

Family Support Strategies in Improving The Quality of Life in Elderly People With Dementia

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ABSTRACT

Background: Dementia is a progressive cognitive disorder that impacts the quality of life of the elderly, causing decreased cognitive and social functions and increased dependency. Families play an important role in providing emotional, physical, social and economic support, but not all have sufficient understanding in caring for the elderly with dementia. Lack of family knowledge and skills in caring for the elderly with dementia can cause stress for caregivers and reduce the quality of life of the elderly themselves. The Alzi Surabaya Community acts as a forum for education and assistance for families to improve optimal care. This study aimed to analyze family support strategies in improving the quality of life of the elderly with dementia in the Alzi Surabaya community.

Methods: This study uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological method. Informants were selected through purposive sampling of seven families of caregivers of the elderly with dementia. Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews and documentation, analyzed using data reduction techniques, data presentation and drawing conclusions/verification. Data validity was tested by source triangulation.

Results: The results of the study from seven respondents showed that family support plays a crucial role in improving the quality of life of the elderly with dementia. Emotional support in the form of good attention and communication improves the psychological well-being of the elderly. Physical support such as assistance in self-care and providing nutritious food, maintains the health of the elderly. Economic support ensures access to health services. In addition, family involvement in social activities also helps maintain the emotional stability of the elderly. Interaction with the Alzi Surabaya community helps families in communication strategies, managing behavioral changes and strengthening social support.

Conclusion: Based on the results of the study, it was concluded that the better the family support that has been given in caring for the elderly with dementia, the better their quality of life will be.

I. Introduction

Dementia is a neurodegenerative syndrome characterized by decreased cognitive function, memory impairment and behavioral changes that affect the quality of life of the elderly. According to data from the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2023, more than 55 million people in the world suffer from dementia with numbers continuing to increase as life expectancy increases. In Indonesia, the prevalence of dementia is estimated to reach 2 million people in 2030 and will continue to increase to 4 million in 2050. Elderly people with dementia not only face challenges in their daily lives but also need support from their families as primary caregivers.

Family support plays a crucial role in improving the quality of life of the elderly with dementia. This form of support includes emotional, physical, social and economic aspects. Emotional support can help

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the elderly cope with stress and anxiety while physical support plays a role in helping the elderly with self-care and health. In addition, social involvement and economic support are also important in ensuring the elderly's access to adequate health services. However, not all families have sufficient understanding and skills in caring for the elderly with dementia which can have an impact on stress for caregivers and a decrease in the quality of life of the elderly themselves.

The Alzi Surabaya Community is present as a forum for education and assistance for families who care for the elderly with dementia. Through various programs such as seminars, training and support, this community group helps families improve care skills, communication strategies and management of elderly behavior change. However, there are still gaps in the implementation of family support strategies so that further exploration is needed regarding the effectiveness of support provided by families in improving the quality of life of the elderly with dementia. Based on the description above, researchers are interested in examining Family Support Strategies in Improving the Quality of Life of the Elderly with Dementia in the Alzi Surabaya Community. The results of this study are expected to provide deeper insight into the factors that influence the quality of life of the elderly and to compile recommendations for families and communities in improving care for the elderly with dementia.

II. METHODS

This study uses a qualitative method with a descriptive phenomenological approach to explore family support strategies in improving the quality of life of the elderly with dementia in the Alzi Surabaya community. Informants were selected through purposive sampling techniques consisting of seven families who care for the elderly with dementia. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations and documentation then analyzed using data reduction techniques, data presentation and drawing conclusions. Data validity was tested using source triangulation to ensure consistency of information.

III. RESULTS

Family experiences in providing support and overcoming challenges while caring for elderly with dementia

Families who care for elderly with dementia face various challenges, especially related to cognitive, behavioral and physical changes experienced by elderly. Family understanding of dementia varies but most are aware of symptoms such as memory impairment, time disorientation, emotional changes and decreased functional abilities. Families generally recognize early signs of dementia through elderly confusion about time and place, memory loss and difficulty performing daily activities. In their role as primary caregivers, family members provide physical support, help with daily activities and provide emotional support for the elderly. The biggest challenges faced include unexpected changes in elderly emotions, physical and mental burdens for caregivers and limited knowledge and resources in caring for elderly with this condition.

To overcome these challenges, families try to increase their knowledge about dementia through communities such as Alzi to manage stress by being more patient and sharing care tasks with other family members. Support from the extended family is an important factor in elderly care, both in the form of physical, financial and emotional assistance. In addition, creating a safe and comfortable environment for the elderly is also a priority to reduce the risk of harm due to their disorientation and confusion. With the right strategy and support from the community and medical personnel, families can improve the quality of life of the elderly with dementia and maintain their well-being as caregivers.

Family support strategies implemented to improve the quality of life in the elderly with dementia

The family has an important role in improving the quality of life of the elderly with dementia through various support strategies. One of the main strategies is to create a safe and comfortable environment. Efforts made include securing the house by locking doors and storing dangerous items to prevent the risk of injury, adjusting the layout of the room to be more friendly to the elderly and supervising activities to avoid dangerous actions. In addition, the family also tries to create a familiar environment by adding

lighting and always accompanying the elderly. These steps aim to increase a sense of security, reduce anxiety and minimize the possibility of aggressive behavior that can worsen the condition of the elderly. In addition to physical factors, emotional support is also a crucial aspect in improving the well-being of the elderly with dementia. The family provides attention by accompanying the elderly, speaking patiently even though the conversation is often repetitive and providing physical touch such as holding hands or hugging to calm them down. A comfortable home atmosphere is also maintained by listening to the elderly's favorite music or turning on the television so that they feel they are not alone. In addition, the family encourages the elderly to remain physically active by inviting them to walk in the morning, sunbathe or do light activities according to their abilities. This activity not only maintains physical health but also helps maintain emotional stability and social interaction of the elderly.

Interaction between families of elderly people with dementia and the Alzi Surabaya Community

The interaction between families of elderly people with dementia and the Alzi Surabaya Community provides great benefits in increasing understanding and readiness in caring for the elderly. The first experience of interacting with this community varies, but most families feel the benefits of education about dementia, sharing experiences with fellow caregivers, and increasing self-confidence in caring for the elderly. Many family members initially considered dementia as ordinary senility, but through the community they became more aware of its various stages. In addition, training and experience sharing sessions helped them be more prepared to deal with changes in elderly behavior and know when to seek medical help.

The Alzi Surabaya Community also provides various information, guidance, and valuable emotional support for caregiver families. The information provided includes how to communicate effectively with elderly people with dementia, strategies for dealing with behavioral changes, and stress management for caregivers. Other forms of support include training, consultation, mentoring, and a space for sharing experiences that help families feel less alone in facing this challenge. In addition, this community also organizes social and interactive activities that provide benefits not only for the elderly but also for their families, thus creating a more supportive environment in the care process

IV. DISCUSSION

Family Challenges and Adaptation in Caring for Elderly with Dementia

Based on the results of the study, it is known that families who care for elderly with dementia face various challenges in physical, emotional, social and financial aspects. Physically, family members often experience fatigue due to the need for continuous care, especially because elderly with dementia require special attention all the time. In terms of emotion, changes in elderly behavior such as confusion, aggressiveness or repetitive behavior trigger stress, anxiety and frustration for family members. In terms of social, limited time to socialize makes elderly care families feel isolated and lack support from the surrounding environment. In addition, financial challenges are also a significant factor because the costs of treatment, therapy and other care needs are often not fully covered by the available health facilities. However, families who care for elderly with dementia also have various adaptation strategies to face these challenges. One common strategy is to increase knowledge about dementia through education and training. With a better understanding of this disease, families can be better prepared to face changes in elderly behavior and know how to care more effectively. In addition, the division of tasks between family members is an important strategy to reduce the burden that is too heavy on one individual. In facing emotional challenges, families often seek support from communities or support groups such as the Alzi Surabaya Community which provides a space to share experiences and obtain information related to caring for elderly people with dementia. Some families also adopt stress management techniques such as meditation, exercise or vacations to maintain their mental balance. With good understanding and appropriate adaptation strategies, families can provide optimal care while maintaining their own well-being.

Effectiveness of Family Support in Improving the Quality of Life of Elderly with Dementia

Based on the results of interviews conducted with informants, it is known that family support plays a very important role in improving the quality of life of elderly with dementia. Family support includes creating a safe and comfortable environment, providing emotional support and keeping the elderly active at home. Elderly with dementia often experience confusion and loss of orientation so that they are more susceptible to the risk of accidents such as falling or getting lost. Therefore, families try to create a friendlier environment for the elderly, for example by installing lockable fences to prevent the elderly from leaving the house without supervision, avoiding the use of furniture with sharp corners and ensuring adequate lighting throughout the house. With a safe and comfortable environment, the elderly can feel calmer and the risk of injury can be minimized.

In addition to physical aspects, emotional support from the family is also an important factor in improving the quality of life of the elderly with dementia. The elderly often experience anxiety, confusion and frustration due to the cognitive limitations they experience. Therefore, family members need to provide attention, patience and empathetic communication in interacting with the elderly. Gentle and simple communication and avoiding confrontation can help reduce anxiety experienced by the elderly. The presence of family members who always support and provide a sense of security can improve the emotional well-being of the elderly and help them cope with changes due to dementia. In addition, keeping the elderly active at home is also an important strategy in improving their quality of life. Elderly people with dementia can still do various simple activities that help them feel useful and independent such as sunbathing in the morning, walking around the house and doing light exercise. By staying active, the elderly will feel happier, avoid feelings of boredom and have a better quality of life. Full support from the family in caring for the elderly with dementia can reduce stress, increase feelings of security and slow the progression of dementia symptoms.

The Role of the Alzi Community in Improving Family and Elderly Welfare

Based on the results of interviews conducted with several informants, it is known that the Surabaya Alzi Community has an important role in improving the welfare of the elderly with dementia and their families. In addition to providing education on how to care for the elderly with dementia, Alzi also provides emotional support and assistance for caregivers. Activities such as seminars, workshops, support groups and consultations help families understand how to better handle the elderly, reduce stress and improve the quality of life of the elderly and caregivers.

In addition, Alzi plays a role in increasing public awareness of dementia through various seminars and campaigns aimed at eliminating stigma and creating a more inclusive environment for the elderly. The existence of this community greatly helps families in facing the challenges of caring for the elderly with dementia, both from the psychosocial, educational and advocacy aspects so that the quality of life of the elderly and their families can be better maintained.

V. CONCLUSION

Families caring for elderly people with dementia face a variety of challenges but can adapt through education, community support and stress management to improve quality of life. Family support in creating a safe environment, providing emotional support and keeping elderly people active can slow the progression of dementia and improve well-being. Alzi Surabaya Community plays a role in education, mentoring and emotional support for families to help families better manage elderly care and create a more inclusive and supportive environment.

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