



## JAMU AS HERBAL MEDICINE: A STUDY OF HEALTH COMMUNICATION AND PHILOSOPHY AS CULTURAL IDENTITY

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### Abstract

*The study aimed to describe jamu as herbal medicine, the study of health communication, and philosophy as a cultural identity. The community's herbal medicine consumption habit and the fertile land conditions allow the community planting of various rhizome species as medicines. Indonesians are familiar with the family medicinal plants (TOGA, Tanaman Obat Keluarga), consisting of fruits, vegetables, and rhizomes, as seasoning ingredients. The data were collected through interviews, observations, documentation, and the informants comprised herbal medicine people in business, herbalists, and consumers. Various media were employed, including direct communication, Whatsapp, Instagram, Facebook, pamphlets, brochures, and leaflets on the walls of shops. The findings of this study concern the herbal medicine-based communication health model as a philosophy of identity in Bandar Lampung City, Indonesia. This model increases the awareness of maintaining health and stamina through herbal medicines, besides conventional medical treatment. These medicines help preserve energy, strengthen body endurance, beauty care, and other therapeutic applications.*

**Keywords:** Cultural identity; Health communication; Philosophy

### INTRODUCTION

According to Rikesdas, 59.12% of Indonesia's population above 15 years old has consumed herbal medicine (Basic health research, 2010), and approximately 95.60% of the community has benefited from them. The medicinal plants ranked based on their frequency of use are ginger at 50.36%, followed by Kaempferia galanga, Curcuma xanthorrhiza, Phyllanthus niruri, and Morinda cirtifolia at 48.77%, 39.65%, 13.93%, and 11.17%, respectively as reported on the Decree of the Ministry of Health Number HK.01.07/Menkes/187/2017 concerning Formulary of Indonesian Traditional Medicine Ingredients.

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Furthermore, over 50% of the country's population is confirmed to consume these herbal ingredients. (Decree of the Minister of Health No HK.01.07/Menkes/187/2017). Traditional medicine in this study is jamu. The medicinal plants used by ethnic Lampung in West Lampung Regency comprise 50 species divided into 22 families, where about 33.3%, or 25 species of these plants, are consumed in liquid form. (Leksikowati, S. S., Oktaviani, I., Ariyanti, Y., Akhmad, A. D., & Rahayu, Y. 2020).

Although alternative treatments using medicinal plants have become a tradition in Lampung society and may even constitute their identity (Rangga, A., Astuti, H., User, P., Subowo, A., & Hendra, J. 2017), the biggest obstacle to this phenomenon is the appropriate dosage of herbal medicines for certain diseases. Hence, extensive studies on this issue are necessitated through several perspectives: health communication, community culture, the philosophy of drinking herbal medicine, and community identity. A concerning problem is the habit of consuming herbal medicine without understanding the right dosage of the ingredients. Furthermore, the philosophy of community identity needs to be developed, particularly ontology, epistemology, and axiology. (Varpio, L., & MacLeod, A. 2020). Several studies on the acquisition of packaged herbal medicines in Lampung have been performed, and one revealed that consumers obtained these preparations from traders and marketers, leading to their involvement in this study. (Lestari, S., Roshayanti, F., & Purnamasari, V. 2019)

The Indonesian government facilitated the use of herbal medicines with the Decree of the Ministry of Health number HK.01.07/Menkes/187/2017. Hence, the next question is how does the local government socialize the use of the right herbal medicinal ingredient dose for certain diseases? Health communication refers to studying the packaging, content, and impact of messages and health news on the community. (Mheidly, N., & Fares, J. 2020).

Besides the community's herbal medicine consumption habit, the fertile land conditions allow the community planting of various rhizome species as medicines. Indonesians are familiar with the family medicinal plants (TOGA, Tanaman Obat Keluarga), consisting of fruits, vegetables, and rhizomes, as seasoning ingredients. Generally, they plant TOGA in their yard and traditionally obtain the plants as herbal medicines by extracting the fruits, leaves, roots, tubers, or all the parts. Public health is essential for the nation's development, a significant supporter of poverty alleviation programs, and a valuable investment in establishing healthy, strong, and independent citizens. The health index is an indicator of improved quality of human resources and is regulated by Law Number (No). 36 article 1 of 2009 regarding Health in Indonesia. Subsequently, health development is an effort made by all components of the nation to provide knowledge (cognition), grow awareness and willingness (affection), and enhance people's abilities (psychomotor and behavioral aspects) to achieve high levels of health as adhered to by the Indonesian people. Also, the community's culture or social process greatly influences disease remedies (Dewi, N L P T., Arifin, M., & Ismail S. 2019); (Suharti, B., Kartika, T., & Sugiyanta, S. 2021); (Kartika, T 2016), and affects their perceptions in choosing treatment methods. One of the most popular ways is using herbal medicines, commonly marketed and conceptualized in this country. (Kristian, A., Sumaryono, W., Widyastuti, S. & Lesmana, H. 2019).

The Indonesian government is committed to helping people alleviate health problems, and in recent years, people have begun to recognize a distinction between the healthy and sick paradigms. Generally, sickness is an effort to manage and return ill patients to healthy conditions. In contrast, the healthy paradigm is oriented towards a preventive measure to ensure individuals are healthy, fit, possess personal awareness, and maintain healthy environments. Since 2019, the government has managed a health sector agenda named Program Indonesia Healthy, entrusted to the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia. This program empowers families based on three pillars: the healthy paradigm, strengthening health services, and the National Health Insurance (Jaminan Kesehatan Nasional).

Several studies have observed the habit of drinking herbal medicines, the number of traders of these preparations in small shops and malls, the presence of herbalists, numerous packaged herbal products, and the Lampung provincial government regulations. This regulation refers to the Decree from the Head of the Lampung Province Health Service Number 442 concerning Guidelines for the Development of Traditional Health Services in Lampung Province in 2009. The use of herbal medicines is relatively high in this region, especially in Bandar Lampung City. (Martinouva, R. A., & Firmanto, A. A. 2019). Meanwhile, the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 increased public awareness of health, including in Indonesia, which led to the enhanced consumption of herbal medicines as a solution, further necessitating health communication studies. These issues are encompassed in the question, How about using herbal medicine, health communication studies, and philosophy as cultural identity?

Meanwhile, the Indonesian community's habit of using these preparations is regarded as a cultural heritage and has become the nation's identity. Their sick are often treated using herbal methods, and companies manage the formulations to facilitate public consumption. (Purwaningsih, E., Yuliwulandari, R., Soenyono, S., & Santoso, J. T. B. 2019). Through BPOM as the control agency for handling herbal medicines, the Indonesian government enables public use by allowing these companies to obtain licenses easily. Subsequently, this research discusses the health communication model utilized by herbal medicine businessmen, herbalists, and user communities, alongside herbal medicines as a philosophy of identity.

## **METHOD**

The research was conducted in the city of Bandar Lampung. Lampung is a province on the island of Sumatra, Indonesia. This research used a qualitative descriptive approach with interviews, observations, and documentation as the data collection techniques. The interviews were conducted with selected informants appropriate to specific criteria, such as herbal medicine businessmen, herbalists, consumers, willing to provide information, and over 15 years of age. This research was conducted in Bandar Lampung due to the easy accessibility, which facilitated data collection through observation and interviews, alongside the community's tradition of consuming herbal medicine and the many types of plants used. Statements were made by monitoring the field conditions directly related to the objectives and research interests, while documentation involved tracing the required and related data, photographs, and literature. The informants were persons and stakeholders involved in the

herbal treatment process in Bandar Lampung City. They consisted of 5 herbal medicine business persons, three herbalists considered capable of treating diseases through traditional methods, such as cupping and concoctions, and 30 consumers. The number was considered sufficient due to the similarity of the data obtained. Meanwhile, the research focused on analyzing herbal-based health communication models used by stakeholders, namely herbal businesses, herbalists, and users or consumer communities in Bandar Lampung City.

Miles and Huberman's interactive data analysis model was employed through data reduction and display, followed by drawing and verifying conclusions. (Punch, Keith F. 1998) The reduction was performed by editing, grouping, and summarizing the data, while the display was implemented by compiling codes and notes to find themes and data groups. Finally, conclusions were drawn and verified at the end of the research to implement the inductive principle and consider the data trend.

## **DISCUSSION**

The healthy paradigm is implemented by prioritizing health in human resource development and strengthening the promotion of health prevention. Strengthened health services are pursued by improving access, optimizing the referral system, and enhancing quality through a continuum of care approach and health risk-based interventions. Subsequently, the National Health Insurance (Jaminan Kesehatan Nasional) was implemented by expanding health targets and benefits and controlling the quality and costs. The target is creating healthy families, as they are the community's constituents and will lead to a healthy society. (Purnaningsih, N., Mawasti, T., & Saraswati, Y. 2017); (Wang, Z., & Yang, L. 2021).

Meanwhile, the government has awarded regions that can increase their herbal medicine business. In 2012, Nguter Sub-district, Sukoharjo District, Central Java Province, was inaugurated as a herbal medicine center in Indonesia. (Health Program Book, Ri Depkes 2016). Entrepreneurs' ability in this sub-district requires facilitation as a guide for implementing suitable traditional medicine manufacturing methods and fulfilling Indonesian standards. Formulating standardized products that will improve the quality of herbal medicines is very beneficial for entrepreneurs. Hence, assistance is required to enhance the quality of these preparations, develop human resources, and improve business management. One of the aid methods is obtaining a permit from the National Agency of Drug and Food Control (BPOM) and enhancing the acquisition of quality ingredients. Herbal treatment has been entrenched in Indonesian society, leading to the development of trade and interested persons, such as herbalists and users of these medicinal products.

### **Herbal Medicine-Based Health Communication**

Health communication research has been conducted to solve various health problems, such as mental health communication. (Rasyid, E., Tunggal, A. P. P. W., & Sugiantoro, H. A. 2021); (Paudyal, V., Sun, S., Hussain, R., Abutaleb, M. H., & Hedima, E. W. 2022); (Fleerackers, A., Riedlinger, M., Moorhead, L., Ahmed, R., & Alperin, J. P. 2021) and health communication of children in street situations. (Kurniasari, N., Candrasari, S., &

Delliana, S. 2021). However, the study discusses health communication in the tradition of drinking herbal medicine by the Lampung people. One of the interviewees, SH, explained that his family used herbal medicines to treat typhus, digestive problems, and fatigue. SH stated: “Ya itu tadi, masalah penyakit typhus, pencernaan, kelelahan kerja” (Yes, that was typhus, digestion problems, work fatigue) (Interview with SH, June 19, 2019).

This is an affirmation that people and even all members of families consume herbal medicines to treat serious illnesses or enhance stamina. Mrs. N, the owner of HPAI Herbal shop, Rajabasa Bandar Lampung, stated: “Masyarakat mendukung dan keluarga support moral dan material, pemerintah sudah mendukung juga, dengan memberikan ijin edar herbal. Pemerintah mempermudah ijin edar herbal” (The community and family offer moral and material support, while the government assists the process by providing distribution permits for herbal medicines) (Interviewed with N, June 19, 2019). This proves that the local government facilitates the circulation of herbal medicines by granting permits to herbal medicine traders. Mrs. F, stated: “Aku bikin jamu untuk diminum sendiri, kira-kira saja, tapi gak tau pesisir berapa gram jahe, atau kunyit yang digunakan. Direbus dan diminum airnya” (I made herbal medicine to drink but I don't know how many grams of ginger or turmeric were used to boil and prepare the mixture (Interviewed with F, April 25, 2020).

This statement confirms that some people do not know the exact ingredient dosage for personally prepared herbal medicines. Conversely, herbal medicines from factories indicate the dosage instructions on the packaging of the formulation. A good example to describe the influence of health communication is the news that the Indonesian president consumed Herbal medicine every morning. Numerous positive comments about this information were obtained from citizens and persons abroad, though this habit has not been scientifically proven to treat the Coronavirus. However, this is a description of the influence of media on audiences. Since the outbreak in Indonesia, the price of herbs has soared in traditional markets alongside supermarkets; for instance, ginger costs between Rp. 40,000 to Rp100,000 per kilogram. CNN Indonesia (March 16, 2020). This shows a relatively high increase from 2.85\$ to 7.14\$, assuming 1\$ equals Rp14.000.

Based on the interviews, observations, and literature review, this research found that 1) herbal medicine in Bandar Lampung city is a continuous habit transmitted through generations, and 2) the community as consumers continue to grow. 3) Herbalists attain a good position in the community because of the local government regulations through the Decree of the Head of the Lampung Provincial Health Office Number 442 of 2009 concerning Guidelines for the Development of Traditional Health Services. 4) The herbal medicine consumer community is increasing and includes children, teenagers, adults, parents, men, and women; 5) informants do not understand the dosages of herbal medicinal ingredients. 6) Herbal medicine sellers use social media for trading activities, and 7) they obtain information about the tradition of herbal medicine consumption from their parents, family, neighbors, and community, as well as mass and social media.

## **Communication Model**

The health communication process used during treatment with herbal medicine by herbalists, businesspersons, and consumers is similar. Meanwhile, personal and social media marketing strategies, such as Whatsapp, Instagram, and Facebook, are most widely

used. Many herbal business people follow sales programs with multi-level marketing (MLM) systems, while pamphlets, brochures, and leaflets are displayed on the shop walls. This informs the customers about the benefits of herbs, the importance of maintaining health, messages about prevention being better than cure, and various diseases and their remedies. Also, testimonials from previous customers recovered after consuming certain herbs. Message receivers or recipients are consumers from multiple walks of life who can buy medicines according to their abilities and needs, based on the high or low price variations. The advantage of consuming herbal medicines is the feeling of health and comfort. Also, the communities' perception has changed to using herbal medicines as the first option for treating their sick and a visit to the doctor as the alternative. Figure 1 shows the herbal medicine communication health model in Bandar Lampung City.

Although there are multiple interpretations of health communication, the discussions are generally related to health issues. Health communication has two important aspects, which emphasize the process and contents. The process approach is based on exploring the exchange and interpretation of information by communication actors and involves mutual structuring, investigation, and interactions regarding health. Conversely, the health aspect is viewed from various perspectives and relates to the concept of healthy and sick. This is influenced by the social and cultural environment, which subsequently shapes how each community member responds to or judges their body condition and receives treatment during illness. Sometimes, sickness is only considered an imbalance in health, meaning the body needs to return to balance.

This perspective may cause a sick person to feel that they need to rest, visit a massage therapist, reduce certain foods, or consume certain herbs to maintain body balance. Hence, this sociocultural issue background needs to be understood and interpreted more broadly by health communication stakeholders. The process and content of health communication messages revolve around more than just the definition of health and sickness from a medical perspective. This discussion can be understood through the communication concept, comprising the source, message, channel, receiver, and effect. (Rustan, A., Hakki, N. (2017); Wahab, N. A., & Bahfen, N. 2021); (Tam, L. T., Ho, H. X., Nguyen, D. P., Elias, A., & Le, A. N. H. 2021). The health communication process must contain S elements (source; message source, communicator), M (message; messages exchanged during the communication), C (channel; message media), R (receiver; recipient of the message), E (effects; results of the communication process), and S-C (Sociocultural; socio-cultural conditions). These conditions are specifically related to the community's perspective of sickness and treatment. Generally, the perception concept, sociocultural conditions, and Indonesian society's media influence the use of herbal and chemical medicines in supporting beauty processes, such as insisting that white skin is a concept of beauty. (Kartika, T. 2016). This research also discussed the communication models used to convey messages about herbal medicines. The use of herbal medicines to cure diseases has persisted for a long time in Indonesia and has become a cultural identity rooted in people's lives and behaviors. Some identities are observed from their behavior, entities, and prevailing norms in the community. Cultural identity is kept from their culture, dance, models, clothing, language, artifacts, daily life, etc. Clarke, S. (2008). Meanwhile, the health communication discussion in this research concerned information related to herbal medicines and the techniques involved in conveying these messages to the audience.

Reliable health information is vital for changing living behaviors and preventing and promoting health awareness. Although various media platforms, such as Tik Tok, convey health information. (Zhu, C., Xu, X., Zhang, W., Chen, J., & Evans, R. 2020); (Soroya, S. H., Farooq, A., Mahmood, K., Isoaho, J., & Zara, S. E. 2021); (Tappen, R. M., Cooley, M. E., Luckmann, R., & Panday, S. 2022), this research employed Whatsapp, Instagram, Facebook, pamphlets, brochures, and leaflets on shop walls.

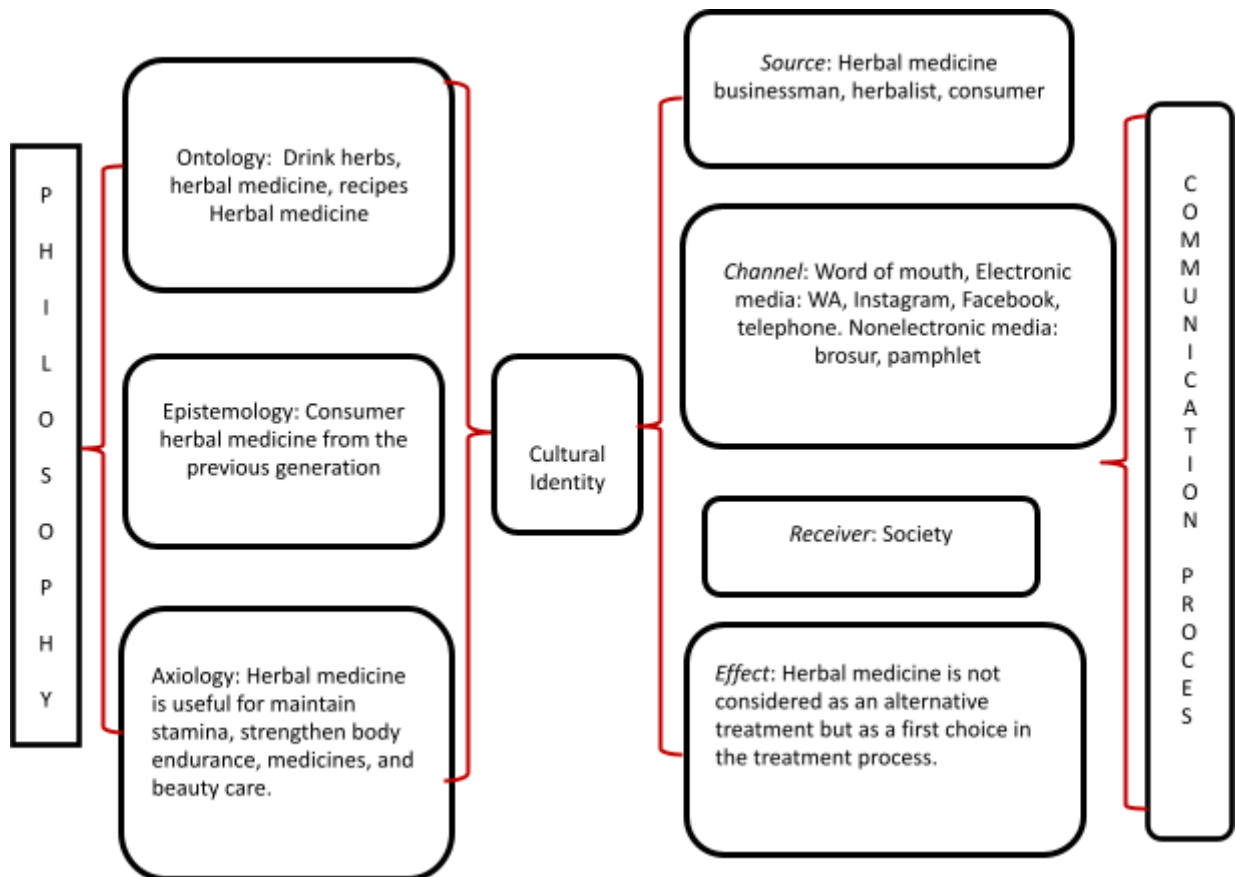


Figure 1. Communication health model of herbal medicine in Bandarlampung City

## CONCLUSION

The process of herbal-based health communication in Bandar Lampung City develops naturally and requires no compulsion of perception and behavior. Meanwhile, using herbal medicines has become a habit in this community, promoting a paradigm shift and leading to the philosophy of identity. The health communication process comprises various sources, namely herbal medicine businesspersons, herbalists, and consumers, and the most effective model for influencing the community was the direct conversation method. This

model increases the awareness of maintaining health and stamina through herbal medicines, besides conventional medical treatment. Meanwhile, BPOM, as the official institution, controls the safe consumption and quality of herbal medicines. Since the Lampung people prepare herbal medicines as their primary option for health treatment, this should be followed with the socialization of the proper herbal ingredient used by the provincial government to maintain a healthy quality of life. Furthermore, the communication models of herbal medicines in Bandar Lampung City were studied. This research consequently recommended the exploration of different paradigms, theories, and concepts in future studies and suggested that stakeholders, with the possible involvement of local governments or other institutions, continue to socialize the use of appropriate herbal ingredient doses.

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