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Being Vulnerable, Being (In)Dependent: Understanding Liminality Experiences of the Elderly in Central Java, Indonesia

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Abstract

A number of studies have examined elderly care, yet most narratives tend to position older people as dependent on their families, particularly their children. Such perspectives often overlook the complexity of lived experiences, as well as the challenges and adaptive strategies that the elderly develop in navigating vulnerability. This paper therefore addresses three main questions: how do the elderly transform and endure conditions of vulnerability? To what extent can they rely on their children? And what happens when such dependency is no longer possible? This research explores the experiences of elderly people in Gotong Village, Central Java, focusing on the dynamics of care and life transitions. The analysis draws on Viktor Turner's concept of liminality, which outlines three phases of transition: preliminal, liminal, and postliminal. The findings show that the preliminal phase is marked by a disengagement from previous social roles and relationships. During the liminal phase, the elderly experience ambiguity, including unclear social roles, ongoing negotiation between formal and informal care, and uncertainty about the future. This phase highlights how the elderly are not only vulnerable but also actively navigating and making sense of their changing circumstances. In the postliminal phase, they enter a stage of reaggregation under new conditions, often shaped by cultural values, particularly notions of self-acceptance. Overall, the experiences of the elderly should not be understood solely in terms of dependency, but as dynamic processes involving negotiation, adaptation, and meaning-making in the face of vulnerability.

Kata Kunci: *elderly, vulnerable, liminal, care, dependency*

Abstrak

Sejumlah penelitian telah membahas perawatan lansia, namun sebagian besar narasi cenderung menempatkan lansia sebagai pihak yang bergantung pada keluarga, terutama anak. Pendekatan ini sering kali mengabaikan kompleksitas pengalaman, tantangan, serta strategi adaptasi yang dijalani lansia dalam menghadapi kerentanan. Oleh karena itu, tulisan ini mengajukan tiga pertanyaan utama: bagaimana lansia bertransformasi dan bertahan dalam kondisi rentan? Sejauh mana mereka dapat bergantung pada anak? Dan apa yang terjadi ketika ketergantungan tersebut tidak lagi memungkinkan? Penelitian ini mengkaji pengalaman lansia di Desa Gotong, Jawa Tengah, dengan menyoroti dinamika perawatan dan proses transisi dalam kehidupan mereka. Analisis menggunakan kerangka liminalitas dari Viktor Turner, yang membagi proses transisi ke dalam tiga fase: pra-liminal, liminal, dan pasca-liminal. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa fase pra-liminal ditandai oleh pelepasan lansia dari peran dan relasi sosial sebelumnya. Pada fase liminal, lansia mengalami kondisi ambiguitas yang ditandai oleh ketidakjelasan peran sosial, negosiasi antara perawatan formal dan informal, serta ketidakpastian terhadap masa depan. Fase ini memperlihatkan bagaimana lansia berada dalam posisi yang rentan namun juga aktif dalam menavigasi perubahan hidup mereka. Sementara itu, pada fase pasca-liminal, lansia memasuki tahap reintegrasi dalam kondisi baru, yang sering kali terkait dengan nilai-nilai budaya, termasuk penerimaan diri terhadap perubahan yang terjadi. Dengan demikian, pengalaman lansia tidak dapat dipahami semata sebagai ketergantungan, melainkan sebagai proses dinamis yang melibatkan negosiasi, adaptasi, dan pembentukan makna dalam menghadapi kerentanan.

Keywords: lansia, kerentanan, liminalitas, perawatan, ketergantungan.

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INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines "elderly" as individuals who are 60 years of age or older. As individuals grow older, there is typically a concomitant reduction in production and a deterioration in health. The elderly are increasingly becoming a demographic that is both physically and psychologically vulnerable. The elderly are frequently deterred from participating in collective social events because of their vulnerability, which preoccupies them. Additionally, they face challenges in avoiding isolation and maintaining their social function within society. As individuals are exposed to new experiences through their life course the stories are amended and if experience does not fit the narrative, then tension occurs in identity transition (Dean, Trees, and Shabbir 2020). The process of transitioning one's identity undoubtedly has an impact on the way elderly perceive themselves and form connections with those in their social circle. Undoubtedly, vulnerability compels individuals to depend on others.

The elderly, due to their vulnerable state, are now in a position where they receive care. In many traditional societies, care for the elderly is built into the structure of ongoing family life (Miller et al. 2008). Providing care for parents is commonly regarded as an inherent familial duty and as a component of enduring intergenerational connections (Alber and Drotbohm 2015). Furthermore, the obligation of children to provide for the elderly has been established and assimilated predominantly through familial education.

According to Malinowski (1930), the development of children's connections with their parents is closely intertwined with the family consolidation phase. During this stage, the infant is initially highly reliant on the parents. Children's reliance on their parents persists until they reach adolescence and start becoming aware of their sexual experiences. Establishing a household as an adult is typically regarded as the point at which children become independent from their parents. Nevertheless, parents reestablish their relationship as they reach old age and once again depend on their children for their care.

The expectation is that the child will not decline the request to provide care for both parents. Riasmini et al. (2013) similarly conveyed that the elderly anticipate receiving care, affection, financial support, and healthcare services from their children. However, when examining the actual state of society, it is impossible to disassociate it from the diverse remnants found inside the ideal ecological framework. Despite child dedication being a customary practice that is still followed by many families, the fact remains that in Indonesia, the proportion of old individuals residing with their relatives is declining (Nathania and Iskandar, 2021).

Nevertheless, Malinowski's concepts concerning the consolidation phase remain highly pertinent to contemporary events. The relationship between children and parents, which undergoes various challenges and fluctuations, is consistently recognized as one of the most prevalent emotions in human existence. This relation is evident in moral principles, legal

responsibilities, and religious ceremonies (Malinowski 1930). Many elderly in Gotong Village, located in Central Java, Indonesia, continue to depend on their children for care. Furthermore, it is important to consider if their financial situation is far from being sufficient to cover all essential necessities.

From the elderly's standpoint, they typically desire to receive care from their children and other family members. Thelen (2015) also conveyed a comparable sentiment, stating that initially, the elderly preferred to receive care from their family members rather than residing in a nursing facility. They frequently experience feelings of isolation and rely on the expectation that their family will provide them with care. This stance is founded on the interplay between self and others within the life space of the elderly. The term "self" includes both immediate family members and extended relatives. Alternatively, the term "other" or "*lian*" pertains to individuals or institutions that are not part of the immediate family. This border further underscores the strong inclination of the elderly to receive care from their own families.

Prior to this, numerous research have examined the topic of care for the elderly. Riasmini, Sahar, and Resnayati (2013) perceive the act of caring for the elderly as a duty and manifestation of cultural values deeply ingrained in Indonesian society. Despite the dual responsibility placed on family members, their role in providing care for the elderly is widely regarded as extremely effective. Several further publications concerning elderly care primarily address the shift of family members assuming the role of caregivers (Jutras 1990; Wolf, Freedman, and Soldo 1997; Dean, Trees, and Shabbir 2020; Lyckhage and Lindahl 2013). The placement of the elderly as a care receiver sometimes results in an asymmetrical relationship. According to Glenn in Drotbohm's (2015) explanation providing care is understood as going along with capacity, potency, and social power, receiving care as entailing vulnerability, need, and deservingness. The narrative also centers on the elderly who typically depend on their relatives for care. Allegedly, this disregards the challenges and adaptations that the elderly genuinely experience.

Therefore, the question that emerges is how can they effectively transform and endure vulnerability? To what extent can elderly depend on their children? What are the consequences when the elderly become unable to depend on their children? This research examines the stories and experience of the elderly in Gotong Village, Central Java, Indonesia, discussing the challenges of care and transition for the elderly. The analysis is conducted utilizing the liminality framework developed by Tuner (2017).

WHAT IS LIMINALITY?

Turner (2017) adopted the concept of liminality from Van Gennep, who described it as "rites de passage," referring to rituals that occur during transitions between different locations, states, social positions, and ages. Turner initially introduced the concept of liminality to explain

the sacred rituals. However, Turner in Shomaker (1989) states, "instead of the liminal being a passage, it seems to be. . . regarded as a state. . . a way of life". The concept of liminality can also be extended to describe the process of transition that the elderly experience as they gradually encounter a decline in their physical and social functions in their daily existence. Hockey and James in Nicholson et al. (2012) explain that that social identities in late old age can be conceptualised as liminal.

Moreover, Turner explained that liminality in rites de passage essentially pertains to three distinct stages, specifically separation, margin, and aggregation. These three phases are also known as spatial transitions, specifically referred to as preliminal, liminal, and postliminal. The separation phase is distinguished by the disengagement of individuals and groups from their prior social interactions. This stage is marked by the elderly experiencing physiological changes and depending on others to perform their everyday activities. Due to age-related physical changes, the elderly may develop physical mobility disorders that restrict their ability to independently perform Activities of Daily Living (ADL). These activities include bathing, toileting, eating, drinking, walking, and sleeping. One can determine whether older individuals are self-sufficient or dependent on others (Taviyanda and Siswanto 2016).

Furthermore, during the liminal phase, individuals find themselves in a state of ambiguity and uncertainty. During the liminality phase, an individual's previous identity and social status are at risk, and they must contemplate a new set of standards, convictions, and personal identities (Gibbons, Ross, and Bevans 2014). Moreover, it is explained that during the liminal period, it frequently lacks structural and physical visibility. Liminality situates individuals in between and betwixt contexts. This research illustrates the liminal period experienced by the elderly, which is marked by various factors, such as (1) encountering role ambiguity, (2) dealing with the issue of formal and informal care, and (3) experiencing uncertainty regarding the future. During the post-liminal phase, they are currently experiencing the reaggregation stage under new circumstances. This overlaps with their approach to vulnerability, which is closely intertwined with cultural factors.

By conducting in-depth interviews, making observations, and reviewing relevant literature, researchers gained a comprehensive understanding from the perspective of the elderly. Researchers conducted interviews with women elderly who live alone and require assistance from others to perform their everyday activities. The purpose of this study is to determine the level of independence that elderly possess when they transition through the liminal phase. Next, an ethnography description of the research data will be explained, which will highlight the detailed complexity of the lives of the elderly in Gotong Village, Central Java.

THE ABSENCE OF CHILDREN AND THE BEGINNING OF LIMINALITY

The Gotong Village is still surrounded by rice fields. The primary source of income for most residents is rice farming. A significant number of young individuals have chosen to relocate and seek opportunities in metropolitan areas. Parents in such area exhibit no reluctance in investing substantial sums of money to provide for their children. Some parents even resort to selling their rice fields and incurring debt to provide their children with the opportunity to attend college or pursue employment in the shipping industry. These efforts are undertaken with the expectation that the child would attain a more secure existence and possess the means to support their parents in the forthcoming years.

However, it cannot be denied that children who relocate to cities are compelled to leave their parents behind. Gotong Village is home to approximately fifteen elderly. Some of them live separately from their children who have either migrated or no longer cohabit with them. When considering the consolidation phase, ageing parents mostly seek to reinforce their relationship with their children. Unfilled space arises when there is a physical and emotional difference between parents and children. This is the stage at which older individuals enter the liminal phase. To enhance clarity, the researcher will commence by recounting the narrative of Mona (using a pseudonym), who live in solitude.

Despite her advanced age, a significant portion of Mona's hair remains dark in colour. Her skin exhibits wrinkles, however, it possesses a vibrant hue, while her physique might be described as ample. Mona stated that she had previously worked as a field labourer and had only completed her education up to the junior high school level. Subsequently, he entered matrimony at the age of 25, as a consequence of an arranged union. Regrettably, her husband deceased a few years ago. In addition to experiencing a sense of confusion, he must also confront the uncertainty surrounding her role. Role ambiguity referred to losing one's identity but not yet incorporating a new identity (Gibbons, Ross, and Bevans 2014). This pertains to her need to clarify her position and role within the family as the eldest one who assumes leadership responsibilities.

Mona, who is now 83 years old, is the mother of ten children. There are nine female children, and the fifth child is the sole male in the family. Mona's children are all married. Mona's ten children live independently and pursue diverse livelihoods. Mona's two children live nearby. One of the daughters achieved a successful life by migrating and currently lives in Jakarta. This circumstance raises the question of who will provide care for Mona if she lives alone.

Despite being in close neighborhood to her two children, Mona does not spend a lot of time interacting with them. Both are working hard to provide for their separate modest families. Particularly given that their economy is categorized as lower middle class, with one operating a laundering business with an irregular income and the other employed as a bulldozer

operator. Considering that the house is close, the child frequently manages Mona's food needs.

Nevertheless, it is crucial to emphasize that the requirements of the elderly extend beyond the mere provision of food. In their study, Nathania and Iskandar (2021:14) identified certain essential requirements of the elderly that must be fulfilled through a family support system. This system is characterized by mutual assistance among family members, whether it is from parents to children or from children to elderly.

Moreover, they explained that the initial tangible support entailed cohabitation, wherein the elderly may live with their children. Cohabitation demonstrates that living under the same roof is more than just a matter of fuelling the stomach. Elderly may encounter difficulties in performing daily activities alone, such as using the restroom, doing laundry and dishes, cleaning the house, and engaging in other household activities. Given Mona's advanced age, it is necessary that she get a caregiver who can assist her in performing daily activities.

Undoubtedly, the presence of children in this setting holds significant importance. However, Mona was still extremely fortunate. Despite the absence of her children, there was a granddaughter who was eager to accompany her. Indonesian society, which values the extended family, supports the practice of the elderly living with their family members, such as children, in-laws, grandkids, or other relatives (Riasmini et al., 2013: 99). The granddaughter provided significant assistance to Mona, particularly in managing the enduring sense of solitude that plagued her during her elderly age. Mona's granddaughter frequently spent the night and joined her in bed. Mona openly acknowledged her reluctance to be away from her grandchild for an extended period.

The fact that Mona's granddaughter is not employed nor married imposes some constraints in providing care to Mona. For instance, the granddaughter is unable to offer financial aid for Mona. Consequently, she is unable to offer aid, which Nathania & Iskandar (2021:14) define as intergenerational transfers, referring to financial assistance provided by adult children to their old parents, or vice versa. Mona is not obligated to return her child's gift in this form of support.

Mona's successful children who have migrated to Jakarta can now offer intergenerational transfer support. Although she did not specify the precise amount received, she utilized the money to fulfil her daily need and stored the remaining amount. Money provided by migrant children is frequently transferred to the account of the youngster who lives next door. Mona will receive the money later.

Nevertheless, managing the financial transfer provided by her child can provide difficulties when it is not under Mona's control. On multiple occasions, Mona's daughter-in-law deceitfully used the money, claiming it was for Mona's welfare. Mona's lack of control over her own money management increasingly exposes her to vulnerability.

The situation does not end there. Naturally, the complexity of caring for the elderly inside the familial sphere prompts us to explore diverse alternative choices in this undertaking. Does family care the sole alternative? What are the advantages and disadvantages of family carers for elderly parents? How do elderly parents make their decisions?

EXPLORING THE CONSTRUCTION OF FORMAL AND INFORMAL ELDERLY CARE

Undoubtedly, the significance of the family in providing care for parents remains highly crucial. Nevertheless, the presence of kinship labels such as father, mother, child, and other embedded kinship labels in individuals entails the establishment of obligations. Dehe, Rumayar, and Kolibu (2016) argue that families with senior members have the responsibility to meet their essential biological needs, promote cultural and personal ambitions, and uphold family values. Subsequently, a discourse ensues regarding the pivotal significance of the family in providing care for elderly.

Upon further examination, the practice of tending to elderly parents can be explicitly categorised into two distinct types: formal care and informal care. Formal care is typically subsidised by the government or provided by commercial organisations. One of these is visible from the home care programme mentioned earlier. Typically, there are expenses associated with accessing facilities and services of a specific quality for the elderly in this category. This contrasts with informal care, which typically involves the assistance provided by family members, friends, and neighbours. Typically, they offer their assistance willingly and lack a standardised structure. Mona's care support might also be categorized as informal care. Observing the direct care provided by her grandchildren and the indirect care provided by her children.

Every category undeniably possesses its own advantages and disadvantages. Formal care encompasses various elements such as appropriateness categories, procedural norms, specialisation, coordination, definitions, and expectations for patient status. It also involves maintaining consistent standards in addressing issues and providing criteria for measuring progress (Froland 1980). Froland asserts that informal care differs significantly in that the provision of aid is primarily influenced by the dynamics of the relationship, the circumstances or emotions of the carer, and a continuous exchange of favours that involves a more intricate framework of rights and responsibilities. Caregivers in informal care are also regarded as more proficient in offering practical guidance, emotional support, sustained care, and everyday support. Nevertheless, there exist numerous informal carers who lack the necessary skills and expertise to effectively address the challenges encountered by elderly. Informal care, which involves personal matters, is susceptible to becoming a breeding ground for conflict. Formal

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care might be considered to possess a higher level of professionalism compared to informal care.

In addition to the concept of a sense of security, the inclination to get care from family members rather than workers in nursing homes and other facilities for the elderly is strongly linked to the establishment of a good family and good community. These two dimensions pertain to the capacity of the family and their social network to effectively provide care for elderly individuals (Alber & Drotbohm, 2015).

Upon further examination, the distinction between formal care and informal care becomes evident. What factors contribute to Mona's preference for receiving care from her children and family instead of opting for a nursing home or other care facility? What is the reality of informal care in Indonesia?

LISTENING THE "COLD" CARE EXPERIENCE FROM ELDERLY

Indonesia provides an alternative through a home care programme supervised by the Ministry of Social Affairs. This programme provides community-based services to the older population, including help and social care programmes for them in their own homes (Riasmini et al., 2013: 100). Regrettably, this option is not currently available in the Gotong Village region. Therefore, the responsibility for parental care in that situation ultimately rests with the child and other relatives.

As Mona ages, it is not advisable to adjust to a new environment. At least, that's what Mona believed. She chooses to remain at her home due to the sense of security and comfort it provides. Being at home was important because it brought feelings of control and anchorage to their lives (Nicholson et al. 2012). However, what are the defining characteristics of a home that is both comfortable and secure?

Externally, Mona's house appears to be less well-maintained. The foundation of the house is constructed of cement, while the walls are composed of woven bamboo. Upon observation, the interior of the house deviates significantly from the standard of cleanliness. An assortment of goods is arranged messily. The glass cupboard contains a television, glass cups that are not arranged neatly, culinary items that are still in their original packaging, and randomly placed ceramic decorations. The entire house was engulfed in billowing clouds of dust. There are two beds located in the middle room directly in front of the TV. One for the granddaughter's bed who accompanies her. Mona herself occupies the other one. The state of the place is pretty concerning. The pillowcases and bolsters in the home appeared worn and crumbling.

Regardless of the particular structure of her house, Mona perceives it as a sanctuary where she effectively copes with her feelings of fear, anxiety, and isolation, ultimately transforming it into a secure and comforting environment. Additionally, she was hesitant to

relocate to a nursing home that was unfamiliar to her. Ultimately, the dwelling in which she lives serves as a repository for the cherished memories of her loved ones. Mona frequently contemplates in solitude, positioned in front of her home during the morning and evening. She appeared to be awaiting the arrival of her children, while the sound of passing automobiles on the road in front of her house disturbed the silence.

Wiru also encountered a comparable experience. This 80-year-old woman frequently engages in solitary contemplation. Wiru openly acknowledged that she has difficulties communicating with her children. In addition, Wiru lacks access to a mobile, television, and radio. She remained silent and accepted the rheumatic pain that was there throughout her entire body. Regarding her health, she acknowledged her inability to afford a medical consultation due to financial constraints. The child offered just basic medical supplies, which were packaged in black plastic and tied to a chair. Regrettably, the drug offered cannot address bodily sicknesses. All Wiru could think about was getting well and being able to walk without a cane so he could see her grandson, whose mother had recently abandoned him and left him to live alone. This demonstrates the insufficient competence of informal carers.

In addition to the loss of her spouse, Wiru frequently expresses her grief for not being present at her son-in-law's recent funeral. Despite the proximity of her house to her children's houses, they are only two houses apart. It is believed that her son-in-law accompanied her husband (son of Wiru) who passed away before. Currently, her two grandchildren, who are both in their twenties, live independently without their parents. Wiru's son was denied the opportunity to visit or participate in the burial. Perhaps this was an expression of worry on behalf of the child, given the significant prevalence of Covid-19 instances during that period. Thus far, Wiru has not yet gotten a vaccination to mitigate the spread of the Covid-19 virus. The neighbouring youngster, Marto, expressed in a detached manner:

"*Uwes nang ngomah wae, sik ra enek ora usah ditangisi*"

(Simply remain at home, there is no reason to grieve for the deceased).

Typically, elderly people hold a significant role as parents that demands respect and appreciation due to their extensive life experience, which makes their perspectives valuable in making family decisions (Riasmini et al., 2013). This stands in stark contrast to what happened that unfolded for Wiru. Instead of getting attention, Wiru also received "cold" care from her family. She has been overshadowed in her role as the oldest member of the family.

Nevertheless, the practice of transferring elderly parents to nursing homes has never occurred in Gotong Village. Frequently, the choice of transferring the elderly to a nursing home becomes a topic of discussion among neighbours, often leading to gossip. This decision conveys a perception of "neglecting one's parents". Regardless of the substandard level of care offered by the family, elderly parents in Gotong Village exhibit a lack of inclination in

opting for professional care. Nevertheless, what are the actual experiences of elderly parents who lack sufficient care and help from their children or other relatives? What actions should the elderly be capable of undertaking when they are no longer reliant on their children or other relatives?

LIMITATIONS OF THE MATERIAL ASSISTANCE MODEL: ELDERLY IN MANAGING THE PAIN OF SUFFERING

Wiru (pseudonym) suffers from severe memory problems, rendering her unable to recall her current age, the age at which she entered matrimony, and even occasionally causing her to forget the names of her sons-in-law and grandkids. Nevertheless, she has a vivid memory of her four sons. Like Mona, Wiru's children's home is located adjacent to her home. Wiru has four sons, two of whom are in the neighbouring nearby areas, one live faraway in Jakarta, and the last one has died alongside her spouse, leaving behind two children.

Wiru frequently spends the afternoon in solitary contemplation in front of the house. Wiru's home lacks spaciousness, as the illumination is insufficient, creating a dismal atmosphere. The house's floor remains unpaved, and the room is sparsely furnished. Her unfamiliarity with hosting guests is evident in the rarity of furniture in the house. The living area, connected to the bedroom, contains a sofa and chairs adorned with individual table settings, including a kettle, a bottle of mineral water, a glass, and a plate. This adequately elucidates her solitary breakfast, lunch, and supper routine, devoid of the presence of her children or other relatives.

Wiru and Mona's children give caring help to them in similar methods. Both individuals have children who have migrated, and their children frequently provide financial assistance, sometimes known as intergenerational transactions. Wiru's favourite child could be Brio (pseudonym), who happened to stray away. While discussing Brio, Wiru's initially tired eyes transformed into a widened and luminous state. Despite the distance, Wiru retains vivid memories of him as a benevolent boy who readily offers assistance.

Due to the ongoing pandemic, Brio, the child that Wiru deeply longs for, has been unable to return home for several years. Previously, he could periodically return home to visit Wiru, although not very frequently. Nevertheless, Wiru consistently recalls the presents bestowed to her by her son and daughter-in-law, comprising five fabric items and other garments. In addition, she noted the enhancements her son made to the bathroom, which have facilitated her ability to shower and launder garments. Conversely, Wiru also mentioned her son's commitment to renovating her house. She desires to replace the current dirt floor of the house with either cement or ceramic, to eliminate the risk of tripping and falling due to the uneven floor. Parents not only consider receiving a present from a distance, but also assess its type, quality, brand, size, colour, and most significantly, whether it was given with a sense of caring

(Alber & Drotbohm, 2015). Wiru was deeply moved by the act of giving driven by genuine concern, despite not having experienced such care from her children in a long time.

Brio frequently sends financial transfers to Marto, Wiru's son who lives in the neighbouring home, as part of their efforts to assist in Wiru's care. Wiru's inability to possess a debit card and utilise an ATM renders her reliant on the nearby children in this particular situation. Upon closer examination, the act of caring for parents, sometimes referred to as informal care, necessitates the collaboration of children and other relatives. What specific responsibilities do children undertake when taking care of their elderly parents?

According to Matthews and Rosner (1988), the routine model is fundamental to the provision of care for elderly parents. Moreover, they clarified that in this approach, consistent support for the elderly entails children actively participating in fulfilling their parents' diverse requirements, which may include performing domestic tasks. Considering the circumstances of the Wiru family, it is evident that the support given by Wiru's children has primarily been around providing material assistance. Commencing with the payment of power taxes and fulfilling basic food requirements. Wiru's daily diet consists primarily of raw veggies. Marto has recently fulfilled this requirement for nourishment. Wiru used to frequently prepare meals for herself. Currently, Wiru's kitchen appears abandoned and left in the corner of the room.

Wiru's worsening health hinders her ability to cook or take care of herself independently. Wiru's condition of health is insufficient to perform activities of daily living alone. Given the absence of any direct support from the child or other family members, Wiru is left with no choice but to depend solely on herself. In addition to the necessity for sustenance, Wiru might be considered highly independent. In addition, she engages in personal hygiene by bathing, performing the task of cleaning dishes, and taking care of laundering her garments. She utilized a wooden stick to provide support for her vulnerable physique. She had stumbled on more than three occasions while attempting to navigate within her own home. She expressed dissatisfaction with the bruised and painful condition of her knee. The lack of empathy demonstrated by the child and other family members, particularly those nearby, is far more distressing than the physical pain of this wound. The liminal phase is characterised by its fluid and dynamic nature (Gibbons, Ross, and Bevans 2014). Additionally, the elderly endeavour to deal with the pain and suffering that result from their vulnerable position as care receivers.

Conversely, it is evident that the elderly have requirements beyond the material; they desire intimacy and care. Furthermore, emotional and psychological support are just as important as material and structural support (Alber & Drotbohm, 2015). Wiru openly displayed her jealousy towards Mona, who continued to get support and attention from her children and grandchildren. Amidst the bustling roadway and the cacophony of traffic, Wiru expressed her profound desires and frustrations regarding her children and grandchildren. It is inevitable, as the residences of her children and grandchildren are nearby to her home. Nevertheless, they

were hesitant to visit her on occasion. She experienced profound sadness when her grandchild, who had recently arrived back, failed to acknowledge her or inquire about her well-being. Wiru had no anticipation of receiving material possessions in the shape of currency or other extravagant goods. Her sole disappointment was that living close did not ensure the sharing of care among family members.

Parents, like everyone else, often dislike seeking assistance and often communicate their desired or required support by indications or signals to individuals in their surroundings (Michaud 1987). Michaud further asserted that the elderly exhibit remarkable levels of engagement in pursuing their own needs. To facilitate the transmission of signals from elderly parents to their children, it is essential to establish a strong and effective means of communication. Wiru faced challenges in doing this due to little interaction with other relatives. Whenever they required something, Wiru did not arrive unaccompanied. Her decision to not arrive was not due to her physical vulnerability, but rather to avoid giving the impression that her presence was a plea for sympathy. With a gesture of disapproval, she remarked, " *Wedi dikira njaluk* " (fearful of being perceived as asking).

The circumstances mentioned earlier illustrate the constraints faced by Wiru in reestablishing her relationship with her child, as portrayed in the consolidation phase. This pertains to the child's limited ability to take care of Wiru, who is progressively experiencing heightened levels of bodily and psychological vulnerability. Wiru frequently expresses her dissatisfaction with the child who pays little attention to him even though he has been raised with tremendous difficulties. Indeed, Wiru was completely devoid of any formal schooling in the past. Before and during her marriage, she engaged in various menial occupations, such as gathering straw and leftover rice that had been discarded during the harvest in neighbouring fields. She became occupied with caring for her children only after getting married, although facing several economic constraints. With their children being married, their level of worry for Wiru has diminished. How do Wiru and Mona manage to survive in the face of vulnerability?

BEING (IN)DEPENDENT BY ACCEPTING VULNERABILITY

Leinaweaver (2020) argues that caring is not a natural outcome or consequence of kinship relationships but is rather productive of both adaptive and nonadaptive relationships. Despite Wiru's considerable dissatisfaction and frustration with the child's apparent indifference towards self-care, he had low expectations. Fortunately, there were other neighbours in the vicinity who were eager to provide Wiru with food. Nicholson et al. (2012) state that particularly for those living on their own, a network of neighbours and friends is dominated over family to provide this daily social 'glue'. Neighbours may engage in such actions due to various causes, such as moral obligation, respect for parents, friendship, or

neighbourliness. However, these actions are guided by the shared ideals of a community code that outlines the necessary requirements (Michaud, 1987).

In the afternoon, Wiru welcomed her neighbours who had recently come back from the rice fields. She possessed the ability to recall and voicer her neighbour's name at a high volume. Her reflexes were quicker when questioned about her son-in-law or grandchild. They engaged in a concise conversation while standing on opposite sides of the roadway. The middle-aged woman's neighbour previously gifted Wiru with a portion of her garden harvest, specifically bananas. Wiru appeared joyful as he recounted the narrative and acknowledged that on multiple occasions, her neighbours had graciously offered to share their meals with her. This demonstrates that compassion may develop beyond the confines of familial relationships. Wiru and Mona both alleviate feelings of loneliness by engaging in social contacts. Engaging in routine activities, such as visiting, asking about conditions, or accompanying elderly, can effectively demonstrate care and foster a sense of belonging.

However, during the post-liminal phase, Mona and Wiru consistently express gratitude despite the persistent vulnerability they experience. Ultimately, the elderly population in Java managed to endure by embracing the Javanese ideology of *narimo ing pandum*. Raharjo Jati (2023) states that the principle encapsulates three interconnected values that define one's ethnic-social identity as Javanese, namely: to live a life of temperance; belief over the influence larger spiritual forces (or "God") have over one's life; and finally, to put faith in the benevolence of these spiritual forces, of in "God's plan".

CONCLUSION

The elderly population in Gotong Village faces transformations in three distinct phases: pre-liminal, liminal, and post liminal. The liminal phase is characterized by changes in the physical and social functions of the elderly within both the family and society. Furthermore, during the liminal phase, the elderly have challenges such as uncertainty about their roles, dilemmas regarding official and informal care, and a sense of fear of uncertainty.

The elderly frequently choose informal care, wherein they prefer to get assistance from their children or other relatives. The significance of children is emphasized because taking care of the elderly serves as a means of reinforcing the relationship between parents and children. The establishment of a strong community and cohesive family unit is also exemplified by the competence of children and families in providing excellent care for their parents. Informal elder care presents both advantages and disadvantages. Close family members possess a greater capacity to comprehend the requirements of old parents, which can be viewed as a positive aspect. Nevertheless, not all families possess adequate knowledge and capability to provide care for the elderly. In addition, the presence of internal conflict within the

family significantly impacts their relationship. However, it is a fact that there are still elderly parents who depend to a certain degree on their children.

Children who migrate or are separated from their parents have the chance to live independently, apart from their parents. Indeed, the elderly who are enveloped in a state of vulnerability frequently depend on and anticipate care from their children and family members. Regrettably, children's support typically extends only to fulfilling material necessities. The care provided by children must also address the psychological and emotional requirements of the elderly. This condition necessitates increased independence among the elderly, especially in performing routine tasks that have become challenging due to their decreasing physical capabilities. The elderly often seek assistance from their network of neighbours when they have trouble reaching out to children. This also demonstrates that the reinforcement of the relationship between parents and children throughout the era of family consolidation does not always function optimally. Alternatively, elderly can endure by adhering to the Javanese principle of self-acceptance. Ultimately, there exist numerous challenges and intricacies that, in reality, depart significantly from this ideal standard.

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