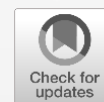


Editorial

Tradition meets controversy: Ida Dayak's phenomenon and its implications in healing practice and healthcare policy

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Editorial

Traditional healing practices have a long-standing history in Indonesia and have continually fascinated the public as an alternative to modern medical treatments (Pradipta et al., 2023). These practices have been deeply embedded in Indonesian culture and have various methods, such as traditional herbal medicine, spirituality-infused healing, and the use of tools that have been prevalent since the era of kingdoms and empires (Elfahmi et al., 2014). Moreover, throughout history, Muslim communities, known for their proficiency in traditional healing techniques, have integrated Islamic teachings from the Qur'an and Hadith into their healing practices (Sangaji, 2023). These conventional healing methods have evolved from extensive experimentation and experience. Successful treatments have been passed down through generations, leading to a wealth of testimonials that reinforce public trust in the effectiveness of traditional healing (Sangaji, 2023).

Lately, a traditional healer, Ida Dayak, has become an internet sensation, getting significant attention on social media platforms. Ida Dayak has caught public interest with her claims of possessing extraordinary abilities and the ability to cure a wide range of diseases. Her unique approach to healing has attracted a large number of people who seek her treatments. She has been named "Healer with Mystical Power" in Indonesia (Lotusbuddhas, 2023), contributing to the large crowds and long queues observed during her practice sessions. Thus,

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Article info

Received: 17 July 2023 | Revised: 9 September 2023 | Accepted: 22 October 2023

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this editorial aims to describe the phenomenon surrounding this famous traditional healer and offer recommendations for healthcare practitioners and the government to consider.

The Phenomenon

Ida Dayak, originally named Ida Andriani, was born in Lotik on July 3, 1972. Initially recognized as an orthopedist, she frequently provided healthcare assistance to people in the local market. Her name gained widespread popularity as she selflessly extended help and treated the sick without seeking any form of compensation ([Sangaji, 2023](#)). Ida Dayak is believed to heal broken bones, speech disorders, pinched nerves, and strokes. Numerous patients have reported significant improvements after undergoing alternative treatments with her. For example, a patient's bent hand for 20 years can be straightened. [Figure 1](#) is a screenshot taken and edited from a YouTube video of [MR Halal \(2023\)](#) with creative commons attribution (CC BY) license.

Ida Dayak's healing rituals are marked by their distinctive elements, such as utilizing her exclusive Star Oil (called "Minyak Bintang") and combining a captivating Dayak dance accompanied by traditional Dayak women's costumes. These practices provide a sense of entertainment and engagement for the patients but generate controversy.



[Figure 1](#) A screenshot taken and edited from a YouTube of [MR Halal \(2023\)](#) [CC BY license]

According to a researcher from the National Research and Innovation Agency, [Ghani \(2023\)](#), there are two original versions regarding the origin of star oil. The

first version is from various stories among the people of Kalimantan, who believe that star oil is derived from the carcass of a snake. The second version involves the use of coconut oil, “bujang” cotton, and “bubut” birds. In this version, “bujang” cotton refers to cotton that has just fruited and hasn’t fallen to the ground. On the other hand, “bubut” birds are birds that inhabit the depths of the forest. These “bubut” birds are intentionally broken alive until they perish and then boiled for an extended period until they undergo a transformation into oil. The process of producing star oil is not a random one, either. It can only be carried out by individuals with specific expertise. Furthermore, the oil must be made on Friday nights when the stars shine brightly in the sky (Ghani, 2023).

While seemingly miraculous, it is worth noting that Ida Dayak initiates her treatments by reciting the Islamic declaration of faith (Laa ilaaha illallaah) and the Basmalah (Bismillahirrahmanirrahim), revealing her adherence to the Islamic faith (Lotusbuddhas, 2023). The utterance of the declaration of faith by Ida Dayak holds great significance for Muslims, as it is one of the remembrances highly emphasized by Prophet Muhammad. The statement “La ilaha Illallah” asserts the belief in the existence of no god but Allah (God) and is believed to absolve sincere reciters of thousands of major sins.

While Ida Dayak claims the ability to heal broken bones and various bone anomalies, it is essential to acknowledge the lack of a robust scientific foundation for these treatments. Modern medical treatments must be duly considered and supported by scientific research and proven medical practices. It is crucial for the public to approach traditional healing, including that practiced by Ida Dayak, with discernment, taking into account various factors such as beliefs, testimonials, and the placebo effect.

Traditional healing offers a sense of relief to individuals, primarily due to the abundance of success stories and the inclusion of religious verses, particularly from Islam, which provide comfort. Additionally, humankind, particularly Muslims, has come to recognize that every disease has a remedy. Therefore, the pursuit of finding a cure for an illness holds equal importance regardless of the source of treatment. Islam includes a medical concept that emphasizes preserving human life and well-being, both in this worldly life and the hereafter, ensuring safety and happiness (Sangaji, 2023).

Besides, the people who seek treatment from Ida Dayak mostly believe that the intervention of an active agent primarily causes their illnesses. This agent can be perceived as a supernatural being, a non-human entity (ghost, evil spirit), or even a human possessing supernatural abilities (sorcerers). While not all patients believe that their illnesses originate from supernatural causes, they still believe

in the existence of a certain power beyond rationality that can accelerate the healing process (Ghani, 2023).

Psychological factors also play a significant role in traditional healing. The placebo effect, which psychologically induces a sense of well-being during the healing process, is commonly observed. While placebos may temporarily alleviate symptoms, they do not cure the underlying condition. This effect is particularly evident in pain management. In the context of traditional healing, healers like Ida Dayak assume psychological roles in their interactions with patients. By reciting sacred verses and assuring patients of their complete recovery, patients' brains automatically modulate pain and discomfort, leading to a perceived successful healing process.

Another contributing factor is the lack of familiarity with modern medical treatments among the general population. Many people fear chemical medications and invasive medical procedures such as surgeries. Additionally, modern medical treatments are often considered expensive and inaccessible to certain segments of society (Sangaji, 2023). In addition, people may believe that they have become "desperate" after waiting for years for a cure through regular medical treatment without any results (Ghani, 2023).

Recommendations

In light of the traditional healing phenomenon discussed, healthcare practitioners and the Government of Indonesia can undertake several measures and consider the following recommendations:

First, healthcare practitioners and the government should provide accurate education and information to the public regarding the advantages and disadvantages of traditional healing. This initiative aims to enhance public understanding of traditional healing, including its risks and benefits.

Second, the government should strengthen the supervision and regulation of traditional healing practices. This entails establishing qualifications and licensing requirements for traditional healers and monitoring the substances used in traditional healing. These measures ensure the safety and quality of treatments provided to the public.

Third, healthcare practitioners and the government should encourage scientific research on traditional healing, including investigations into the practices employed by healers such as Ida Dayak. Objective and scientifically validated research can yield a deeper understanding of the effectiveness, risks, and mechanisms of specific traditional healing modalities.

Fourth, healthcare practitioners and the government should continuously promote collaboration between traditional healing and modern medicine. Such

partnerships can integrate proven, effective conventional healing practices with modern medical treatments, providing comprehensive treatment options for the public.

Fifth, the government needs to enhance the accessibility and quality of modern healthcare services, particularly in remote areas with limited access. By improving access to and the quality of modern healthcare services, the public will have superior and trustworthy alternatives to meet their healthcare needs.

Sixth, healthcare practitioners and the government can leverage social media platforms to disseminate accurate information about traditional healing and modern medicine. Responsible social media usage can help counteract misinformation and educate the public about safe and effective treatment options.

Seventh, the government should bolster education and information regarding traditional healing within the healthcare education system. This includes incorporating traditional healing into healthcare curricula, providing educational resources, and raising awareness among the public regarding safe and effective traditional healing practices.

Last, the government should develop ethical guidelines for traditional healers. These guidelines should include principles governing the relationship between practitioners and patients and procedures for using materials and traditional healing techniques.

However, it is noted that these policy recommendations necessitate the involvement of relevant stakeholders, including traditional healthcare practitioners, medical professionals, academics, and the general public. The objective is to establish balanced regulations that address the public's needs and safety concerning quality traditional healing practices.

Conclusion

The phenomenon of traditional healing associated with Ida Dayak underlines the popularity and development of traditional healing practices in Indonesia. Despite lacking a robust scientific foundation, traditional healing remains an alternative to modern medical treatments. Factors such as beliefs, testimonials, psychological elements, lack of familiarity with modern medicine, fear of invasive medical procedures, and cost are significant determinants influencing the selection of traditional healing methods. Recommendations for healthcare practitioners and the government include accurate education, strict supervision and regulation, scientific research, collaboration between traditional healing and modern medicine, improved access and quality of healthcare services, responsible use of social media, robust education, and the development of ethical

guidelines for traditional healers. These recommendations are expected to promote better integrative healthcare between traditional and modern medicines.

Keywords

Traditional medicine practitioners; spirituality; Indonesia; complementary; integrative healthcare; healing practice

Declaration of Conflicting Interest

None.

Funding

None.

Acknowledgment

None.

Authors' Contributions

This editorial was solely written by JG.

Author's Biography

Joko Gunawan, S.Kep.Ners, PhD is Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Healthcare Administration.

Data Availability Statement

Not Applicable.

Ethical Consideration

Not Applicable.

Declaration of the Use of AI in Scientific Writing

None to declare.

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How to Cite This Article

Gunawan, J. (2023). Tradition meets controversy: Ida Dayak's phenomenon and its implications in healing practice and healthcare policy. *Journal of Healthcare Administration*, 2(2), 86-91. <https://doi.org/10.33546/joha.2821>