

# The Relationship Between Levels of Social Interaction And Depression In The Elderly

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Depression is a prevalent mental health issue among the elderly and contributes to decreased well-being and functional ability. Social interaction plays an important role in maintaining psychological health; however, evidence regarding its association with depression among elderly individuals living in residential care settings remains inconclusive.

**Objective:** This study aimed to examine the relationship between social interaction and depression levels among the elderly at PPRSLU Budi Sejahtera Banjarbaru.

**Methods:** A quantitative correlational study with a cross-sectional design was conducted involving 81 elderly selected through total sampling. Social interaction was measured using a social interaction questionnaire, and depression was assessed using the Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS). Data were analyzed using Spearman's rank correlation test.

**Results:** Most respondents had good social interaction (88.9%), and the majority experienced mild depression (74.1%). Spearman's rho analysis showed no significant relationship between social interaction and depression ( $\rho = 0.069$ ;  $p = 0.541$ ).

**Conclusion:** Social interaction was not significantly associated with depression levels among the elderly at PPRSLU Budi Sejahtera, South Kalimantan. Other factors beyond social interaction may contribute to depression in this population.

**Keywords:** Depression; Elderly; Social Interaction; Geriatric Mental Health

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## INTRODUCTION

Psychological disorders in the elderly arise from various factors such as physical, social, family, and environmental factors (Petrova & Khvostikova, 2021). These factors can often worsen social interactions and give rise to feelings of uselessness that lead to the risk of depression in the elderly (Devita et al., 2022; Kerto, 2024). According to data from the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2022, approximately 14% of elderly people aged 60 years and over experience mental disorders, depression, and anxiety. Indonesian health data recorded that more than 40% of nursing home residents experience depression, with the rate being higher in women (31.5%) compared to men (11%). The prevalence of elderly people in South Kalimantan, according to the South Kalimantan Department of Health, shows that approximately 5.79% of the elderly population of South Kalimantan aged 55-64 years experience

depression, 6.72% for those aged 64-74 years, and 9.44% for those over 75 years (Dinkes Kalsel, 2022).

Depression in the elderly is caused by several factors, one of which is housing. Elderly people living in residential care facilities (PPRSLU) and those living at home have different levels of depression. This is supported by research by Sari, Arneliwati, & Sri (2015) and Seddigh et al., (2020), who examined the differences in depression levels between elderly people living in nursing homes and those living at home. The results of this study showed that elderly people living in nursing homes had higher levels of depression than those living at home. This is due to psychological changes in the elderly, such as loneliness, loss, and grief. These factors contribute to the increased incidence of depression in the elderly.

Depression can be addressed through social interaction with those around them (Radell et al.,

2021), including actively participating in physical activities such as exercise, discussion groups, and religious services, as well as providing emotional and psychological support, and providing a healthy diet and environment (Stevens et al., 2021). This can improve mental well-being in older adults. Furthermore, families and communities around older adults play a crucial role in improving their well-being (Hossen et al., 2023; Kerto, 2024).

The results of a preliminary study through interviews with the management of the Budi Sejahtera Banjarbaru Social Rehabilitation Protection Home (PPRSLU) conducted on April 17, 2025, showed that there were 111 elderly people in the home, 3 of whom experienced social interaction disorders due to family problems, the death of relatives, and neglect. There were 12 elderly people who experienced signs of depression such as sleep disorders (insomnia), eating disorders (overeating), sensitivity, loss of interest, fatigue, and frequent pain (headaches, digestive disorders, or pain that appears without a specific cause). The aim of this study was to determine the relationship between social

interaction and levels of depression in the elderly at PPRSLU Budi Sejahtera, South Kalimantan Province.

## METHODS

This research design used a quantitative research method with a cross-sectional approach. The research variables included the independent variable (free variable), namely social interaction, and the dependent variable (control variable), namely depression. The sample in this study was 81 elderly people at PPRSLU Budi Sejahtera using a total sampling method. The instruments used in this study were a social interaction questionnaire adapted from Mutmainah's (2019) study and the Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS) questionnaire. Data analysis used the Spearman rank test.

## RESULTS

### Respondent characteristics

The characteristics of respondents in this study are depicted in Table 1 as follows:

**Table 1. Characteristics of Respondents at PPRSLU Budi Sejahtera South Kalimantan Province (n = 81)**

Characteristics	N	%
<b>Age (years)</b>		
60–70	45	55.6
71–80	29	35.8
81–90	7	8.6
>90	0	0.0
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	44	54.3
Female	37	45.7
<b>Education level</b>		
No schooling	20	24.7
Elementary school	24	29.6
Junior high school	16	19.8
Senior high school	20	24.7
Kindergarten	1	1.2

Source : Primary data 2025

Based on Table 1, the results show that the majority of elderly people aged 60-70 years are 45 people (55,6%). The elderly people are male, 44 people (54,3%). The elderly people have an elementary school education, 24 people (29,6%).

### Variable categories

The variable categories in this study are as shown in Table 2 below:

**Table 2. Distribution of Study Variables (n = 81)**

Variable	Category	N	%
Social Interaction	Good	72	88.9
	Fair	9	11.1
Depression Level	Normal	10	12.3
	Mild	60	74.1
	Severe	11	13.6

Source : Primary data 2025

Most respondents had good social interaction (88.9%), and the majority experienced mild depression (74.1%).

### Correlation between Social Interaction and Depression Level

The relationship between the variables, namely social interaction and respondents' levels of depression, is as follows in Table 3

**Table 3. Correlation between Social Interaction and Depression Level**

Variable	Correlation (r/ρ)	p-value
Social interaction – Depression	0.069	0.541

Source : Primary data 2025

The correlation analysis showed a very weak and non-significant relationship between social interaction and depression level ( $\rho = 0.069$ ;  $p = 0.541$ ). Therefore, there was no statistically significant association between social interaction and depression among the elderly at PPRSLU Budi Sejahtera.

## DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the study on 81 respondents, it shows that the majority of elderly people have good social interactions, amounting to 72 respondents (88.9%). This indicates that the elderly's social interactions are categorized as good because the elderly are able to socialize with other elderly people. The results of this study are in line with the research of [Herianja, Azhar, & Agussabti \(2021\)](#), which found good interaction results (98.0%) because the elderly feel happy with other elderly people, feel comfortable in their environment, like to help elderly people who need help, like to socialize with people of different ethnicities and religions, and participate in elderly activities even though they have different religions. According to [Susanto \(2021\)](#), the ability of elderly people's social interactions also depends on their efforts to adapt to their environment. Social interactions can occur due to active socialization, so that elderly people can adjust healthily and build positive relationships and physical well-being. The role of social interactions carried out by elderly people can affect psychological, biological, and spiritual conditions. If the psychological, biological, and spiritual conditions of the elderly improve, the elderly will gain satisfaction in living their lives.

Based on the results of the study on the level of depression, it shows that the majority of elderly people experience mild depression as many as 60 people. This study is in line with the research of [Nurlianawati, et. al., \(2020\)](#) where the level of depression experienced by the elderly is mostly mild depression as many as 47 respondents (41.6%). Depression in the elderly is related to the impact of the natural aging process, which has consequences in the form of a decline in all anatomy and body functions as well as negative consequences due to aging. Depression is one of the natural mood disorders, namely a decrease in mood characterized by feelings of sadness, hopelessness, loss of interest

in activities, the appearance of symptoms of physical disorders, changes in appetite and sleep patterns are also changed ([Stanghellini et al., 2021](#)). Mild depression in the elderly reflects the presence of psychosocial problems that have not been fully addressed optimally. Mild depression is often not recognized or considered normal in old age, even though if left untreated it can develop into moderate to severe depression. This condition can be influenced by various factors such as lack of social support, feelings of loneliness, loss of role, and chronic diseases that accompany the aging process. The majority of elderly people experience mild depression because they are active in participating in activities at the shelter, such as religious studies, gymnastics, cheerful Saturdays, and so on, so that they have positive activities ([Widodo, 2022](#); [Xu et al., 2022](#)).

There was no relationship between social interaction and depression levels in the elderly at the Budi Sejahtera Community Health Center (PPRSLU) in South Kalimantan Province. This is in line with research by [Septyani \(2023\)](#) which showed no significant relationship between social roles and depression in the elderly (P-Value 0.721). The lack of a significant relationship found in this study does not mean that social interaction is unimportant for the elderly, but rather it could be caused by several other factors that more dominantly influence depression levels. For example, physical health conditions, a history of chronic disease, family support, traumatic experiences, or the elderly's personal psychological condition have a stronger influence on the emergence of depressive symptoms ([Bintang, 2021](#); [Trtica Majnarić et al., 2021](#)). Social interaction factors do not stand alone in influencing depression in the elderly, and these results suggest that efforts to prevent depression in the elderly need to consider a multidimensional approach, not only from a social perspective but also from a physical, psychological, and spiritual perspective. For example, in the psychological aspect, the elderly experience stressors. Stressors are conditions that are felt to be very stressful so that a person cannot adapt. Life events, both acute and chronic, can cause depression, for example quarrels that occur almost every day, whether at work or at home, financial difficulties, and persistent threats to security (living in a dangerous or conflict area) can trigger depression ([Marta, 2012](#)).

Elderly individuals who adapt well, such as by interacting with relatives and participating in various activities at the Budi Sejahtera Community Rehabilitation Center (PPRSLU), will receive positive social support. Conversely, those who adapt poorly and rarely interact with their surroundings tend to receive low levels of social support. Therefore, the ability to adapt is closely related to the level of social support, which ultimately impacts the quality of life of older adults both now and in the future.

### Implications

The implications of this study are to provide an overview of the state of social interaction in the elderly and their depression and to see whether there is a relationship between the two, thus making it easier for nurses to provide interventions related to the elderly who experience depression in geriatric nursing care.

### Limitations and Recommendations

The researcher realized that there were obstacles and challenges in the research. One of these was that data collection was carried out when the elderly had finished their daily routine activities in the religious study group, resulting in some elderly people being sleepy and tired. The results of this study are expected to be used as a research reference or reference and bibliography related to social interactions with depression in the elderly. For further research with various better variables like factors associated with depression

### CONCLUSIONS

This study shows that the majority of elderly people's social interactions were good, amounting to 72 respondents (88.9%), The level of depression in the elderly was mostly mild, as many as 60 respondents (74.1%) and There is no relationship between social interaction and depression in the elderly at PPRSLU Budi Sejahtera, South Kalimantan Province (p-value=0.541).

### Declaration of Interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest.

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### Authors' Contributions

Anggraeni, F. contributed to the conception of the research idea, methodological design, and the analysis and interpretation of data. Pefbrianti, D.

contributed to the initiation of the research topic, data collection, and the drafting of the initial manuscript till publish.

### Data Availability

All data utilized in this study, including raw data, analyzed datasets, and supporting documents, are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. These data are accessible for replication or further exploration by other researchers in accordance with open science principles and research ethic

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