

Collective Transcendence of Aging People through Majelis Taklim: Challenging the Individual Assumptions of Gerotranscendence Theory

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Abstract

This study explores the concept of elderly transcendence by critically examining the individualistic assumptions inherent in the theory of Gerotranscendence, developed by Swedish sociologist Lars Tornstam (1943–2016). Gerotranscendence refers to the developmental shift in older adults from self-centered interests toward broader, more transcendent perspectives. According to the theory, this shift is primarily achieved through personal reflection and a gradual withdrawal from social engagement. However, within the context of Indonesia's collectivist culture, this research raises a key question: Is transcendence solely an outcome of individual introspection, or can it also be realized through meaningful social interaction? To address this question, the study employs a phenomenological qualitative approach, involving 12 elderly participants actively engaged in majelis taklim (religious study groups) in urban Indonesia. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and participatory observation, and subsequently analyzed using thematic analysis. Findings reveal that participation in religious community activities not only enhances the spiritual dimension of aging but also enriches personal reflection and strengthens social bonds. From these insights, the study proposes the concept of Collective Transcendence, suggesting that transcendence in later life is not solely an individual process, but is also cultivated through communal and relational experiences. These findings contribute to the theoretical development of Gerotranscendence by adapting it to collectivist cultural contexts, and offer practical implications for designing religious community-based welfare programs that support holistic well-being among the elderly.

Keywords: majelis taklim, collective transcendence, gerotranscendence, aging people, Tornstam

Introduction

The number of people in the world aged 60 years and above, known as the elders, is estimated at 14% or 1.4 billion people (WHO, 2024). While in Indonesia, the number reaches 12 percent or 29 million people from the total population of Indonesia, as reported by the Indonesian Population Census in 2023 (Antara, 2024). Globally, data shows that many older people experience limited social support, which impacts their well-being. Living alone (28%) and

lacking family support (24%) indicates that smaller family structures and geographical factors make older people more vulnerable to social isolation (21%) (Emerson et al., 2020), while dependence on outside help (27%) reflects that older adults often need external support for daily activities which can increase the risk of isolation and helplessness. This data confirms that strong social support is essential for the well-being of older people so that they can live old age with more dignity and well-being.

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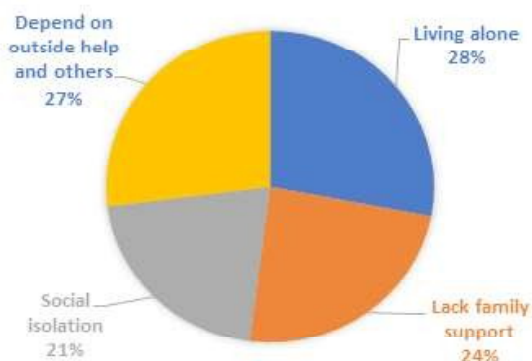
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Figure 1 Percentage of Elder's Social Support



Aging is a complex process that is not only related to physical changes, but also involves psychosocial and spiritual transformations (Villar et al., 2021). Physically, the elderly face challenges such as chronic diseases, decreased body function, and nutritional problems (Maresova et al., 2019). Psychologically, they are vulnerable to loneliness and depression, which contribute to a reduced quality of life. However, research also shows that older adults can adapt to these conditions through various social strategies, such as involvement in religious communities that provide spiritual and social support (Bouchard et al., 2022)

In gerontological studies, the gerotranscendence theory developed by Lars Tornstam (Tornstam, 2003, 2011) is often used to explain the psychosocial changes of the elderly. Gerotranscendence is defined as the experience of aging individuals of a shift in consciousness from a materialistic and rational orientation towards a more cosmic and transcendental understanding. Older people who experience gerotranscendence show increased spirituality, deep reflection on life and death, and reduced attachment to social norms and materialism (Dehkordi et al., 2021). Tornstam divides this transcendence into three main dimensions: the cosmic dimension, the self dimension, and the social relationship dimension (Tornstam, 2003, 2011).

The cosmic dimension refers to a shift in the way older people understand life, where they begin to see themselves as part of a wider universe (Tornstam, 2003). Elders in this stage

often experience increased spirituality, reduced fear of death, as well as feeling closer to God or a greater power (Abreu et al., 2023; Tornstam, 2011). The self dimension reflects how older people increasingly accept themselves, let go of egoism, and focus more on inner balance and life reflection than material achievement (Dehkordi et al., 2021). Meanwhile, the social dimension shows changes in relationships with others. The elderly become more selective in their interactions, more interested in meaningful relationships, and in some cases, withdraw from social norms that are considered no longer relevant (Tornstam, 2003). These three dimensions together form a deeper experience of transcendence in the elderly.

Table 1 The Dimensions of Gerotranscendence

Dimension	Indicators	Actions Needed
Cosmic	Increased spirituality	Engage in spiritual practices like prayer, meditation, and reflection
	Reduced fear of death	Reflect on the meaning of life and afterlife
	Feeling closer to God or a greater power	Strengthen personal faith through worship
Self	Greater self-acceptance	Practice self-reflection and gratitude
	Letting go of egoism	Prioritize humility and empathy
	Focus on inner balance and life reflection	Dedicate time for quiet contemplation
Social	More selective in social interactions	Choose meaningful relationships over superficial ones
	Interest in deep, meaningful relationships	Foster emotional connections through open communication
	Withdrawal from irrelevant social norms	Focus on personal values rather than societal expectations

Although gerotranscendence theory is widely used in gerontological studies, the assumption that transcendence is always accompanied by withdrawal from social life is questionable. In a collective cultural context such as Indonesia, many older people remain active in social communities, especially through religious activities such as majelis taklim (Khuzaimah et al., 2023; Rusli, 2020; Wijayanti & Lestari, 2022). Majelis taklim is not just a place to learn religion, but also a space for reflection, social interaction and emotional support for the elderly (Hasyim, 2021). Older people who are active in majelis taklim report that their involvement in these communities helps them reflect on life, remember death, and gain

wisdom through social interactions (Hasyim, 2021).

This phenomenon raises an important question: Can elderly transcendence only occur in isolation as gerotranscendence theory assumes, or can it also develop within a social religious community? To answer this question, this study aims to criticize the assumption in gerotranscendence theory that transcendence of the elderly is individual and tends to be accompanied by withdrawal from social life. By examining the elderly in majelis taklim, this study aims to show that transcendence can also occur collectively through meaningful social-religious activities.

Majelis taklim has characteristics that make it an ideal platform for elderly transcendence. In addition to being a place of religious learning, majelis taklim also serves as a space for life reflection, where older people can re-analyze their life journey, evaluate past decisions, and improve relationships with others and God (Hidayat et al., 2024). Older people who are active in majelis taklim also experience greater social support, which helps them avoid loneliness and improves emotional well-being. Social interactions within these communities allow older adults to share experiences, gain new insights and deepen spiritual understanding (Achmad & Nasution, 2020; Jadidi et al., 2022).

If gerotranscendence theory states that transcendence tends to reduce social engagement, then this study wants to show that majelis taklim can actually be a means that accelerates and strengthens the experience of transcendence of the elderly through collective reflection and involvement in religious activities. Therefore, this study offers the concept of “collective transcendence” as an extension of gerotranscendence’s theory, which asserts that transcendence can not only be achieved through individual reflection, but can also be facilitated by a community that supports shared spiritual reflection.

In a society with a communal culture like Indonesia, collective transcendence is more relevant than individualized assumptions of transcendence. Elderly participation in majelis

taklim shows that the experience of transcendence does not have to occur in isolation, but can be strengthened through meaningful social interactions. For example, older people who are active in majelis taklim often find a deeper meaning of life through religious discussions, sharing life experiences, and gaining spiritual support from fellow community members (Achmad & Nasution, 2020). This contradicts the assumption that older people who experience transcendence will become more distant from social life.

More broadly, the findings of this study can contribute to the development of policies related to elderly well-being. If involvement in religious communities is proven to help the transcendence process and improve the psychosocial well-being of the elderly, then the government and social organizations can consider strengthening religious community-based programs as part of a strategy to improve the quality of life of the elderly. Thus, this study not only makes a theoretical contribution to the development of gerotranscendence theory, but also has practical implications for the design of social welfare programs for the elderly in Indonesia.

In addition to the individualistic approach as emphasized by Tornstam, a number of sociological studies have highlighted the importance of social engagement and communal practices in the aging process. The concepts of aging-in-community (Gonzales et al., 2020; Hou & Cao, 2021; Kalvari, 2021) and aging well through participation (Dizon et al., 2020; Huang et al., 2025; Tia et al., 2024) suggest that participation in community can be a source of meaning, identity and psychosocial well-being for older adults. Likewise, Jewell (2014) emphasizes that gerotranscendence cannot be considered a universal process because aspects of culture, personality and spirituality greatly influence how older people experience transcendence, and in many contexts, the communal aspect is the dominant element. In the context of a collective culture such as Indonesia, a communal approach to aging becomes the main mechanism for coping with existential changes in old age.

Research Method

The research method used in this study is a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. This approach was chosen to explore the subjective experiences (Creswell, 2009), especially among the elderly group of majelis taklim members, in understanding the gerotranscendent phenomenon. This method allows us to gain a deeper understanding of how individuals experience and give meaning (Neuman, 2012) to their spiritual and social lives in old age.

This research was conducted in three different locations, namely South Tangerang (Banten), Bekasi (West Java), and Pondok Pinang (South Jakarta). The selection of these locations was based on the population density of majelis taklim in urban areas, where elderly members tend to be more involved in religious activities. Older members of the majelis taklim were involved as participants in this study. The criteria for selecting participants were those aged 60 years and above and active in majelis taklim activities. The researcher used a purposive sampling technique to select informants who were considered to have relevant information and could provide deep insight into the gerotranscendent phenomenon. The decision to stop data collection on the 12 participants was based on the principle of data saturation, when the last interview no longer produced substantive new information or themes. The saturation indicator is reached when the emerging findings begin to repeat themselves without adding meaningful insight into the dimensions of collective transcendence being researched. The names of participants are anonymous.

The comparison between male and female elderly people in this study shows differences in the way they experience transcendence through majelis taklim. Apart from personal reflections and spiritual experiences by remembering death, men tend to experience transcendence through intellectual studies organized by majelis taklim, with a focus on deepening religious knowledge. As we found in field observations, men have routine activities to study Arabic books with the guidance of a

kyai teacher.

Meanwhile, women experience more transcendence through social and community activities, such as establishing majelis taklim, inviting others to learn to read the Qur'an, and establishing closer social relationships in religious communities. Women are also more active in collective activities, such as joint recitation, pilgrimage, and sharing religious experiences with fellow members of the majelis taklim. In other words, men emphasize the reflective aspect, while women are more prominent in the relational and social aspects of religion in their spiritual journey in old age.

This difference is influenced by gender roles in the culture of Indonesian Muslim society (Setyawan et al., 2022), where men from a young age are more accustomed to intellectual studies and individual worship, while women are more involved in building and maintaining social communities so that in old age this pattern is carried over in the way they experience spiritual transcendence. Elderly women tend to experience transcendence through communal social religious activities, such as organizing majelis taklim, sharing religious experiences, and building close social ties. Meanwhile, elderly men emphasize cognitive-reflective aspects, such as deepening Islamic sources and intellectual discussions. This difference reflects the structure of gender roles in Indonesian Muslim culture, where women are more attached to the domestic-communal social sphere, and men to the intellectual-individualistic sphere (Setyawan et al., 2022). Thus, collective transcendence needs to be understood within a relational framework that considers the social construction of gender in society.

Data were collected through in-depth interview techniques and participatory observation. Interviews were conducted at 12 informants from July to September 2017, using a semi-structured interview guide, but still allowing space for informants to share their experiences and views freely. Each interview session was recorded and transcribed for further analysis. To update the data, participatory observation was conducted from December 2023

to February 2024 with a total time of about 12 hours. These observations were conducted during majelis taklim activities, where researchers were directly involved in the activities to understand the social dynamics and interactions between members and compare them with the findings from the interviews.

Table 2 Informants in Majelis Taklim

City	Names	G	Background	Activities in Majelis Taklim
Tangerang	Lita	F	Former <i>Ibu Lurah</i> (urban village head's wife), previously busy with work and family	Started to be active after becoming a housewife, establishing a taklim assembly to learn the Qur'an
	Musa	M	Used to hang out in the community	Became a community leader while active in majelis taklim
	Nuh	M	Used to work in a government agency, has the status of a community leader	Initially less active, then more involved after receiving social reprimands
	Onih	F	Initially often helped Lita in social affairs and leadership	Involved in managing the majelis taklim and supporting religious programs
Bekasi	Ahmad	M	Former company employee, started to explore religion after retirement	Became active in majelis taklim as part of a search for spirituality
	Bibi	F	Worked in a private company	After retirement, became an active member of majelis taklim, built togetherness, and focused on religious deeds
	Cici	F	Moved to the Kranji area in the 80s, started to be active in the recitation for a long time	Teaches the Qur'an and is active in majelis taklim activities
	Dhani	M	Community leader, known as the first person who can read the Qur'an in his village	Started a recitation tradition in his neighborhood, becoming a spiritual role model
Jakarta	Putri	F	Started to delve more into religion in old age	Collaborated in the management of majelis taklim with Siti
	Qila	F	Active in majelis taklim, often performs pilgrimage of guardians	Explores the teachings of Islam, gaining inspiration from the stories of the saints
	Roni	M	Has studied at a pesantren, has strong spiritual experience	Often dreamed of meeting his kiai, becoming more active in worship and dhikr
	Siti	F	Feels called to invite people to learn to read the Qur'an	Established majelis taklim, trying to build an Islamic learning community

G = Gender, M = Male, F = Female

The procedure for analyzing the data that has been collected through interviews is done using thematic analysis techniques (Miles et al., 2014). The first step was to transcribe all interview recordings to facilitate analysis. Next, we identified themes that emerged from the

informants' narratives, which relate to their transcendent experiences in religious and social contexts. This process involved repeated readings of the transcriptions to capture deeper meanings and discover emerging patterns. To increase reproducibility, the researcher conducted a thematic analysis process with systematic steps, starting from open coding, axial coding, to selective coding. Initial codes were developed from the interview transcripts through repeated readings, then grouped into thematic categories based on similarities in meaning.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, we triangulated the data by comparing the results of the interviews with the observations made. In addition, we also involved other elderly group members to provide feedback on the results of the analysis, so as to get a more comprehensive perspective and reduce bias in data interpretation. By using this method, the research is expected to provide a clear picture of the gerotranscendent phenomenon among the elderly in the context of majelis taklim, as well as its contribution to their social and spiritual life in urban areas

Results and Discussion

This section presents the main findings of the study on how older adults experience transcendence through their involvement in majelis taklim. The findings show that elderly who are active in majelis taklim experience psychosocial changes that can be categorized into three main aspects: spiritual awareness and acceptance of mortality, self-reflection and life wisdom, and more meaningful social relationships.

These three aspects reflect the dimensions of the gerotranscendence theory proposed by Lars Tornstam (Tornstam, 2003, 2011), but with significant differences. While the gerotranscendence theory states that older people who experience transcendence tend to withdraw from social life and focus more on individual spiritual experiences, the findings of this study show that the process of transcendence can occur in a supportive social environment, especially through involvement in

religious communities such as majelis taklim.

Spiritual awareness and acceptance of death

One of the indicators of transcendence in gerotranscendence is an increased cosmic awareness, which is a broader sense of connectedness with God and the universe and acceptance of death. In the context of the elderly in the majelis taklim, this aspect is very visible in how they understand death, destiny, and life after death.

Older people who regularly attend majelis taklim report a change in the way they deal with death. If they previously felt fear and anxiety at the thought of death, involvement in majelis taklim helped them see death as part of a natural spiritual journey. Musa, an informant from South Tangerang, revealed:

"I used to be afraid of death, afraid of leaving children and grandchildren. But after often participating in pengajian, I am more sincere. The Ustaz said that life is temporary, and death is not the end, but the beginning of a journey to a better life", (Informant Musa, South Tangerang)

This statement shows that religious studies in majelis taklim help the elderly understand death as something more transcendent and not just the end of their existence.

In addition, many elderly people began to feel a closer relationship with God after being active in taklim assemblies. They recite dhikr more often, reflect on God's greatness, and feel that their lives are calmer and more meaningful. Putri, an informant from Jakarta, said:

"I used to be busy working, busy with world affairs. Now I realize that the most important thing is my relationship with God. I do more dhikr and remember death more often, because that is certain". (Informant Putri, Jakarta)

This shows that cosmic awareness in gerotranscendence does not only occur through individual reflection, but can also be strengthened through collective activities such as recitation and discussion in majelis taklim.

Self-reflection and the wisdom of life

This finding is in line with the second

dimension of gerotranscendence, which is a change in the way older people see themselves, characterized by acceptance of the past, decreased egoism, and increased wisdom of life. Older people who are active in majelis taklim report that their involvement in religious studies and social interactions helps them accept themselves more, reflect more on life, and draw lessons from past experiences. Ahmad from Bekasi said:

"I used to regret many things, feeling guilty about past mistakes. But after attending the recitation, I learned to accept that everything has happened with God's permission. The important thing now is how I can improve myself". (Informant Ahmad, Bekasi)

This kind of reflection shows that majelis taklim not only functions as a place to learn religion, but also as a space for older people to reconstruct their understanding of themselves and their lives.

In addition, older people who experience transcendence in this aspect tend to be wiser in looking at life. They no longer pursue materialistic things, but instead focus more on moral values, virtues, and contributions to others. Lita said:

"I feel lighter now. I used to chase the world, money, positions, but now I realize that the most important thing is how we live well and benefit others." (Informant Lita, Tangerang)

This shows that majelis taklim not only plays a role in shaping the spiritual aspects of the elderly, but also in building deeper wisdom in life.

More meaningful social relationships

The third dimension of gerotranscendence is changes in social relationships, where older people become more selective in their social interactions and prefer meaningful relationships. However, contrary to Tornstam's assumption that older people who experience transcendence will withdraw from social life, this study found that majelis taklim is actually a place where older people build more meaningful social connections. An informant from Bekasi stated:

“I feel more alive since joining majelis taklim. The friends here are like family. We share stories, learn together, and strengthen each other” (Informant Bibi, Bekasi)

Participation in this religious community helps older people avoid loneliness and increases their sense of community. They find peers who have similar life experiences, so they do not feel alone in their journey towards transcendence.

In addition, older people also feel that they have a meaningful role in their community, especially in guiding the younger generation. Some older people in the majelis taklim act as mentors or role models for younger members of the majelis. Informant Siti from Jakarta said:

“I am happy to be able to share my experiences with the young mothers in this majelis taklim. I feel that I am still useful and can give something to them” (Informant Siti, Jakarta)

This shows that transcendence in social relationships does not mean withdrawing from social life, but rather building more meaningful and constructive interactions.

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that the elderly who are active in the majelis taklim experience transcendence in three main aspects. The first relates to spiritual awareness and acceptance of death, where the elderly begin to see death as part of a broader spiritual journey and feel a deeper closeness to God. The second relates to self-reflection and life wisdom, where older adults become more accepting of their past, more humble, and more focused on spiritual virtues and values. The third is related to more meaningful social relationships, where older adults build social connections that support their spiritual journey, share their experiences, and become role models for the younger generation.

These findings challenge the assumptions of the gerotranscendence theory which states that transcendence primarily occurs in isolation. Instead, transcendence can also occur through meaningful social interactions within religious communities.

Challenging the gerotranscendence theory

The gerotranscendence theory asserts that as individuals age, they experience a shift in consciousness that brings them closer to spirituality, life reflection, and connectedness with the universe (Tornstam, 2003). Tornstam argues that individuals who reach this stage of transcendence tend to withdraw from social life, focus on the meaning of life, and reduce involvement in worldly affairs (Tornstam, 2003, 2011). In other words, transcendence is seen as a process that is individualized and occurs through personal reflection.

However, the gerotranscendence theory as developed by Tornstam has been criticized for overemphasizing individual aspects and not considering the influence of social and cultural factors in the aging process (Rajani & Jawaid, 2015). This study challenges Tornstam's assumption by showing that elderly transcendence does not necessarily develop in isolation. Instead, this process can also be facilitated by meaningful social interactions, especially in the context of religious communities such as majelis taklim. Majelis taklim is not only a space for religious learning, but also a place for shared spiritual reflection. Through activities such as religious discussions, sharing life experiences, and collective reflection, older adults receive social support that enriches their spiritual journey.

The findings of this study support previous research on the role of community in older people's transcendence. Aging individuals often find profound experiences of transcendence through their involvement in religious communities. This involvement fosters a sense of belonging and improves their mental health and overall well-being (Javadi et al., 2025). Research by Siah et al., (2025) suggest that participation in religious organizations can be a protective factor against depression and loneliness, particularly in older people. This is due to the social support network provided by religious communities, which can significantly contribute to their lifestyle choices (Siah et al., 2025), tolerance of life's uncertainties and mental resilience (Khodarahimi et al., 2021).

In addition, religious involvement is

associated with increased opportunities for social participation, which is particularly important for older adults who may face isolation due to physical limitations or loss of peers. For example, one study found that older people who practice religious observance often participate more in community activities compared to non-religious older people (Siette et al., 2020). This active participation contributed to reducing feelings of loneliness and strengthening their sense of purpose and connection to the community, which is an important component of transcendence.

In the sociology of community, the notion of aging as social integration also reinforces the view that older people's involvement in community not only maintains their social identity, but also deepens the existential meaning and transcendence they experience (Holt-Lunstad & Lefler, 2021; Torrejon & Martin-Matthews, 2022). McManus's (2024) study on faith communities shows that collective practices such as spiritual discussions, experience sharing and intergenerational mentoring have a strong influence in shaping the redefinition of life in old age.

The concept of self-transcendence is particularly relevant in this context. Self-transcendence refers to the ability to overcome personal concerns and connect with broader existential meaning, often facilitated through spiritual practices and community engagement. In religious settings, older adults can engage in practices such as prayer, meditation and corporate worship, which can enhance their sense of spiritual well-being and foster a deeper understanding of their life experiences (Lekhak et al., 2020). These practices often lead to personal growth and a greater appreciation of life, contributing to transcendent experiences characterized by feelings of peace, connectedness and purpose (Siette et al., 2020).

A new concept emerging from these findings is "collective transcendence", which emphasizes that achieving transcendence depends not only on individual reflection, but also on supportive social interactions. In a collective culture like Indonesia, involvement in religious communities plays an important

role in strengthening the spiritual dimension of the elderly (Billah et al., 2024; Gede Agung et al., 2024; Khuzaimah et al., 2023). Older people who are active in this kind of religious communities not only deepen their religious understanding, but also broaden their perspectives on life and death through deep social connections (Jothikaran et al., 2023; Nurjanah et al., 2023; Saarelainen et al., 2020; Xu, 2025).

Community support in majelis taklim creates a space for older people to share narratives about their life journey, gain new insights, and strengthen emotional resilience. These social interactions catalyze the development of broader reflections and deeper meanings of life. With this support, the elderly feels a sense of community that reduces feelings of loneliness and enriches their transcendence process.

Other studies also concur with these findings by showing that older adults who are active in religious communities experience improved quality of life and psychological well-being. Narratives and experiences shared within religious communities can be a powerful tool for transcendence. Older people often tell stories of resilience and hope, which not only inspire others but also strengthen their own sense of identity and purpose (Riveros et al., 2023). This intergenerational exchange of wisdom and experience can foster a sense of heritage and continuity, further enhancing the aging individual's transcendental experience (Garrison, 2021).

Involvement in community activities not only provides social support but also fosters a sense of belonging and generativity, which is a concern for future generations and a desire to contribute positively to society (Villar et al., 2021). Such generative actions can improve the psychological well-being of older adults, allowing them to feel valued and connected to their community (Sibel & Yasemin, 2025). In addition, the spiritual dimension of transcendence is often strengthened through community participation. Research shows that older adults involved in community activities report higher levels of spiritual well-being,

which is closely related to happiness and life satisfaction (Khodarahimi et al., 2021). This relationship is particularly relevant in the context of age-friendly communities, which are designed to encourage active aging and social participation among older adults (Dehkordi et al., 2021). These communities provide infrastructure and support systems that enable older individuals to engage meaningfully with others, thereby increasing their sense of purpose and fulfillment (Javadi et al., 2025). Moreover, the interaction between community engagement and personal experiences of loss or adversity can further catalyze transcendence. Negative life events, although challenging, can lead to a deeper understanding of life and a greater appreciation of social relationships, thus promoting gerotranscendence (Sibel & Yasemin, 2025). This suggests that challenges faced in later life can be transformed into opportunities for growth and community ties, thus reinforcing the idea that aging can be a time of significant personal and communal development. In other words, meaningful social engagement accelerates and deepens the process of transcendence, refuting Tornstam's view of withdrawal as the only path to transcendence.

With these findings, gerotranscendence theory requires expansion to accommodate the role of community in the spiritual journey of older adults. In collective cultures, social interaction is a crucial aspect that supports spiritual reflection and enriches the experience of transcendence. Therefore, the concept of collective transcendence becomes a more relevant and contextual approach in understanding the aging process in societies that emphasize social relationship and togetherness.

Collective Transcendence as a New Perspective in Aging Studies

Based on the findings of this study, the concept of collective transcendence is introduced as an alternative to Gerotranscendence theory which emphasizes the individual aspect. Collective transcendence is a process where older adults experience a shift in spiritual awareness, life reflection, and self-acceptance through engagement in a supportive

community.

This concept emphasizes that social interaction can be a catalyst in the elderly's journey of transcendence, especially in the context of religious communities such as majelis taklim. The elderly not only experience transcendence through individual reflection, but also through social support, spiritual discussions, and sharing experiences with fellow community members.

In this study, majelis taklim acts as a space that facilitates collective transcendence, where the elderly experience changes in three main aspects. The first is the emergence of a deeper spiritual awareness. Majelis taklim helps older people expand their understanding of life and death through recitations and religious discussions. The second is the emergence of community-supported self-reflection. In majelis taklim, older adults not only reflect on their own lives, but also share spiritual experiences with other members, thus accelerating the process of self-acceptance and life wisdom. The third is social connections that reinforce transcendence. Older people who are active in religious communities not only gain spiritual benefits, but also feel more valued, more respected, and have a more meaningful role in society.

This finding reinforces Jadidi et al.'s (2022) research which found that in societies with collective cultures, social interactions play an important role in supporting elderly transcendence. Elders in Indonesia are more likely to seek spiritual support within their communities rather than undergoing transcendence in isolation, as assumed by the gerotranscendence theory.

Cross-cultural studies in gerontology also show that the experience of aging is not always individualistic. In Eastern cultural contexts such as Taiwan and China, communal values and collective spirituality are important factors in the transcendence process of older adults (Cheng et al., 2025; Lekhak et al., 2020; Xu, 2025). This reinforces the findings in this study that transcendence can be facilitated by community engagement and collective spiritual practices, not just through personal reflection as assumed in Western approaches.

By discussing the findings of this study with gerotranscendence theory and current research, this study has theoretical and practical implications. As for the theoretical implications, the findings suggest the development of gerotranscendence theory. The concept of collective transcendence introduced in this study extends gerotranscendence theory in several ways. First, it adds a social dimension to the transcendence process. While gerotranscendence theory emphasizes individual reflection as the main driver of transcendence, the concept of collective transcendence asserts that social support and community interaction also play an important role in the spiritual journey of older adults. The second is to accommodate collective culture in aging studies. Gerotranscendence theory was developed in the context of Western societies that tend to be individualistic. The concept of collective transcendence is more relevant in community-based societies, such as Indonesia, where spirituality is often developed through social and collective interactions. Third, it shifts the understanding of social engagement in aging. If gerotranscendence theory assumes that withdrawal from social life is a sign of transcendence, then the concept of collective transcendence suggests that social engagement can be a more effective means of transcendence, especially in religious communities.

Meanwhile, the practical implications of this study concern the idea of the need for majelis taklim as a model of transcendence space. Practically, this study shows that majelis taklim can be used as a model in designing community-based elderly welfare programs. Some recommendations that can be implemented include expanding the majelis taklim program. In addition to religious studies, majelis taklim can develop a more in-depth spiritual reflection program to help the elderly in the transcendence process. The second is to strengthen the role of the elderly in the community. Among the things that can be done is to give the elderly the role of mentor or guide for the younger generation, so that they feel more valued and have a clear purpose in their lives. In addition, another practical thing that

can be done is to making religious communities a part of elderly welfare policies. Governments and social organizations can support faith community-based programs to help older people achieve psychosocial well-being through meaningful social interactions.

Conclusion

This study successfully addresses the objective of questioning the individualistic assumptions in Lars Tornstam's Gerotranscendence theory. This study revealed that participation in religious communities like majelis taklim can help older people transcend their social lives, in addition to promoting introspection and social disengagement. Three primary aspects of transcendence are experienced by aging people who participate in majelis taklim: increased spiritual awareness, introspection and life lessons, and deeper social connections. These results gave rise to the idea of "collective transcendence", which holds that social support, group reflection, and active participation in spiritual communities can all help older adults on their path to transcendence.

Based on the results of this study, it is suggested that Gerotranscendence theory be expanded to accommodate the collective cultural context, where social interactions play an important role in the elderly's transcendence process. The practical implications of this study also highlight the importance of majelis taklim as a space that supports the psychosocial well-being of the elderly, not only as a place for religious learning but also as a platform for spiritual reflection and social support. Policy makers and social organizations are therefore advised to strengthen religious community-based programs to support older people's transcendence and spiritual well-being. Further studies are also needed to examine collective transcendence in other religious communities and explore the role of digital technology in supporting the spiritual journey of older adults who cannot be physically present in the community.

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