

Spiritual Coping "Tri Hita Karana" among Older Adults during Pandemic COVID-19: A Perspective of Balinese Culture

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Abstract People in their later years frequently struggle with mental health issues, particularly depression. This is especially common in people who have reached older ages. Having a spiritual coping mechanism is one of the factors that might prevent someone from developing depression. On the island of Bali, Tri Hita Karana's philosophy is put into practice in daily life. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the purpose of this study was to investigate older adults' cultural involvement in the spiritual coping strategies known as Tri Hita Karana. Methods of qualitative description were utilized to accomplish this study's objectives. Five of the older adults who took part in the research were asked detailed questions during in-depth interviews. The subject of the thematic analysis was chosen with inductive reasoning as the guiding principle. The investigation discovered that the primary concepts revolved around "a sense of hopelessness" and "enlightening our path". The categories "a sense of hopelessness" encompassed "Inguh/Sebet", "connection through the mind," "human social nature," and "nature surrounding us." The contribution to the enlightenment includes the "pathway to parahyangan", the "sharing live and life of pawongan", and the "calmness of palemahan". Tri Hita Karana is a method of spiritual coping that is practiced on a daily basis among older people in Bali. Tri Hita Karana, when practiced, transforms into a potent

spiritual coping enhancement that can assist in preventing depression. Support for the utilization of social capital in the management of stress is provided by the indigenous philosophy that is ingrained in day-to-day life.

Keywords Old, Spiritual Coping, Depression, Culture

1. Introduction

In recent years, one of the most pressing issues of global concern has been the graying of the population. As a direct consequence of this, the phenomenon is seen more frequently in nations with low and middle incomes than in nations with high per-capita incomes [1]. A report by the United Nations estimates that by the year 2050, one in every six people will be at least 65 years old. The proportion of people aged 60 and over in South East Asia and Latin America is growing at the world's fastest rate [2]. For them to age actively, they need to take responsibility for their physical and mental health. It is necessary to emphasize the problem's effect on the public health system [3].

Due to mobility issues and other physical impairments,

older adults are likelier to live alone than any other demographic. This trend has increased among the elderly since 2019, when the COVID-19 pandemic began. Isolation, fear, helplessness, and lack of social support increase the likelihood that older adults will experience depressive or anxious feelings again [4–6]. However, depression has been identified as a pathological mental decline associated with aging. Depression is 80 percent more prevalent among older adults than younger individuals [7]. Consequently, the symptoms of major depressive disorder, persistent depressive disorder, substance-induced depressive disorder, and depressive disorder due to a medical condition worsened, and relapses occurred [8].

Recently, the concept of healing has shifted to emphasize inner peace, allowing older adults to coexist in harmony with others, their material possessions, and even the Supreme Being or God. This is a spiritual coping mechanism [9]. Individual resiliency in the form of coping is necessary to overcome each aging-related challenge [10]. Popular culture rarely discusses the concept of coping, even as it evolves. Although the term "culture" has been in use for some time, the vast majority of published works explore how a culture's mentality changes when it adopts Western values and practices [11]. The originality of this study lies in its emphasis on *Tri Hita Karana*, the Balinese concept of harmony [12].

Along with other Balinese philosophies, its existence as an omnipresent concept was cultivated as a way of life. *Tri Hita Karana*, like the majority of concepts developed in Bali after Siva-Buddha's influence, *Tri Hita Karana* derives its meaning from the Balinese capacity to combine religion and indigenous knowledge [13]. Therefore, the concept is formed as a result of comprehension of actuality within the context of values or standards adopted by outsiders.

Conceptually, *Tri Hita Karana* is defined as three causes of happiness [14]. The three elements of *Tri Hita Karana* are relation humans to God (theocentric), known as *Parahyangan*; the relation human to human (anthropocentric), known as *Pawongan*; and human relations to nature (cosmophocentric) known as *Palemahan* [15]. This character is aligned with the spiritual coping transcendence, including the individual, the community, the natural world, and religion [9]. One

study found that the imbalance of these three things causes disease [16]. Thus, *Tri Hita Karana* could be categorized as a spiritual coping impacting health and wellbeing.

Despite many studies using the *Tri Hita Karana* concept specifically related to economic, political, social, and anthropological research [17], there are not enough studies employing this concept in health research. Therefore, the study explored the spiritual coping "*Tri Hita Karana*" among older adults in dealing Covid-19 pandemic.

2. Materials and Methods

The study used a qualitative method with a descriptive approach [18,19]. The study wanted to discover and understand THK among older adults' perspective in dealing COVID-19 pandemic.

2.1. Study Design

This study uses d a purposive sampling technique. Participants were recruited after signing the participant's informed consent form with a minimum age of 60 years old, conscious, had depression experienced, had a good memory, and well-communicated. If patients and families refused to take part, they were excluded. The sample of this study consisted of five participants (Table 1). The researcher himself was the primary tool used in this study. Paper and digital media were used to document the experiences of the participants. Specifically, in-depth interviews conducted in person following semi-structured protocols were used to compile the data [20]. The semi-structured questions were: (1) Can you tell me what you feel become an older adult? (2) Can you tell me what you think caused it? (3) Can you tell me how *Tri Hita Karana* relates to your experience?

The informants from the in-depth interviews came from several regions in Gianyar Regency. The average age of the respondents is older adults, with an age range of 60-67 years. There were variations in gender, but the proportion of male informants was more than the proportion of female informants.

Table 1. Characteristic of In-Depth Interview Informants

| Code | Age (years) | JK | Address | Occupation | Length of interview |
|------|-------------|----|-----------|------------------------|---------------------|
| I.1 | 61 | L | Batubulan | Herbalist | 60 minutes |
| I.2 | 64 | L | Batubulan | Retired civil servants | 50 minutes |
| I.3 | 60 | P | Sukawati | Posbindu Cadre | 60 minutes |
| I.4 | 60 | L | Ubud | Indigenous Village | 60 minutes |
| I.5 | 67 | P | Gianyar | Housewife | 50 minutes |

2.2. Data Analysis

Since thematic analysis is readily available and adaptable, it was selected [21]. The analysis followed an inductive pattern. All authors were involved in the data analysis. Transcripts of the conversations were typed up word by word, and then the information was gathered from each interviewee. Multiple pieces of code containing the necessary information were created [18]. After that, we compared every code to the others. Records that contained identical information were merged and recorded. Then, using the association between codes, we drew a relationship diagram between all the individuals who participated in the study.

2.3. Trustworthiness

The researcher performed a credibility check by recording every participant's words in complete and unaltered detail without making any edits in order to improve the descriptive validity of the study. By arriving at this interpretation, the researchers were able to understand better and analyze all of the expressions contained within the cluster, which contributed to an increase in the validity of their work. As part of data triangulation, the researcher also analyzed information provided by the nurse who served as a participant. To further verify the interview, the researcher talks to each subject about the transcript. In the meantime, the researcher ensures that the collected data can be verified for the dependability test. Similar results could be obtained by repeating this study. The researchers also conducted an objectivity-guided conformity test. The results are consistent with the perspectives of the respondents. To ensure the results are reliable, the researcher triangulated data from multiple sources and conducted a transferability test based on member check-ins to the database [20].

2.4. Ethical Consideration

This study was reviewed by The Health Research Ethics Committee Faculty of Nursing Airlangga University, with the ethical approval number 2303-KEPK. Before the participants completed the main questionnaires, they were given the opportunity to give their informed consent. The concept of informed consent has been applied in order to approach the principles of benefit, no harm, confidentiality, justice, and voluntary participation. Before any data is collected, the participants need to give their consent to the information that has been provided. The participant had the option to terminate the survey at any time while it was being completed. Before the study even began, the informed consent had already been reported during the ethics approval and consent process.

3. Results

The study was divided into two major themes based on inductive analysis: 1) A hopeless feeling 2) Enlighten our path. The first theme was extracted based on all participants' interviews, meanwhile, the second theme was extracted from 80% of participants.

3.1. A Sense of Hopelessness

3.1.1. "Inguh/Sebet"

Depression is one of the things that are often found in society, especially in the older adult group. In Bali, depression has a fairly broad meaning. Depression is not only a disturbed mental condition, but also involves a feeling that was not in line with expectations, a feeling of sadness, and a feeling of hopelessness, which then created confusion in the individual or what is known as "*inguh/sebet*." The older adult group was vulnerable because of the lack of activity and limited space for movement. On the other hand, various problems arise. These conditions could lead to depression in older adults. As stated by the following informants:

"... sigh/sad/annoyed, because the uncomfortable mood makes it uncertain whether it tastes good or smells..." (I.2)

"... After work, I stay at home so that extravagant thoughts arise and the influence of the family environment. Many problems arise at the same time, and there is no way out and must be resolved ..." (I.4)

Almost all respondents generally felt "*sigh/sad/ sad*" when they entered the older adult phase. The older adults also had the perception that the cause of depression in the older adults was not only caused by one factor, but multiple-factors, especially family environmental factors and problems that arose simultaneously and demanded to be resolved at the same time. Moreover, if the issues encountered did not find a way out, it would exacerbate the feeling of helplessness and eventually lead to depression.

3.1.2. Connection through the Mind

Most informants stated that God was the guide for their life whom they depended on. Everything was done based on belief in God. Besides that, some believe that apart from God, the role and inclusion of the ancestors also guided living in the world. Several forms of these perceptions were outlined in a prayer routine that is carried out every day. Thus, it was believed that it could help to calm the heart, especially keeping the inner condition that is experiencing agitation well maintained. The following is an example of a quote that shows this information.

"... Whatever the results from what we do without His [God's] permission, it is difficult to get maximum results..." (I.1)

"... I have to pray every day. I believe in Ida Sang Hyang Widi Wasa [God] and the ancestors leads to a better mood and a calmer life..." (I.3)

Belief in God and ancestors was a way for older adults to maintain their inner condition and mood in everyday life, especially when experiencing problems. Everything needed to be done, and it was crucial to ask for the guidance of God. Besides that, calm in a precarious situation can be obtained through trust that God will provide advice and direct them to the right path.

3.1.3. Human Social Nature

Most respondents stated that the role of the family for older adults was the closest person to share and a significant role as a social being. Older adults use various ways to establish good relationships in old age with family members. The methods used vary according to the situation and condition of each family. Building togetherness at various moments and always sharing with family was a way for older adults to maintain a good relationship with their family. The following is an example of a quote that demonstrates this:

"... yes, it is very influential on our relationship between families, between neighbors, the community, for example, with the family, because among families, wives, children, and in-laws, we maintain mutual respect so that things don't happen that don't fit between us ..." (I.2).

"... good relations with the people around family and us can keep us in a good mood ..." (I.5)

"... my relationship with my family is excellent, so anything that requires solving a problem, we will talk about it with the wife of the children-in-law and parents who happens to be alive ..." (I.3)

"... yes, if we are alone, we think we will be curious. That's why we need the closest people like husbands or neighbors to help us, so the more we invite them to share to tell our children, the more comfortable and calm our minds will be..." (I. 4)

Human social nature reflected family conditions and the relationship between older adults and their families. The role of the family in taking every part related to problem-solving was also crucial. With full support from the family, the older adults believed that any problems they faced would not be complex because the family was ready to support and help find solutions and implement these solutions.

3.1.4. Nature Surrounds us

Most of the older adults believed that the environment was one of the factors that could influence the state of

mind and spirit. A noisy environment could create an uncomfortable feeling. This condition would trigger the emergence of "Inguh" when other problems arose from other sources, such as family or societal issues. It could create a beautiful and calm atmosphere to maintain the mood of older adults who need peace of mind. An example of a quote that shows this is:

"... the environment is boisterous, so we cannot calm down, we cannot sleep, so we are not quiet, and this really affects our mood, in a hot atmosphere, and it also affects our mood because we're uncomfortable..." (I.3)

"... a house that is clean and full of plants makes you feel comfortable. Gardens and fields that contain lots of plants make it cool and when harvesting makes the heart happy..." (I.5)

"... the natural environment is mentioned, maybe there need to be trees, then there are plants that we need to look after, animals, birds, and dogs so that weary thoughts calm down and we feel grateful to be able to enjoy nature ..." (I.3)

"... the first influence of the natural environment, in this case, gardens, rice fields, thickets, can cause unpleasant thoughts or moods to lighten..." (I. 2)

The role of nature in creating peace and joy in older adults had a large portion. When the social environment cannot provide comfort, the natural environment could be the solution chosen by older adults to calm down. When older adults cannot interact with other family members who are still productive, the choice to interact with nature provides entertainment for the older adults.

3.2. Enlighten our Path

3.2.1. Pathway to Parahyangan

One concept of *Tri Hita Karana* is Parahyangan, so almost all older adults take advantage of this to prevent anxiety from arising from their problems. Older adults believe in the power of God in their religion, which can guide action. It can grow the belief that every problem faced would be given a solution that can be thought of in a calm and peaceful mood because it had been faced and asked God. An example of a quote that states this is:

"...the efforts that I make if I experience depression: first, I do not forget to be closer to God and my ancestors [who have passed away], and ask for guidance. To be able to do that, I need to pray to Him [God]. Then, if I experience more intense depression again, I ask for more comprehensive directions. I do meditation and go to the temple that makes me feel better, relaxed and sleep tight at night ..." (I.2)

"... we approach through one of them, yes, we pray at the merajan. and family..." (I.4)

Praying in family temples was an effort by older adults to be closer to God. They feel they are encountering problems or feeling uneasy, but it needs to be done every day because it is a requirement to gain calm and think clearly about a solution to the issue.

3.2.2. Sharing Life and Life of "Pawongan"

Pawongan, in this case, includes family, relatives, and the community, having its own role in helping the majority of older adults deal with problems and maintain their mental health of the older adults. The family is a place to share. Everything related to family affairs cannot be carried by the older adults alone and should be known by the family. It was hoped that family members could understand the existing situation and conditions to assist in providing solutions. Relatives and neighbors were also considered to be able to contribute in giving consideration. Most of the respondents always coordinated with village officials or community leaders regarding problems or constraints in the community. The following is an example of a quote that demonstrates this:

"... I know that I could not solve it by myself. I usually share my feelings. I approach my family and neighbors ..." (I.1)

"... I was retired and am not as strong as I used to be. Therefore, I have to understand my condition, calm down, and communicate with my family to understand the situation. Then, we are looking for close friends and community leaders who are invited to negotiate to solve the problem in my mind..." (I.4)

Most older adults solve problems using the Pawongan concept in Tri Hita Karana. Older adults shared with family, discussed with relatives, told stories with neighbors and involved community leaders when they encountered a problem. The role of the people around you is significant in preventing hopelessness, feelings of uselessness, and disturbances in the minds and mentality of older adults.

3.2.3. Calmness of Palemahan

The surrounding environment, gardens, rice fields, and even courtyards can be beneficial for older adults to find peace. The beautiful natural situation, the cool air, and the beauty of the plants can provide refreshment for the fatigue experienced by older adults. Boredom due to lack of activity can be overcome by doing activities that don't involve many people, but interact with the natural surroundings. The following is an example of a quote that states this:

"... when doing an activity outside, we will see beautiful scenery. Moreover, we will have fresh air so that there is an exchange of air in the lungs. I also refresh our eyes..." (I.1)

"... my mind becomes calm, and reduces frivolous thoughts. We feel relaxation in the body by reducing

nonsensical thoughts..." (I.2)

"... being close to nature can make the mind calmer. We can garden, clean the yard, enjoy the scenery. That way, the heart becomes happy, can smell the flowers and feel the cool air..." (I.5)

Nature had meaning for older adults. Almost all older adults have experienced boredom, fatigue, feeling alone, and no activity. These conditions encourage older adults to take advantage of the *Tri Hita Karana* approach in getting peace, refreshment, and entertainment. In addition, many older adults carried out valuable activities such as gardening, raising fish, arranging plants, and raising livestock in nature, which are beneficial for mental health.

4. Discussion

This study explored the connection of Balinese spiritual coping called "*Tri Hita Karana*" and its connection with depression prevention behavior. The finding revealed that "a hopeless feeling and enlighten our path" were the themes. A hopeless feeling is expressed aging situation when a low connection to God, an unsociable, and an unhealthy environment. These findings were supported by the previous study that there was a significant connection between depression and God [22], depression and social activity [23,24], and depression and environment [25,26].

The theme "enlighten our path" was expressed as the way older adults think to overcome the problem. "Pathway to *parahyangan*" referred to the path of older adults to find the solution when they feel hopeless or sad. The previous study found a meaningful correlation between the level of attachment to God and pain intensity [27]. Another study supported that attachment to God dimensions are associated with psychological adjustment through the use of specific coping strategies [28]. The individual can increase their adaptive coping through praying to God which will impact mental health.

Sharing life and life of "*pawongan*" was related to the sociability of the human. Individuals, specifically older adults, showed more likely to interact, share the problem, and find a solution from another. The former study found sharing stories can reduce feelings of depression and increase well-being [29,30].

Last but not least, Calmness of *palemahan* refers to a good situation with the environment bringing a positive impact on their mind. New Zealand researchers found that exposure to environmental "goods" and "bads" influenced people's mental health. When compared to people who live in environments that are the least healthy, those who live in environments that promote health saw a steady decrease in the likelihood of having negative mental health outcomes and experiencing psychological distress [26].

Recently, a holistic health orientation involved spiritual aspects as coping mechanisms [31]. The philosophical

investigation of spiritual coping strategies in nursing science led to improvements in patients' physical, mental, and social health as well as their capacity for self-transcendence and resilience [32]. According to the findings of recent studies, individuals may find it easier to deal with their health problems when they employ spiritual coping strategies that involve their relationships with themselves, others, the ultimate other/God, or nature [33]. Congruence with Balinese culture is the definition of spirituality known as Tri Hita Karana, which symbolizes a state of mental and physical health achieved through a person's integration with their spiritual, social, and natural surroundings [34].

Implementation of Tri Hita Karana embedded in Balinese people's daily life. Everyday people in Bali create handmade offerings to show the gratuitousness of The Supreme God Blessing. That activity became an indigenous culture infused with Hinduism belief (*Sradha*) and compassion to serve (*Bhakti*) [35]. Another implementation of Tri Hita Karana as a Spiritual Coping strategy during Covid 19 was implemented by reading Bhagawad Githa involving 100 participants in Bali [36]. As part of harmony with the Supreme God, Balinese people tend to be more surrendered and more likely to do self-control and reflection, known as *Mulat sarira* [37]. Harmony among humans as human beings in Bali conceptualized *Menyama Braya*. *Menyama*, its semantic meaning refers to family ties by marriage and blood; while *Braya* refers to the neighborhood. This concept during a pandemic became social capital to build coping and resilience during a pandemic [38]. Many people give free food supplies to others, offer social loans, and personal protective equipment such as masks, face shields, and disinfectants. Creating harmony in nature physically reflected in the Balinese concept house always provides green space for *Palemahan*. Balinese house is divided into 3 elements as Tri Mandala: a sacred place or temple for praying, a home for human interaction, and space for garden/pet [38]. Even in dynamic rural areas such as Denpasar as Bali's Capital is still maintained [38]. Gardening and connecting with animals or pets became a habitual activity among Balinese people, which were available in their green space during the isolation period of the pandemic. Stress reduction is one of gardening's many health benefits because of the therapeutic effects of connecting with nature [39].

Due to the study's limited scope, its findings may not be representative of Bali or Indonesia as a whole. To learn more about the spiritual coping "Tri Hita Karana" in Indonesia, researchers need to test their hypotheses on a larger, more diverse sample. During a pandemic, this result may not apply as widely. It is strongly suggested that more studies be conducted using longitudinal methodology. Furthermore, the results did not show cause effects; therefore, future research needs a causal model to confirm spiritual coping and depression prevention behavior.

5. Conclusions

This study aimed to explore the spiritual coping "*Tri Hita Karana*" among older adults in dealing Covid-19 pandemic. Spiritual coping would help older adults to choose the right path when they feel hopeless, sad, and uncertain about their feelings. The results of this study can provide input for nurses to understand depression behavior prevention. In addition, the results can be used to develop interventions through *Tri Hita Karana* to manage depression behavior prevention.

Spiritual coping has to apply in our daily life, specifically *Tri Hita Karana*. The relationship human to human would develop a healthy connection between ourselves, family, friends, neighbors, and people around us. Taking care of our environment is a part of our relationship with nature. It would have a positive impact on our bodies and minds. Last but not least, our connection with God/religion could be made through prayer and respect for another person's belief.

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