

Culture and social: herbal medicine as health communication to build urban community empowerment

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Abstract This article discusses culture and social issues in the community related to herbal medicine used for health communication and community empowerment in Bandar Lampung. Additionally, herbal medicine plays a significant role in empowering families from the dependence of conventional medicine and developing traditional medicine. A good health level of community is an asset of Indonesia's human development that is independent, healthy, and strong. Using the qualitative research approach, the data source consisted of interviews, deep observations, and documentation. The results are herbal medicine 1) empowers the community for better family finance, 2) empowers people to get a job, 3) creates a new paradigm, making herbal medicine the first treatment choice when one is sick, instead of conventional medicine (medics). This study's findings describe the culture of the Indonesian people who are accustomed to drinking herbal medicine. Therefore, traditional herbal medicine needs to be empowered as a unique Indonesian culture, as it is possible to combine herbal and conventional medicines. This research contributes to policymakers to make herbal treatment models holistically, to support *Program Indonesia Sehat* (Indonesian General Health Program).

Keywords: Culture, health communication, community empowerment

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INTRODUCTION

Health is very significant in human life. The Indonesia government considers the health of its people as a noteworthy point. Indonesian Law Number (No). 36 of 2009 on health, states that health is a well-being condition both physically, spiritually and socially that enables people to be productive socially and economically (Undang-Undang No 36 tentang Kesehatan Republik Indonesia, 2009). The Minister of Health of the Republic of Indonesia has established regulations on traditional medicine. Traditional medicine is an effort to treat and or other treatment methods outside medical science, which are widely used by the community in overcoming health problems. Moreover, through the Ministry of Health, the Indonesia government issued the Ministerial Regulation No. 6 of 2016 on the original Indonesian herbal medicines' formulary. It shows the Indonesian government's seriousness to make its people healthy physically, mentally, and spiritually. Indonesians have a habit of consuming various rhizome, such as turmeric (*Curcuma longa*), galangal (*Alpinia galangal*), ginger (*Zingiber officinale*), kencur or aromatic ginger (*kaempferia galanga L*), temulawak (*Curcuma xanthorrhiza*), lemongrass (*Cymbopogon*), etc., which are formulated into a health drink, known as *jamu*. Many studies about *jamu* include *jamu* for people suffering from obesity (Ardiyanto, D., 2018).

Some countries have their own governance to manage their community's health, like India's case (Dasgupta, S. 2019). Good communication will influence subsequent health care provision (Gehlert, S. et al., 2019). The effectiveness of health communication will facilitate all perspective differences. Subtle boundaries must be created; therefore, health communication is needed (Hastall, MR 2019). Several studies reveal this in Saudi Arabia (Mheidly, N., & Fares, J. 2020). Mheidly explained in other research, the health communication analysis model to increase income in low-income countries (Mheidly, N., & Fares, J. 2020). The study of health communication has become a global humanist issue (Werder, O. 2019). What needs to be considered are what factors need to be implemented in the health sector (Carrapato, P. et al., 2019) and public participation in health planning and management. (Silva, B. T. D., & Lima, I. M. S. O., 2019). Indonesia has its management, including governance and traditional treatment methods through formularies of original Indonesian herbal medicines. In Indonesia, traditional medicines are overseen by a government agency for food and drugs known as BPOM (*Badan Pengawas Obat dan Makanan*). The legal basis for BPOM is Presidential Regulation No. 80 of 2017 on BPOM. However, a lot of Indonesian people make herbal medicines themselves, known as *jamu*. The habit of drinking *jamu* has long been a national culture that has positive values. It encourages public awareness to continue to preserve it—awareness to promote herbal medicine spread to others easily, supported by local

social culture. Cultural facilitation includes the habit of drinking *jamu*, and many *jamu* peddlers in the villages (by carrying bag, by bicycles, by motorcycles, or selling in shops). Moreover, the noteworthy points are ease of getting information, especially getting online health information. This is what is meant by the concept of literacy in social culture in the concept of medicine. (Krisnadi, I. G, 2017).

This research is a concept of awareness of conveying information that is motivated by socio-cultural and connected with empowering urban communities to achieve financial independence, especially for Bandar Lampung people. From the description above, it appears that family health is a top priority. Not only healthy, but family is also expected to be able to handle their health independently. A good family can recognise, describe, and maintain family member health, so it does not merely depend on health services. High awareness in maintaining the health of oneself, family members and their environment, in accordance with the healthy paradigm, can be done through promotional and preventive efforts which are the main focus of the health paradigm. The healthy paradigm is more focused on preventing than treating disease. Sickness causes suffering, not only physical suffering but also causes mental suffering. A long sickness will burden individuals and families because it can disrupt family activities, become a financial burden due to high medical costs, and cause the family to be less productive. It should be considered, so everyone is aware of overcoming their health problems and reducing dependence on access to conventional health services. Naturally, it requires adequate health literacy. Health literacy is an understanding of how patients obey health instructions. It determines health understanding with aspects of daily treatment adherence. (Mayo-Gamble, T. L., & Mouton, C, 2018).

There are many things about the concept of health literacy, among others: understanding of healthy and sick, understanding of the using of drugs, both traditional and conventional, and understanding how the behaviour in the treatment (adherence to health instructions). For example, herbal medicine includes patients with polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) and irregular menstruation sufferers. Experiments prove that increasing the effectiveness and comfort for lifestyle interventions using herbal medicines in women with PCOS (Arentz, S. et al., 2017)

This research's novelty concept is a unique Indonesian tradition; a culture passed down to the next generation. Therefore, traditional herbal medicine sellers need to be empowered by understanding herbal medicine, then marketed directly in shops or online shops. Knowledge about herbal medicine through the relationship between herbal business, herbal healers, and herbal users communicates health to empower the community. Discussions in this article were 1) the concept of culture, social and cultural literacy in health communication, 2) Empowering the community of Bandar Lampung City through

traditional medicine. The focus of this research was the Indonesian people' social culture in consuming herbal medicine and maintaining it in their daily life

METHODOLOGY

This study explains facts based on the results of observations, interviews, and literature studies. Data collection techniques are carried out through interviews, field observations, and documentation. Interviews were conducted with selected informants according to certain criteria. The method of selecting informants was carried out using purposive sampling. Observations are made by looking at conditions in the field directly related to the study's objectives and interests. Documentation is carried out by tracing the data, photos, and literature needed and related to the research objectives and interests. Furthermore, documentation and observation are carried out in accordance with the characteristics of the informants of this study, namely herbal medicine entrepreneurs, herbal medicine makers, and herbal consumers. This study has ten informants consisting of three entrepreneurs, three herbal medicine makers, and four herbal consumers. The data analysis technique was carried out in three steps, including data reduction and distribution, and conclusion. The informants in this research are herbal medicine entrepreneurs, herbal medicine makers, and herbal medicine users in Bandar Lampung City.

This study aims to determine the achievements of using herbal medicine, the various obstacles faced, and how to overcome these obstacles. Researchers asked herbalist businessmen, herbalist practitioners, and people who treat sick people using herbal medicine, and herbal consumers. The question for herbal medicine entrepreneurs is how the herbal medicine business trade process is? What media are used for promotion and communication? Who are the consumers of herbal medicine? What kinds of herbal medicine do doctors, nurses and midwives buy? What are the advantages of herbal products? How do doctors or midwives find out information on herbal medicines? Should the pharmacy be filled with herbal medicine? Generally, what herbs are most sought after? What is the average sales turnover of herbal medicine a day? Are there other businesses being developed besides herbal medicine? How many employees do you have? Are consumers usually sick or healthy people?

Meanwhile, questions for herbalists include how to get to know herbal medicine for the first time? How is the customer's condition, sick or healthy? How to treat a sick person with herbal medicine? Give examples of diseases that can be cured with herbal therapy? The question for consumers of herbal medicine is the duration of consuming herbal medicine? Are herbs taken to cure disease? What types of herbs are regularly consumed? What are the benefits of herbal medicine?

However, this research's main question is how to communicate between herbal medicine entrepreneurs, herbal medicine makers, and herbal health consumers to empower the community?

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Social and Cultural literacy

Many herbalists use various media for business communication, such as WhatsApp. It greatly facilitated an informant, Mr Fir (initial) in Bandar Lampung who was interviewed in July 2019. Mr Fir is a wholesale herbal shop owner. When asked about herbal medicines' consumers, Mr Fir explained that "We got many orders via mobile phone, by WhatsApp. Sometimes we send through a courier based on customer orders. It is usually sent to Terbanggi Besar, Liwa, Krui, Unit dua, Bukit Kemuning, Bandar Jaya, and Pringsewu. The customer must pay first, and then the goods will be sent" (Mr Fir, Personal Interview, July 2019). There are not only customers who buy directly, but many also order herbal medicines through various media. They transfer some money, and then herbal medicines are sent.

We interviewed with another informant in July 2019, Ms Ne (initial name), a herbalist. We talked about the promotion media used, and she explained: "We use many media, such as WA, FB, IG, and Radio. We often educate the public. We hope to have an impact on medical education training and the need to maintain health. Education also promotes our products for various purposes. Some of the materials given include the importance of maintaining health and maintaining immunity with herbal medicines." (Ms Ne, Personal Interview, July 2019)

Nowadays, consumers are smart enough. They access the media provided by the informants and can quickly get whatever information they want. Therefore, media literacy in the digital era is essential, and all elements of society need to understand the importance of digital media literacy. For example, research on housewives in Sleman Regency, Yogyakarta Province shows that after being given training, socialization, and focus group discussions on digital media literacy, housewives have become aware of the importance of digital media literacy (Novianti, D., & Fatonah, S. 2019).

The next research is about the elaboration of the concept of health literacy. A study discusses how this has proven useful for elaborating a consistent health literacy concept (Frisch, A. L., et al., 2012). The internet is also used as a source of information about patient beliefs and treatment adherence behaviours. Patient behaviour in searching for information online at the treatment stage is very relevant in influencing patient trust and treatment adherence (Linn, A.J et al., 2019).

Furthermore, making literacy models as part of cultural preservation finds that cultural literacy can build public awareness in preserving Sundanese culture (Saepudin, E. et al., 2020). Proper

health information needs attention so that messages can be received easily. From these studies, it was found that herbal medicine requires good management. Proper health information is produced from a health management information system to build a healthy and results-oriented nation, where the government must guarantee the standardization and financing of health data infrastructure (Adebayo, T. T., & Omole, M. S. 2019).

Cultural literacy studies can also influence people's behaviour. In this article, cultural literacy is conceptualized as a fundamental dialogue. Cultural literacy strengthens intercultural dialogue, opening up space for dialogue with inherent democratic potential (Maine, F. *et al.*, 2019). An example of cultural literacy is a literacy development program based on regional oral stories with the title "Sekolah Budaya Lisan" (SBL) (Rokhmawan, T., & Firmansyah, M. B. 2017).

There are several examples of herbal medicines that are consumed by the public. There are still many examples of herbal medicines that Indonesians often consume. Honey contains a combination of fructose and glucose and functions to regulate blood sugar. Madu Sehat Products contain honey and other types of herbal plants. It has a sweet taste that many people like, including children, adolescents, and the elderly. Meanwhile, Innolife Assaudah is a capsule containing natural vitamin oil. This capsule is useful for treating several diseases, including stabilizing cholesterol, high blood pressure, and anaemia. Information on capsule usage is printed on the Innolife Assaudah packaging. The two products can be seen in Figures 1 and 2.

Figure 1. Innolife Assaudah



Source: Author Documentation (2020)

Figure 2. Madu Sehat



Source: Author Documentation (2020)

Urban Community Empowerment

The concept of community empowerment is oriented to provide community independence. The local government supports community empowerment programs in community assistance to have a better life financially. Herbal medicine entrepreneurs in Bandar Lampung have accommodated this concept. In addition, the government provides business licensing facilities. It directs the community to create new institutions that encourage the social learning process to move forward together (group movements resulting from social learning) and produce sustainable independence in the community. A reorientation of society arises, from being just an object of government to meeting the needs or increasing the community's welfare. Herbal medicine entrepreneurs not only empower themselves but also empower others, such as their employees.

In the interview, informant Mr Fir explained, "My team consists of 6 people, I divide the work and work time for each." (Mr Fir, Personal Interview, July 2019) Then, Mr Fir continued talking about his employees' salary, "I adjusted [the salary] to the Lampung Province minimum wages. In addition, it also depends on the length of service and duties of each. Generally, we adjust it to the minimum wages for Lampung Province, which is around USD 143." (Mr Fir, Personal Interview, July 2019). Another informant, Mr Faj mentioned their turnover, "This [turnover] fluctuates, usually ranges from USD 357-571 per day. On certain days, it can reach USD 786-1425 per day." (Mr Faj, Personal Interview, July 2019). The direct benefit of the herbal medicine business for community empowerment is the salary received. Employees who work for herbal medicine entrepreneurs receive salaries adjusted to the minimum wages in Lampung Province, which is around USD 143. This certainly helps many people to get money. For

herbal medicine entrepreneurs, their turnover ranges from USD 357-786 per day and on certain days it can reach USD 1500-2143 per day. That is a sizeable number, which requires them to find workers. Employers need workers to serve consumers directly and serve orders outside the city. In addition, the selection, packaging and delivery of goods certainly require several workers to do so. In herbal medicine shops around the city of Bandar Lampung, there are several workers on average.

Consumers also appreciate the benefits of the herbal medicine industry by reducing dependence on doctors and hospitals. Consumers feel healthy and fit when consuming herbal medicines. Understanding herbal medicine's function and the increasing availability of herbal medicine make it easy for consumers to buy the herbs they need. People are also increasingly aware that prevention is better than cure. Herbal medicine is more widely used to maintain health so that it is not susceptible to disease. One of the herbal medicines used is for the treatment and therapy of cancer.

Some empowerment concepts are empowering community gardens to create useful spaces. Knowledge and innovation community gardens offer nature education and natural gardening methods for children and bring urban communities to create user-centred spaces, (Zou, H., & Yu, H. 2018). The concept of empowering community gardens can be emulated in creating community herbal gardens that empower the community for control functions (Forenza, B. *et al.*, 2019).

Health communication

Health communication is the study of communication whose content is health (Dutta, M. J. 2018). The theory and concept of health communication will continue to develop in people's lives (Schiavo, R. 2013) and the role of health communication is very supportive of the quality of human life (Sembiring, N.B. *et al.*, 2019). Furthermore, health communication also helps accelerate the patient's healing process (Xue, Y. 2020). Solving problems regarding young women's reproductive process, the socio-cultural context greatly influences this research (Zakaria, M. *et al.*, 2019). Generally, this is very important for humans (Frederick, N. N., *et al.*, 2019). The process of communication between patients and doctors about sexual health communication is often a topic of conversation between doctors and patients (Reese, J.B *et al.*, 2019). Discussion about adolescent reproductive health does require mental readiness because it relates to the next steps to become an adult—adolescents who have not yet grown up but are no longer as children are in a transitional phase. One example of a case is at MA Annajah Pondok Pesantren AL-Halimy Sesela, West Lombok, which helps young women to prepare themselves to become quality human beings in the future. (Maliki, M., & Ismiani, B.L.2020).

Health communication is needed in several other scientific concepts, for example, in education. Health communication-based learning models are also being developed (Noorbaya, S. et al., 2019). Health communication studies are currently developing quite well. This can be seen from how the packaging of health messages affects public health. The state needs health studies to ensure the physical and mental health of the people. However, packaging health messages, managing health messages, and analyzing health messages must be considered by all social elements. Some analysis of health communication on Facebook is related to diabetes. The appearance of messages on Facebook presents positive branding, undermines, and reverses several message features (Rus, H. M., & Cameron, L. D. 2016).

The process of conveying the habit of using herbal medicine uses various electronic and non-electronic media. Social media such as Instagram, Whatsapp, Facebook, Twitter, and WeChat are the most popular media today because they are relatively easy and cheap. Given many WhatsApp users in Indonesia, this application is the most reliable medium in conveying messages to the public. WeChat is also a medium with great potential to help improve health. Users not only search and exchange health information on WeChat but also fulfil their health needs. This study's findings contribute to a psychological understanding of social media use aimed at health relationships and subsequent active behavioural responses (Zhang, L., & Jung, E. H.2019). The health message design incorporates selected visual and textual components thought to produce the desired message effect. Most research suggests that when recipients see relevant health messages, they may happily agree with them (Yzer, M. et al., 2018). Health communication contributes more cost-effective and efficient, creating priority scale and sustainability (Macnamara, J., & Camit, M. 2017). Health messages can link narratives with health measurement processes that predict behavioural intentions (Gebbers, T. et al., 2017). Subsequent research is how government policies influence people's social behaviour towards healthy living (Atarodi Beimorghy, A. et al., 2017).

Health Communication Message

It is important to reveal how health communication messages are packaged. Messages will be easily received well if they are easy to understand. Message packaging can be through media and non-media, mass media or non-mass media, or other social media. Many studies have done this (Ran, H. et al., 2018). There is much research on social networks on the internet regarding health communication. (Shi, J. et al., 2018). The development of traditional media into a very accurate network has increased interest in health communication studies (Wright, K.B.2020). Discussions about healthy living habits discussed on social media have a significant influence on human life quality.

(Maulida, H., & Nugraheni, M.C.2020). Early 2020 to October 2020, the corona/covid-19 virus has spread to almost all every country. This creates new challenges for media observers to create more varied media channels to convey messages. One of the most effective ways to convey messages is using a visual-digital model (Liu, Q. et al., 2020). Furthermore, the development of Covid-19 continues to be widespread and frightening. Many people want fast and accurate information. Such information is also required for the public interest (Chen, C. M. 2020). This message packaging is also studied for coding in health campaigns. One example is supporting cancer patients in several countries in America and Africa (Mitchell, J. et al., 2020). In Indonesia, another case in the spotlight during the Covid-19 pandemic was that people did not want to be honest when they were sick, especially when they first came to the hospital to explain the disease symptoms (such as symptoms of COVID-19). This is detrimental to medical personnel so that they are infected from dishonest patients who have symptoms of COVID-19. This phenomenon is included in the socio-culture that considers COVID-19 as a cursed disease and others. The traditional approach adopted by medical personnel in Makassar is an example of interpersonal communication to overcome this problem. Doctors wear ordinary clothes, different from the doctor's clothes when they work (wearing a typical white doctor coat) and use local languages to greet patients and use polite speech. This process is carried out so that patients are more open about their disease (Al Husain, A. H. 2020).

Herbal medicine

Herbal remedies can be combined with spiritual healing. In fact, in Solomon's research, for people addicted to drugs, one alternative is physical, mental, spiritual health, and herbal medicine. Drug addiction is a form of sin that harms oneself, others, society and even the nation. Drugs damage physically, mentally, spiritually (religion), socially, economically and culturally. Rehabilitation, both medically, non-medically, and psychologically can be done through herbal treatment (Sulaiman, A. I.2016). Herbal medicine benefits are not only felt by buyers, but also for herbal medicine business actors who also consume herbal medicine. An informant, Mr Fa, is a herbal medicine entrepreneur. He also took herbal medicines. Mr Fa explained that he was taking herbal medicine to maintain stamina, immunity and a supply of multivitamins. Another consumer of herbal medicine, namely Mr Ni, who works as a police officer, explained that his family consumed herbal medicine to maintain health. Mr Sh, in the July 2019 interview, explained that "herbal medicine does not have much risk, we will be healthy and fit. Antibiotics (chemical drugs) are at high risk. The effect can lower immunity.

On the other hand, herbal remedies increase immunity and endurance. Health care is cheaper with herbal medicines than medical treatment by visiting a doctor. " In this study, several paramedics and

doctors were also consumers of herbal medicine. Mr Fir said, "Some medical officers and doctors often buy *gamat*, honey, and black seed. They are the best seller products." *Gamat* is a herbal product made from sea cucumber (*Holothuroidea Habbatus*). Meanwhile, *Habatussaudah* is made from black seeds (*Nigella sativa*). In the next interview in July 2019, Mr Fa explained that usually doctors buy G Gold, a herbal medicine made from sea cucumber which is useful for postoperative patients and postpartum recovery periods. In addition, there is some honey for stamina maintenance and recovery phases. Several studies have been done on the use of herbal medicines including thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*), chamomile (*Matricaria chamomilla*), borage (*Borago officinalis*), lavender (*Lavandula*), ginger (*Zingiber officinale*), and cinnamon (*Cinnamomum Verum*) (Muizzulatif, M. et al., 2019). There is also a study of bilimbi (*Averrhoa Bilimbiis*), which can treat diabetes, where the prevalence rate of diabetics in Indonesia continues to increase every year (Kurniawaty, E., & Lestari, EE, 2016).

The culture of the people accustomed to drinking herbal products either manually or through the factory becomes the social foundation for community empowerment. The people's habit of drinking herbal medicine is learned from health communication because it makes traditional medicine an alternative medicine. Community empowerment is done in Bandar Lampung City by optimising herbal medicine sellers using various sales methods. Another empowerment is optimising traditional healers (people who are considered capable of treating illnesses using traditional ingredients). Sales optimise online media and health message packaging.

CONCLUSION

The concept of health in Indonesian society needs to be supported by several elements, including the Indonesian people's support for government policies in regulating the concept of health and the habits of Indonesian people to consume herbal medicine. Spices can be processed as spices in cooking and drinks. The Indonesian agency that regulates food and medicine is the BPOM (Food and Drug Supervisory Agency). The Indonesian people who consume herbal medicine are increasing rapidly, and this is evidenced by the development of herbal medicine shops in the city of Bandar Lampung and the number of consumers spread across almost all of Lampung Province. The development of herbal medicine shops is an indicator of community empowerment by employing people to earn money and empowering people to think and behave positively. The results showed that there was interest in the people of Lampung Province in choosing herbal medicine over conventional medicine. Herbal medicine is also widely used by paramedics (doctors). The development of herbal medicine is inseparable from social media's current development because social media supports the ease with which people can get

information about herbal medicines. An understanding of the benefits of herbal medicine can also reduce dependence on chemical drugs. This study uses a qualitative paradigm, meaning that the results cannot be concluded in general. So, researchers suggest conducting further research with different methods, places, and treatments.

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