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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Tuberculosis Treatment Using a Religious Approach

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Abstract

In 2020, Bandung city ranked second in West Java for tuberculosis (TB) cases. The city government and stakeholders have taken health education, early detection, free treatment, and surveillance measures to address TB. Yet, a comprehensive approach is still needed. Despite previous studies exploring TB management, the role of religious approaches still needs to be explored. Employing a qualitative approach through a case study method, this research involves data collection through observation, in-depth interviews, and literature reviews. Participants are TB healthcare workers and religious speakers in Universitas 'Aisyiyah Bandung city. In 2020, Bandung reported 8,504 TB cases with increased detection success. 'Aisyiyah TB Care uses a religious approach to offer emotional and spiritual support to patients facing physical challenges, emotional burdens, and stigma. Religious perspectives introduce spiritual support via Islamic teachings emphasizing hygiene and self-care. Interviews reveal changed patient perceptions due to the religious approach. 'Aisyiyah addresses TB complexity and stigma, conducting educational efforts to reshape perceptions. The religious approach assists TB sufferers, aiming for positive influence, improved relationships, and fostering hope, gratitude, and trust in God. Collaborative efforts among health, religious, and government organizations are essential for effective TB management. The research highlights the positive impact of 'Aisyiyah TB Care's religious approach on management, addressing stigma, and enhancing well-being. Improved information dissemination and support are vital, particularly in areas with high TB burdens.

Keywords: Religious approach, stigma, tuberculosis (TB)

Introduction

Tuberculosis (TB) is an infectious disease caused by *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* (MTB), primarily affecting the respiratory system.¹ In 2020, Bandung city was the region with the highest number of TB cases in West Java province, with 8,504 cases reported.² To address this high number of cases, the Bandung City Government and various institutions have implemented multiple approaches for TB management in the city.³ These approaches include health education, early detection, free treatment, and establishing a surveillance network. However, more significant and integrated efforts from all parties are still required to reduce the TB case count in Bandung city and Indonesia.⁴

Previous research on the same topic has been conducted by earlier researchers, such as a study titled "Cultural and Religious Belief Approaches of a Tuberculosis Program for Hard-to-Reach

Populations in Mentawai and Solok, West Sumatra, Indonesia." The research findings show that cultural and religious belief approaches play a significant role in the Tuberculosis Program for hard-to-reach populations.⁵ Next is a study on "Infectious Diseases, Religion, and Spirituality," its research findings reveal the critical role of religion and belief in tackling infectious disease outbreaks.⁶

Although both of these studies discuss approaches in TB management, their research focuses are distinct from those of this current study. The first previous study focuses on the role of religion and culture in TB management. Meanwhile, the second study addresses the role of religion and belief in managing infectious diseases. In contrast, this study focuses on the Islamic religious approach.

Drawing from the background and previous research, the researcher will take a different approach from previous studies. This study

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analyzes how Islamic values are adopted in TB management as a health communication strategy. This research explores how 'Aisiyah TB Care incorporates religious values as a strategy in TB management in Bandung city. This research employs a qualitative approach through a case study method. Data collection techniques involve observation, in-depth interviews, and literature reviews. Research informants include TB health workers serving as religious speakers within Universitas 'Aisiyah Bandung city.

Methods

This research employs a qualitative approach with research subjects, including Aisiyah TB Care volunteers and several TB patients in Bandung. The research design used is a field study involving data collection techniques such as in-depth interviews, field observations, and literature reviews. The applied method of analysis is content analysis.

The research subjects consist of Aisiyah TB Care volunteers with direct experience addressing TB-related issues in Bandung. Additionally, several TB patients were interviewed to gain insights into their perspectives on TB treatment with a religious approach.

The research design involves conducting field observations in various locations relevant to TB activities and symptoms in Bandung. These observations were conducted to gain a deep understanding of the on-ground conditions.

Data collection includes in-depth interviews with three informants from Aisiyah TB Care volunteers and four TB patients undergoing treatment at the Tuberculosis Technical Implementation Units (UPT TB) Garuda and UPT TB Sukahaji, Bandung city. These interviews aim to obtain more detailed information about their experiences and views regarding TB treatment with a religious approach. In addition to interviews, a literature review was conducted to understand the theoretical framework and

broader research context, helping to connect field findings with relevant theories.

The research was conducted from October to December 2022. The method of analysis applied is content analysis. Data collected from interviews, field observations, and literature reviews are extensively analyzed to identify patterns, themes, and relationships within the obtained information. This study investigates the religious approach to TB treatment using data obtained from diverse and relevant informants.

Results

The total number of tuberculosis cases in 2021 was 8,191, comprising 6,281 cases within Bandung city and 2,638 cases outside Bandung city. The total number of tuberculosis cases in 2021 increased compared to the previous year, which was 8,504, with 5,908 originating from Bandung city. With the total number of tuberculosis cases in 2021, a case notification rate (CNR) of 346 per 100,000 population was obtained.⁷

The CNR in 2021 was higher than the previous year's, 339 per 100,000 population. It implies that ongoing healthcare services can more effectively identify TB patients in the community. Table 1 compares CNR indicators in Bandung city from 2015 to 2021.

Based on the interview results with Aisiyah TB Care volunteers, who are also *ustadzah* (Islamic scholars), it is evident that the Aisiyah institution emphasizes the importance of a religious approach in tuberculosis (TB) treatment. This view aligns with several studies that state that religiosity must be applied in various aspects of life.⁸⁻⁹ According to her perspective, TB patients not only face physical challenges due to the disease but also experience emotional burdens arising from the lengthy and exhausting treatment process, as well as the negative stigma surrounding TB. Ironically, this stigma doesn't only originate from external sources but can also emerge from the patients themselves.

Table 1 Tuberculosis Cases in Bandung City for the Years 2020 and 2021

Year	Total Cases	Within Bandung City	Outside Bandung City	CNR (per 100,000 Population)
2020	8,504	5,908	N/A	339
2021	8,191	6,281	2,638	346

Note: Source: Dinas Kesehatan Kota Bandung⁷

In this context, introducing a religious perspective is considered an effort to provide spiritual support to the patients. Explaining that their journey with TB is a test and lesson from God is expected to offer them tranquility and hope. This analysis illustrates that the spiritual dimension can play a role in helping TB patients confront the treatment journey with a more meaningful and optimistic outlook. "Patients should be reminded that in Islam, it is stated that for every disease, there is a cure except death. *Alhamdulillah* (praise be to God), some of the patients we have accompanied have realized this, and it has positively impacted the improvement of their treatment process," stated the Aisiyah volunteer in the October 2022 interview.

Aisiyah TB Care volunteers receive training that encompasses medical understanding and religious comprehension to ensure optimal handling of TB cases. TB issues are acknowledged to be not solely medical concerns; they are closely related to societal behaviors that often neglect hygienic lifestyles. According to the volunteer, it is essential to grasp that religious teachings emphasize maintaining a clean and healthy way of life.

From the patient's perspective, an interview was conducted with a TB patient at UPT Garuda. The findings revealed that the patient's perception of the illness transformed. Initially, the patient felt overwhelmed by the prolonged treatment process. However, upon gaining a new perspective, the patient began to view the illness as a test of faith. The patient acknowledged that the introduction of the religious dimension had altered the way they perceived their illness—from something negative to a meaningful spiritual trial. This viewpoint granted the TB patient a sense of tranquility and resilience in facing treatment challenges. "I fulfill my duties by undergoing treatment and praying. The rest I leave to God. I entrust myself to His will," expressed the TB patient in the December 2023 interview at UPT Garuda.

Additionally, the interview outcomes revealed another viewpoint regarding the causes of TB. Some patients believed that TB could be attributed to a lifestyle that deviated from the teachings of religion, which emphasizes healthy living habits. This analysis illustrates how religious beliefs can shape illness perceptions, even extending to its root causes. It is recognized that religion plays a role in instilling healthy living values, and

this perspective motivates behavioral changes to achieve improved physical and spiritual well-being.

Discussion

The complexity of TB and the associated stigma are prominent issues discussed by Aisiyah. The organization highlights the intricate nature of TB as a health concern. However, a significant challenge lies in the social stigma surrounding TB patients in the community. This stigma leads to the isolation of individuals diagnosed with TB due to a lack of awareness regarding the disease and its transmission. Aisiyah takes on the role of public education to dispel such stigma related to TB. Despite ongoing efforts, the process of eliminating this stigma remains ongoing. The interviewee points out the persistence of certain misconceptions, one of which is the misguided belief that TB is a hereditary disease.

The informant's statements underscore the negative impact of this stigma on TB sufferers. The stigma and discrimination faced by these patients pose obstacles to their treatment process. The situation becomes more complex when this stigma is combined with a religious approach. Consequently, TB patients undergo emotional distress and bear derogatory labels, ranging from being labeled sick to being unfairly associated with curses. These labels inflict an additional psychological burden on patients who did not willingly choose to be afflicted with TB.

The strategy and approach employed by Aisiyah TB Care cadres to address this stigma are discussed in the interview. Despite some progress in dispelling misconceptions in Bandung, some individuals still cling to such misconceptions due to embarrassment and fear of social exclusion. The cadres assume an educational role in addressing this issue, regularly conducting sermons and discussions. The objective of this approach is to reshape the perceptions of TB sufferers gradually. The cadres remind them that all events, including TB infection, are subject to the will of Allah SWT. They encourage patients to seek divine assistance and healing, fostering a more positive outlook.

Health communication is a technique for conveying messages and information that influences and motivates individuals, institutions, and the public regarding the importance of health issues. Improve their health.

In this study, the focus of the research is on

Table 2 Health Communication and Religious Approach

1	Help sufferers develop and improve their relationship with Allah SWT.
2	Influence the minds of sufferers by giving suggestions and words of encouragement with positive messages based on the teachings and values of the Islamic religion
3	Growing forgiveness, hope, gratitude, and generosity through religious practices based on Islamic values and teachings
4	Improving the relationship of TB sufferers with humans and the universe

how cadres from Aisiyah TB Care carry out the religious approach and communication strategy to treat TB in Bandung. Other research that supports this research is research on religious concepts in counseling services. This study found that various religious activities carried out the spiritual approach in the counseling process, such as self-reflection, the gratitude approach, the al-Quran recitation approach, and the remembrance approach to repentance.¹⁰

This research shows that the religious approach and communication strategy adopted by Aisyah's cadres can slowly make TB sufferers change their views and behaviors towards the TB infection they are suffering from.

Stigma and discrimination can cause mental health problems for people with TB. Mental health is operationalized as a measure of distress and dichotomism, life satisfaction, well-being, and quality of life. The link between health communication and a religious approach includes participation in public and private religious activities and support from assembly members or recitation.¹¹

The results of the analysis show that there is a link between the religious approach taken by Aisyah cadres and changes in the views and behavior of the TB sufferers they assist. In the

results of an interview with Mrs. Nikmah, one of the cadres from Aisiyah TB Care said that their usual approach is to visit TB sufferers, hold recitations, and pray together where the recitation activities are usually filled with lectures or studies to approach religion based on the values and teachings of Islam.

Based on the results of research and interviews, it can also be seen that the inhibiting factors in the treatment process and this religious approach are due to the stigma and discrimination that TB sufferers have received beforehand. Because it makes TB sufferers feel inferior, blame themselves, and isolate themselves because they feel ashamed of their infection.

In fact, in several cases, it was found that stigma and discrimination did not only come from the community where they lived but even from their families and themselves. It is feared that this will make TB patients reluctant to carry out the treatment process. The solution offered by Aisiyah TB Care cadres in efforts to treat TB is to take a religious approach. The aim of a religious approach based on the values and teachings of Islam is to assist every individual with TB in returning to physical and spiritual health, or what we usually know as spiritual and moral health.

Adz-Dzaky¹² states that a religious approach to disease management has the following functions: understanding, control, forecasting, development, education, prevention, healing and care, and purification (Figure).

He also said that a religious approach based on Islamic values and teachings could be one of the key strategies for helping TB sufferers during the treatment process.¹² Fear and anxiety caused by TB infection, as well as hopelessness and sadness due to illness, are spiritual reactions that require treatment with a religious approach based on Islamic teachings and values.^{13,14}

Quoting the statements of Walker and Avant, to predispose the conversion of emotions

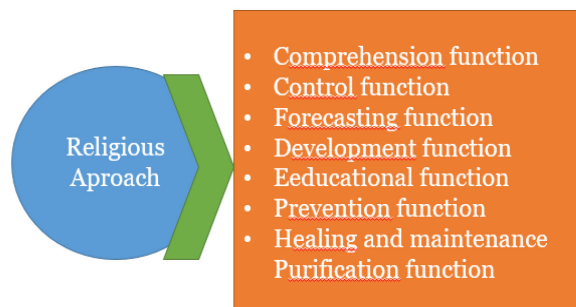


Figure The Function of the Religious Approach in Disease Management

originating from fear and sadness into emotions full of confidence and security, as well as behavioral adaptation to illness. For problem-focused and emotion-focused adaptation, the disease must be introduced as a challenge through enhancing the patient's relationship with God and by developing courage and optimism.^{15,16}

In this study, the researchers observed that the cadres of Aisyiyah TB Care had a practical approach to religion and health communication. Furthermore, the communication process and approach taken can be explained in Table 2.

(1) Help sufferers develop and improve their relationship with Allah SWT. Thinking positively about life's provisions can make TB sufferers hope they will be healthy again. (2) Influence the minds of sufferers by giving suggestions and words of encouragement with positive messages based on the teachings and values of the Islamic religion. For example, the TB infection that is currently being suffered is a form of trial as well as a form of compassion to see and know the extent of the sufferer's faith to continue to try and pray so that they can get through and recover from this TB infection. (3) Growing forgiveness, hope, gratitude, and generosity through religious practices based on Islamic values and teachings. (4) Improving the relationship of TB sufferers with humans and the universe based on the teachings of the Qur'an, maintaining friendship is a form of belief in goodness and the promises mentioned in the Qur'an that can prolong life (Table 2).

It is in line with the advice of Rasulullah SAW to avoid actions that damage faith and how to deal with this disease with a mindset of steadfastness, sincerity, trust, and surrender without blaming Allah SWT. Islamic teachings encourage people to immediately seek treatment when they are sick as a proactive action that must be taken with the belief that Allah SWT will provide healing. Islamic teachings encourage people to immediately go to the doctor when they are sick as a proactive step that must be taken with the belief that Allah SWT will provide healing.¹⁷

The Qur'an also encourages people to be positive towards Allah's provisions.¹⁸ This has been implemented in the religious approach process carried out by the cadres, namely by always giving encouragement and positive words to TB sufferers. An influential religious approach will present a belief in positive religious values and teachings, where people who believe in them

will feel that God will not leave them alone in a painful situation; God will always be with them.¹⁹

Religion and spirituality are often associated with one another. Religion is service to or worship of God or the supernatural. Faith is often associated with religion and Spirituality. Faith is more personal, subjective, and more profound. While Spirituality is in the form of a relationship with God, nature, other people, and the surrounding environment, Spirituality is associated with quality and meaning in life.²⁰

In contrast, the religious approach in this study is a communication activity by carrying out an approach whose other purpose is to introduce the values and teachings of a religion, which in this study are the values and teachings of the Islamic faith that cadres from Aisyiyah TB Care have implemented.

Other research also shows an influence between the religious approach and recovery from TB infection. Mohammed is one of the many survivors who managed to recover. One of the factors in his recovery was the religious approach taken by the nurses at the hospital where he was undergoing treatment. The words of one ward nurse stuck with him: "Whatever you do, don't leave until you have finished treatment; even if you have a stable family at home, you must be mentally and physically fit."²¹

Researchers also hope there will be continuous collaboration between health, religious, and government organizations to treat TB. Suppose religious leaders or cadres already know and strongly believe in the TB handling process through a spiritual approach based on Islamic religious values and teachings. In that case, they can use information dissemination media to disseminate information more broadly.²²

This is based on an interview with respondents who said the media still lacks reporting on TB infections. The more information that is spread, the more people will know and care about the symptoms of TB or the people around them who are infected with TB instead of giving the sufferers stigma and discrimination. What they want is support and prayer.

In addition, it is also said that countries with a high TB burden, such as Indonesia, will need help to routinely implement these new guidelines for HR-TB because easy access to INH resistance testing is a challenge. Although there are WHO-supported technologies (such as line-probe tests and liquid cultures) that can detect INH, these

tools are limited to centralized or reference laboratories.²²

Conclusions

The conclusion from the results of this study is the discovery of changes in TB sufferers after going through a religious approach and assistance process. They become more optimistic and enthusiastic and always try to pray so they can recover from this TB infection. In addition, it is also known that there are positive effects of a religious approach for TB sufferers.

Conflict of Interest

None declared.

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