

TRADITIONAL MEDICINE: JAVA COMMUNITY WAYS DEALING WITH COVID-19

Helmy Bastian¹, Susi Darihastining², Astrid Wangsagirindra Pudjastawa³

^{1,2}STKIP PGRI Jombang, Jl. Patimura III/20 Jombang

³SMKN 3 Malang, Jl. Surabaya No,1, Klojen, Malang

¹helmybastian1@gmail.com

Abstract

Traditional medicine is often stigmatized negatively, even though people still practice it. This study tries to identify efforts to maintain the health of the Javanese people during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study uses an ethnographic approach with observations and interviews conducted with 48 informants and six key informants of the Javanese ethnic community in Mojokerto Regency from 2020-2021. A phenomenological approach was used during data collection and analysis. The results showed that traditional medicine was applied for easy, cheap, and effective and by their frame of mind related to balance. The principle of treatment, according to them, is like a binary opposition: hot x cold; lose x tight; wind in x wind out; light x weight and achieving balance is the rational basis of traditional medicine. Based on the study results, it can be recommended that traditional medicine be equated with modern medicine so that negative views disappear and the rationality of this treatment can be recognized by all parties.

Keyword: *traditional, cheap, Javanese people*

Abstrak

Pengobatan tradisional sering mendapat stigma negatif, meski masyarakat tetap mempraktikkannya. Penelitian ini mencoba mengidentifikasi upaya menjaga kesehatan masyarakat Jawa di masa Pandemi COVID-19. Studi ini menggunakan pendekatan etnografi dengan observasi dan wawancara dilakukan terhadap 48 informan dan 6 informan kunci masyarakat suku Jawa di Kabupaten Mojokerto, selama tahun 2020-2021. Pendekatan fenomenologi digunakan saat pengumpulan data maupun analisisnya. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pengobatan tradisional diterapkan karena alasan mudah, murah dan manjur serta sesuai dengan kerangka berpikir mereka terkait dengan konsep keseimbangan. Prinsip pengobatan menurut mereka seperti oposisibiner: panas x dingin; longgar x kencang; angin masuk x angin keluar; ringan x berat serta tercapainya keseimbangan merupakan dasar rasional pengobatan tradisional. Berdasarkan hasil penelitian dapat direkomendasikan bahwa pengobatan tradisional dapat disejajarkan dengan medis modern sehingga pandangan negatif hilang dan rasionalitas pengobatan ini dapat diakui semua pihak.

Kata kunci: *tradisional, murah, masyarakat Jawa*

INTRODUCTION

Ethnic and cultural diversity has consequences for the diversity of medical systems (traditional and modern) in society. The medical system is a universal element of a culture so that the medical system is an integral part of the culture (Edy Susanto, 2019). Therefore, each medical system has a different concept of health and illness and different treatment efforts. There is a classification of the causes of disease that are considered to come from naturalistic systems (natural forces, individual self-balance, not regarding certain people) and personalistic (interventions from agents, both supernatural and human) (Janes & Corbett, 2009). In addition, health anthropologists divide the disease model into three health belief models, namely the magical-religious model, the biomedical model, and the holistic model (Galanti, 2014). In rural communities such as Java, where there is a robust system of traditional medicine, all diseases are explained in a holistic model. This model emphasizes the aspects of harmony or balance in the body regarding the environment, socio-cultural, and behavior.

Healing is intended to restore balance (Galanti, 2014). In Indonesia, especially in Java, medical pluralism is a recognized condition. All medical systems can be accepted by society and coexist, intending to complement each other. Unfortunately, although medical pluralism is widely known, the marginalization of traditional medicine in marginalized systems is still found. The negative stigma that treatment. Traditional is the ancient way; even though massage or scrapings cause swelling and skin tissue damage, blood vessels are still found (Hidayana, 2014); (Sudayasa et al., 2018). Traditional medicine is often regarded as irrational, immeasurable, and full of superstitions (Janes & Corbett, 2009).

On the other hand, traditional medicine has received official recognition from the government and its position in China and India. similar to modern medicine (Rastogi et al., 2020). Village communities in Java, impoverished groups such as farmers, fishermen in their daily lives still practice traditional medicine in overcoming diseases. That is because modern medicine is considered expensive. Farmers' health needs to be managed by considering the quality of farmers related to education and health aspects. In the Human Development Index, the health of farmers must be seen from two aspects, namely health as working capital and aspects of diseases related to work, especially risk factors due to the use of technology and agrochemicals (Achmadi, 2009). In maintaining their health, poor people in the village tend to use traditional medicine because it is considered traditional, easy, cheap, and effective (Tamtomo, 2008). Traditional medicine is generally used as first aid when experiencing pain, including colds. Amid globalization and the opening of access to health for the poor through the Jamkesmas/Askeskin program, will traditional medicines still exist in the community? This paper wants to reveal how the knowledge or concepts of rural communities in Java are related to the diseases they often suffer from and their economic ability to take treatment measures.

METHOD

Research using qualitative methods through ethnographic studies was carried out on the Daily Worker Community in Mojokerto Regency, which consisted of Pungging District, Mojosari District, and Ngoro District. Ethnographic studies were chosen because human activities require an empirical approach; openness is needed for elements that cannot be identified. Recorded at the time of data collection, considering the background phenomena observed in the field (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). While the consideration of choosing this community is based on the assumption that they belong to the poor group, work using muscle power, so they get tired quickly, work in the open, and do not have access to modern medicines.

The research was conducted during 2020-2021 by making friends and having a free dialogue with informants during the data collection process. Informants are adults with various daily jobs consisting of farmers, traders, motorcycle taxi drivers, and construction workers: have experience of illness and are willing to provide data related to the research topic. There are 48 informants, plus six key informants.

Observations were made by observing physical conditions, work environment, events in the social environment, behavior, and the actions and words of the informants (Sugiyono, 2017). Interviews were conducted to understand other people's experiences and the meaning of their experiences (Moleong, 2017). The interview process is carried out repeatedly to get the depth of the data so that the validity of the data can be maintained. The information saturation point is an important consideration, meaning that if the interview and observation data do not find additional new information regarding aspects of culture, subculture, and the factors that influence the incident, then the data is considered sufficient. In this way, redundancy is avoided (Schensul & LeCompte, 2013).

The collected data was transcribed and categorized according to the theme to facilitate the analysis process. Data analysis was carried out simultaneously at the time of collection so that the analysis was continuous. The phenomenological approach that emphasizes actors' experiences and their interpretations, experiences, and interpretations are legitimized (accepted) in the context, although they still need help in understanding them (Van Manen, 2017) applied both at the time of data collection and analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Villagers most often experience health problems such as colds. Cold is the term they use to describe bodily discomfort (unwell feeling in the body) with symptoms: headache, bloating, heat, cold, muscle aches and pains, nausea, diarrhea, vomiting, no appetite, and weakness/lethargy. A cold does not include symptoms such as cough or runny nose. The Javanese call it a series of diseases for someone who has a cold with a cough and runny nose. Usually, a cold is followed by a cold cough, but coughs and colds are not part of the symptoms of a cold. The common cold is considered a mild disease and is easily curable. The leading causes are fatigue, rain, overheating, staying up late (lack of sleep),

sleeping on the floor. Cold, sleeping outdoors, barefoot on the cold floor, eating late, or being exposed to the night breeze.

According to the Javanese, several informants made an analogy for COVID-19 as a disease similar to angina, closely related to the concept of health and illness; according to the Javanese, namely, the imbalance will cause disease and balance (harmony) is healthy. This imbalance concerns not only the macrocosm (nature) but also the microcosm (humans).

Restoring balance is returning the body to a state of balance, meaning that all conditions must be in harmony. According to most informants, Covid-19 treatment can be done by scraping, massage, drinking ginger, Javanese herbal medicine, and eating spicy food; this is intended to restore balance quickly. The reason for choosing traditional medicine is because it is cheap, easy, and effective. That is why daily workers do not always have money for treatment, so cheap treatment methods are their primary choice.

Covid-19 as a disease is analogous to the Javanese community in terms of work patterns and changes in the weather in the environment where they live. Their pattern of work is to work hard in order to earn money to support their family quickly. They generally choose to finish work first and then take a break. As a result, they often neglect to rest, eat and drink. The condition of an empty stomach, even though the body is used continuously to work complex, causes the body to no longer supply energy. When the body needs a supply of food and drink but cannot meet it, the room will be filled with viruses. Viruses are believed to interfere with the body's metabolic system. As a result, the body feels disturbed, especially in the respiratory area. Therefore, the Javanese consider COVID-19 a respiratory disorder, and the shaft in the body is blocked.

Fatigue conditions, either due to work, lack of sleep, or being exposed to the wind, continuously cause the body's defenses to decrease, resulting in weak. Plus, when tired, a person's appetite usually goes down, so the body does not have energy. However, at the same time, the body is still forced to work due to severe COVID-19. For them, COVID-19 can arise when a person has much work; the mind is too heavy, it is difficult to sleep, so physical exhaustion is accompanied by mental at the same time. Traditional massage treatment is carried out as the first stage; if it does not bring healing, it is combined with over-the-counter drugs (free medicine, at the cost of Rp. 1.000,00 for two pills or one pill). herbal sachets) Alternatively, herbal powder drinks for Rp. 5,000.00 mixed with honey, wine, and eggs. Double treatment is done with the intention that the patient recovers quickly.

In Javanese cosmology, humans have the dimensions of body, soul, and soul, so that balance does involve these three dimensions and God, spirit, or supernatural elements (Yunarti et al., 2016). Healing of disease must include all human elements, both physical/external and supernatural/inner. The healing of Javanese disease conditions is based on binary opposition (Forth, 2010), where one thing must contradict another. Even the principles of traditional medicine must meet criteria such as entry x exit; lose x tight; cold x hot; weight x light, and then reach a level of balance. These principles are embodied in traditional massage treatments; massage is intended so that blockages that enter the body can

be removed through the nose, a heavy nose becomes light after a massage, and finally, balance will be achieved if the elements in the body are in harmony.

The holistic model is quite firmly adhered to by the Javanese community regarding the concept of health, where in this model, all diseases are considered a result of an imbalance of elements in the body and the environment, socio-culture, and behavior (Galanti, 2014). The holistic model implies that between the body, mind, soul (body, mind, soul) is a unity that influences each other (Goertzen & Hatfield, 2009). So healing has to heal all three things together. The current modern medical trend is an integrative approach applied because the mind is the power in healing (Goertzen & Hatfield, 2009).

Massage can be modern medicine because no poisons are put into the body; naturally, apart from scrapings, restore the balance of body elements and improve social relations with the environment. Advice about rest, eating, drinking, and daily behavior often comes from masseurs to sufferers. Two-way communication between the masseuse and the patient motivates the patient to recover quickly and return to work immediately. Motivation and suggestions become medicine for the soul to get back excited in living life. The pleasure of massage is beneficial for healing and has solid suggestive power in the treatment process. Feelings of pleasure that arise will cause joy so that passion and enthusiasm for life reappear. The soul also seems to rise and unite with natural processes (Andira & Pudjibudojo, 2020). The masseur's words to patients, such as: "Get well soon, continue to eat and sleep so that tomorrow can work again," are often heard at the end of a massage session. The statement is intended so that patients can immediately return to their activities after some time their daily activities have been stopped due to illness. The advice contains the hope that the patient will recover soon after the scrapings so that the invitation to eat is intended to generate new energy. During the COVID-19 disease, sufferers are generally lazy to eat and drink because the mouth feels bitter to swallow food. Lack of sleep (sleeping up) both before and during illness is expected to be replaced after a massage. The patient's experience after the massage feels beneficial because sleep will feel good and restful. Sufficient rest is believed to be able to restore a weak body.

For daily workers who do not earn money every day, illness is a threat. Sickness will cause them to be unable to work, so they often have no money. For daily workers, not working is like not eating because they rarely have food supplies, let alone savings. This condition forced them to get sick and try not to spend money. Given that COVID-19 is considered an easily curable disease, they will only seek the most accessible treatment. Massage is an easy way of healing. Anyone can do scrapings by massaging their own body (certain body parts that hands can reach) or asking for help from family members, relatives, neighbors, friends. Easy equipment, namely oil/balm, as a lubricant so that the skin does not hurt. The experience of post-massage sufferers is the body becomes light (light), sweating and a feeling of splendor (fresh) appears. That is a sign of healing, followed by *mbeler* (blowing of mucus from the nose). As disclosed informant S (38 years).

“Massage is accessible and healing. Before COVID-19, if I had a cold or cough and then massaged, I would be cured. The body is light, sweating, sleeping soundly, then the next day, able to work again.”

For the lower class people, traditional medicine is very beneficial because it does not need to spend money, although fixed costs are still within their reach. One of the considerations in choosing a source of treatment is that the cost is relatively cheap (Szawarska, 2017). In addition, traditional medicine can be done anytime; there is no need to leave the house so that there are no transportation costs to be borne. Traditional medicine, in the eyes of its users, can reduce costs. Health, because it is cheap (Tamtomo, 2008). Treatment can be done at any time without waiting a specific time, as long as there is free time. They can do it themselves or ask for help from others. Traditional medicine should not be dispensed with or banned but as an alternative. Complementary and alternative therapies (Chauhan & Agarwal, 2015). Another reason is that traditional medicine has long roots in the community, so conservation needs to continue.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Since medicine is related to health and illness, it is not wise to force everyone to seek treatment from modern medicine. For daily workers who still have a solid holistic concept and Javanese cosmology related to disease, COVID-19 is considered suitable to be overcome with traditional medicine. Traditional medicine is considered cheap, easy, and practical to reduce the cost of health services for the community. Traditional medicine serves to create a balance both physically and mentally. There are no side effects from this form of treatment.

For Indonesian people who have various cultures and socio-economic levels and knowledge of traditional medicine, it is deemed necessary so that traditional medicine needs to be recognized by the government and its position is equal to modern medicine. Traditional medicine is also rational, so it is necessary to promote in-depth cultural research so that marginalization and stigma do not appear again. Supervision and development of traditional medicine need to be done as long as it is profitable for them.

REFERENCES

- [1] Achmadi, U. F. (2009). Manajemen Penyakit Berbasis Wilayah. *Kesmas: National Public Health Journal*, 3(4). <https://doi.org/10.21109/kesmas.v3i4.217>
- [2] Andira, D. A., & Pudjibudojo, J. K. (2020). Pengobatan Alternatif Sebagai Upaya Penyembuhan Penyakit. *Insight : Jurnal Pemikiran Dan Penelitian Psikologi*, 16(2). <https://doi.org/10.32528/ins.v16i2.2053>
- [3] Chauhan, S., & Agarwal, V. (2015). Looking in the past for the future: Traditional vs modern medicine: Traditional vs modern medicine. In *Rheumatology (United Kingdom)* (Vol. 54, Issue 2). <https://doi.org/10.1093/rheumatology/keu036>
- [4] Edy Susanto, M. (2019). Antropologi Kesehatan. In *Journal of Chemical Information and Modeling* (Vol. 53, Issue 9).
- [5] Forth, G. (2010). Symbolic classification: retrospective remarks on an

- unrecognized invention. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 16(4). <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9655.2010.01649.x>
- [6] Galanti, G. A. (2014). Caring for patients from different cultures. In *Caring for Patients from Different Cultures*. <https://doi.org/10.1097/00001416-200601000-00013>
- [7] Goertzen, C., & Hatfield, G. (2009). Encyclopedia of Folk Medicine: Old World and New World Traditions. *Journal of American Folklore*, 122(483). <https://doi.org/10.2307/20487662>
- [8] Hidayana, I. (2014). Menuju Kesehatan Madani. *Antropologi Indonesia*, 0(59). <https://doi.org/10.7454/ai.v0i59.3370>
- [9] Hsieh, H. F., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 15(9). <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732305276687>
- [10] Janes, C. R., & Corbett, K. K. (2009). Anthropology and global health. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 38. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-anthro-091908-164314>
- [11] Moleong, L. J. (2017). Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif (Edisi Revisi). In *PT. Remaja Rosda Karya*.
- [12] Rastogi, S., Pandey, D. N., & Singh, R. H. (2020). COVID-19 pandemic: A pragmatic plan for ayurveda intervention. *Journal of Ayurveda and Integrative Medicine*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaim.2020.04.002>
- [13] Schensul, J., & LeCompte, M. (2013). Essential Ethnographic Methods: a mixed methods approach. In *Ethnographer's Toolkit*.
- [14] Sudayasa, I. P., Kusumawati, P. A., Paddo, J., Bittikaka, Y., Salam, N. M., & Sahidin, I. (2018). Identifikasi kajian filosofis penyehat tradisional pijat patah tulang. *Teknologi Terapan Berbasis Kearifan Lokal (SNT2BKL)*, 1(1).
- [15] Sugiyono. (2017). *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif Kualitatif dan R&D*. Alfabeta.
- [16] Szawarska, D. (2017). Curing and healing: Two goals of medicine. In *Handbook of the Philosophy of Medicine*. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-8688-1_59
- [17] Tamtomo, D. G. (2008). Gambaran Histopatologi Kulit pada Pengobatan Tradisional Kerokan. *Buletin UNS*, 35.
- [18] Van Manen, M. (2017). Phenomenology in Its Original Sense. *Qualitative Health Research*, 27(6). <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732317699381>
- [19] Yunarti, Y., Nurainas, N., Yulkardi, Y., & Ramona, F. (2016). Rasionalisasi Sakit dan Penyakit dalam Konstelasi Budaya Minangkabau (Kajian Etnomedisin di Agam dan Tanah Datar). *Antropologi Indonesia*, 35(1). <https://doi.org/10.7454/ai.v35i1.4719>