Widow/Widower	30 (28.3)
Education History	
No school/did not graduate from elementary school	13 (12.3)
Elementary school/equivalent	32 (30.2)
Junior high school/equivalent	27 (25.5)
High school/equivalent	30 (28.3)
Bachelor's degree	4 (3.8)
Medical History	
Yes	32 (30.2)
No	74 (69.8)
Residence Status	
Alone	22 (20.8)
Family	84 (79.2)

Table 1 shows that out of 106 elderly respondents, the median age is 68, with a range of 25-75 percentile values of 62-72 years. The proportion of elderly with female gender is greater, namely 88 people (83%), compared to elderly with male gender, namely 18 people (17%). Regarding the last educational history of the elderly, most of the elderly graduated from elementary

school (SD), and as many as 32 people (30.2%). Based on marital status, most elderly are still married, and as many as 76 are elderly (71.7%). Most elderly do not have a history of disease, as many as 74 elderly (69.8%). Most of the elderly also still live with their families, as many as 84 of them are elderly (79.2%).

Table 2. Spirituality Indicators in the elderly at Patrang Health Center area (n=106)

Spirituality Indicators	Md (P ₂₅ -P ₇₅)	Z	P-value
Relationship with God and all life	9.00 (8.00-10.00)	0,138	0,000
Happiness and self-transcendence	5.00 (4.00-5.00)	0,290	0,000
Sense of comfort and strength	9.00 (8.00-10.00)	0,204	0,000
Sense of peace	5.00 (4.00-5.00)	0,276	0,000
Feeling God's help	5.00 (4.00-5.00)	0,236	0,000
Feeling God's guidance	4.50 (3.75-5.00)	0,243	0,000
Perceiving and feeling God's love	9.00 (8.00-10.00)	0,202	0,000
Sense of awe	4.00 (4.00-5.00)	0,236	0,000
Appreciation and gratitude	4.50 (4.00-5.00)	0,225	0,000
Care for others	9.00 (8.00-10.00)	0,132	0,000
Feeling united and close to God	8.00 (7.00-8.25)	0,237	0,000
Total	70.00 (66.00-73.00)	0,97	0,000

Based on the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test results in the Table 2, it is known that there is no

significant difference in the spirituality of the elderly, including in each spirituality indicator (p-value = 0.000).

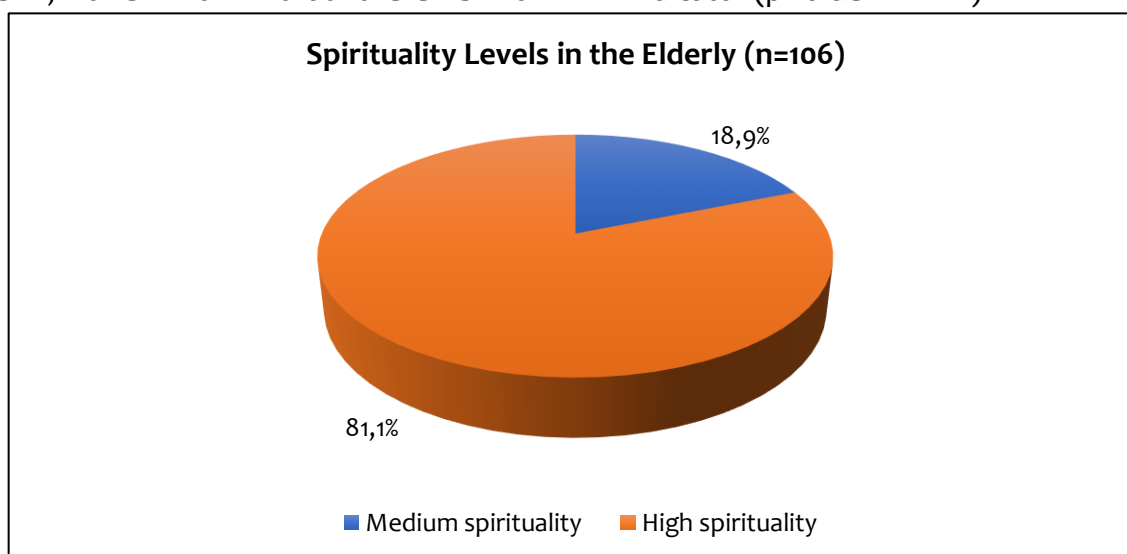


Figure 1. Distribution of Spirituality Levels in the Elderly in Patrang Health Center Area

Figure 1 shows that the level of spirituality of the elderly in Patrang Health

Center area is mostly at a high level of spirituality, namely 86 elderly (81.1%).

Table 1. Distribution of Elderly Spirituality Levels in the Patrang Health Center Area

Anxiety Indicators	Md (P ₂₅ -P ₇₅)	Z	P-value
Anxious	2.00 (1.00-2.00)	0.489	0.000
Worried about small results	2.00 (1.00-2.00)	0.271	0.000
Trembling	0.00 (0.00-0.00)	0.529	0.000
Upset	0.00 (0.00-0.00)	0.529	0.000
Frequent negative thinking	0.00 (0.00-1.00)	0.425	0.000
Tense	0.00 (0.00-0.00)	0.540	0.000
Stomach ache due to worry	1.00 (0.00-1.00)	0.522	0.000
Total	5.00 (4.00-6.00)	0.225	0.000

Based on the results of the analysis in Table 3 using the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test, it is known that there is no

significant difference in anxiety covering all anxiety indicators (p-value = 0.000).

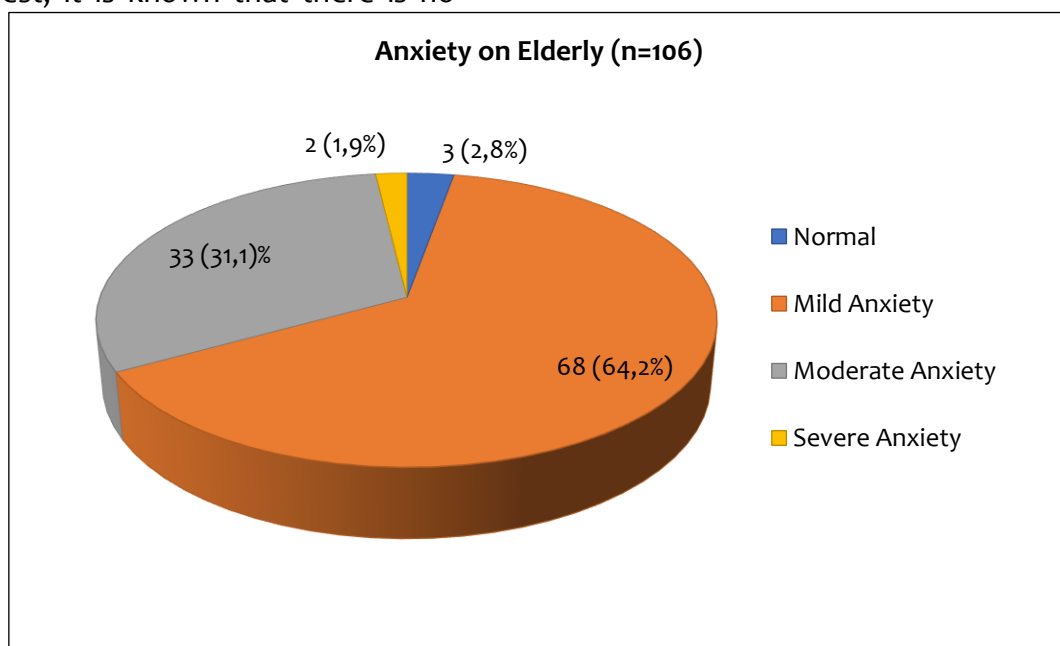


Figure 2. Distribution of Anxiety Levels in the Elderly in Patrang Health Center

Figure 2 explains that the majority of elderly in Patrang Health Center Area have a

mild level of anxiety, as many as 68 elderly people (64.2%).

Table 2. The Relationship between Spirituality and Anxiety in the Elderly in the Patrang Health Center Area (n=106)

Variable	Median	Min-Max	r	P-value
Spirituality	70.00	47-91	-0,405	0,000
Anxiety	5.00	0-12		

Table 4 shows the results of the Spearman-rho statistical test, and the p-value obtained is 0.000. The results of this analysis indicate that the p-value is <0.05 , so the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted. Therefore, the results of the analysis indicate a relationship between the variables of spirituality and anxiety in Patrang Health Center Area. The value of the correlation coefficient is $r = -0.405$, which means that there is a fairly strong relationship between the two variables. The direction of the correlation is negative, which means that the higher the spirituality score, the lower the level of anxiety in the elderly.

4. DISCUSSION

The Spirituality in Elderly

The results of research related to the spirituality of the elderly in Patrang Health Center area show that there is no significant difference in the spirituality of the elderly. This is because every elderly person or religious person will carry out the worship process according to their respective beliefs, which are the indicators of spirituality. In addition, as they get older, the elderly tend to experience more maturity and maximum spirituality because they start to think about the final stage of life.

The results of this study indicate that the majority of elderly in Patrang Health Center area have a high level of spirituality, namely 81.1%, this is in accordance with research conducted by Simbolon et al. (2022), which shows that most elderly people have high spiritual well-being, namely 67.1%. The high level of spirituality possessed by the elderly in Patrang Health Center area is possible due to the involvement and support of the family who routinely remind the elderly to worship, such as performing the five daily prayers and dhikr in all situations, as well as providing good treatment to the elderly so that it can increase the spirituality of the elderly. In addition, this study is also in line with research conducted by Sunarya & Sadiah (2022), which states that the level of spirituality in the elderly in the UPTD Situ Health Center work area has a good or high level of spirituality of 75.5%. This is related to the availability of support in structured spiritual activities that allow the elderly to learn and express their spiritual values.

Based on the results of the study showed the high level of spirituality possessed by the elderly in Patrang Health Center area, one of which was indicated by the high value of the indicator of relationship with God and closeness to God.

This is possible because there are various routine activities in the elderly's residential environment, such as religious activities in the form of congregational prayers and weekly religious lectures, which significantly support the increase in the spirituality of the elderly. The relationship of spiritual needs is closely related to religion, which can be fulfilled by getting closer to God through various religious activities and carrying out worship (Musmiller, 2020). In accordance with the results of the study, it can be seen that strengthening spirituality in the elderly can be done by holding religious activities such as lectures so that these things can strengthen the relationship with God.

The results of the study from one of the indicators, namely concern for others, also showed quite good results, this was made possible by the existence of community service activities carried out around the elderly's residential environment to maintain relationships with each other. Harmonious relationships between individuals can provide psychological support for the elderly and influence their spiritual support (Kirnawati et al., 2021). Based on the study's results, spirituality can also be supported through social activities that can maintain and improve relationships between fellow humans.

In the indicator of feeling united and close to God, most elderly people also stated that they tried to be as close to God as possible. Religion and spirituality are sources of coping usually used by the elderly when they feel sad, lonely, troubled, and lost. This can provide a new perspective for the elderly on life, related to other people, and allowing them to accept everything positively. The spiritual needs of the elderly can be met if they have good knowledge related to spirituality, such as exploring relationships with God Almighty. Being close to God must be maintained to obtain help, peace, safety, strength, and healing (Simbolon et al., 2023).

The study results showed that there were still older adults with a moderate level of spirituality of 18.9%. This is possible because of the elderly's lack of knowledge regarding the importance of spirituality, which is shown in the indicator of feeling God's guidance. God's guidance can be obtained if you are close to God, one of which is through spirituality. Spirituality is an attitude that must be possessed by a person in facing and solving life's problems so that life can be more meaningful (Irawan, 2022). Spirituality is a source of support and strength for the elderly to achieve well-being in living their lives. Therefore,

information related to spirituality is needed to be able to increase the elderly's self-awareness of their spiritual needs.

The Anxiety in Elderly

Based on the results of the study related to anxiety show that there is no significant difference in the anxiety of the elderly in Patrang Health Center area. This is because the majority of the elderly have mild levels of anxiety. At this level of anxiety, the elderly become motivated to learn and produce growth and creativity.

In relation to the results of the research that has been conducted show that the majority of elderly in Patrang Health Center area have a mild anxiety level of 64.2%. This is possibly related to the many activities the elderly who live in the Patrang Health Center work area. This is in line with the research conducted by Hidayat (2019), which shows that the majority of elderly respondents in the Cenrana Health Center work area, Bone Regency, have a low level of anxiety, namely 52.5%. Elderly people with good social interactions give them a sense of belonging to a group to share stories and do activities together (Sigalingging et al., 2021). The low level of anxiety is related to the ability of the elderly to adapt, the influence of the local environment, and good habits of

the elderly, such as interacting with other people and actively participating in activities routinely carried out around their residence.

According to the results of the questionnaire, the symptoms shown when the elderly experience anxiety are having difficulty making decisions, being nervous, restless, worried, trembling, annoyed, often thinking negatively, being tense, and having a stomach ache due to worry. This is to the statement according to Maharani & Safaria (2023) regarding the signs and symptoms of anxiety in the elderly, namely physical, behavioral, and cognitive symptoms.

The study results showed that most elderly people felt anxious as much as 73.6%. The feeling of anxiety felt by the elderly is possible due to changes that occur in the aging process, including psychological, physical, and social factors. Therefore, changes that occur in the elderly affect their emotional aspects, such as feelings of anxiety. In addition, the study results showed that most elderly people felt worried as much as 79.2%. Worry is one of the signs and symptoms that indicate that the elderly are experiencing anxiety. Factors that trigger anxiety that can be experienced by the elderly include physical changes (chronic illness, pain, loss of ability), loss of loved ones, changes in family roles,

dependence on others, changes in the environment, or history of trauma. Therefore, it is necessary to pay attention to several ways that can reduce the anxiety experienced by the elderly. The study showed that most elderly people felt stomach aches due to worry, as much as 70.8%. This is possibly related to the presence of worry and anxiety that causes abdominal muscle contractions in the elderly. Therefore, it is hoped that the elderly will be able to adapt to the changes, especially in psychological aspects.

Based on the research results, there are still some elderly people who have moderate anxiety levels of 31.1% and severe anxiety of 1.9%. In moderate anxiety, a person's perceptual field will become narrow so that a person's ability to see, hear, and perceive decreases. While in severe anxiety, a person's perceptual field will decrease. The level of severe anxiety in the elderly can be caused by the elderly's fear of their condition and future. In addition, this is also possibly related to the results of filling out the questionnaire, which showed that the majority of elderly people think that they feel easily worried (79.2%). The worries that are often experienced by individuals or the elderly are one of the signs and symptoms that indicate that the elderly are

experiencing anxiety (Agestiya Maharani & Safaria, 2023). Changes in the elderly can occur in several aspects. The most common change is a decrease in physical health problems. This requires the elderly to undergo various treatments such as diet and eating arrangements, regular blood sugar or blood pressure control, and medication that must be taken throughout their lives, which makes the elderly quickly feel worried, which ultimately causes the elderly to experience anxiety (Suhandi et al., 2020).

The study's results showed that 2.8% of elderly people had normal conditions. This is possible from the results of several indicators of anxiety, including the indicators of trembling, irritation, and tension, which show a value of (0.00), which means that the majority of elderly people do not experience signs and symptoms of anxiety or are in normal conditions. In addition, it can also be possible because of routine activities in the environment around the elderly's residence and support from the family. The results of this study are also supported by research conducted by Kurniasih & Nurjanah (2020) that the support that the family can provide is not only in the form of physical support but also emotional support that can make the elderly feel calm and attention of their families. The

study results show that many elderly people still have life partners and live with their families. This is one of the factors that can affect the level of anxiety in the elderly because having a life partner can provide motivation and support to the elderly so that the elderly do not experience severe levels of anxiety. Elderly people who still have a life partner can share and support each other when facing old age, so the risk of anxiety is lower, whereas people who are married and still have a life partner have much more stable mental health compared to elderly people who are not married, divorced or have lost their partners (Kurniasih & Nurjanah, 2020).

The Relationship between Spirituality and Anxiety in the Elderly

The results of the study showed that there was a significant relationship between spirituality and anxiety in the elderly at the elderly health post in the Patrang Health Center work area. This is related to a high level of spirituality, so it is related to the level of anxiety in the elderly, namely that most of the elderly in the Patrang Health Center area have mild levels of anxiety. Several factors, such as psychological, social, and biological factors, can cause anxiety in the elderly. The psychological process of anxiety begins with

the perception of a threat that causes activation of the sympathetic nervous system and the release of stress hormones that affect the individual's negative emotions, causing negative cognition (Andri & Purnamawati, 2007). Meanwhile, according to Mukhlis (2024), a person's spirituality begins by searching for the meaning of life and God, recognizing the existence of God, developing a relationship with God, integrating spiritual values in life, and actualizing spiritual values and behavior.

Spirituality has a very close relationship with anxiety in the elderly. Spirituality can help reduce anxiety by providing confidence, calmness, and meaning. By practicing spirituality, the elderly can develop an awareness of the existence of God and feel more connected to the Almighty, thereby reducing anxiety. In addition, spirituality also helps the elderly in facing death and developing self-acceptance, thereby reducing anxiety about the future. Thus, spirituality can be one of the effective strategies for managing anxiety in the elderly (Wulandari et al., 2023).

Based on the research results by Siwayana et al. (2020) show that there is a relationship between spirituality and anxiety in the elderly. It can be seen from the activities of the elderly in the community,

including diligently praying in congregation, listening to weekly religious lectures, and participating in activities held in the residential environment so that they have the opportunity to interact with other elderly people and this will have a positive impact on the spiritual needs of the elderly.

Spirituality can provide the energy needed to find their identity, adapt to difficult situations, and maintain health. The energy that comes from spirituality can help individuals always feel healthy and help determine choices in living life (Irawan, 2022). This is following the research results, which show that if an individual has good spirituality, it can improve the relationship with God and the elderly's concern for fellow human beings so that it can minimize the possibility of the elderly thinking negatively, feeling anxious and the possibility of the elderly experiencing worry about small results which are signs of someone experiencing anxiety.

The spiritual approach to the elderly is interpreted positively as part of something that can have a very beneficial impact on life. Spirituality can also provide a sense of comfort and peace, so it can help the elderly have enthusiasm in living life, minimize feelings of despair, and maintain satisfaction in their lives. The spiritual needs that a

person has can make individuals feel calm in their hearts and minds and avoid the risk of spiritual distress and spiritual dysfunction that can result in mental disorders such as anxiety, fear, depression, stress, and others (Hidayat, 2019).

The results of this study also show a negative correlation direction, meaning that the higher the level of spirituality, the lower the anxiety score in the elderly. When individuals experience stress, they will overcome the problem by seeking support from their religious or spiritual beliefs, which is very much needed to accept the conditions or circumstances being experienced (Rahmah et al., 2023). One of the compensation strategies that can be used by the elderly to prevent or reduce the burden of the problems being experienced is getting closer to the creator through religious activities. Therefore, it can be seen that the level of spirituality is closely related to the occurrence of anxiety problems in the elderly, so a good level of spirituality is needed so that the elderly can avoid anxiety.

5. CONCLUSION

This research shows that higher social media usage is associated with increased risky sexual behavior among adolescents. The study highlights the importance of

providing adolescents with comprehensive knowledge and education on reproductive health to help them distinguish positive behaviors from negative influences, thereby reducing the likelihood of engaging in risky sexual behavior. Additionally, the role of parents and teachers in educating and guiding adolescents from an early age is important, as their behavior is shaped by the approach and supervision they receive. In efforts to prevent risky sexual behaviors in adolescents, nurses can play a crucial role by providing education and counseling that emphasize the importance of understanding the risks associated with sexual behavior.

To maintain and reduce the level of anxiety in the elderly, need to the involvement of health workers to carry out routine monitoring of the condition of the elderly, especially regarding their spiritual needs, namely regarding the closeness of the elderly to God and the closeness of the elderly to other humans in order to prevent the occurrence of severe anxiety or even depression in the elderly.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Substantial contributions to conception, data collection: Karina Paramita Yanuari, Hanny Rasni, Fahrudin Kurdi, and Tantut Susanto. Analysis, writing, and manuscript revisions: Karina Paramita Yanuari, and Hanny Rasni,

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest in this research.

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DATA AVAILABILITY

The data supporting this study's findings are available upon request from the corresponding author.

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