



How cultural and spiritual entities leverage the achievement of global health agendas: learned from pandemic control in Indonesia

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Background

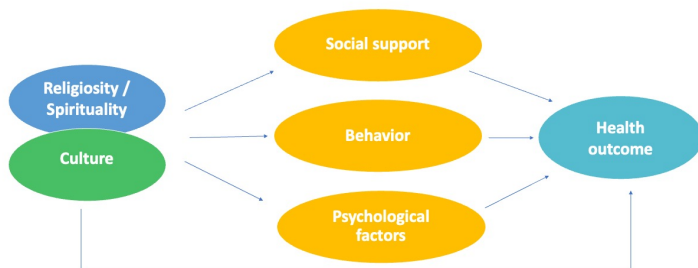
Globalization has opened up the boundaries between countries. The COVID-19 pandemic highlights how globalization drives the vast transmission of pathogens, followed by the rapid spread of information. Particularly in Indonesia and Asian Region, cultural and spiritual subjects were among the most influencing information hampering the control efforts of the pandemic and other global health agendas. On the other side, cultural and spiritual factors are entities to which the people still adhere and influence the social construct in daily lives.

Objective

The study aimed to elaborate on how cultural and spiritual components can be utilized to accelerate the achievement of the global health agenda in Indonesia.

Methodology

This qualitative research was a literature study, reviewing existed literatures within the context of religion and COVID-19. A systematic search of electronic literature databases was carried out by using *religion, religious, COVID-19, pandemic, vaccination* with Boolean operators of AND and OR. The following framework was used in exploring how cultural and spiritual components can be utilized in tackling the pandemic, adapted from Masters (2008) with addition of culture variable.



Source: Masters, K. S. (2008). Mechanisms in the relation between religion and health with emphasis on cardiovascular reactivity to stress. *Research in the Social Scientific Study of Religion*, 19, 91-115.

Results

Studies found that religiosity positively correlates with people's compliance, lowered distress, and social support, which is essential in developing people's healthier behavior. However, in Indonesia, some cultural and spiritual issues regarding non-halal vaccines, people's perception of commercial motives of the vaccines, the violation of the restriction of cultural and religious events, and the community framing regarding the COVID-19 pandemic created hesitancy and rejection toward control measures. Several crucial ways through which the religious and cultural leaders can impact the health of the community:

- Effectively communicate the religious message in disease prevention as stated in the scripture to establish public trust, including to counter misinformation shared among the community.
- Empower and lead the mobilization of people-centered action in pandemic control to support testing, tracing, vaccination, and community-based isolation.
- Enhance the sense of togetherness in the community to address stigma and discrimination toward patients and their family.

Conclusion

Community with tight culture and religion will follow their leaders. In some communities in Indonesia, these important figures could encourage the acceleration of vaccination coverage, compliance with health protocols in public areas, and countering the negative information spread through social media.

Policy Recommendation

The study suggested that it is crucial for the government to invest more to increase literacy and the capacity of the leaders and involve them more in program implementation as trusted messengers in the community by delivering health information more respectfully to the target community.

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