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## God's Servant as Potential Local Support: An Effort of Getting to Zero HIV and AIDS in East Nusa Tenggara Indonesia

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### ABSTRACT

The increase in the number of HIV cases every year is the reason that HIV / VCT test is essential to prevent HIV and AIDS transmission. An HIV test is the most important entrance to prevention, care, support and treatment. East Nusa Tenggara is unique since most of its residents are very dependent on God's servant in addition to health care. The people consider God's servant someone who is recognized and believed to have a gift from God to cure diseases. They have potential in identifying individuals at risk of HIV and AIDS and support to take VCT. Based on this condition, this research concludes that God servant is potential local support in getting to zero HIV and AIDS.

**Keywords:** God's servant, HIV and AIDS

### INTRODUCTION

The trend of HIV and AIDS incidence in Indonesia is increasing. East Nusa Tenggara, one of the provinces in Indonesia with HIV and AIDS growth, is now at the general epidemic stage. Most of the HIV and AIDS cases are found in housewives. Various programs have been proclaimed to suppress the epidemic rate of HIV and AIDS. In 2014, the Ministry of Health of Indonesia launched the 2015-2019 getting to Zero, in which: 1. No new cases of HIV and AIDS; 2. No more stigma against HIV and AIDS; 3. No more mortality due to HIV and AIDS<sup>(1)</sup>. Various community-based activities have been conducted, involving community and religious leaders, to prevent the spread of HIV and AIDS. However, it is not enough since the epidemic rate of HIV and AIDS has been uncontrollable. Therefore, more efforts are necessary, such as identifying potential local support and direct contact with HIV and AIDS issues.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF GOD'S SERVANT TO REALIZE ZERO HIV AND AIDS

The people of East Nusa Tenggara are dependent on God's servants, in addition to health care, in healing sickness. The status of a God's servant is acknowledged by the community through experiences the community shared regarding miracles and healing performed by the God's servant. The community defines God's servant as someone with the gift of healing others through prayer. The gift comes from faith in Christ. A person with illness will follow any advice the God's servant gives for their recovery. Commonly, one sees a God's servant when they get sick. Some other would see a God's servant when doctor could not cure their illness. In the practice of health services, sometimes there is a clash between medical treatment and the practice of healing performed by God's servant. Findings in the community indicate that many people living with HIV / AIDS no longer consume ARVs because God's servant tell them that they are cured through his prayer.

This happens to God's servants who do not have the knowledge about HIV and AIDS. Meanwhile, God's servants with knowledge about HIV and AIDS provide support for PLWHA to regularly consume ARVs and also for individuals at risk of HIV and AIDS to be willing to do VCT. In addition, God's servants would serve anyone with love. Therefore, they can be empowered to persuade the community to have a positive attitude towards people living with HIV and AIDS. This fact suggests that God's servant's related to HIV and AIDS health literacy is an important factor to support finding a new case, eliminating stigma and preventing mortality due to HIV and AIDS.

Research conducted by Manurung shows that God's servants have the potential to be involved in supporting 3 zeros HIV and AIDS<sup>(2)</sup>. This can be seen from the characteristics of the ministry of the God's servants in which each person who seeks for medication or prayer would honestly answer any question from God's servants for a confession, even if God's servants ask whether they have ever had free sex or been injecting

drugs. They should honestly answer the questions and be willing to do what the God's servants ask them to. This becomes an opportunity for God's servants to detect individuals at risk of HIV and AIDS, provide support to do VCT and motivation to consume ARV.

The ministry performed by God's servants is the service of love so as to make people feel comfortable and not judged when they are being honest. Research conducted by Abara *et al.*<sup>(3)</sup> and Ramirez-Jhonson *et al.*<sup>(4)</sup> describes that church leaders, pastors and congregations have the power of doctrine, care, and mental recovery by using their faith in providing life support for people living with HIV and AIDS.

Stewart's study of African American Church congregations shows that people are willing to take the advice of HIV prevention delivered by church ministers<sup>(5)</sup>. People take the advice because church ministers are very trusted and accepted by the local community. They are trusted and accepted due to their high integrity and faith. Church ministers also have the real power of influencing and driving people to an ultimate goal, namely: to repent, to be reconciled, and to make life better. The practice of healing in the form of prayer service performed by God's servant is very potential in supporting 'getting to zeros'. It is supported by the trust in God's servant to cure illness.

Trust is individual's willingness to depend on God's servant has a positive outlook on the God's servant. Trust is a manifestation of the interaction between individual's psychic condition and the environment. One has a tendency to make a decision based on the choice of a highly trusted person rather than the choice of a less trusted person<sup>(6)</sup>. Trust is one's psychological realm to accept what it is based on expectations of the good behavior of others<sup>(7)</sup>. According to McKnight, Choudhury, and Kacmar<sup>(8)s</sup>, the dimension of trust is divided into two, namely:

- (1) Trusting belief is the extent to which individual believes in and has faith in God's servant in certain situation based on the perceptions of God's servant's goodwill, integrity and competence.
- (2) Trusting intention is a deliberate whereby individual is individually prepared to depend on God's servant in certain situation based on willingness at any risk and the willingness to provide any information needed and take the advice from the God's servant.

The trust in God's servant is influenced by the individual's perception of the reputation of the God's servant. Reputation is an attribute given to God's servant based on information from other sources. Reputation is important to build individual's trust in God's servant when individual has no personal experience regarding the service of God's servant. Positive information about God's servant can reduce the perception of risk of insecurity during service. This can help increase individual trust in God's servant's competence, goodwill and integrity. The trust obtained from an individual becomes God's servant's potential capital to identify individuals at risk of HIV and AIDS, provide support to do VCT so that treatment can be promptly given, as well as prevent contagion and early mortality. Therefore, it is necessary for the government to involve God's servants as a potential local support in achieving getting to zero HIV and AIDS.

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