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# Psychological Well-Being Among Older Adults Living Alone: An Educational Psychology Perspective On Self-Acceptance, Autonomy, And Lifelong Learning In Late Adulthood

**Azam Syukur Rahmatullah**
Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, Indonesia
**Fatchanainy Febrianto**
universitas Muhammadiyah Surabaya, Indonesia
**Siti Baiatun**
universitas Muhammadiyah Surabaya, Indonesia
**Marini**
universitas Muhammadiyah Surabaya, Indonesia
**Muhammad Hisyam Syafii**
National Dong Hwa University, Taiwan

Corresponding Author: azam.sy@umy.ac.id

**Abstract**

*This study examined the psychological well-being of older adults living alone in Puring Subdistrict, Kebumen Regency, Indonesia, with attention to their subjective experiences and the factors shaping their adaptation to solitude in later life. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, in-depth interviews were conducted with five widowed older women, aged 65 to 67, selected through purposive sampling based on their status of living entirely alone, without a spouse or co-residing children. Data were analyzed through phenomenological and eidetic reduction, following procedures for trustworthiness including credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. Findings revealed that all participants initially experienced sadness, loneliness, and emptiness following the loss of a spouse or the departure of children, but gradually adapted through self-acceptance, positive thinking, meaningful daily activity, social relationships, and spirituality. Four key factors emerged as influential: emotional regulation, spirituality, social support, and environmental mastery, with spirituality and social support proving most dominant. These findings extend Ryff's psychological well-being framework by highlighting spirituality as a culturally significant dimension among older adults in religious, collectivistic communities.*



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*Implications are discussed for families, community-based elderly programs, and psychological practice, alongside recommendations for future longitudinal and more diverse research.*

**Keywords: psychological well-being, older adults, living alone, phenomenology, spirituality**

## INTRODUCTION

Aging is an inevitable and universal stage of human development, one that every individual will eventually pass through if given the length of life to do so. It is a phase marked not only by physical decline but also by profound psychological and social transformation, as the roles a person once held within the family and community gradually shift, diminish, or disappear altogether (Moody & Sasser, 2020) (Sigelman et al., 2018). In recent decades, the proportion of older adults within the global population, and within Indonesia in particular, has grown at a remarkable pace. What was once a relatively small demographic segment has now become one of the fastest-growing groups in the population structure, a trend driven by improvements in healthcare, nutrition, and life expectancy. Yet this demographic shift brings with it a set of psychological challenges that are often overlooked amid the celebration of longer life spans, chief among them being the experience of growing old alone.

For many older adults, later life does not unfold as a peaceful continuation of family closeness and social connectedness (King & Wynne, 2004). Instead, it often becomes a period marked by growing distance from the people who once filled their daily lives with meaning and companionship. Children who were once dependent and ever-present in the household eventually grow into independent adults, pursuing their own careers, forming their own households, and building lives increasingly separate from their aging parents. This transition, while a natural and even necessary part of the family life cycle, frequently leaves older parents grappling with an emotional vacuum (McGoldrick & Carter, 2003). The home that once echoed with the laughter and activity of a full family gradually becomes quiet, and the older individual is left to navigate daily life with far less companionship than before. This experience, commonly known as the empty nest phenomenon, captures the sense of sadness, loss, and hollowness that many parents feel when their children leave home to build independent lives of their own (Gerson, 1995).

The situation becomes even more emotionally complex when a spouse passes away. For many older adults, a life partner serves as the closest source of emotional support, a companion through decades of shared experience, and an anchor of psychological stability. When that partner is no longer present, the surviving spouse must confront not only profound grief but also the



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practical and emotional reality of living entirely alone. Children may return briefly to comfort their grieving parent, but as social and occupational obligations pull them back to their own lives, the older parent is often left once again in solitude. This layered experience of loss, first the gradual departure of children, and then potentially the death of a spouse, can accumulate into a persistent and deeply felt sense of loneliness. Without a partner to share daily life with, and without children close enough to provide regular company, many older adults living alone find themselves questioning their purpose, their motivation, and their emotional resilience in the face of solitude.

At the same time, it would be a mistake to assume that living alone in old age is universally and uniformly distressing. Human beings possess a remarkable capacity for adaptation, and psychological responses to solitude in later life vary considerably from one individual to another (Kirkevold et al., 2013). Some older adults experience persistent sadness, anxiety, and a diminished will to engage with life, while others discover an unexpected sense of freedom, independence, and inner peace in their solitary circumstances. This variation suggests that psychological well-being in old age is not simply determined by external living arrangements, but is shaped by a complex interplay of internal psychological resources, personality characteristics, coping strategies, social support networks, and life experiences accumulated over decades. Understanding this variation, and identifying which factors protect older adults from psychological distress while others place them at greater risk, becomes an essential task for researchers and practitioners alike (Orlandini et al., 2025).

Psychological well-being itself is a multidimensional construct that extends far beyond the simple absence of illness or distress. It encompasses the ability to accept oneself fully, including one's past choices and present limitations, the capacity to build and maintain warm and trusting relationships with others, a sense of autonomy that allows one to withstand social pressure and make independent decisions, the competence to manage and adapt to one's surrounding environment, a clear sense of purpose and direction in life, and an ongoing commitment to personal growth and self-realization even in the later years of life. For older adults living alone, each of these dimensions faces unique pressures. Self-acceptance may be tested by physical decline and the loss of former social roles. Positive relationships may become harder to sustain as social circles shrink. Autonomy may be both a blessing and a burden, offering freedom but also demanding self-reliance in the absence of daily support. A sense of purpose may waver when the roles of parent, spouse, or active community member fade into the background of daily life. It is precisely this complexity that makes the psychological well-being of solitary older adults a subject worthy of careful and sustained scholarly attention.


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Beyond its relevance to developmental and clinical psychology, this phenomenon also carries meaningful implications for the field of educational psychology. Educational psychology is not confined to the study of learning within formal classrooms; it extends to the broader processes by which individuals across the lifespan acquire knowledge, adapt their thinking, regulate their emotions, and develop strategies for coping with the challenges of daily existence. Older adults living alone are, in many respects, engaged in a continuous process of learning, learning how to manage solitude, how to regulate difficult emotions without the immediate presence of a life partner, how to construct new routines and sources of meaning, and how to psychologically adjust to a stage of life that differs dramatically from what came before. Viewed through this lens, the psychological well-being of solitary older adults becomes not only a matter of emotional health but also a matter of self-regulated learning and adaptive psychoeducation in late life. Understanding how older adults learn to cope, adapt, and even thrive while living alone can inform the design of psychoeducational programs, community-based learning interventions, and lifelong learning initiatives aimed at strengthening the psychological resilience of this growing population.

It is against this backdrop that the present study seeks to explore the psychological well-being of older adults living alone, with particular attention to the subjective experiences that shape their daily emotional lives and the protective and risk factors that influence how well they adapt to solitude in old age. Rather than assuming that living alone is inherently detrimental, this study approaches the phenomenon with an open and exploratory stance, seeking to understand the lived reality of older individuals in their own words and contexts. By doing so, the research aims not only to contribute to the academic literature on developmental and gerontological psychology, but also to offer insights that can inform educational and psychoeducational efforts designed to support older adults as they navigate the emotional and cognitive demands of aging alone, ultimately fostering healthier, more autonomous, and more psychologically fulfilling later years of life.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### The Concept of Psychological Well-Being

Contemporary psychological literature has increasingly recognized the study of well-being as central to understanding not only what constitutes psychological illness, but also what constitutes a life well lived. (Mandavilli, 2025) argued that psychological well-being should not be understood merely as the absence of distress or dysfunction, but as a positive state characterized by feelings of competence, security, comfort, and the capacity to function effectively despite life's


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ordinary pressures. In her review, Huppert further proposed that psychological well-being is shaped by an interaction between social environment, early life experience, and underlying biological processes, suggesting that no single factor operates in isolation when determining how well an individual copes with the challenges associated with different life stages, including old age.

**Theoretical Models of Psychological Well-Being**

Building on earlier theoretical traditions in developmental and humanistic psychology, (Lopez et al., 2024) developed one of the most influential and enduring models of psychological well-being, conceptualizing it as a multidimensional construct comprising six interrelated components: self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. According to Ryff (1989), these dimensions collectively reflect what earlier theorists such as Maslow, Rogers, Jung, and Allport had described through different but conceptually overlapping ideas of optimal human functioning, including self-actualization, individuation, and maturity. This model has become particularly relevant to gerontological research because it allows scholars to examine well-being not as a fixed trait but as a dynamic configuration of psychological capacities that may strengthen or weaken as individuals move through different life transitions, including the transition into old age and, for some, into living alone.

A complementary theoretical perspective was offered by (Kang & Kim, 2022), who distinguished between two broad traditions in well-being research: the hedonic approach, which defines well-being primarily in terms of pleasure attainment and the avoidance of pain, and the eudaimonic approach, which defines well-being in terms of meaning, self-realization, and the degree to which a person is fully and authentically functioning. Emphasized that these two traditions, although historically treated as separate lines of inquiry, are in practice deeply interconnected, since a person's subjective sense of happiness is often inseparable from their sense of purpose and self-congruence. This eudaimonic emphasis is particularly pertinent to the study of older adults living alone, since their well-being cannot be adequately captured through momentary affect alone but must also account for how they interpret meaning, purpose, and continuity of self in the absence of a spouse or the daily presence of children (Mishra et al., 2023).

**Solitude in Later Life: The Empty Nest and Spousal Loss**

Within the specific context of aging, the psychological literature has long identified the departure of children from the household as a significant developmental transition capable of


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provoking emotional distress in older parents, a phenomenon often referred to as the empty nest experience. This transition is frequently compounded, in later stages of life, by the loss of a spouse, an event that removes what is often the most proximal and consistent source of emotional support an older adult has relied upon for decades (Artino Jr et al., 2022). The cumulative effect of these transitions, first diminished contact with adult children who have formed independent households, and subsequently the death of a life partner, can leave older individuals in a state of prolonged solitude that carries substantial implications for their psychological functioning. Existing well-being frameworks suggest that such individuals face heightened vulnerability across several dimensions simultaneously: their sense of positive relations with others may erode as their social network contracts, their sense of purpose in life may become destabilized as long-held family roles diminish, and their capacity for environmental mastery may be tested by the practical demands of managing daily life without a co-resident partner (Ratnawulan et al., 2026).

**Variability in Adaptation to Living Alone**

At the same time, the literature cautions against treating solitary living in old age as a uniformly negative experience. Ning et al (2026) emphasis on autonomy as a core dimension of psychological well-being, some older adults appear to experience living alone not as abandonment but as an opportunity for independence, self-direction, and freedom from social obligations that had previously constrained their daily choices. This divergence in outcomes suggests that psychological well-being among solitary older adults is best understood as the product of an ongoing adaptive process, one in which internal psychological resources, including personality, emotional regulation capacity, optimism, and coping style, interact with external circumstances such as the availability of social support, financial stability, and physical health (Al-Thani, 2025a).

**Bridging Psychological Well-Being and Educational Psychology**

This adaptive process is where the literature on psychological well-being in aging intersects meaningfully with the field of educational psychology. Educational psychology has traditionally concerned itself with how individuals acquire knowledge, regulate their own learning, and adjust their strategies in response to feedback from their environment, a set of processes most thoroughly articulated in the literature on self-regulated learning. Described self-regulated learning as a cyclical process in which individuals set goals, monitor their own progress, and adapt their strategies based on ongoing self-evaluation, a process that Zimmerman argued extends well beyond the formal classroom into broader domains of self-directed personal development (Al-


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Beltagi et al., 2025). Although Zimmerman's model was originally formulated to explain academic achievement, its underlying logic, that individuals can be taught to consciously monitor, regulate, and adapt their own psychological and behavioral responses, offers a useful conceptual bridge for understanding how older adults living alone might be supported in developing more adaptive emotional and cognitive responses to solitude. Framed this way, coping with the loss of a spouse or the departure of children is not merely a passive emotional experience but can also be approached as a learnable, self-regulated process, one that psychoeducational interventions grounded in educational psychology principles could potentially strengthen (Paley & Hajal, 2022).

## METHOD

### Research Approach

This study employed a qualitative research design using a phenomenological approach, an approach that places primary emphasis on the subjective experience of individuals. This approach was selected because human behavior is fundamentally shaped by the way individuals perceive themselves and the world around them, including their self-concept, self-esteem, and level of self-awareness or self-actualization. In this sense, an individual's behavior can never be fully understood apart from the phenomena of their own lived experience.

The researcher deliberately chose the phenomenological approach because the study is concerned with the subjective experience of older adults living alone, particularly in relation to how they perceive and construct their own psychological well-being. Following phenomenological research is required to address four essential elements: intentionality, constitution as a guiding principle for observing phenomena, the procedural steps of phenomenological inquiry, and the trustworthiness of findings produced through this approach.

*Intentionality* refers to the researcher's conscious awareness of the object being observed, such that observation is never accidental but is instead a deliberate and essential act; intentionality is understood as the mind's directedness toward an object, through which raw experience is translated into meaningful experience. *Constitution* refers to the two-directional relationship, or close dialogical engagement, that develops between the researcher and the participants being studied. Through this relationship, the researcher comes to share in the conscious experience of the individuals being observed, which is the essence of what is meant by constitution.

With regard to the procedural steps of phenomenological research, this study followed the framework proposed, which consists of: (a) directing attention toward the phenomenon of


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experience as it presents itself, (b) describing what is observed without offering explanation, (c) assigning equal weight to all phenomena that directly present themselves, and (d) searching for and identifying the underlying, invariant structure of the phenomenon under study.

Regarding the trustworthiness of phenomenological findings, this study acknowledges that results obtained through a phenomenological approach cannot be evaluated using the standards typically applied by rationalist or materialist scientific traditions, since such standards would generate unwarranted skepticism given that phenomenological findings are not verifiable through sensory observation alone. Instead, following Schutz, this study relies on a distinct set of criteria, referred to as the postulate of adequacy, to assess the credibility of its findings.

**Research Participants**

**Participant Criteria**

The participants of this study consisted of five older adults residing in the Puring Subdistrict, Kebumen Regency, all of whom were living entirely alone. Participants were selected based on the following criteria: (a) male or female older adults aged at least 65 years; (b) individuals genuinely living alone, without children or relatives residing with them; (c) individuals who had lost a spouse, whether the deceased partner was male or female, resulting in the surviving spouse living alone; (d) individuals who remained physically independent, healthy, and reasonably fit; and (e) individuals capable of communicating clearly, meaning they were not experiencing severe illness, such as stroke, that would hinder the data collection process.

**Profile of the Five Participants**

The five participants who were successfully identified and interviewed are described below.

*Grandmother SA*, aged 67, has three children and five grandchildren. She remains physically healthy and lives alone; her husband passed away three years earlier (2022), while her three children live in other cities with their own households and visit only during holidays or major religious celebrations.

*Grandmother SZ*, aged 65, has two children and one grandchild. She lives alone and remains active working in the rice fields. Her husband has passed away, her first child lives in another city and has one child, while her second child, though unmarried, also works outside the area.

*Grandmother MYT*, aged 67, has two children and three grandchildren. She was widowed



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more recently, her husband having passed away two years earlier due to illness. Both of her children have established their own households in Bandung.

*Grandmother ASR*, aged 66, has no living children. She has been widowed for nearly five years and fills her days by running a small household shop, using her interactions with customers as a way of coping with loneliness. Her one child passed away, leaving her with no surviving children.

*Grandmother AM*, aged 66, has no husband, having never married, and consequently has no children, making her situation one of complete solitary living.

All five participants selected were widowed grandmothers rather than widowers, a choice informed by several considerations: widowed older women were more numerous than widowed older men in the research location; a greater number of widows lived alone, either without children or with children who did not share the same household; older women were generally more accessible and more open in providing information than older men; and older women statistically tend to have higher life expectancy than older men, further justifying their selection as the study's primary informants.

**Research Setting**

The study was conducted in Puring Subdistrict, Kebumen Regency, an area characterized by lowland and coastal geography bordering the Indian Ocean, with a coastline stretching across several villages. The subdistrict lies at an average elevation of approximately eight meters above sea level and is traversed by numerous rivers. The majority of residents work as fishermen, farmers, farm laborers, homemakers, small business owners, or civil servants. Working-age residents commonly migrate to larger cities within Indonesia or abroad, most frequently to Japan and Malaysia for men, and to Malaysia, Taiwan, and Singapore for women, typically seeking employment as factory workers or domestic workers due to limited local income opportunities and low educational attainment beyond junior secondary school. This pattern of outward migration among working-age residents was identified as a key contextual factor contributing to the phenomenon of older adults being left to live alone in the research area.

**Data Collection Techniques**

Two primary data collection techniques were employed in this study: observation and interview.

*Observation.* The researcher conducted direct field observation in Puring Subdistrict,


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engaging with the five participants over a period extending from June 2026, as an initial observation phase, through July 2026, as a follow-up observation phase.

*Interview.* Interviews were used as the primary data collection technique, given that this is a phenomenological study. An interview is understood as a process of interaction between an interviewer and an information source through direct communication. This study employed in-depth interviews aimed at capturing participants' opinions, emotions, and other subjective dimensions of their experience, allowing for richer and more detailed data than could be obtained through other means. The interviews focused specifically on the participants' experiences of striving for well-being while living alone after being left by their children.

A semi-structured interview format was used, guided by a systematic and comprehensive interview protocol prepared in advance. This technique allowed the researcher to probe participants' responses in depth while maintaining flexibility, with the interview guide addressing participants' subjective experiences of living alone, including dimensions such as self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, environmental mastery, autonomy, purpose in life, personal growth, and the factors influencing their psychological well-being.

Participants were selected using a purposive (non-random) sampling technique, in which participants are chosen based on specific considerations aligned with the study's focus and objectives, rather than through random selection, applying the criteria described above. Participants were identified based on recommendations from the village head and confirmed through field verification to ensure their suitability as informants.

Prior to conducting the interviews, the researcher undertook several preparatory steps: determining the sampling method to be used, establishing participant criteria, identifying contingency plans in case a participant was unavailable, and developing an interview guide that met appropriate research standards. In-depth interviews were conducted primarily with the older women who had directly experienced the challenge of pursuing well-being while living alone and managing their own daily lives independently.

## RESULT AND DISCCUSION

### Psychological Well-Being Profile of the Five Participants

The interview data revealed that all five participants shared a broadly similar trajectory in their psychological adjustment to living alone: an initial phase marked by sadness, emptiness, and a sense of loss, followed by a gradual movement toward greater self-acceptance and inner calm, though each woman arrived at this calm through a somewhat different pathway.



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Grandmother SA, who remained physically strong and accustomed to independence, acknowledged that sadness was still present, particularly at night and during periods of illness when no one was present to care for her. Nevertheless, she actively managed these feelings through daily activity, most notably gardening, and by keeping the radio on for company during quiet evenings.

Grandmother SZ, who continued to work in the rice fields, reported that the early period of living alone had felt especially hollow, since her children visited only occasionally. Over time, however, she grew accustomed to her circumstances, in part because she declined her children's invitation to move in with them, preferring instead the comfort of her own home despite the accompanying solitude.

Grandmother MYT, more recently widowed than the others, described ongoing feelings of loneliness but attributed her emotional stability to a deliberate inner strength and an acceptance of fate. Although her children checked on her daily by phone, she resisted living with them, not wishing to become a burden, and instead cultivated gratitude and a positive outlook as a coping strategy.

Grandmother ASR, who had lost her only child and had no remaining family, filled her days by running a small household shop, using her daily interactions with customers as a substitute for family companionship. Her adjustment process involved an early period of considerable distress, which gradually gave way to acceptance framed around surrender to divine will.

Grandmother AM, who had never married and had no children, presented the most outwardly contented profile among the five participants, attributing her well-being to an active social network of friends and neighbors as well as to an increasing focus on religious practice as she prepared for the later stages of her life. Across all five cases, a consistent pattern emerged in which early emotional distress was gradually managed through some combination of active behavioral engagement, spiritual practice, and social connection, rather than through any single uniform coping strategy.

**Factors Influencing Psychological Well-Being**

Analysis of the interview data identified four recurring factors that shaped participants' psychological well-being while living alone.

The first factor was internal emotional regulation and personal resilience. Grandmother SA and Grandmother MYT both demonstrated a deliberate effort to manage their emotional state, using rational self-talk and conscious emotional composure to prevent prolonged sadness from


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taking hold.

The second, and most consistently reported, factor was spirituality. Four of the five participants, Grandmother SZ, Grandmother MYT, Grandmother ASR, and Grandmother AM, identified drawing closer to God, engaging in worship, and adopting an attitude of surrender and acceptance as their primary means of calming inner distress. Grandmother ASR's shift toward sincere acceptance of her fate following the loss of her only child illustrated particularly clearly how spiritual reframing helped her move through profound grief.

The third factor was social support from the surrounding environment. Grandmother SZ described her neighbors as having become like family, which substantially reduced her sense of loneliness, while Grandmother AM relied on a broad network of friendships to compensate for the absence of a nuclear family of her own.

The fourth factor was purposeful activity and a sense of mastery over one's immediate environment. Grandmother SA's gardening and Grandmother ASR's small shop both functioned not merely as ways of passing time, but as adaptive strategies that allowed each woman to feel capable, productive, and in control of her daily life.

## DISCUSSION

### The Psychological Well-Being Profile of Older Adults Living Alone

The overall pattern observed among the five participants is consistent with conceptualization of psychological well-being as a capacity to live in a healthy, functional, and balanced way despite the presence of ongoing pressures, rather than as a state defined by the simple absence of hardship. Notably, the pathways participants used to reach this state diverged along thematic lines: Grandmother SA and Grandmother SZ relied primarily on behavioral and activity-based coping, while Grandmother MYT, Grandmother ASR, and Grandmother AM leaned more heavily on spiritual and social dimensions of adjustment. This divergence indicates that psychological well-being among older adults living alone is not a singular, uniform outcome but a multidimensional and individually configured process shaped by the personal and environmental resources available to each person (Dendle et al., 2022).

Viewed through six-dimension framework, the participants showed particularly strong evidence of self-acceptance, reflected in their willingness to embrace their circumstances with an attitude of surrender rather than continued resistance or regret. Evidence of positive relations with others was also present, though expressed through varied channels, ranging from long-distance telephone contact with children to close relationships with neighbors and friends (Shin


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& Park, 2022;M. H. Syafii et al., 2025).

**Factors Influencing Psychological Well-Being**

The four factors identified above align closely with the internal and external influences on psychological well-being discussed in the literature review, though their relative weight differed across participants. The emotional regulation demonstrated by Grandmother SA and Grandmother MYT reflects a form of psychological resilience consistent with description of well-being as encompassing effective functioning under pressure (Al-Thani, 2025b). The prominence of spirituality across most participants reinforces the theoretical proposition that religious meaning-making can serve as a central coping resource, and connects directly to construct of self-acceptance, understood here as the capacity to accept one's circumstances without continued rumination over the past. The social support described by Grandmother SZ and Grandmother AM corresponds to dimension of positive relations with others, characterized by warm, trusting, and empathetic interpersonal bonds, while the purposeful daily activity engaged in by Grandmother SA and Grandmother ASR reflects the dimension of environmental mastery, understood as the ability to manage and make productive use of one's surroundings (Suryo & Syafi'i, 2024).

Taken as a whole, the findings suggest that psychological well-being among older adults living alone in Puring Subdistrict is not produced by any single determinant but emerges from the interaction between internal psychological resources, including emotional regulation, spirituality, and self-acceptance, and external environmental resources, including social support and opportunities for meaningful activity (M. H. Syafii & Azhari, 2024). Spirituality emerged as the most dominant and consistently reported coping strategy among the five participants, a pattern consistent with the strongly religious cultural context of the research setting (Currier et al., 2024). This suggests that living alone in old age, within this cultural context, is not experienced solely as a condition of loss, but also as a space in which new forms of psychological autonomy and purpose in life, as conceptualized are able to develop (Safari et al., 2022).

**Theoretical and Practical Implications**

These findings carry both theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, the results extend model of psychological well-being, which was originally developed and validated within predominantly individualistic Western populations, by demonstrating that among older adults in a collectivistic, religious, rural Javanese context, the dimensions of self-acceptance and positive relations with others do not operate independently but are strongly undergirded by spirituality, a


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dimension not explicitly included among Ryff's original six components (Rahmatullah & Putra, 2023; Chu & Tran, 2025). This finding resonates wobservation that eudaimonic well-being is inherently contextual and shaped by the cultural values an individual holds, and suggests that spirituality may function as a meaningful seventh dimension for understanding psychological well-being among older adults in religious communities such as those in Indonesia, a conclusion broadly consistent argument that psychological well-being is multifactorial and cannot be reduced to any single explanatory approach (Lapyen & Darawong, 2025;(Tiktana & Rahmatullah, 2026).

Practically, the findings offer several actionable insights. First, for families whose older parents live separately, maintaining consistent communication and regular visits remains important, given that social support was shown, particularly in the cases of Grandmother SZ and Grandmother AM, to be a key pillar of psychological well-being(H. Syafii et al., 2025). Second, village governments and relevant institutions might consider developing community-based programs for older adults, such as religious study groups, mutual cooperation activities, or regular social gatherings, which could simultaneously strengthen social support networks and provide structured outlets for the spiritual coping strategies that proved central to participants' well-being. Third, healthcare providers and psychologists working with older populations should consider integrating spiritual and religious dimensions into counseling and psychological support for older adults living alone, rather than treating these dimensions as peripheral to clinical intervention (Nagy et al., 2024;(M. H. Syafii & Azhari, 2025).

## CONCLUSION

The overall profile of psychological well-being among the five participants showed that, at the outset of living alone, all informants experienced sadness, loss, loneliness, and a sense of emptiness following the departure of a spouse and the establishment of independent households by their children. Over time, however, each participant demonstrated the capacity to adapt to these circumstances through a process of self-acceptance, positive thinking, engagement in meaningful daily activity, the maintenance of social relationships with neighbors and friends, and the strengthening of spirituality through worship and closeness to God. Taken together, these findings indicate that although the participants lived alone in a physical sense, they remained able to sustain and even strengthen their psychological well-being through the adaptive resources available to them.

The factors influencing this psychological well-being were found to be both internal and external in nature. Internal factors included the capacity for self-acceptance, emotional


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regulation, an optimistic outlook, resilience, and spirituality, the latter emerging as the most central source of inner strength in coping with solitude. External factors included social support from family, neighbors, and friends, as well as involvement in daily activities that allowed participants to continue feeling productive and to maintain a sense of meaning in life. Among all the factors identified, spirituality and social support emerged as the most dominant contributors to the participants' psychological well-being.

**FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

For families, it is recommended that attention, communication, and emotional support continue to be extended to older parents living alone, even when co-residence is not possible. Regular communication and periodic visits can help reduce feelings of loneliness and support the maintenance of psychological well-being in later life.

For village governments and related institutions, the development of community-based empowerment programs for older adults is encouraged, including social activities, religious study groups, elderly-focused health posts (posyandu lansia), and other community initiatives capable of strengthening social interaction, a sense of belonging, and overall quality of life among older adults living alone.

For health workers and psychologists, it is recommended that psychological support extend beyond a narrow focus on mental health status alone to also account for the spiritual, social, and cultural resources that older adults draw upon in coping with the various transitions associated with later life.

For future researchers, it is recommended that subsequent studies involve a larger and more diverse participant pool, including older men, older adults residing in urban settings, and those living in residential care facilities. Future research may also benefit from adopting a longitudinal design in order to capture a more comprehensive picture of how psychological well-being among older adults living alone evolves over time.

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