

Spiritual embrace: A source of strength for caregivers in a mental health crisis



Letter to the Editor

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Corresponding author: Rikas Saputra;
Email: rikassaputra_uin@radenfatah.ac.id

Rikas Saputra, M.PD.¹ , Setyorini, M.PD.², Manah Rasmanah, M.Si.¹, Nuraida, M.AG.¹ and Dominikus David Biondi Situmorang, M.PD., M.Si.³ 

¹Department of Islamic counselling, Faculty of Da'wah and Communication, Universitas Islam Negeri Radenfatah, South Sumatra, Indonesia; ²Department of guidance and Counselling, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana, Salatiga, Indonesia and ³Department of Guidance and Counselling, Faculty of Education and Language, Atma Jaya Catholic University of Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia

Dear Editor,

I have carefully read the previous study entitled “Spirituality Moderates the Relationship Between Cancer Carer Burden and Depression,” which opened our eyes to the importance of spirituality in caregiving (La et al. 2023). Interestingly, this study showed that spirituality is not just an additional aspect but a significant influence that can moderate the emotional burden experienced by cancer carers. This proves that spirituality has the power to reduce the risk of depression, which is often overlooked in caregiving practices (Hebert et al. 2006; Selman et al. 2018).

Amidst today's increasing mental health challenges, recognizing the vital role of spirituality as a psychological resource is crucial (Hill et al. 2000). This spiritual strength acts as a valuable tool for caregivers, enabling them to deal more effectively with mental health crises – both their own and those of the patients they care for. This strength paves the way for a more comprehensive and in-depth approach to caregiving, which not only addresses the physical aspects but also provides strong emotional and spiritual support in the face of today's mental health challenges.

While it is recognized that spirituality plays an important role, there are still significant gaps in its application in caregiving practice (Christie et al. 2018; Aoun et al. 2017). Most training and support programs for caregivers still need to incorporate spiritual elements into their coping strategies fully. Additionally, the lack of research explicitly linking spirituality to caregivers' mental health outcomes indicates the urgency for further research in this area (Hebert et al. 2007). This underscores the importance of integrating spirituality more broadly and structurally in caregiving programs to fill the existing gaps and improve the effectiveness of the support provided to caregivers.

Based on experience in guidance and counselling, the researcher proposes a unique training program for caregivers that involves a module on the importance of spirituality (Kang et al. 2021). This program could include meditation sessions, in-depth discussions on spiritual values, and techniques for integrating spiritual practices into daily routines (Shonin et al. 2014). Key to this solution is an in-depth understanding of how spirituality can be effectively applied in caregiving practices. In addition, further research is needed to explore how spiritual practices can be concretely integrated into caregiving protocols, thus creating a more holistic approach and supporting the mental well-being of caregivers (Marín-Maicas et al. 2021).

This approach carries important implications in creating a holistic and supportive caregiving environment, emphasizing the importance of caregivers' mental health paralleling their physical health. By implementing this approach, not only will the quality of life of the caregivers improve but it will also improve the quality of care provided to the patients they care for (Deeken et al. 2003). Furthermore, it encourages wider recognition of spiritual values in healthcare practice, emphasizing the importance of caring for all aspects of an individual: physical, mental, and spiritual (Puchalski et al. 2014). This approach paves the way towards more inclusive and holistic healthcare, which values and supports the whole person's well-being.

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