

## EXPERIENCES OF THE ELDERLY IN SELF-MANAGEMENT OF JOINT PAIN IN THE BENCAH VILLAGE AREA

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### Abstract

*Joint pain is a health problem often experienced by the elderly due to degenerative processes and their impact on physical function, psychological condition, and daily activities. The success of joint pain management depends not only on medical therapy but also on the elderly's ability to perform self-management. This study aims to explore the experiences of the elderly in self-managing joint pain in the Bencah Village area in 2025. This study employed a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. Informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique involving four participants with the criteria of being elderly aged  $\geq 60$  years, experiencing joint pain, and being able to communicate verbally. Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews, field notes, and audio recordings. Data analysis used the Colaizzi method. The results identified four main themes: (1) sensory perception and factors influencing the perception of joint pain, (2) efforts of the elderly in relieving pain through pharmacological and non-pharmacological strategies, (3) emotional reactions and efforts to achieve self-calming when pain occurs, and (4) the need for care and family support in pain management. The conclusion shows that self-management of joint pain in the elderly is influenced by individual understanding, emotional conditions, physical abilities, and family support. Continuous health education is essential to improve the elderly's understanding of how to perform warm compresses independently, select safe medications according to medical recommendations, and apply relaxation techniques to maintain emotional stability when pain occurs. Active family involvement is also needed to enhance the effectiveness of joint pain self-management among the elderly.*

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### INTRODUCTION

An elderly person is an individual who has reached the age of 60 and is in the final stage of their life cycle. During this phase, the elderly undergo an aging process characterized by a gradual decline in physical, psychological, and social functioning, which increases their vulnerability to various health problems, particularly degenerative diseases (1). A global phenomenon of concern is the growing elderly population in various countries. The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that the proportion of the world's population aged 65 years and over has increased significantly from 5.86% in 1980 to 9.64% in 2021, and is projected to continue increasing in the coming decades (2).

In Indonesia, the population aging trend also shows a consistent increase. Data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) in 2024 showed that the percentage of the elderly population in 2023 reached 11.75%, up from 10.48% in 2022 (3). This position places Indonesia as a country with a population structure that is moving towards aging. The increasing number of elderly people has a direct impact on the increasing prevalence of degenerative diseases, one of which is joint pain, a common symptom of which is degenerative changes in the musculoskeletal system (3). The 2023 Basic Health Research (Riskesdas) from the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia showed that joint pain is one of the most common health complaints in the elderly and contributes to a decline in their quality of life.

Regionally, the Bangka Belitung Islands Province also faces a similar situation. The Bangka Belitung Islands Province Statistics Agency (BPS) reported in 2024 that the proportion of residents aged 60 years and older reached 10.41% of the total population, with a relatively balanced gender distribution. In South Bangka Regency, the percentage of elderly people aged 65 years and older was recorded at 4.73%, indicating a growing need for healthcare services for the elderly, particularly for chronic and degenerative diseases such as joint pain. Local data from the Bencah Village Community Health Center shows that in 2024, 121 elderly people sought treatment for joint pain, and this number continued into 2025, with 53 cases recorded as of May. This data indicates that joint pain is a significant health problem among elderly people in this rural area.

Chronic joint pain in the elderly not only impacts physical aspects such as limited mobility and reduced ability to perform daily activities, but also impacts psychological and social aspects, such as reduced social participation, increased dependency, and the risk of emotional disorders and depression (5). Although pharmacological and medical therapies are available, successful joint pain management is greatly influenced by the elderly's ability to practice self-management. At the global level, self-management is widely recognized as a key strategy in managing chronic conditions such as joint pain, as it actively involves patients in making healthy lifestyle decisions and independently monitoring their symptoms. Self-management is an approach that emphasizes active individual involvement in managing chronic conditions through decision-making regarding medication, physical activity, lifestyle, and independent symptom monitoring (6).

The experiences of elderly people in implementing self-management of joint pain vary widely and are influenced by personal, social, and cultural factors, as well as family and community support. Studies on the subjective experiences of older adults in self-management, particularly in rural areas, are still limited. Therefore, this research is crucial to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of older adults in self-managing joint pain in Bencah Village in 2025, as a basis for developing more contextual and sustainable health interventions.

## METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design, aiming to deeply understand the experiences of older adults in managing joint pain through self-management strategies. The phenomenological approach was chosen because it allowed researchers to explore the lived experiences of older adults related to joint pain, how they interpret the pain, its impact on their activities and psychological well-being, and how their families perceived their role in supporting pain management.

The study was conducted in Bencah Village, Bangka Belitung Islands Province. The study period was from October to November 2025, encompassing the entire research process, from preparation and permitting, data collection, interview transcription, data analysis, and validation of the research findings. Four elderly residents of Bencah Village participated in the study. The determination of four participants in this qualitative study was based on the principle of data saturation (7). Phenomenological studies typically involve 3–10 participants to adequately describe the essence of lived experiences. Participant selection was conducted using a purposive sampling technique, with inclusion criteria including being aged 60 years and above, experiencing joint pain, having good verbal communication skills, being able to express their experiences reflectively and in-depth, and being willing to participate by signing an informed consent form after receiving an explanation. Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews supported by a voice recorder (smartphone) and field notes. The researcher served as the primary instrument in data collection, assisted by an interview guide as a supporting instrument.

Data analysis was conducted through seven steps: reading all transcripts, extracting significant statements, formulating meanings, clustering themes, developing exhaustive descriptions, identifying fundamental structures, and validating findings through member checking.

Data validity was maintained through the application of qualitative research validation principles. Data dependability was ensured by systematically documenting the entire research

process, from data collection and transcription to analysis, allowing for clear tracing. Meanwhile, confirmability was maintained by maintaining researcher objectivity through reflective note-taking and the use of direct quotes from participants as the basis for drawing themes. By applying these validation techniques, the results of this study have a high level of reliability and authentically represent the experiences of older adults.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of research conducted through in-depth interviews with elderly people in Bencah Village yielded four main themes in their experiences of self-management of joint pain: sensory perception and factors influencing joint pain perception, pain relief efforts, emotional reactions and self-soothing efforts, and the need for family care and support. These four themes illustrate that joint pain in the elderly is a complex, subjective experience influenced by various internal and external factors.

Participant quotations are presented to strengthen the validity of each theme. *"Nyeri badan ni ngilu-ngilu, hampir sebadan terutama kaki, lutut, sampai ke panggul... rasanya narik kenceng sampai ke paha."* (L4). The first theme indicates that elderly people can describe the sensation of joint pain using simple terms such as aching, stabbing, throbbing, and aching. This pain perception is related to physiological processes resulting from the activation of nociceptors triggered by mechanical, chemical, and thermal stimuli, which are then transmitted to the central nervous system (8). In addition to biological factors, degenerative changes in joint tissue due to aging also increase pain sensitivity in the elderly (9). Psychological factors such as anxiety and mental restlessness also amplify pain perception, as emotional states can influence cognitive assessment of painful stimuli (10). Furthermore, environmental factors such as changes in weather and excessive physical activity have been reported to exacerbate joint pain (11).

The second theme describes various efforts by older adults to relieve joint pain through pharmacological and non-pharmacological approaches. Elderly individuals use pharmacological and non-pharmacological strategies to relieve

pain. Elderly individuals use analgesics, balms, massage oils, and warm compresses to reduce pain. This approach aligns with research showing that a combination of pharmacological and non-pharmacological therapies is effective in controlling joint pain in older adults (12). Warm compresses and light massage are known to increase blood flow and reduce muscle tension, thus helping to reduce pain intensity (13). Furthermore, some older adults also utilize herbal therapy as a traditional treatment with anti-inflammatory effects (14). However, the use of medical drugs still requires supervision to prevent side effects, especially in older adults (15).

The third theme demonstrates that joint pain not only impacts physical health but also affects the emotional well-being of older adults. *"Tergantung nyeri bisa nangis keluar air mata sakitnya sangat..."* (L4). Elderly people experience feelings of sadness, confusion, anxiety, and stress when pain interferes with daily activities. This condition aligns with research showing that chronic pain is closely linked to emotional disturbances and a reduced quality of life in the elderly (16). High pain intensity can also increase emotional distress and decrease motivation (5). However, elderly people demonstrate positive coping strategies through spiritual activities and maintaining light activities within their abilities. Spiritual activities and simple routines have been shown to increase self-efficacy in elderly people in managing pain (17).

The fourth theme emphasizes the importance of family support in managing joint pain in the elderly. *"Keluarga bantu memijat, memandikan, menyediakan makanan, dan mendengarkan keluhan."* Family support is provided in the form of physical care, activity restrictions, emotional attention, and preparedness for pain recurrence. Family support plays a crucial role in increasing the success of pain management and preventing recurrence (13). Despite this, some older adults still strive to manage their pain independently, reflecting an effort to maintain independence and self-esteem (12). The presence of family as physical and emotional companions provides a sense of security and improves the quality of life of older adults.

Research results indicate that self-management of joint pain in older adults is influenced by individual perceptions of pain, emotional state, adaptability, and family support. A holistic and sustainable pain management approach that actively involves older adults and their families is necessary to improve the quality of life of older adults.

## CONCLUSION

The experiences of older adults in self-managing joint pain indicate that pain management relies not only on medical therapy but is also influenced by individual understanding, emotional state, and family support. Older adults tend to use simple and accessible strategies, such as warm compresses, balms, traditional massage, and medication, based on personal experience and inherited habits. Joint pain impacts the physical and emotional aspects of older adults, which can reduce their enthusiasm and ability to carry out daily activities. Family support plays a crucial role in increasing the sense of security and self-confidence of older adults, thus requiring ongoing health education and the active involvement of families and healthcare professionals to improve the effectiveness of self-management of joint pain in older adults.

This study is limited by the presence of elderly participants with decreased cognitive function and memory, requiring repeated clarification during interviews. Healthcare providers are recommended to enhance education on safe pain management and actively involve families in supporting elderly individuals both physically and emotionally. Future research is expected to examine the effectiveness of specific self-management techniques, such as moringa leaf compresses or slow back massage, quantitatively.

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