

DIRECT HEALTH EDUCATION BY CHRISTIAN DOCTOR THAT HAVE THE PRIVILIGE TO SERVE MORE PEOPLE

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DIRECT HEALTH EDUCATION BY CHRISTIAN DOCTOR THAT HAVE THE PRIVILEGE TO SERVE MORE PEOPLE: SHARING EXPERIENCES DOING COMMUNITY SERVICE IN LOCAL CHURCH COMMUNITIES IN JAKARTA

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ABSTRACT

Health education is important, because the need to promote health among member of the community, in order to maintain the health status and if possible to prevent people to get sick. Specific communities such as church members have unique characteristics that can facilitate health education so that it can be more easily accepted and implemented. The existence of Christian scholar among those specific community can help church to promote daily healthy living activities and maintain health standard, especially in the era of Covid pandemic. This article is a sharing experience of doing multi-form community service in a specific community, a local church located in Tanjung Priuk, Jakarta, Indonesia.

Keywords: local church, specific, community, health promotion, volunteers, responsibility, communication

INTRODUCTION

For many Christians and church member, ¹an enduring memory of the pandemic will be the separation it made in local churches because the congregation found themselves on opposite sides over Sunday service reopenings, and some procedural steps before worship/Sunday service is carried out, for example body thermal checking, must wear mask and sit far away policies, and even vaccinations.¹ This kind of separation is actually undesirable because in this difficult times, the congregation should be united.² This is the reason why the implementation of community service is needed, especially if it is carried out by scholars who are in accordance with the problems at hand.³

Community service is work conducted by by a single person or even a bunch of people that benefits others, and this is done voluntarily.⁴ According to the place of community service carried out, it is mostly held in the neighborhood area where the person who does the community service is domiciled or works or does most of his or her activities.⁵ With a specific communal approach like this of course, the community closest to the implementer will benefit the most.^{4,5} Usually, community service volunteers do not get financial rewards, maybe only in the form of free meals or t-shirts.⁶ According to Einoff,⁶ generally there are

three kind of community service organizations in which people may willing to volunteer: moral, functional, and interactive.

Doctors have greater opportunities to take part in specific community based health services, compared to other professions.^{7,8} They have the privilege to serve specific communities, e.g church's local community in a more specific manner, especially during Covid-19 pandemic. According to Jayalal,⁹ in the real Covid pandemic situation, the Christian doctor has observed, and even directly helped churches supporting members suffering from shortage of food related to poverty, church's clinics or hospitals serving the community at large (usually those who are less fortunate or come from a very low social level background), and fellow Christian physicians volunteering to serve in some of the places hardest hit by the coronavirus.

Local specific community members, as well as community members in general, have advantages in the context of understanding health problems/situations, thanks to medical professionals who also happens to be the member of the same community.¹⁰ Doctor can play a role in the society/community directly, e.g., by implementing health promotion on certain health issues or educating member of the community with simple daily practice healthy living.

Unfortunately, in the era of over-information that can caused information overload syndrome, the advancement in information technology and social media also bring negative excess, one of which is in the form of hoaxes in the medical/health sector.^{11,12} In April 30th, 2021, The Ministry of Communication and Information has recorded and labeled 1,556 hoaxes related to Covid-19 and 177 hoaxes related to the Covid-19 vaccine.¹³ Hoax is very easy to spread through social media.^{14,15} In this context, Christian scholars in the health sector and even the church should be able to take more responsibility and also flexibility in their own local church community.^{16,17}

Health communication is an important point in the effort to deliver health education, in order to increase the understanding of local church members.^{18,19} Considering that the church community also comes from various backgrounds, e.g., ethnic, education and social levels, Then the method of delivering health news must also be seriously considered.¹⁶⁻¹⁸ The following section is a sharing of experiences in serving the congregation of a local church in Tanjung priuk, in northern part of Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia.

Overview Of The Local Church Characteristics

The church being served is a church that has been established since 1965 with a senior pastor, someone who is charismatic and respected by the general public around the church. it is estimated that the number recorded as permanent congregations is 1500+ people. The church is geographically located in an area near the main port of Jakarta, named Tanjung Priok. (<https://maps.app.goo.gl/AjqsbtKbMCekHvHy5>).²⁰

The composition of the church community is also typical of the composition of the general typical community in Indonesia (in general), which is dominated by young adults (<45 years

old) and youth and adolescents. However, the number of elderly people is also increasing along with improvements in the economy and health services.

Like a typical community that lives near a port, the congregation also mostly works in fields related to transportation or port activities. Socio-economically, most of the members of this local church have a low to moderate economic level. In general, the level of education of most church members is secondary education/high school, although some are blessed because they can get higher education, even from abroad.

In normal condition, due to the limited capacity of the church building, worship Sunday service is divided into three times (at 6.30 am, 9 am and 17 pm). For each service, usually attended up to 600+ people. In simple terms it can be said, the first worship service (6 am) is usually attended by parents and the elderly. The second Sunday service (9 am) usually dominated by young adults. The last but not least, the third Sunday service which is done every Sunday mostly attended by youths and teenagers.

But temporarily due to micro-scale social restrictions, worship Sunday service was changed from on site service to online worship, where the congregation worshiped from home using popular social media such as the church's official facebook™ or via Youtube™ (the church's official account: GBI Shalom Tanjung Priok).

Sharing Experiences

As a member of the church who is arguably still a young adult, the opportunity to serve the congregation is given by the senior pastor according to the capacity. In many aspects, the congregation does need to be served, including in practical matters in the health sector. There are various forms of service, ranging from health education/health promotion through pulpit service, home visit, distribution of groceries/food for the poor congregation, involved in the congregation's whatsapp group chat about health issues, coordinating blood donations and even standard general health checks on certain national holidays (*e.g.*, Independence Day). Through pulpit service, the speaker can insert various relevant and up to date topics, *e.g.*, about covid 19 or other diseases, about human growth and development, about how to ward off hoaxes in social media, the implementation of clean and healthy living behavior and even the importance of family planning programs.

The variety of these activities are actually very good media for the speaker to teach the church member, especially in cases regarding health problem. It is undeniable that health professionals are more easily accepted in society than professionals in other fields. That is why inserting messages about health, clean and healthy living behavior and other practical health matters is easier if the speaker is a health professional.



Fig. 1. (A) Photographs from the 2nd Sunday service held on February 14th, 2021 at 9 am, carried out online, conveying about prevent hoax news. Note that even during onsite worship the church still prioritizes health protocols; one of them by sitting far away. (B) Screenshot from the 2nd Sunday service held on May 23rd, 2021 at 9 am, carried out online, conveying about physical and mental growth.

Advantages

Direct health education to a specific population, *e.g.*, local congregation, provide benefits, not just for the people who conduct it, but also for the audiences/local church member, and for the church itself as an organization. Here are some of the advantages of doing direct health promotion:

1. It is specific, both the population and also the media, so that the message to be conveyed is relatively easier to give; even though although that does not mean it is easier to understand/accept,²¹
2. resources friendly from certain point, *e.g.*, time allocation, cost, technology, location, other administrative matters,²²
3. because it is inserted between religious message/word of God so it is not likely to bore people, it may even help audience to better understand the context¹⁸

Some of the benefits of direct health promotion like this show the privilege of Christian scholars, working in the health sector, to increase the understanding of the congregation in the context of health issues. why is it called a “privilege” because not all scholars are 'feel the divine call' or have the opportunity to take part in this noble task.^{23,24} Privilege based on the doctor's personal understanding, through his/her spiritual experience with God.^{18,24} Religion is important in supporting believers to prepare the congregation for difficult times.²⁵

Disadvantages

In addition to the favorable factors considered as advantages, there are also unfavorable factors for such approach that being considered as disadvantages. Some of them are as follows:

1. it is usually always one direction only, a speech-based approach which tends to dictate audience. It is almost impossible to turn it into a two-way discussion, apart from the large number of listeners, also the event platform that does not support such communication,²⁶
2. The potency for bias in retaining new knowledge is almost unavoidable because there is a possibility that even though the audience come from the same church, there may be a gap in age, gender, ethnicity, educational background and even social status,²⁷
3. Time constraints are also a concern because for important points, the speaker certainly wants more emphasis in delivering or for example by repeating important topics. Other excess of limitation in time allocation is that it cannot be ascertained whether the message conveyed by the speaker can be received properly by the viewer.²⁸

Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that health promotion for specific communities can still be carried out, even through religious activities such as through Sunday worship for Christians.

Discussion

The church, as organization entity, also experiencing the challenges of the times, for example at this time the covid 19 pandemic. it prevents massive social interaction, a mode the church has actually practiced for hundreds of years.^{1,2,17,18} But the show must go on, and churches just like any other aspect of our life have to adjust, modify or even change the old methods.¹⁷ Online Sunday service is a good example of how a specific community responded the pandemic.

Churches also uses social media to reach people and serve them with the love of Christ.^{17,18,23,24} The use of IT causes the breakdown of barriers such as distance and time. Through the senior pastor, he then appointed and given the opportunity for professionals or scholars of the congregation to share knowledge, explain and even teach in order to fix or make right what was considered to be the true general view of the community.

The privilege of doctors in serving the congregation is actually part of the noble values inherent in the medical profession.^{9,24} During covid-19 pandemic era, the presence of doctors as members of the congregation is very helpful in educating health issues or other problems related with health, as well as preventing hoax news in the congregation's social media.^{1,2,17,18} This kind of approach model is typically one-way only, dictates without any opportunity for active interaction (it is impossible to make time for a question and answer session), time allocation is relatively limited so it cannot be ascertained whether the message conveyed by the speaker can be received properly by the viewer.²⁶⁻²⁸ Even so, this method can still be an

option in direct community service, especially for the specific population like church member.

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