

Health Promotion Strategies in Reducing Loneliness in The Elderly in Indonesia: Literature Review

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Article Info

Article History

Submitted: 12-08-2025

Revised: 08-09-2025

Accepted: 26-08-2025

Keywords:

Health promotion;
loneliness; elderly

Abstract

Background: Loneliness is a common problem experienced by the elderly and negatively impacts quality of life. Based on data from the Central Statistics Agency in 2023, more than 2.3 million elderly people or approximately 7.10% of the total elderly population in Indonesia live alone, this condition is an additional risk factor for increasing loneliness among the elderly. **Objective:** To determine what health promotion methods are provided to the elderly to reduce levels of loneliness. **Method:** Qualitative research using a literature review method. Journals were taken from the period 2017-2025. The search followed the PICO model (patient, population, problem; intervention, prognostic, factor; comparison; outcome study). Inclusion criteria included studies with elderly subjects and health promotion interventions involving community approaches, education, social support, physical activity, arts and culture, and technology. **Results:** Various interventions such as cross-sector coordinated elderly posyandu, storytelling, art therapy, health education through print media and lectures, and physical activities such as Tai Chi have been proven effective in reducing loneliness. A community-based approach with social empowerment and family support has a positive impact on reducing loneliness and improving the quality of life of the elderly. Key barriers include limited access in remote areas, social stigma, and readiness to use technology. **Conclusion:** Health promotion that integrates sustainable community approaches, education, and technological innovation is crucial in addressing loneliness in older adults. Strengthening policies and resource capacity is needed to ensure program effectiveness and sustainability.

eISSN 3063-2439

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Introduction

The aging process is a natural and continuous series in human life that causes a decline in physical and psychological functions. (Azizah, 2016). Law No. 13 of 1998 defines the elderly as individuals aged 60 and over. The elderly face various challenges, including declining physical abilities, health problems, and social issues that impact their quality of life. (Sihab & Nurchayati, 2021). In addition, psychological and psychosocial changes are often experienced by the elderly in the form of feelings of pessimism, insecurity, anxiety and loneliness. (Mulyadi & Juanita, 2018).

Loneliness is an unpleasant subjective experience resulting from a lack of the number or quality of social relationships, in contrast to social isolation, which is more objective. (Hawley, 2017). Causes of loneliness include the loss of a life partner, children who have moved away for education or work, and children who have become independent from their families. (E. Fitriana et al., 2021). The three main factors causing loneliness in the elderly are psychological (low self-esteem and the emergence of negative feelings), cultural and situational (shifting family patterns from extended to nuclear families, and the inability of families to care for the elderly), and other factors. spiritual (Aldila & Mudjiran, 2019).

Loneliness among older adults is increasingly being recognized as a serious public health issue in many countries. People who experience loneliness tend to have a negative view of their own existence, feel useless, depressed, and experience a variety of other negative feelings. (Nowman, 2008 dalam Afnan & Halawa (2015). Globally, data shows that older adults are a rapidly growing population group. In 2020,

there were 1 billion people aged 60 and over in the world, and this number is expected to increase to 1.4 billion in 2030 and reach 2.1 billion in 2050. The proportion of older adults in the total world population is projected to increase from less than 10% in 2021 to around 17% in 2050. (WHO, 2022). In some developed countries such as Japan, the elderly are expected to reach almost 30% of the total population by 2024, making it the country with the highest proportion of elderly people in the world. (VOA Indonesia, 2024).

Studies in Indonesia also show a high prevalence of loneliness among the elderly. Various studies report varying levels of loneliness, for example, 33.7% of elderly people experience mild loneliness, 51.2% experience severe loneliness, and nearly 65% of elderly people overall experience varying levels of loneliness. (Rafki & Kurniawati, 2024). Furthermore, according to 2023 data from the Central Statistics Agency, more than 2.3 million elderly people, or approximately 7.10% of the total elderly population in Indonesia, live alone, a phenomenon that is more common in urban areas than in rural areas. This condition is an additional risk factor for increasing loneliness among the elderly. (BPS, 2023; DW, 2025).

Loneliness in the elderly can be prevented and reduced through appropriate interventions, including through education-based health promotion and empowerment. Loneliness in the elderly can be prevented and reduced through appropriate interventions, including through education-based health promotion and empowerment. (Afnan & Halawa, 2015; Haris et al., 2019) Therefore, health promotion is an important strategy to improve the ability of the elderly to face the aging process, through health education, psychosocial empowerment, and interventions that are appropriate to local socio-cultural conditions. (Kemenkes RI, 2011; Haris et al., 2019). Health promotion programs can provide understanding and support to the elderly so that they can live a more meaningful and healthy old age and reduce feelings of loneliness. (Susilowati & Dwi Prajayanti, 2023). A study from Spain shows that elderly health and well-being education programs can significantly reduce loneliness problems. (Díaz-López et al., 2016).

Based on this background, the author is interested in looking at health promotion strategies to reduce the level of loneliness in the elderly.

Methods

The method used in this article is a literature review with an international literature search through Google Scholar and PubMed. The search followed the PICO model (patient, population, problem; intervention, prognostic factor; comparison; outcome study). Keywords used included "lonely elderly" and "health promotion for lonely elderly." The selected journals were from 2017 to 2025, meeting the inclusion criteria.

Inclusion criteria included English-language journals discussing the implementation of interventions to reduce loneliness in older adults aged 60 years and measuring the effects of these interventions, using quantitative, qualitative, or literature review research designs without specific design restrictions. Exclusion criteria included non-original publications such as abstracts only and articles with unclear titles or abstracts, which were then reviewed and re-evaluated.

The article selection process followed the PRISMA process, starting with an initial search, screening for duplication and relevance, abstract selection, and full-text review, until nine articles met the criteria for analysis. This approach ensured systematicity, transparency, and quality in selecting relevant literature to assess the effects of interventions on the social health of older adults, particularly regarding loneliness.

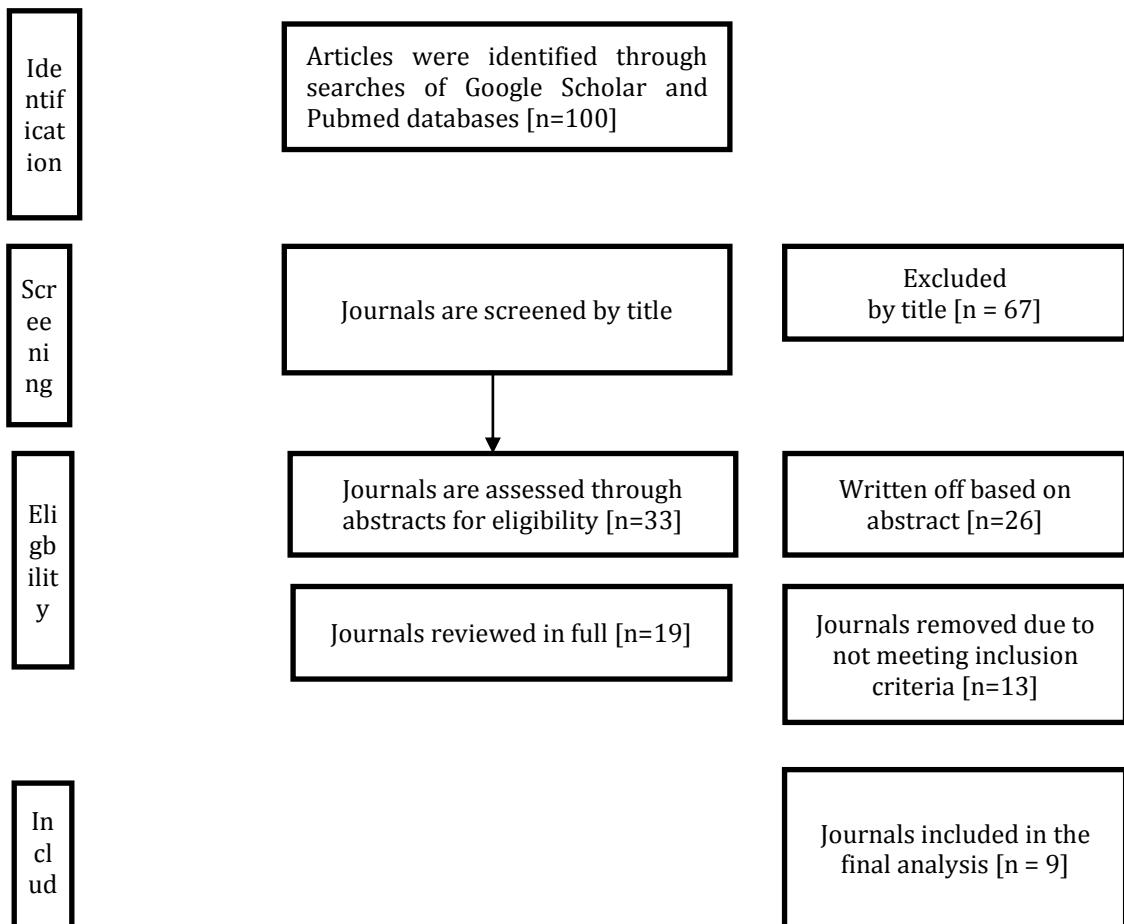


Figure 1. Article Search Process

Results

Extraction results from 9 journals obtained with predetermined keywords and topics

No	Title/Author/Year	Population	Intervention	Comparison	Outcome	Study/Design
1	Health promotion strategy for elderly integrated health posts during the COVID-19 pandemic in the community health center work area kampili/Arifuddin et al. (2022)	Elderly people in the working area of Kampili Health Center, Pallangga District, Gowa Regency	Health promotion, elderly integrated health post	Not doing health promotion for the elderly	Obtaining support from village heads, deliberations, cooperation with TP PKK, regular monthly integrated health posts	Quasi kualitatif
2	Various Interventions That Can Reduce Loneliness in the Elderly/Fahrudiana & Kusbaryanto, (2019)	Journals published in the period 2017-2019	Loneliness in the elderly, interventions to reduce loneliness in the elderly	Do not intervene in the elderly	Eleven interventions were found to reduce loneliness in older adults; 90.9% used community-based approaches such as health promotion and social support.	Literature review
3	<i>Skills for Successful Ageing in the Elderly. Education, well-being and health/Díaz-López et al. (2017)</i>	200 individuals over the age of 55 in the province of Almería	Welfare health education	Don't have the ability	Education, welfare and health programs have a positive influence on reducing the	Experimental design with a control group

No	Title/Author/Year	Population	Intervention	Comparison	Outcome	Study/Design
4	Card-Based Health Promotion to Increase Motivation in the Elderly: An Alternative Health Education Media /Wahyudi & Octamelia, (2023)	The elderly population consists of 50 respondents	Health Promotion, Motivation for the Elderly	Not doing health promotion	Motivation of elderly people increased significantly after the intervention	problem of loneliness in the elderly. One group pre post test design
5	The Effect of Storytelling on the Level of Loneliness of Elderly People Living Alone in the Sewon 1 Community Health Center Work Area/Resmonicasari & Indrayana, (2023)	31 Elderly people who live alone in Hamlet Ngantak, Bibis Hamlet, Ngasem Hamlet, and Gabusan Hamlet	Storytelling, loneliness	Doesn't provide storytelling	Storytelling has a significant effect on reducing loneliness	Pre-experimental pretest-posttest
6	The Relationship Between Family Social Support and Loneliness in the Elderly in Batam City /Putri (2021)	All elderly people in Batam city	Social support, loneliness in the elderly	Not providing social support	There is a negative relationship between loneliness and adequate family social support, which will result in moderate loneliness.	Cross Sectional Study
7	Health Promotion Media Using the Lecture Method for Mental Health of the Elderly at the Adisehat Posbindu in Adisara Village /Khotimah, (2025)	Elderly at the Adisehat Posbindu in Adisara Village	Health Promotion Lecture Method, Mental Health of the Elderly	Does not provide health promotion	Counseling has a significant impact on the mental health knowledge of the elderly.	Pre-experiment using one group pretest and posttest design
8	Empowering the Elderly to Overcome Loneliness in the Elderly in Bedoro Village, Sambungmacan, Sragen /Susilowati & Dwi Prajayanti, (2023)	The population is all elderly people in Bedoro Village, Sambungmacan, totaling 1,329 people.	Empowerment of the elderly	Not empowering the elderly	Loneliness in the elderly decreased from moderate to mild category	Community service
9	The Relationship Between Physical Activity and the Level of Loneliness in the Elderly in Karang Lansia Bahagia Banjarmasin /L. N. Fitriana et al. (2021)	The population in this study was all elderly people aged ≥65 years, totaling 35 elderly people.	Physical activity, loneliness in the elderly	No physical activity	There is a relationship between physical activity and the level of loneliness in the elderly at Karang Lansia Bahagia Banjarmasin.	Cross sectional

Discussion

The research results in the reviewed articles revealed several health promotion efforts for the elderly to reduce loneliness. This discussion will examine interventions that will ultimately reduce loneliness in the elderly. The journal review of health promotion strategies for the elderly integrated health service post (Posyandu) during the COVID-19 pandemic revealed that advocacy was carried out by directly approaching the village head to gain support. The atmosphere was fostered through large-scale,

cross-sectoral deliberations, and mini-workshops involving community leaders. Community empowerment, in collaboration with the Family Empowerment and Welfare Movement Team (TP.PKK), involved monthly Posyandu activities, with the village appointing organizations directly. (Arifuddin et al., 2022). Researchers believe that the pandemic increases the risk of illness in the elderly, both physically and psychologically. Health promotion efforts, including cross-sector collaboration, can alleviate health problems in the elderly and minimize potential negative risks during the pandemic.

Other research shows that health promotion efforts conducted for the elderly include health education using printed media cards about spirituality and brain gymnastics, mental health counseling, and empowering the elderly, which is implemented through day care activities, art creation activities and peer groups, music therapy, and religious guidance/mental-spiritual guidance. The results of the study showed an increase in knowledge, motivation and a reduction in levels of loneliness in the elderly. (Khotimah, 2025; Susilowati & Dwi Prajayanti, 2023; Wahyudi & Octamelia, 2023). By applying the lecture method in the extension intervention carried out, it can increase respondents' understanding of the material presented in the extension, because by applying the lecture method the interaction between respondents and the presenter is direct. (Notoatmodjo, 2018).

The results of further research which conducted a literature study found that of the 11 interventions that could reduce the problem of loneliness in the elderly, 10 of the 11 interventions (90.9%) had a community-based group approach such as health and well-being promotion, I-SOCIAL implementation, Tai Chi Qigong, increasing social support, socialization interventions and interventions using technology. (Fahrudiana & Kusbaryanto, 2019). In the research Díaz-López et al. (2017) it was shown that education, welfare and health programs have a positive influence in reducing the problem of loneliness in the elderly.

Health promotion efforts using methods to reduce loneliness have also shown positive results. A study using storytelling as part of the health promotion method significantly reduced loneliness levels in the elderly. (Resmonicasari & Indrayana, 2023). Efforts to reduce loneliness in the elderly by providing family support have also shown positive results. (Afnan & Halawa, 2015; Aldila & Mudjiran, 2019; Ayu et al., 2022; Pospos et al., 2022; Putri, 2021). Meanwhile, the use of physical activity methods as an effort to reduce loneliness in the elderly also shows positive results. (E. Fitriana et al., 2021; Mulyadi & Juanita, 2018).

The journal analysis shows that various health promotion efforts play a role in reducing loneliness levels in the elderly. These efforts are highly effective in improving the quality of life of the elderly if implemented sustainably.

Mental health promotion and prevention strategies for older adults focus on supporting healthy aging. This means creating physical and social environments that support well-being and enable people to do what is important to them, even when their capacities are declining. (Khotimah, 2025).

In line with these global findings, WHO emphasizes the importance of strategies that support healthy aging by creating conducive physical and social environments that enable older adults to engage in meaningful activities despite declining abilities. WHO's strategies include integrating health and social services, community activities, social training, psychoeducation, and leveraging technology to enhance social connectivity and reduce loneliness (WHO, 2023).

However, limitations of these various strategies include challenges to intervention sustainability, limited access, particularly in remote areas, social stigma that hinders elderly participation, and a lack of human resources and training for program implementation. Technology-based interventions also depend on the readiness and ability of older adults to use these devices. In Indonesia, stronger cross-sector coordination and policy support are essential for programs to reach and benefit older adults more broadly and sustainably.

Thus, community-based health promotion efforts, education, social support, and physical activity have proven effective in reducing loneliness in older adults and improving quality of life. However, policy strengthening, increased access to services, resource capacity, and program innovation are needed to optimize outcomes and maintain the sustainability of interventions. Considering that older adults are a special group that requires attention from various parties, prevention and health improvement efforts through health promotion are essential as an early step in addressing elderly health issues.

Conclusion

Health promotion strategies involving community approaches, education, family support, and physical activity have been shown to be effective in reducing loneliness in older adults and improving quality of life, particularly through integrated health service post (Posyandu), storytelling, art therapy, and technology programs. The WHO strategy, which emphasizes the creation of a conducive physical and social environment, aligns with these findings, although challenges remain, such as limited access in remote areas, social stigma, and the readiness of human resources and older adults to use technology.

Therefore, strengthening policies, increasing resource capacity, and program innovation are essential to ensure the sustainability of interventions. Research recommendations in Indonesia include conducting experimental studies with randomized controlled trial (RCT) designs to test the effectiveness of storytelling and health promotion media, as well as exploring elderly-friendly digital technologies.

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