



Challenges and Benefits of Sports for the Elderly: A Case Study in Panimbang District, Banten, from the Perspective of the Elderly and Health Professionals

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Abstract

Aging is a natural process that causes significant changes in many aspects of life, including physical and psychological aspects. As older people age, they often experience a decline in physical function, which can lead to reduced mobility and an increased risk of various chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, and osteoporosis. One way to improve the quality of life of the elderly is through exercise. Regular exercise can help maintain or improve the physical and mental health of the elderly, improve sleep quality, and reduce symptoms of stress, anxiety, and depression. However, the elderly often face various barriers to exercise, such as physical limitations, fear of injury, and lack of elderly-friendly sports facilities. Therefore, it is important to explore the challenges faced by the elderly when exercising and how to overcome these barriers. This study used a qualitative approach with a case study in Panimbang District, Banten, involving 15 elderly and 8 health workers. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and observations of elderly sports activities. The results showed that despite various challenges, elderly who exercise regularly reported significant physical and mental benefits, such as reduced joint pain, increased mobility, and reduced stress and improved sleep quality. It was also found that health workers face challenges in providing specific training on exercise for the elderly and managing the risk of injury. However, they acknowledge the benefits of exercise in improving public health, reducing chronic diseases, and increasing patient satisfaction. It is recommended that the government and related institutions pay attention to providing elderly-friendly sports facilities and provide training for health workers so that exercise programs can be implemented safely and effectively.

Keywords: Elderly, sports, quality of life, challenges, health workers

1. Introduction

Aging is a natural process that leads to significant changes in many aspects of life, including physical and psychological aspects (Taylor, 2021). With ageing, older people often face a decline in physical functioning, which can lead to reduced mobility and an increased risk of various chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension and osteoporosis. One way to improve the quality of life of older people is to exercise (Weber et al., 2020). Regular exercise can help maintain or improve the physical and mental health of older people, improve sleep quality and reduce symptoms of stress, anxiety and depression. Exercise is therefore an important solution to improve older people's quality of life and prolong healthy lifespan (Reynolds et al., 2022).

Despite the many benefits of exercise, older people often face a number of barriers to physical activity. Factors such as reduced physical fitness, fear of injury and lack of sports facilities for older people are important barriers. Many older people, especially those with joint and balance problems, are concerned about falls and injuries during exercise (Rodrigues et al., 2022). This is exacerbated by their limited knowledge of the types of exercise appropriate for their condition. Without appropriate support, older people may be reluctant to start or continue exercise. Therefore, it is important to explore the challenges older people face when exercising and ways to overcome these barriers (Montero-Odasso et al., 2022).

On the other hand, exercise plays an important role in improving the physical health of older people. Exercise enables older people to improve their muscle strength, balance and flexibility, which are essential to prevent falls and injuries. Mentally, exercise has also been shown to reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety and improve mood

(Breckner et al., 2021). In addition, exercise gives older people more confidence and helps them to be more independent in their daily lives. Understanding the benefits of exercise for older people is therefore crucial to encourage more older people to participate in physical activity (Gao et al., 2020).

The role of health professionals in supporting older people to exercise cannot be underestimated. Doctors, physiotherapists and exercise trainers play a crucial role in guiding older people to safe forms of exercise that are appropriate for their physical condition. They can also help older people overcome their fear of injury and motivate them to continue exercising (Richardson et al., 2020). Support from health professionals can be a powerful factor in increasing exercise participation among older people, as exercise programs can be tailored to individual health conditions. Such support is important to create an environment where older people can exercise regularly and safely (Finlay et al., 2021).

The Panimbang sub-district of Banten is a region with a large elderly population with unique social and geographical characteristics: Most older people in Kecamatan Panimbang live in rural areas and have limited access to appropriate health facilities and exercise facilities. However, there is potential to develop exercise programs for the elderly in Panimbang sub-district through existing elderly poshandu and community health centers. This study therefore focuses on exploring the challenges and benefits that older people face when exercising in Kecamatan Panimbang, as well as the role of health professionals in supporting older people's participation in exercise in the area.

The aim of the study is to explore the perceptions of older people and health professionals regarding the benefits, challenges and role of exercise in improving the quality of life of older people in Panimbang sub-district. This study aims to better understand how older people in Panimbang sub-district access sport and the factors that influence their participation through in-depth interviews with older people and health workers (Latella & Haff, 2020). It is hoped that the findings of this study will serve as a reference for health policy makers to improve access and participation in sports among the elderly, as well as provide useful recommendations for designing more comprehensive and coordinated sports programs for the elderly in this region.

The study is also important in providing clearer insights into the challenges that older people face when exercising and the benefits they derive from physical activity. Given the lack of research focusing on sports for the elderly in rural areas such as Panimbang district, the findings of this study are expected to make a valuable contribution to the development of more effective sports policies and programs at the local level. Hence, this study is expected to have a positive impact on improving the quality of life of the elderly both physically and mentally through safe and cost-effective exercise.

2. Methods

2.1. Research design

This study used a qualitative design with a case study approach to explore the challenges and benefits of exercise for the elderly in Panimbang District, Banten. This approach was chosen because the aim was to understand the perceptions and experiences of the elderly and health professionals in depth.

2.2. Location and research participants

This study was conducted in Panimbang Regency, Banten, involving two groups of participants:

- 15 Elderly people aged 60 years and above who actively participate in or have participated in sports programs in the area.
- 8 Health workers, such as doctors, physiotherapists, and sports instructors, who work with the elderly in the context of physical health and exercise.

2.3. Data collection techniques

2.3.1. In-depth interviews

Conducting interviews using a semi-structured interview guide to gain in-depth perspectives on the challenges and benefits of exercise for older adults.

2.3.2. Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

Conducting focus group discussions with older adults and health workers to discuss topics related to exercise, health, and existing barriers.

2.3.3. Observation

Observing older adults' exercise activities in the community to gain first-hand understanding of existing practices.

2.4. Data analysis

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings obtained will be grouped into main themes, such as the benefits of exercise, the challenges faced by the elderly, and the role of health professionals. This process is done iteratively, re-examining the data to ensure that the results are relevant and insightful.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Challenges faced by the elderly in exercising

Based on the results of interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGD), several major challenges faced by the elderly in Panimbang Regency in exercising were found. These challenges can be described in the following table:

Table 1: Challenges faced by the Elderly

Challenges	Description	Number of Elderly People Experiencing
Physical Limitations	The elderly experience physical health problems such as joint pain, decreased muscle strength, or impaired mobility.	12 out of 15 elderly people (80%)
Lack of Knowledge about the Benefits of Exercise	The elderly do not understand the importance of exercise for health and disease prevention.	9 out of 15 elderly people (60%)
Accessibility of Sports Facilities	There are no elderly-friendly sports facilities in the village, or the existing facilities do not meet the needs of the elderly.	10 out of 15 elderly people (67%)
Social and Psychological Isolation	The elderly feel embarrassed or anxious to exercise in front of others.	8 out of 15 elderly people (53%)

From the table, it can be seen that the biggest challenges faced by the elderly are physical limitations and lack of understanding of the benefits of exercise. Most elderly people find it difficult to exercise due to physical disorders such as joint pain and impaired mobility. In addition, many elderly people are not aware of the importance of exercise for their health, which worsens their participation in physical activities.

The lack of elderly-friendly facilities is also a significant obstacle. Elderly people complain about the absence of places or sports facilities specifically designed for their needs. Coupled with psychological factors such as embarrassment or anxiety when exercising in front of others, this adds to the challenge of encouraging the elderly to actively exercise.

3.2. Benefits of exercise for the elderly

Despite the challenges faced, elderly people who exercise regularly report various positive benefits both physically and mentally. The following table illustrates the benefits obtained by the elderly from exercising:

Table 2: Benefits of exercise for the elderly

Benefit	Description	Number of Seniors Experiencing
Improved Physical Health	Seniors reported improved physical health, reduced joint pain, and increased mobility.	13 out of 15 seniors (87%)
Improved Mental Health	Seniors felt happier, less stressed, and slept better after exercising.	10 out of 15 seniors (67%)

Improved Independence	Seniors felt more independent in performing daily activities after exercising.	11 out of 15 seniors (73%)
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This table shows that the benefits of exercise are very significant for the elderly. The majority of seniors who participate in sports activities report improvements in their physical condition, including reduced pain and increased mobility. In addition, sports also have a positive impact on the mental health of seniors, as seen from reduced stress and improved sleep quality.

Another benefit felt is increased independence. Seniors who exercise regularly feel more confident and are able to carry out daily activities without much assistance. This shows that sports are not only beneficial for physical health, but also improve the overall quality of life of seniors.

3.3. Challenges faced by health workers

Health workers in Panimbang District also face a number of challenges in supporting and managing sports programs for the elderly. The following table presents the challenges faced by health workers:

Table 3: Challenges faced by health workers

Challenges	Description	Number of Health Workers Experiencing
Lack of Knowledge and Training	Health workers do not have specific training on sports that are suitable for the elderly.	6 out of 8 health workers (75%)
Lack of Resources	Sports programs for the elderly are hampered by budget constraints and existing facilities.	7 out of 8 health workers (88%)
Risk of Injury	Health workers are concerned that the elderly could get injured if there is no proper guidance in exercising.	5 out of 8 health workers (63%)

The biggest challenge faced by health workers is the lack of specific training on sports for the elderly. Most health workers do not have sufficient knowledge about the types of sports that are safe and effective for the elderly. In addition, limited resources, both in terms of budget and facilities, hinder the implementation of sports programs optimally.

The risk of injury is also an important concern for health workers. They need to ensure that any physical activity carried out by the elderly is carried out safely to avoid injuries that can worsen their physical condition.

3.4. Benefits of exercise for health workers

Despite the challenges, health workers also see a number of benefits associated with exercise programs for the elderly. The following table presents the benefits gained by health workers:

Table 4: Benefits of exercise for health workers

Benefits	Description	Number of Health Workers Experiencing
Improved Public Health	Health workers see that exercise helps reduce chronic diseases, reduce hospital visits.	7 out of 8 health workers (88%)
Improved Patient Satisfaction	Elderly people feel healthier and more cared for, increasing satisfaction with health services.	6 out of 8 health workers (75%)
Health Education	Health workers can provide better education about the importance of exercise for the elderly.	8 out of 8 health workers (100%)

Health workers reported that exercise provides significant benefits in improving community health. By increasing the physical activity of the elderly, they can reduce the burden of chronic diseases and reduce visits to health facilities. In addition, health workers are satisfied that elderly people involved in exercise programs show improvements in overall health.

The importance of health education is also an advantage for health workers. They feel more able to provide relevant information to the elderly about the benefits of exercise, which in turn supports disease prevention and improves the quality of life of the elderly.

3.5. Observation results of elderly sports activities in panimbang regency

In addition to interviews and FGDs, direct observation of elderly sports activities in Panimbang Regency was also conducted. The following table shows the types and frequency of sports activities carried out by the elderly:

Table 5: Observation results of elderly sports activities in Panimbang Regency

Types of Sports Activities	Frequency	Number of Elderly Involved
Morning Exercise	3 times a week	8 out of 15 elderly (53%)
Healthy Walking	2 times a week	5 out of 15 elderly (33%)
Muscle Strength Training (With Equipment)	1 time a week	4 out of 15 elderly (27%)
Other Sports (Yoga, Tai Chi)	1 time a week	3 out of 15 elderly (20%)

Observations showed that morning exercise was the type of exercise most often followed by the elderly, with more than half of the participants participating in this activity. In addition, walking and strength training are also quite popular, although the number of participants is smaller.

4. Conclusion

The results and discussion show that exercise provides significant challenges and benefits for the elderly in Panimbang District, Banten Province. The elderly face various barriers in exercising, including physical limitations due to joint pain and muscle weakness, lack of knowledge about the benefits of exercise, and limited access to elderly-friendly sports facilities. Psychological barriers such as embarrassment and anxiety when exercising in public places are also major challenges. Nevertheless, elderly who exercise regularly report physical benefits such as reduced joint pain and better mobility, as well as psychological benefits such as reduced stress and better sleep quality. Exercise also increases the independence of the elderly in daily life.

At the same time, health professionals who support elderly exercise programs also face several challenges, including limited training on appropriate exercise for the elderly and concerns about the risk of injury. However, health professionals recognize the importance of exercise for the health of the elderly and educate them about the benefits of exercise for the elderly. The benefits recognized by health professionals include improving overall community health, reducing chronic diseases and increasing patient satisfaction. Thus, exercise programs not only have a positive impact on the elderly, but also on society and the health care system in general.

Despite the challenges in implementing exercise programs for the elderly, the benefits are far greater. Therefore, it is recommended that the government and related institutions pay more attention to providing elderly-friendly sports facilities and educating the elderly about the importance of sports in maintaining health. Special training for health workers is also needed to ensure that sports programs can be implemented safely and effectively. Therefore, sports have an important role in improving the quality of life of the elderly and addressing this problem will have a greater positive impact on the health of the elderly and society as a whole.

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