

Grandparents' Roles and Psychological Well Being in Elderly (Correlational Study In Family With Autism Child)

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Abstract

Objective: The purpose of this study was to find the correlation between grandparents' roles in the family and psychological wellbeing of elderly in taking care of their grandchildren with autism spectrum disorder. **Methods:** The study used quantitative methods with correlational design. Measuring devices were the scale of psychological well being and the role of grandparent. This research involved 108 elderly from Semarang, Jepara and Kendal, obtained through a quota-purposive sampling technique. Quantitative data analysis was based on simple regression analysis. **Results:** The study results in $r_{xy} = 0.397$, $p = 0.000$ ($p < 0.05$), which indicates a positive and significant correlation between the role of grandparent and psychological well-being of the elderly. **Conclusions:** The test result indicates a significant correlation between the roles of grandparents to their psychological wellbeing where the higher the roles results in the higher psychological wellbeing they experience and, vice versa, the lower roles of grandparents results in the lower psychological wellbeing. **Implication for Practice:** Elderly actually plays an important role in the family, i.e take care for the child when the parents are not at home, help for the cost of therapy and take care of them when sick.

Keywords: the role of grandparent, psychological wellbeing, elderly, grandchild, autism spectrum disorder

Introduction

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by the failure of social interaction, communication difficulties and their repetitive and restrictive behavior with onset before the age of 3. Included in the criteria for ASD diagnostic are autistic disorder, pervasive developmental disorder not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS) and Asperger's disorder (APA, 1994). Childhood Autism Rating Scale is more commonly used to evaluate the behavior, adaptation to change, listening responses, verbal communication and interaction with others in children aged 2 and above. The children's behavior are then scored and ranked based on a comparative scale to normal children at the same age (Schopler & Bourgondien, 2010) [1].

In recent years, the prevalence of autism has increased. It is predicted that the number of people with autism is one of 150 children (67 of 10,000) in the United States (Austin, 2008) [2]. The prevalence of ASD in Asia was around 14.8 per 10,000, from 1980 until now and, in China, it was 10.3 per 10,000 children aged 2-6 years, in 2000 until now (Sun & Allison, 2009) [3]. The incident of autism in Japan was 27.2 per 10,000 (Honda, Shimizu, Imai & Nitto, 2005). In Indonesia, the data collection of

the number of children with autism has not been carried out nationally. In Indonesia, in 2013, it was estimated that there are more than 112,000 children who suffer from autism at the age of 5-19 years old (klinikautis.com, 2015) [4]. Other data presents that in Palangkaraya lies the center of autism therapy center which has nearly 200 children, while the population was about 250,000. Thus, the prevalence of autism in that area was one per 250 inhabitants (Lismaya, 2013) [5].

Parenting a child with autism is not an easy matter. Characteristics of autism which usually indicates the behavior of hyperactivity or hypoactive could become a burden for caregivers (Desiningrum, 2016) [6]. Hyperactive behavior indicates very active movements, which could make the caregivers feel overwhelmed, while hypoactive indicates by slow and unwilling movements that often make caregivers feel annoyed. Furthermore, some children with autism have developmental disabilities, which hamper their independence. They have to be treated like a baby although they are 5-9 year old. Besides that, the communication barriers in children with autism have become a major obstacle in the care of children with autism. Children with ASD do not recognize nor understand the important nonverbal behavior from the environment, as if they show ignorance to nonverbal cues and social cues, such as facial expressions that help social

interaction (Lee, Chen & Lin, 2016) [7]. Communication barriers in children with autism can cause difficulty for caregivers to transfer educational or values of life to the child. The barrier results in the development of autistic children that becomes more impaired and, in some cases, the barriers create misunderstanding that makes the caregivers feel irritated and treat children with autism badly. Physical and psychological aggression towards children with autism is mediated by the effects rearing stress (Chan & Lam, 2016).

Autism spread throughout Indonesia, from the city to the villages, from upper level community to those in poverty. In Indonesian society that embraces collectivism, the existence of the extended family is something common. In Europe, the role of grandparents in rearing their granddaughter actually have better health and wellbeing compared to those who are not taking care of their grandchildren (Gessa, Glaser, Tinker, 2016) [8]. In Indonesian culture, grandparents could be part of the family in child rearing. Kinship between children and parents and grandchildren with grandparents is very close, where grandparents cannot be separated from the growth and development of children. That's why young parents tend to feel safe entrusting their children in the hands of grandparents, rather than babysitters. However, there is something unrevealed and might appear as the problem between grandparents and parents.

In 2010, 3.1 million grandparents aged 60 and older live with grandchildren under the age of 18, increased from 2.3 million in 2000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010) [9]. In 2010, approximately 915,000 of these grandparents have primary responsibility for at least one grandchild in terms of meeting basic needs such as food, clothing, and shelter. In 2000, there was an increase of about 30 percent every decade. In Indonesia, there has been no consensus conducted. The data mentioned above demonstrate that children reared by the grandparents are quite common in Indonesia. Grandparenthood occupies an important part of the life cycle and have an important impact on the family. This impact can be characterized in terms of gender roles, grandparenting styles and direct and indirect patterns of influence from grandparents to grandchildren (Drew, Richard, and Smith, 2008) [10].

One of 166 elderly will become a grandparent for children with autism. The role of grandparent would be complex because the parents of autistic children might experience depression due to social isolation and financial burden, being a single parent or divorced, so that the elderly will be exposed to two loads like adapting to the conflicts that arise and providing emotional and instrumental support (Hillman, 2007). Not all of the grandparents are involved in the care of grandchildren with autistic disorders (D'Astous, Wright, Wright & Diener, 2013) [12]. On the other hand, in grandparenting to children with autism, social stress, financial problems, and the impact on family health condition of the whole family including the elderly were observed (Kahana, Lee, Kahana, Burk & Barnes, 2015).

Elderly having their roles in taking care of their grandchildren can experience stress, anxiety, depression, and worsen stress coping if they do not have social support from family members or other social environments (Ross, Kang & Cron, 2015) [14]. On the other hand, a positive perception of the existence of grandparents to grandchildren, which is considered significant and important as well as requires emotional closeness of grandparents to their grandchildren, might improve the life quality and health of elderly (Zohar & Garby, 2016) [15]. Healthy and happy elderly is the focus of much research today, which is also known as successful aging. Elderly happiness and success can be achieved by the needs to feel good psychologically (Poulin, M., & Silver RC, 2007), one of which is by achieving psychological wellbeing. The concepts of elderly psychological welfare was introduced by Bernice Neugarten in 1961 which is defined as a psychological condition achieved by a person at an advanced age (Ryff, 2004), related to the theory of life satisfaction. According to Ryff (2002), psychological wellbeing is an individual who has positive psychological functioning.

According to Ryff (in Cavanaugh & Blanchard, 2006), psychologically, people who have positive attitudes toward themselves and others are those who recognize and accept various aspects in him, both good and bad, and feel positive with his past life (self-acceptance), have positive relations with others, capable of performing and directing the behavior independently, autonomy, have purpose in life, can continue to develop their own potentials based on their ability (personal growth), are able and allowed to take an active role in meeting their needs from their environment (environmental mastery).

Inconsistent parenting between parents and grandparents, results in imbalance children's psychological development. Grandparents usually show more affection and freedom to his grandchildren, exceeding what they gave to their own children. There are several findings in a study conducted in Tonga Hawaii about grandparenting; one of them is grandchildren is a center of cultural preservation, adapting the custom of local culture. Furthermore, there are protective factors that consist of a sense of unconditional love, reciprocity between grandparents and grandchildren, loyalty to their grandchildren, applied discipline, and prayer from grandparents along the children and grandchildren's journey of life (Vakalahi, 2011). There has been no research on the role of elderly in rearing children with autism in Indonesia, and its impact on the wellbeing of the elderly.

The purpose of this study was to discover if there is any correlation between the roles of grandparents to elderly psychological wellbeing in families having children with autism. The hypothetical of this study is the roles of grandparents have correlation with elderly psychological wellbeing in families having children with autism.

Methods

Research Design. The study was based on correlational design which correlates two variables (Azwar, 2010) [19]. The data were collected using psychological scale as self-administered questionnaire meaning that research participants have the right to complete the questionnaire. The variables used in the research were Grandparent's role as predicting variable and Psychological Wellbeing as Criterion Variable. The specific criteria of research subjects are: (1) Grandparents living with grandchildren with autism. (2) Grandparents not suffering from chronic nor acute illnesses.

Research Subject. The sampling technique used was quota-purposive sampling (Azwar, 2008) [20] considering the specific criteria of subjects. The subjects of the study were grandparents having grandchildren with autism in SLB Negeri Semarang (49 elderly), Yayasan Terapi Autis Kendal (22 elderly), Yayasan Bintang Semarang (15 elderly), Sekolah Autisme Jepara (17 elderly) dan Sekolah Autis Putra Mandiri Semarang (5 elderly) that sums the total subjects as 108 elderly. All subjects were given informed consent which acts as the agreement to be the subject of the research. Mentioned in table 1, the description of demographic data of the subjects according to the characteristics.

Table 1. Demographic Data of Research Subjects

Data of Subject	Remarks
Age: 60-75/76-90	69/39
Sex: F/M	78/30
Age of grandchildren with autism: Toddler/6-12 y.o	40/68
Presence of spouse: Yes/No	57/51

Data Analysis. The data collected were then analyzed to determine the correlation between grandparents' role to elderly psychological wellbeing using Karl Pearson's product moment correlation. Furthermore, to observe the contribution of grandparents' role to their psychological wellbeing, an analysis using simple regression technique was conducted using SPSS 21.0 software.

The Measurement Tool. This research used two measurement tool, there are psychological wellbeing which consists of 33 questions with 21 positive items and 12 negative items. Psychological wellbeing is defined as the ability to take the role positively, including psychologically, so the items were derived from psychological wellbeing indicators (Ryff, in Keyes & Magyar, 2003). And Grandparents Roles: act as culture transfer agent, moral and ethical provider, financial provider, emotional support provider, supporter wellbeing, and provision of childcare (Goodfellow & Laverty, 2003; Kemp, 2007; Smith & Drew, 2002) which consists of 30 items.

Result and Discussion

Result

Measurement Tool Try Out Results

The result showed in table 2, that were 25 items valid of Grandparents' Roles scale and 30 items valid of Elderly Psychological Wellbeing scale. From table 3, it showed high reliability of Grandparents' Roles scale and Elderly Psychological Wellbeing scale.

Table 2. Results of Analysis on Measurement Tool Item Try Out of Grandparents' Roles and Elderly Psychological Wellbeing

Variable	Number of Initial Items	Range of Validity	Range of Validity	Remarks
Grandparents' Roles	30	0,00 – 0,80	0,32 - 0,95	25 valid
Psychological Wellbeing	33	0,00 - 0,82	0,31 - 0,82	30 valid

Table 3. Results of Measurement Tool Reliability Test of Grandparents' Roles and Elderly Psychological Wellbeing

Variable	Number of Items	Reliability	Remarks
Grandparents' Roles	25	0,92	Very reliable
Psychological Wellbeing	30	0,89	Very reliable

Descriptive Statistics

Based on the table 4, it is known that, commonly, grandfather/grandmother has good/noticeable roles in families having children with autism. And the description from table 5 shows that, in general, elderly in Semarang are in average psychological wellbeing.

Table 4. Frequency Distribution of Grandparents' Role

Category	F	%
High	67	62,04
Average	25	23,15
Low	16	14,81
Total	108	100

Table 5. Frequency Distribution of Psychological Wellbeing

Category	F	%
High	36	33,33
Average	53	49,07
Low	19	17,59
Total	108	100

Inferential Statistics

Correlation and Contribution of Grandparents' Roles to Elderly Psychological Wellbeing

Based on the analysis using SPSS 21.0, the value of product moment correlation coefficient shows the amount of 0,397 and 0,000 significance level, which means that there is a positive, significant, and strong correlation between the roles of grandfather/grandmother to elderly

psychological wellbeing. The value of R-square from simple regression analysis which is amounted 0,296 shows that the roles of grandfather/grandmother has contributed as much as 29,6% to elderly psychological wellbeing.

Correlation and Contribution of Each Aspect of Grandparents' Roles to Elderly Psychological Wellbeing
Table 6 showed the Correlation and Contribution of Grandparents' Roles and Their Aspects to Elderly Psychological Wellbeing. There is two aspect of grandparents' roles which have fairly strong correlation to elderly psychological wellbeing, and the others aspects are have weak and average correlations.

Table 6. Summaries of Correlation and Contribution of Grandparents' Roles and Their Aspects to Elderly Psychological Wellbeing

Variable	Correlation	Contribution	Correlation Interpretation
Roles of Grandfather/Grandmother and Psychological Wellbeing	0,397	29,6 %	AVERAGE
Culture transfer agen and Psychological Wellbeing	0,171	12,7 %	WEAK
Moral and ethical provider and Psychological Wellbeing	0,312	21,8 %	AVERAGE
Financial provider and Emotional support provider and Psychological Wellbeing	0,408	31,1 %	FAIRLY STRONG
Supporter of family member wellbeing and Psychological Wellbeing	0,199	13,9 %	WEAK
Provision of childcare and Psychological Wellbeing	0,452	29,9 %	FAIRLY STRONG

Discussion

Grandparent having interaction with family usually has an effect on family's psychological condition. A survey conducted to 380 grandfathers focusing on personality traits and frequency of having interaction with grandchildren and their activities with their grandchildren shows that, from 40% of those children having daily or weekly contact with their grandparent, one third of the subjects stated that they do regular activities with their

grandparent, and one fifth of the subjects said that they have special relationship with their grandparent (Keeling, 2012). It means that grandparents conducting frequent interaction with their grandchildren have their roles and influences to their grandchildren's life and development.

A quick review of the main conceptual idea and empirical findings on the relationship of grandparents with grandchildren suggested four main topics to understand the relationship between generations, i.e. the historical context, the importance of the relationship, the individual changes over time, and the variations in culture (Geurts and Tilburg, 2015) [25]. Various family ethnics involving grandparents with significant parenting responsibility to grandchildren are related to household system, social and environmental factors, belief, and practice of culture (Yahiro, Ceria & Caulfield, 2004) [26].

Parenting by the grandparents, surely, will affect their own wellbeing. Mentioned from the research, in the United States, the parenting role has proven to be a significant source of stress for elderly. In general, this study shows that caregivers have higher stress levels than non-caregivers. For women, the number of orphans and the adults who should be taken care of will result in other stress effects (Gillian, Sadruddin, Aalyia, Amy, Jaja and Elizabeth, 2012) [27]. In families having children with special needs such as autism, the burden of parenting gets heavier. Caregivers have to deal with autistic children facts, namely, the difficulties to communicate as in expressing his desire and the inability to comprehend stimuli from the environment, and the presence of repetitive behaviors like imitating and showing unusual behaviors, which become the obstacles during the parenting process (Desiningrum, 2016) [6].

The result of hypothesis analysis using product moment technique and simple regression analysis using SPSS 21.0 shows the value in $r_{xy} = 0.397$ with $p = 0.000$ ($p < 0.05$), The test result indicates a significant correlation between the roles of grandparents to their psychological wellbeing where the higher the roles results in the higher psychological wellbeing they experience and, vice versa, the lower roles of grandparents results in the lower psychological wellbeing.

Psychological wellbeing is a description to the extent where an individual has his/her purpose in life, whether he/she realizes the potential, his/her relationship quality with others, and the level of individual responsibility for his/her own life based on the evaluation or judgment against him which acts as the evaluation of his/her life experience (Ryff, 2002). According to Ryff (in Papalia, Old & Feldman, 2008), psychological wellbeing is very important for the elderly, because with good psychological well-being, they will be happier, have a life satisfaction and no symptoms of depression.

Result of the study indicates that the elderly psychological wellbeing in Semarang depicted from 108 elderly can be seen in table 5. From the table, it can be described that the psychological wellbeing of 36 elderly (33,33%) can be

categorized as high, 53 elderly (49,07%) can be categorized as average and 19 elderly (17,59%) are categorized as low. In general, those categorized as having high wellbeing are able to take active roles in fulfilling their individual needs as well as the needs of their autism grandchildren, autonomous so that they are able to face social pressure and burdens of facing care their grandchildren, and able to show positive attitudes toward themselves. The elderly having average wellbeing shows that they have positive acceptance and mastery toward family, are autonomous, have purpose of life and good personal development, and have positive relationship with family including taking care of the grandchildren. There are 19 elderly having low wellbeing. They face difficulties in improving and developing themselves, adapting their attitude and behavior to new situations and having positive thoughts about the meaning of their life. Based on the observation, they are able to communicate but are not able to taking care of their autism grandchildren because of their physical condition and do not receive adequate attention and support from their family.

Grandparents act as culture transfer agent, moral and ethical provider, financial provider, emotional support provider, supporter well-being, and provision of childcare (Goodfellow & Laverty, 2003). The interaction between grandfather/grandmother and their autism grandchildren generates positive influence i.e. giving more attention to their grandchildren suffering from illness or accompanying their grandchildren attending therapy sessions or classes. Grandfather/grandmother also contributes to family financial from their pension allowance or their saving which can be given as pocket money or supporting therapy cost for their grandchildren. Family needs such as food or clothes can be supported by grandfather/grandmother by cooking, sewing, or accompanying to shopping. It can be concluded that grandfather/grandmother provides significant parenting roles for their autism grandchildren.

The roles of elderly in family are individual active behaviors showing his/her roles in life. When an elderly has important roles in his/her family, a positive understanding of feeling needed might support a better psychological wellbeing. From table 4, around 62,04% of 108 respondents has important role in family. Based on table 6, from regression analysis, a strong correlation is seen in financial and emotional support aspect and provision of childcare aspect. It means that grandfather/grandmother provides support for family financial, emotional and childcare, thus stimulating elderly to realize their potential, taking active roles in fulfilling individual, family, and grandchildren needs. Life satisfaction of elderly who still have a good role in the family is higher than those living in nursing homes (Ferrand, Martinent & Durmaz, 2014).

Coefficient of determination which is shown by R-square in the variable of grandparent's roles shows 0,296. The value means that the role of grandparent in this study has contributed effectively as much as 29,6% to the variable of elderly psychological wellbeing while the rest is determined by the factors which are not discussed in this

study. Those factors influence the psychological wellbeing are socio economic status, relation or social network (Papalia, Old & Feldman, 2008) [28], individual competence, religiosity, personality traits and sex (Santrock, 2011) [30].

The limitation of this study is some variation of children autism level in in the family which can affect the level of parenting stress which in turn would affect the psychological well-being of the elderly. This is minimized by limiting the characteristics of the elderly i.e. having good physical condition, not experiencing any chronic pain, strengthening the measuring tools, both questionnaires of grandparent's role and psychological wellbeing through validity and reliability test.

Conclusions

The test result indicates a significant correlation between the roles of grandparents to their psychological wellbeing where the higher the roles results in the higher psychological wellbeing they experience and, vice versa, the lower roles of grandparents results in the lower psychological wellbeing. The coefficient of determination shows that the roles of grandparents contributes effectively as much as 29,6% to the variable of psychological wellbeing, while the rest is determined by other factors which are not discussed in this study. There is a fairly strong correlation shown in the aspect of financial support and emotional support while the aspect of caring support to grandchildren is found at the variable of grandparents' role to the elderly psychological wellbeing. The limitation of this study is some variation of children autism level in in the family which can affect the level of parenting stress which in turn would affect the psychological well-being of the elderly. For further research, it can find about grandparenting and the development of the children in the family with autism spectrum disorder.

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