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# Exploration study of the interest of public health center visitors in utilizing traditional health services in Denpasar

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## ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** Traditional health services (THS) are organized by the Public Health Center (PHC) as an alternative to disease prevention and treatment for the community. Since its launch, the number of visits to the THS has not reached its target. The purpose of this study was to explore the interest of PHC visitors in utilizing THS.

**Methods:** This research was qualitative research with an exploratory approach. The research was conducted at South Denpasar. Samples were selected using a purposive sampling technique. The research informants consisted of seven main informants who used THS at the PHC and private medical practices and two supporting informants, namely health workers at the PHC and traditional healers at the medical practice. Data collection used in-depth interviews and observation methods, which were then analyzed using thematic methods.

**Results:** The community's interest in utilizing traditional medicine consisted of 4 themes, namely, aspects of benefits, factors of trust, factors of habits, and aspects of making traditional medicine a companion or even a substitute for medical treatment methods.

**Conclusion:** The community's interest in traditional medicine is quite high. Public opinion regarding the use of traditional medicine consists of several aspects, namely aspects of benefits, beliefs, habits, and aspects of companion or substitute for medical treatment. Therefore, it is suggested that THS providers always provide good and correct information about traditional medicine.

**Keywords:** exploratory study, interest, public health center, utilization, traditional health services.

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## INTRODUCTION

Traditional health services (THS) are methods or treatment systems carried out based on traditional methods and medicines. Over time, traditional medicine began to be applied in healthcare facilities. In 2013, the World Health Organization (WHO) published the Traditional Medicine Strategy 2014-2024 to support member countries in utilizing traditional and complementary medicine to improve individual health status.<sup>1</sup>

Basic Health Research data for 2018 shows Indonesians have used THS about 31.4%.<sup>2</sup> With regulations that oblige health service providers to provide THS, every health facility in Indonesia has THS in their respective areas. According to data from the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia for 2020, it was found that the number of Public Health Centers (PHC) using THS in Indonesia

was 130 (74%) of the target of 175 health centers. In 2021, the target achievement of PHC, which already has THS, was above the target, namely 262 (104.80%). Community Health Centers from the target of 250.<sup>3</sup>

THS has been carried out by 91 health centers from 120 health centers in Bali Province. THS in Bali are quite attractive to the public; since 2016, the number of visits to complementary THS in Bali has been 1,301 visits. This number increased in 2017 to 1,966 visits; in 2018, it also increased to 2,825 visits.<sup>4</sup>

PHC IV at South Denpasar has been carrying out THS since 2016. The THS carried out are in the form of acupressure massage and herbs. Based on preliminary study data at the PHC, in 2016, the number of visits to THS at PHC IV South Denpasar was 309 visitors for acupressure services. In 2017, there were 75 visits by THS, then in 2018, there were 66 visits,

and in 2019 there were 40 visits. Data from the Denpasar City Health Office in 2020 recorded the number of visits to the THS Health Center IV South Denpasar as many as 25 visits for acupressure services and 2021 noted that in August 2021, as many as 34 people visited THS in the form of acupressure services.<sup>4</sup>

The use of THS by the community showed behavior in seeking treatment; several factors were why people chose to visit THS. Research in 2013 conducted on patients who went to traditional herbal medicine in Denpasar City stated that the factors associated with the find for herbal medicine were knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and information media, where trust is the most influential.<sup>5</sup>

Based on the socio-ecological theory, several factors impact a person's behavior to prevent the occurrence of a disease, namely individual, relationship, community, and societal.<sup>6</sup> McLeroy

(1988) suggested that there are five levels that are likely to influence individuals in preventing the occurrence of a disease so they decide to seek treatment services. The first is the individual's biological factors and personal history that increase the likelihood of having an impact on behavior. Interpersonal factors, namely those that come from relationships with people around, such as friends and family. Then, from an institutional perspective, it is influenced by an organization in the surrounding environment. From the community factor, namely community groups that are likely to influence behavior. Finally, public policy is the existence of policies that regulate society to achieve a planned goal. The purpose of this research was to explore deeper regarding the use of THS in the South Denpasar PHC IV working area, which was reviewed based on socio-ecological theory.

## METHODS

This research was qualitative research using an exploratory approach. The population in this study was all people who used THS at the PHC IV South Denpasar. Informants in the study were the community and service providers involved in THS. The informants in the study consisted of seven people who used THS at the PHC, one traditional healer, and one holder of a THS program, who were selected using a purposive sampling technique. The research method used in-depth interviews. The instrument in this study was an in-depth interview guide. The data analysis method in this study used a thematic analysis method, in which thematic analysis was carried out by analyzing the data collected to identify themes from the data that has been collected.

## RESULTS

### Characteristics of informants

Table 1 illustrates that the minimum-maximum age of informants is 26-58 years, the education level is from high school to bachelor's degree, and only 2 informants work as housewives.

**Table 1. Characteristics of main and supporting informants**

Informant Code	Sex	Age	Education	Job
I- 01	F	50	Senior High School	Public Employee
I- 02	F	52	Junior High School	Housewife
I- 03	M	66	Bachelor	Civil Employee
I- 04	F	26	Bachelor	Businesswoman
I- 05	F	58	Senior High School	Housewife
I- 06	M	37	Senior High School	Public Employee
I- 07	F	31	Bachelor	Public Employee
IK- 01	F	36	Bachelor	PHC Staff
PT- 01	M	44	Senior High School	Therapist

### Benefits aspects of traditional medicine

People used traditional medicine because there were benefits felt when undergoing treatment, as in the following statement.

"Because I feel that the effect is immediately felt like that in the body like that when it's been treated like that, so that's why I keep the term for traditional medicine" (I-02)

"..so yeah, I feel the benefits, I think... it's amazing, and it continues until now, I'm thankful it doesn't recur" (I-01)

### Belief aspects in traditional medicine

People have faith in the efficacy of traditional medicine, so they do not hesitate to take advantage of it if they are sick, as in the following statement.

"I Believe... but it depends on the person, sometimes there are those that don't work on the body, some are suitable, so far I have been fine" (I-03)

"I just believe in it because I also felt before that it had an effect until now" (I-04)

### Habit factor

As stated below, the community has made traditional medicine a habit in dealing with problems or complaints of minor ailments, such as complaints of fever, chills, and others.

"... sometimes if for example my body is not feeling well at that time, I get treatment like that" (I-02)

"Eee... because yes, from the past, if you have fever, fever, you usually get a massage if you speak my language like that, please hurry up" (I-06)

### Traditional medicine as a companion or substitute for medical treatment

The community stated utilizing traditional medicine as a companion drug to medical treatment. Some people even use traditional medicine as a substitute for medical treatment methods, such as the following statement.

"... eee I have high blood pressure because that's why if I feel dizzy right here like that (points to the back of the neck) I immediately take the *amphodipine*, but yeah I do that too so that the blood pressure doesn't get high I drink like cinnamon lollipops, roselle flower tea right, so that the blood pressure doesn't rise, in the end, I still use it until now" (I-03)

"Usually if the children are sick, they are given *beras kencur* like that, it's traditional" (I- 07)

"..I'm really trying to cut down on drugs. Well...so I think traditional medicine is the solution huh" (I-01)

"So now I'm saying I'm avoiding drugs, so now I don't want to take drugs anymore" (I- 01)

"..if I'm medical, sometimes I'm afraid of the drugs that enter my body, so I prefer to just try this traditional medicine" (I-02)

## DISCUSSION

The interest of the public/community in traditional medicine is relatively high based on benefits, beliefs, and habits. Even traditional medicine is used as a companion and a substitute for medical treatment. The selection of treatment services is an effort to overcome health

problems. Visitors of PHC have been using traditional healing methods for about two years, coming from various professions, ages, and religions. However, the place to get traditional medicine services is not only at the PHC but in other places, namely private traditional medicine services. This is related to THS availability in the form of acupressure and traditional massage, which are easier to obtain at clinics or private traditional medicine services.

Several studies have found that people's interest in traditional medicine varies, but it is a challenge to integrate it into the healthcare system. The level of public knowledge about traditional and complementary therapies was also reported to be different. Likewise, one type of therapy is more popular than other types of therapy.<sup>7</sup> Communities in Korea believed in the effectiveness of traditional medicines during the colonial period; people in Korea preferred traditional medicines over Western medicine; this was based on several considerations, such as beliefs, experience, economic status, and the nature of the disease.<sup>8</sup> Other studies have also found the effectiveness of traditional medicine in treating various medical conditions and are accessible and less expensive than Western medicine. However, the safety of its use is not in accordance with the standard.<sup>9</sup>

THS implementation at the PHC IV of South Denpasar has been running since 2016 in accordance with Law number 36 of 2009 concerning health, which explained that THS needs to be integrated with every health service facility. Integrating traditional medicine into public health care is necessary to increase access to health facilities. Integration of traditional medicine into medical care is also needed to evaluate and ensure the safety, efficacy, quality, and rational use of traditional medicine.<sup>10</sup>

Visitors' interest in the use of traditional medicine is based on visitors' perceptions of the benefits of traditional medicine. Based on the results of the interviews, it was found that they believed and felt positive effects while using traditional medicine or treatment. Based on the perceived benefits, the visitor decided to reuse the treatment. This statement was supported by a study that found that the belief factor is one of

the factors underlying the use of traditional medicine.<sup>11</sup> The benefits of traditional medicine can be felt if it is used properly by paying attention to several things such as the correctness of the ingredients used, the correctness of the dosage, the time of use, the correctness of how to use it, the accuracy of information, and the selection based on certain indications.<sup>12</sup>

Belief in traditional medicine increased the interest of visitors to take advantage of traditional medicine. Belief in medicine and traditional healers dispels visitors' doubts about utilizing traditional medicine. Traditional medicine has several advantages: faster treatment, cheaper, minimal side effects, and easy to do independently. This was supported by a study that found that the trust factor had a significant relationship with the number of traditional herbal healers visiting. Trust is the most dominant factor in determining people's actions in seeking traditional herbal medicine. Trust is associated with existing traditions in Indonesia.<sup>5</sup>

This study also found that habit factors influenced visitors' intentions to use traditional medicine. Based on the results of the study, it was found that traditional medicine has been used for a long time, so it has become a habit to visit medical services when experiencing health problems. This statement aligns with a study that found that habit factors influence the use of herbal medicines.<sup>13</sup> The dominant habit of using alternative medicine is related to economic factors where the costs incurred for alternative medicine tend to be cheaper than conventional/medical treatment costs.<sup>14</sup>

Conventional drugs are drugs prescribed by doctors/health workers. This study also found that visitors used traditional medicine to reduce their consumption of medical drugs, which were believed to have more side effects. Effect side due to chemical substances caused in medical treatment are also found using complementary medicine for cupping.<sup>15</sup> Complementary conventional medicine is expected to complement each other in handling health problems so that their use can be carried out side by side. This has been regulated in Minister of Health Regulation number 37 of 2017, which states that traditional and conventional

health services need to be integrated into health facilities. Traditional medicine is used as a complementary medicine and is expected to work together with conventional medicine and not harm each other to improve public health status.<sup>16</sup>

This research has limitations in the research area, which only used information from one health center in Denpasar City, so there may be variations in information that have not been explored. In addition, researchers as research instruments have little experience in exploring information, so the information obtained may be less in-depth.

## CONCLUSION

Community interest in using THS consists of 4 themes: aspects of benefits, trust factors, habit factors, and aspects of making traditional medicines a companion or even a substitute for medical treatment methods. So, it is suggested to increase socialization about using traditional medicine that is good and right for the community.

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## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

Komang Laksmi Widari played a role in writing the entire manuscript. Luh Seri Ani played a role in developing ideas and as an editor in writing the manuscript. Ida Bagus Gde Fajar Manuaba played a role in developing the manuscript's content.

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## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest in writing this manuscript.

## ETHICAL CLEARANCE

This research has received a permit from the Research Ethics Commission for

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