

Enhancing the Knowledge and Skills of Informal Caregivers through a Training Program: A Pre-Experimental Study

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Abstract: The growing proportion of the elderly population, both globally and in Indonesia, necessitates modifications in health development plans, including the establishment of specific initiatives for elderly health. Despite the vulnerabilities resulting from the challenges of aging, the elderly are entitled to a dignified and affluent existence. They continue to possess optimism in maintaining their productivity despite their advanced age. In Indonesian culture, there is a prevailing phenomena where regardless of the circumstances, both the elderly and their family have a strong desire to reside together within the community. Hence, the Ministry of Health has initiated an Informal Elderly Caregiver Program. The study aims to analyze the increase of knowledge and abilities among elderly informal caregivers subsequent to their participation in a training program. The study utilized a pre-experimental design, specifically employing a one-group pre- and post-test approach. A total of thirty informal caregivers participated in this study. The mean age of the participants was 42 years (SD = 2.55). The majority of participants (97%) were female. The results show that knowledge and skills were improved. The participants actively engaged in discussion and posed inquiries regarding the cases they frequently encounter. The caregivers' confidence increased in providing care for the elderly being care for. Furthermore, it is highly advised to have a regular training program and easily accessible educational materials.

Keywords: Community Services; Elderly; Informal Caregiver; Knowledge and Skills; Training Program

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INTRODUCTION

As per Indonesian Government Regulation Number 43 of 2004 [1], the term "elderly people" refers to individuals who are 60 years old or above. They are further categorized into two groups: potential and non-potential elderly. Potential elderly refer to individuals who possess the ability to carry out tasks and engage in activities that result in the creation of commodities or services. Non-potential elderly refer to persons who are incapable of generating income and rely on the support of others.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2023 [2], the global elderly population is projected to rise from 1.4 billion in 2020 to 2.1 billion by 2050. This implies that the proportion of elderly is 1 in 6. Indonesia, classified as a developing country, has transitioned toward an aging demographic structure since 2021, with approximately 1 in 10 population being elderly. By 2050, it is estimated that 80% of the elderly would reside in low- and middle-income countries, such as Indonesia. In light of this increasingly elderly population, every nation worldwide

is confronted with the task of safeguarding the well-being of senior citizens, necessitating the readiness of social systems to adapt to these shifting demographic circumstances.

Based on the Central Bureau of Statistics [BPS] (2023), the senior population in Indonesia in 2022 declined by 0.34% compared to 2021, amounting to 10.48% [3]. Furthermore, the average lifespan was 71.57 years. It is well-established that the elderly are susceptible to both communicable and non-communicable diseases as a result of the degenerative process [4]. Consequently, the proportion of old individuals in Indonesia who rely on others for support was 16.09% according to the data from the BPS in 2023. It has the potential to impose a significant strain on both the economy and public health. In response to these events, the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia implemented an informal caregiver program in 2019. An informal caregiver refers to an aging companion who is typically a family member, neighbor, or volunteer [5]. They offer daily aid and care to older individuals who are dependent on help with activities and fulfilling their

daily requirements. Moreover, an informal caregiver must possess knowledge and skills. In order to enhance the skills and abilities of informal caregivers, it is the obligation of community health center to offer an educational program specifically designed for informal caregivers. The study aims to assess the enhancement of knowledge and skills among informal caregivers through a comprehensive and structured training program specifically designed for them.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study applied a pre-experimental design, specifically employing a one-group pre- and post-test design. In order to ensure an efficient class, it is essential to have a limited number of only thirty caregivers in the sample. The eligibility criteria encompassed families with older individuals, caretakers for the elderly, or individuals in the community health worker. The duration of this curriculum spanned eight weeks. Each week consists of four hours of classical offline instruction, which encompasses both theoretical and practical components in the nursing laboratory. The educational content emphasizes fundamental caregiver knowledge and essential nursing skills specific to aged care, designed to align with the curriculum. The training program commences with traditional instructional techniques, which are then complemented by hands-on practical sessions. The learning strategy employed an interactive approach, fostering active engagement of the participants in the teaching process. The author utilized a questionnaire designed to assess the caregivers' fundamental knowledge and proficiency in nursing skills. An evaluation of the knowledge was conducted both before to and following the completion of the training program.

RESULTS

A total of thirty informal caregivers participated in this training program. The average age of the participants was 42 years, with a standard deviation (SD) of 2.55. The vast majority of participants (97%) were female. Half of the educational background consisted of primary school schooling. 73% of the participants are jobless, they are a household. 53% of the participants lived with elderly they cared for. The average age of the elderly being cared for was 72 years (SD = 11). The training participants have demonstrated enhanced knowledge and skills. This progress is evidenced by the higher mean scores observed in the posttest compared to the pretest. The participants actively participated in discussions and asked questions pertaining to the cases they commonly come across. The caregivers' confidence increased in giving care to the elderly being cared for. The characteristics of the participants' show in Table 1.

Table 1. The Characteristics of Participants

Characteristic	mean (SD)
Age of Caregiver	42 (9.17)
Age of Patient	72 (11)
	n (%)
Gender	
Female	29 (97)
Male	1 (3)
Education levels	
Primary School	15 (50)
Senior High School	11 (37)
Higher Education	4 (13)
Occupation	
Employee	7 (23)
House hold	22 (74)
Entrepreneur	1 (3)
Living Status	
With Patient	16 (53)
No With Patient	14 (47)

DISCUSSION

The informal caregiver training program implemented in this study has demonstrated to be a substantial and effective endeavor, positively enhancing the caregivers' knowledge and skills in elderly care. An outstanding achievement of the informal caregiver training program was the remarkable degree of participant participation and excitement. The program's resonance across the community is evident from the active engagement of 30 caregivers, which represents a 100% attendance rate. The involvement of local stakeholders, including Community Health Workers, the Village Head, and Kedungwuni II Community Health Center, was crucial in facilitating the participation of caregivers in the training. The program's relevance and the community's appreciation of the need of improving caregiving skills are highlighted by this passionate involvement. The caregiver plays a crucial role in providing care for the elderly [6].

The primary objectives of the informal caregiver training program were to enhance the knowledge and skills of caregivers. The post-training assessments, as seen by the improved scores from the pretest to the posttest, indicate a beneficial influence on the participants' comprehension of aged care. Moreover, the caregivers' shown confidence in answering questions and engaging in discussions about real-life scenarios demonstrates the practical implementation and the feeling of empowerment acquired through the training. This result was in concordance with Albers *et al.* [7] and Chan *et al.* [8], which found that educational program could enhance caregiver's confidence to taking care of their elderly.

The initiative has effectively accomplished its stated goals. The participants expressed a strong inclination for the training program to be conducted on a regular basis, emphasizing the importance of ongoing learning



and the enhancement of skills. In order to maintain the favorable progress, it is advisable to arrange subsequent training sessions that concentrate on particular domains such as dementia, stroke, and other commonly occurring chronic ailments [9]. Consistently following a training plan can effectively improve caregivers' knowledge and readiness to manage diverse circumstances in aged care [10].

An important suggestion resulting from the review is the development of instructional resources for caregivers and the broader community. Creating inclusive and educational materials, such as brochures, booklets, or online resources, could act as a beneficial resource for caregivers and help spread crucial caregiving information beyond training sessions [7]. Although the program has shown effectiveness, it is crucial to strive for ongoing development. Subsequent versions of the training program should contemplate integrating additional interactive components, case studies, and practical simulations to augment the practical involvement of participants. Furthermore, seeking input from caregivers might offer valuable insights into their distinct requirements and preferences for forthcoming training sessions.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the informal caregiver training program has had a beneficial influence on the community by equipping caregivers with the requisite knowledge and skills to provide appropriate care for the elderly. By targeting the specific areas that need development and adopting a sustainable approach, this program could become a benchmark for continuous community-led initiatives focused on improving the well-being of the elderly through knowledgeable and competent caregiving. The informal caregiver training exercise was executed with success and met expectations. The participants displayed great enthusiasm and remained fully engaged throughout the program. They expressed a need for ongoing comparable training to continuously improve their knowledge and skills. The study proposes two recommendations. Firstly, it suggests that regular caregiver training should be conducted to improve the knowledge of caregivers in areas such as dementia, stroke, and other common chronic diseases in the community. Secondly, it advises the creation of educational materials that can be used by caregivers with varying levels of educational background, as well as the wider community.

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