

Original Research

Stress Level in Ensuring Health Measures Compliance in Local Religious Ceremonies During COVID-19 Pandemic among Pecalang in Bali



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Article Info	Abstract
Article history: Received: 24 October 2022 Accepted: 28 April 2023	<p>Introduction: The global COVID-19 pandemic attack, especially on Bali Island, is not only causing significant loss of life but also has profoundly transformed the way of living. This situation eventually restricted the participation of Hindhus in religious ceremony activities in Bali due to strict mass gatherings measures. This study aimed to examine the stress level among <i>pecalang</i> (local security officers in a native administrative area in Bali) in ensuring health measures compliance in faith-based ceremonies during the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>Methods: This was a quantitative-descriptive study involving 292 <i>pecalang</i> in Susut District, Bangli. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select eligible participants. Fourteen stress-scale statement items in Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS 42) Questionnaire used to collect primary data from the participants. Data were then analyzed using a univariate analysis in SPSS version 25.</p> <p>Results: The majority of participants, 184 subjects (63%), were aged between 25 to 39 years (early adulthood stage). Sixty-two percent of the participants (181) graduated from senior high school. The majority of them were also working in private companies (141: 48.3%). Findings revealed that the majority of participants were experiencing a normal level of stress (180; 61.6%).</p> <p>Conclusion: The majority of participants perceived normal level of stress in ensuring health measures compliance in local spiritual ceremonies during the COVID-19 pandemic.</p>
Keywords: Pecalang, COVID-19, health measure, stress	

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INTRODUCTION

The global COVID-19 pandemic attack, especially on Bali Island, is not only causing significant loss of life but also has profoundly transformed the way of living, from human interaction to ways to connect with God [1]. After the announcement of the establishment of a “new normal” scenario to coexist with this novel virus attack, the entire life on earth has been changed completely. Adjustments are mandated in all aspects of life by embracing and integrating health into everyday activities, including faith-based ceremonies. *Pecalang*, local security officers in the native administrative area in Bali, present a substantial role in preventing COVID-19 transmission during the local Hindhu rituals [2].

Balinese faith-based ceremonies are sacred processions to express gratitude and worship the God Almighty for his blessings and graces. Hindus obediently embrace their customary norms and values developed within their community as an element of the local social life during their ceremony celebration. A prominent structural or technical characteristic of *yadnya* (holy sacrifice) in Bali is the drive to carry the previously divided tasks responsibly. Faith communities encounter significant transformation in executing the faith-based processions after the ferocious attack of the COVID-19 virus, shaping a novel way to connect with the Creator. This virus has claimed a very large number of lives worldwide. Portraying its detrimental effect, COVID-19 is agreed to be a world extraordinary event. Finally, the rapid virus

transmission in Indonesia and Bali has pushed the government to issue strict policies and measures, especially due to its unprecedented impact on almost all aspects of human life [3].

Local stakeholders and authorities have set several measures to manage faith-based ceremonies in Bali during the pandemic. The number of participants in faith gatherings or faith-related activities was strictly limited. No more than 50 participants were allowed. Additionally, they were mandated to comply the pandemic health protocols: wearing masks, washing hands properly, and maintaining a safe distance. The native local village authorities are committed to support adequate health measures implementation during the local spiritual ceremonies. Thus, the role of *pecalang*, as the local security officers in Bali, is highly demanded to ensure health measures compliance [4].

The establishment of a native customary local security unit, named *Pecalang*, had been mentioned in Regional Regulation No. 4 of 2019 concerning Traditional Villages (Bali Native Villages). *Pecalang*, essentially serves as local officers who secure a village area, especially during the local faith-based ceremonies. *Pecalang* is elected and dismissed by the village's authorities according to the *paruman* (internal village forum). *Pecalang* could analogize as security means employed to achieve peace, attain welfare, and bring contentment to the local community [5]. *Pecalang* has been ascertained as a powerful resource for securing local ceremonies in the villages. They are also acknowledged as local qualified forces for crowd security management.

Therefore, the presence of *pecalang* becomes crucial. Further, *pecalang* has the legal power to control and prevent practices that may threaten Balinese culture [6].

Pecalang generally functions as the controller who secures the entire course of religious-based ceremonial activities in the village area [7]. However, they demanded to work harder during the pandemic. Since the establishment of health measures nationwide, *pecalang* also needs to ensure compliance with health measures during the pandemic. The additional assignment included truthfully confirming and strictly ensuring the implementation of the established health protocols during the faith-based activities to break the chain of COVID-19 transmission [8].

The aforementioned facts accentuated the hindrance in conducting faith-based ceremonies during the pandemic in Bali. Restrictions on the national policies mandated mass gatherings control in the faith-based ceremony. Therefore, the context of *meyadnya* (holy sacrifice with sincere feeling) is urgently required to be systematically organized according to the mutually agreed policies [9]. However, most of the local community has poor comprehension of the importance of health measures for their health and safety. This situation eventually puts more burden on the *pecalang*. They expressed this overwhelming situation and a higher level of stress due to the increase of their duties and responsibilities. They were mandated to be active in reprimanding, advising, and providing proper direction for the member of the community who violates or do not comply the health protocols [10].

METHODS

This was a quantitative study with a descriptive design. We investigated the stress level among *pecalang* in ensuring proper health measures implementation in local religious ceremonies during the COVID-19 pandemic. We enrolled *pecalang* who met the inclusion and exclusion criteria from Susut District, Bangli. Inclusion criteria is *Pecalang* who are able to use smartphones and are able to apply Google Forms independently; *Pecalang* who are able to read independently and Exclusion criteria is *Pecalang* who refused to participate became respondents. A non-probability sampling (purposive sampling) technique was employed to select eligible subjects. Subsequently, the primary data was collected from 292 eligible subjects using a questionnaire. In this study using Fourteen stress-scale statement items in the Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS 42) Questionnaire used to collect primary data from the participants. The data were then analyzed using a univariate analysis in SPSS version 25.

The study approval was granted by the Research Ethic Committee of Buleleng College of Health Sciences through an ethical clearance letter of 124/EC-KEPK SB/IV/2022 issued on April 30th, 2022.

RESULTS

Participant's Characteristics

The majority of participants, 184 *pecalang* (63.0%), were classified into the early adulthood stage (25 to 39 years). Thirty-seven percent of the participants (108

pecalang) were categorized into the late adulthood phase. Participants were graduated from Senior High School (181: 63,0%), university (82; 28.1%), Junior High School (20; 6.8 %) and Elementary School (9; 3.1%). The majority of participants were working in private companies (141: 48.3%). Eighty-seven *pecalang* (29.8%) were working as Indonesian National Armed Forces/Indonesian Civil Servants/Teachers. The rest of them (64; 21.9%) were working as

farmers.

The Stress Level

Table 1 illustrates that from the total of 292 *pecalang* in Susut District, Bangli, 61.6% of them were experiencing the normal level of stress in ensuring health measures compliance during the faith-based ceremonies in the pandemic era.

Table 1

Frequency Distribution of *Pecalang* in Susut District, Bangli, according to the Stress Level

Stress Level	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Normal	180	61.6
Mild	56	19.2
Moderate	49	16.8
Severe	6	2.1
Very Severe	1	0.3
Total	292	100

DISCUSSION

Findings reported the normal level of stress among the majority of the *pecalang* (180 participants; 61.6%), characterized by imperturbable feeling, no difficulty in relaxing, not being quickly offended, and no tense or nervous feeling. Statistical analysis also yielded mild stress levels among 56 participants (19.2%) marked by aggression over trivial things and irritability. Forty-nine participants (16.8%) reported a moderate level of stress with annoyed feelings at times, occasional restlessness, and constant irritability. Further, six participants were on

severe stress levels (2.1%) that portrayed by frequent exhaustion due to fatigue, frequent offensiveness, constant irritability, and nervousness. One participant (0.3%) experienced very severe stress that reported with constant irritability, emotionally sensitive tendency, difficulty in relaxing after a disturbing situation, constant aggression over insignificant things, and poor ability to deal with setbacks successfully.

These findings were similar to a study of Safety Protection of *Pecalang* in Anticipating COVID-19 in Bali [11]. They revealed that the majority of participants were experiencing normal stress levels. Hence, they were

expected to manage their stress through therapeutic accompaniment from stress experts provided by the village authorities or psychologists provided by the government or related official boards to reduce the overwhelming tension [12].

Pecalang stated several barriers in ensuring health measures compliance among the locals. They observed a lack of compliance and negligence of the purpose of the health protocols establishment. They also expressed frustration in splitting their work to engage the community in implementing health protocols properly during the spiritual ceremonies. These situations eventually triggered stress and exhaustion.

STUDY LIMITATION

The researcher realizes that this study has a number of limitations which must be taken into account for future work. These limitations include requiring quite a long time to collect the results of the 292 questionnaires filled out by *pecalang* via the *Google form*.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicate that there is Findings yielded normal stress level among *pecalang* in Susut District, Bangli.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

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