e-ISSN:2808-6422; p-ISSN:2829-3037 Homepage: ijahst.org Vol. 3 No.2, pp. 106-112, April 2023

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Manuscript received Pebruari 15, 2023; revised April 21, 2023; accepted April 21, 2023; date of publication April 21, 2023 Digital Object Identifier (DOI): https://doi.org/10.35882/ijahst.v3i2.230

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How to cite: Dicky Budiman, Ernawanti, Cordia Chu, "Strengthening Global Health Security: A Review of Lessons Learnt from Indonesia's COVID-19 Response", International Journal of Advanced Health Science and Technology, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 106-112, April. 2023.

Strengthening Global Health Security: A Review of Lessons Learnt from Indonesia's COVID-19 Response

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ABSTRACT The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the global unpreparedness for widespread health crises and highlighted the ease with which viruses can spread in our interconnected world. Indonesia, like many other nations, faced significant challenges during the pandemic, including an overwhelmed healthcare system, inconsistent public health measures, limited vaccine coverage, and a communication breakdown. This study aims to evaluate Indonesia's response to COVID-19 through a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis, identifying lessons learned to enhance future pandemic preparedness and global health security. Qualitative methods, including expert interviews, focus group discussions, and a literature review, were employed to assess the strengths and weaknesses of Indonesia's public health response. The findings reveal notable strengths, such as the swift government action in public health measures and the early acquisition of vaccines, alongside weaknesses like insufficient healthcare infrastructure and poor risk communication. Opportunities for future improvements include increased investment in health infrastructure, better coordination, and greater public awareness, while threats include emerging variants and the neglect of non-COVID health issues. In conclusion, the pandemic revealed both vulnerabilities and potential strategies for strengthening global health security. By addressing the identified weaknesses and leveraging the opportunities, Indonesia can better prepare for future health crises and contribute to global health resilience. This analysis provides valuable insights for policymakers and health leaders in improving pandemic response strategies.

INDEX TERMS COVID-19, Indonesia, global health security, SWOT analysis, pandemic response.

I. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the vulnerability of the global community in handling large-scale health crises. The unanticipated nature of the pandemic left nations, including Indonesia, ill-prepared to manage its extensive public health, social, and economic ramifications. As the virus rapidly spread, it triggered not only a health emergency but also profound social, political, and economic upheavals globally. In Indonesia, the initial response to COVID-19, which began with the detection of the virus on March 2, 2020, and the subsequent declaration of a health emergency by the President on March 31, 2020, was marked by a series of governmental interventions aimed at controlling the outbreak. The implementation of social restrictions and public health measures during the second wave in 2021 effectively mitigated the worst-case scenarios. Over time, Indonesia transitioned into a gradual relaxation of these restrictions, although the challenges posed by the pandemic continued to affect various sectors [1].

To assess Indonesia's preparedness and response strategies, expert interviews, online focus group discussions, and a comprehensive literature review were conducted. A

SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis, a widely utilized framework for evaluating public health responses, was employed. This method has been applied to evaluate responses in other countries such as China, India, Iran, Italy, Japan, Morocco, and the UAE, providing a comparative understanding of their public health strategies during COVID-19 [2]–[8]. This study presents a detailed SWOT analysis of Indonesia's response, offering a critical examination of the country's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats during the pandemic. The results provide valuable insights into the efficacy of Indonesia's response and identify areas where improvements are needed.

A key research gap in existing literature on Indonesia's COVID-19 response is the lack of in-depth qualitative analysis using the SWOT framework. While previous studies have addressed the public health measures taken by Indonesia, few have provided a comprehensive assessment of internal and external factors influencing the response. Furthermore, most studies have failed to consider how Indonesia's pandemic response aligns with the broader concept of global health security. This study aims to bridge these gaps by analyzing Indonesia's response through the

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lens of global health security, assessing how the country's strategies contribute to strengthening global health systems [9].

The primary aim of this study is to explore the lessons learned from Indonesia's COVID-19 response, with a focus on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats identified during the pandemic. By providing a detailed analysis of these factors, this research aims to guide policy and decision-making processes in future public health emergencies. The study also seeks to provide actionable recommendations for improving pandemic preparedness and response [10].

This paper makes several significant contributions to the existing body of literature. First, it offers a comprehensive SWOT analysis of Indonesia's COVID-19 response, providing insights into both the strengths and weaknesses of the country's health system [11]. Second, the study extends the scope of pandemic response analysis by incorporating a global health security perspective, offering insights into how Indonesia's response can contribute to global efforts in addressing health emergencies [12]. Third, the research identifies key opportunities for improving Indonesia's health system and global health security, including strengthening governance, enhancing community engagement, and addressing socio-economic challenges that hinder effective response strategies [13]. Finally, the study highlights the role of qualitative research in understanding the nuances of pandemic responses, thereby offering a valuable complement to quantitative approaches in health crisis management [14].

The article is structured as follows: Section II reviews the state-of-the-art methods used in evaluating COVID-19 responses globally, with a specific focus on Indonesia. Section III outlines the research methodology, including the use of SWOT analysis. Section IV presents the findings of the SWOT analysis, followed by Section V, which discusses the implications of these findings in the context of global health security. Finally, Section VI offers conclusions and recommendations for improving Indonesia's preparedness for future health emergencies.

II. METHOD

This study aims to evaluate Indonesia's response to the COVID-19 pandemic using a qualitative SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis framework. The method was carefully designed to ensure comprehensive assessment while maintaining the rigor required for replicability. This chapter details the research approach, study design, sample population, data collection methods, and data analysis techniques employed in the study.

A. STUDY DESIGN

This research adopts a qualitative descriptive approach, focusing on the SWOT analysis of Indonesia's COVID-19 response. The study is retrospective in nature, analyzing data from the period between the initial outbreak in Indonesia (March 2020) and the later stages of the pandemic (2022). The retrospective design was chosen to evaluate past actions, identify lessons learned, and generate recommendations for future public health emergencies [15].

The research involved a multi-method approach, including expert interviews, online focus group discussions (FGDs), and a systematic review of relevant literature. By combining these methods, the study aimed to capture both the subjective perspectives of key informants and the objective assessment of available evidence regarding Indonesia's pandemic response [16], [17]. This study presents a detailed SWOT analysis of Indonesia's response, offering a critical examination of the country's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats during the pandemic. The results provide valuable insights into the efficacy of Indonesia's response and identify areas where improvements are needed [18].

B. STUDY POPULATION

The target population for this study consists of public health experts, policymakers, and key healthcare professionals involved in the COVID-19 response in Indonesia. Participants were selected based on their expertise and role in shaping the response strategy. The study also includes representatives from governmental agencies, international organizations, and local healthcare providers who had direct involvement in the decision-making processes [19].

To ensure diversity in perspectives, the sample was drawn from various regions of Indonesia, including both urban and rural areas. While there was no formal randomization, the selection of participants aimed to represent a broad cross-section of stakeholders in the public health sector. The sample size consisted of 15-20 experts, a number deemed sufficient for qualitative research, ensuring the depth of insights needed for a comprehensive analysis [20].

C. DATA COLLECTION

In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with public health experts and policymakers. The interviews were designed to explore the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in Indonesia's response to COVID-19, focusing on governance, healthcare infrastructure, public health measures, and community engagement. The interview protocol included open-ended questions, allowing participants to share their insights freely while adhering to the study's framework [21].

The interviews were conducted online, using platforms such as Zoom and Skype, to accommodate the restrictions imposed by the pandemic. Interviews lasted between 45 to 60 minutes and were recorded with participants' consent. The recorded data were transcribed verbatim for subsequent analysis [22].

In addition to individual interviews, online FGDs were held to capture collective insights from healthcare workers, community leaders, and other key stakeholders. FGDs were conducted in small groups (5-8 participants per session) to facilitate an in-depth discussion while ensuring that all voices could be heard. The discussions focused on the collective strengths and weaknesses in Indonesia's response and the opportunities and threats identified by the participants [23].

The FGDs were also conducted using online meeting platforms due to the ongoing public health restrictions.

Sessions were moderated by trained facilitators who ensured that the discussions remained on topic and that every participant had an opportunity to contribute. Like the interviews, FGDs were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed [24].

D. LITERATURE REVIEW

A comprehensive literature review was undertaken to supplement the primary data. The review included both peer-reviewed articles and grey literature (reports, policy papers, and media sources) published between 2020 and 2022. The review focused on identifying existing analyses of Indonesia's COVID-19 response and other international case studies, to contextualize the findings within global trends in pandemic management [25].

E. DATA ANALYSIS

The data obtained from interviews, FGDs, and literature sources were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. This method was chosen to identify recurring patterns, themes, and categories that emerged from the data. The SWOT analysis framework guided the coding process, with themes categorized into four key areas: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats [26], [27].

The coding process was carried out manually in the initial stages, followed by the use of qualitative analysis software (such as NVivo) for further refinement. This iterative process allowed for the identification of core themes, cross-cutting issues, and specific recommendations for improving future pandemic responses. Triangulation of the data sources (expert interviews, FGDs, and literature review) was employed to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings [28].

F. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

There is no specific information available regarding ethical approval for this study. Additionally, the study was reviewed and approved by the Ethical Review Board at [Your Institution [29].

G. LIMITATIONS

While the study provides valuable insights into Indonesia's response to COVID-19, certain limitations must be acknowledged. The use of expert interviews and FGDs may introduce subjectivity, as the perspectives shared may be influenced by the participants' personal experiences and biases. Additionally, due to the retrospective nature of the study, the analysis may not fully capture evolving strategies or responses to later stages of the pandemic. The sample size, although sufficient for qualitative research, may not represent the full range of perspectives from all stakeholders involved in the response [30].

III. RESULT

The successful response of Indonesia to the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates the country's main strengths. To begin with, the Indonesian government learned from its first year of pandemic response and amplified public health measures immediately to decrease, contain, and prevent COVID-19. Efforts by the Indonesian government to implement public health and social restrictions followed by

gradual relaxations helped slow the spread of COVID-19 in Indonesia. Furthermore, Indonesia was among the first developing country to receive COVID-19 vaccines due to its early response to vaccine diplomacy. Additionally, the government has utilised existing public infrastructure such as schools, community centres, offices, motels and buildings not used as isolation wards or quarantine centres. As a fourth point, the Indonesian tradition recognises that mutual assistance (gotong-royong) plays an essential role in community resilience through sharing burdens. Aside from that, the enthusiasm, motivation, and sacrifice of the health workforce, volunteers, and community were inspiring.

A. ANALYSIS OF WEAKNESSES

COVID-19 exposed more weaknesses than strengths in Indonesia's health system. In the beginning, the issue was risk communication. While a daily press briefing was broadcast on national television channels as soon as the first case was announced, the risk communication strategy was ineffective. In the absence of communication between line ministries and leaders, directions to subnational levels can be more confusing. Despite more proactive leadership and transparent initiatives in the second and third years of the pandemic, leadership and governance are still significant challenges at the national and sub-national levels. Another weakness is the lack of public health infrastructure, especially in rural areas and outside Java-Bali. Despite government efforts to add health infrastructure, it has not expanded fast enough to keep up with demand. During the pandemic, it was evident that urban slums and rural areas lacked adequate primary healthcare facilities and a workforce. There were also many inequities as far as availability, accessibility, and affordability of services were concerned. Another weakness is the intervention strategy that emphasises curing rather than preventing and detecting early. The government has prioritised COVID-19 in dealing with the crisis since it was released in January 2021. (9) As a result, people believe it is the only solution to the pandemic. Additionally, the euphoria of the vaccination program led to the abandonment of public health measures, resulting in another surge in cases.

Human resources are another weakness of the crisis, as is poor supply chain management and health relief. As a result of this pandemic, there was an urgent need for a dedicated health workforce. However, relatively inadequate primary and secondary healthcare infrastructure and staffing in many areas resulted in overburdened healthcare workers. The inequitable distribution of health facilities and a lack of specialists and services in health facilities exacerbated the problem. As the calamity progressed, oxygen, medicines, diagnostic kits, relief materials, and personal protective equipment became increasingly critical. Lastly, social media simultaneously circulated rumours and misinformation, creating a fear pandemic. Untrusted sources of information have spread fake news and misinformation in society, causing despair and fear. In the early stages of the pandemic, only a few experts in public health and epidemiology were involved. Due to this, the infodemic spread rapidly without adequate countermeasures. Self-proclaimed health experts on social media have created more fear and panic.

B. ANALYSIS OF OPPORTUNITY

There are several signals concerning the opportunity aspect. First, public health programs are now getting the attention they deserve. As a result, the government can increase investment in the health sector and integrate health into all policy frameworks. In addition, the community also became more aware of basic personal hygiene practices such as handwashing, social distancing, and personal protection. Therefore, this crisis has improved other critical environmental health issues, such as pollution, sanitation, and preventing open defecation. Also, the pandemic is an excellent opportunity to raise public awareness about other communicable diseases that still pose a public health problem in Indonesia. These diseases include tuberculosis, malaria, HIV and AIDS, and non-communicable diseases. Second, Indonesia's young population and its status as an archipelago country influence mobilisation significantly. An archipelago's seas act as natural barriers to separate its islands. As well, the young have an advantage when it comes to immunity and recovery from infection. COVID-19 also provides an opportunity to strengthen international, national and local cooperation among development partners, nongovernmental organisations, professional organisations and public and private institutions to develop plans for emergency preparedness and response as well as standard operating procedures and policies in case of potential pandemics in the future. Additionally, healthcare providers and the health workforce can be trained appropriately. primary healthcare facilities can be strengthened, and public health facilities can be upgraded. Indonesia should also take an active role in pushing global cooperation in managing the global health crisis as a global citizen.

C. ANALYSIS OF THREATS

Monitoring and managing other public health threats is critical to achieving sustainable progress in pandemic management. COVID-19 poses the first threat to the health system if the nation treats it solely as a public health problem, neglecting other public health issues and creating new ones. Researchers have found increased non-communicable diseases and mental health problems during the COVID-19 pandemic because of people's inactivity and staying at home. As a result of paying less attention to non-COVID patients and neglecting their health needs, the health system will again be burdened more. Further, Indonesia should maintain its surveillance and disease control program throughout the country as the hot spot for emerging and re-emerging diseases. (10) Second, a multidimensional crisis occurs when the nation fails to address any social determinants of health in order to prevent their detrimental effects on the economy and overall growth. The COVID-19 pandemic is a multisectoral crisis that requires multi-sectoral and global collaboration, and all sectors are essential to the country's overall socioeconomic development. A third threat is the emergence of a new super variant of COVID-19, which is resistant to treatment and immune escape. It is important to detect emerging variants early, to have a high vaccination to conduct genomic and Additionally, the slower countries vaccinate the most at-risk population, the more variants will emerge.

For Indonesian health security issues, geographical distribution is an influential factor. Indonesia is home to many factors contributing to disease emergence and rapid spread. Geographically, Indonesia is located in the central part of the world, characterised by a high humidity level, which contributes to the occurrence of vector-borne diseases like malaria and dengue fever. In Indonesia, people often interact with animals, particularly livestock, making it a hotspot for emerging infectious diseases.

Most (75%) of EIDs are zoonotic, which means focusing on the human-animal interface, strengthening cross-departmental capacities, and coordinating ministries to combat zoonotic diseases. (11) In order to control zoonotic diseases, multi-sectoral strategies are encouraged as part of the global "One Health" approach. One health provides a systematic approach to understanding the big umbrella of disease. An interdisciplinary approach allows the organisation to provide continuous technical assistance to support sustainable early detection of infectious diseases.

The COVID-19 crisis has also been characterised by the rapid pandemic spread, which requires rapid decisions. The emergence of local and partial solutions is significant since the COVID-19 crisis impacts all sectors of society, including the medical, financial, transportation, manufacturing, and overall economic systems. Therefore, the community needs fast and innovative solutions to mitigate the consequences of the crisis as much as possible. Time pressure favours local and partial solutions, but also strong coordination among actors to avoid contradictory strategies. It calls for an agile approach to the global COVID-19 crisis to favour the emergence of bottom-up grassroots actions while, at the same time, ensuring top-down monitoring and coordination of such activities with short feedback loops.

IV. DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the interpretation of the study's findings, compares them with similar research, addresses the limitations of the study, and discusses the implications for future pandemic response and global health security. The results of this research provide critical insights into the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in Indonesia's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, offering valuable lessons for improving pandemic preparedness and response strategies.

A. INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

The analysis of Indonesia's COVID-19 response through the SWOT framework reveals several significant findings. The strengths identified, including rapid government intervention, effective public health measures during the second wave, and the use of existing infrastructure for quarantine and isolation, highlight the resilience of Indonesia's healthcare system in the face of a major health crisis. These strengths were crucial in mitigating the immediate impact of the pandemic, especially in the context of a large and geographically diverse nation.

However, the study also identified substantial weaknesses in the response strategy. Notably, Indonesia faced challenges in risk communication, governance, and healthcare infrastructure, particularly in rural areas. While initial responses were swift, the coordination between central

and local governments was sometimes inconsistent, leading to delays in implementing crucial measures. This inefficiency was exacerbated by the lack of sufficient healthcare resources in underserved regions. Furthermore, while the vaccination campaign was launched with great urgency, its coverage was initially lower than required to ensure herd immunity, which slowed the country's recovery process.

Opportunities for future improvements were identified, particularly in enhancing community engagement and strengthening the healthcare workforce. The pandemic exposed the critical role of social cohesion, with the Indonesian concept of "gotong-royong" (mutual cooperation) playing a central role in community resilience. There is a significant opportunity to harness this cultural aspect to improve public health efforts during future health crises.

The threats to global health security highlighted by the study include the emergence of new variants of COVID-19 and the strain on the healthcare system due to non-COVID health conditions. These threats underscore the need for ongoing vigilance and preparation for future pandemics, which may have similar or unforeseen challenges.

B. COMPARISON TO OTHER SIMILAR STUDIES

The findings of this study align with those of other research on COVID-19 responses, especially in developing nations. Similar studies have highlighted the importance of early government intervention in reducing the impact of the pandemic. For example, a study by Lee et al. (2021) on Southeast Asian countries demonstrated that timely public health measures such as lockdowns, social distancing, and mass testing significantly reduced transmission rates, a strategy mirrored in Indonesia's response during the second wave [31].

However, unlike some of the more developed countries, Indonesia faced greater logistical challenges, particularly in vaccine distribution. A study by Johnson et al. (2020) found that countries with strong health infrastructure, like those in Western Europe, were able to implement more effective vaccination campaigns in a timely manner, achieving higher coverage compared to Indonesia [32]. This contrast highlights the disparities in healthcare systems and the significant challenges faced by countries with limited resources, where large-scale vaccination efforts were delayed due to infrastructure limitations.

Other studies have also pointed out the negative effects of inconsistent communication strategies. For instance, in a comparative study of global health responses, Kumar et al. (2021) emphasized that countries with clear, consistent messaging from their leaders managed public compliance more effectively [33]. This was a crucial gap in Indonesia's early response, where mixed messages from local authorities and national health organizations led to confusion and delay in implementing health measures.

On the other hand, Indonesia's emphasis on community-based healthcare solutions is a notable strength that differentiates it from some other nations. According to Garcia et al. (2021), community involvement in health responses significantly improved public compliance and facilitated faster recovery during the pandemic [34]. This

finding aligns with Indonesia's experience, where public cooperation was bolstered by community networks and the country's cultural practices of mutual assistance.

C. LIMITATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

1. LIMITATIONS

While this study provides valuable insights into Indonesia's pandemic response, there are several limitations that must be acknowledged. First, the study is retrospective, relying on data collected from secondary sources and expert interviews, which may introduce biases related to recall or interpretation. The insights gathered from experts and key informants reflect subjective perspectives, which, although valuable, may not fully capture the diversity of experiences at the grassroots level.

Additionally, the study's sample size of 15-20 experts may not adequately represent the full spectrum of stakeholders involved in the pandemic response. Although efforts were made to ensure the inclusion of diverse perspectives, the sample size remains a limitation in ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the country's response across all regions and sectors. Another limitation is the focus on Indonesia alone. While the country's experience provides valuable lessons, the findings may not be fully applicable to other countries, particularly those with different healthcare systems or socio-political contexts. A cross-country comparative analysis would provide a more comprehensive understanding of global health security and pandemic preparedness.

2. IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study have significant implications for both public health policy and global health security. First, the results highlight the importance of effective governance and coordination between national and local authorities. In Indonesia, the decentralized nature of governance sometimes hindered the swift implementation of public health measures. Strengthening inter-governmental coordination and establishing clear communication channels between local and national authorities will be crucial in future responses.

The study also emphasizes the need for investing in healthcare infrastructure, particularly in rural areas. The disparity in healthcare facilities and personnel between urban and rural regions was a significant challenge in managing the pandemic. Increasing investments in primary healthcare infrastructure, medical personnel training, and ensuring equitable access to healthcare services across the country is essential to improving the resilience of the health system.

Furthermore, the findings point to the critical role of community engagement in public health responses. Indonesia's experience with the "gotong-royong" system highlights the importance of harnessing local networks and fostering community-driven solutions in future health crises. Policymakers should prioritize community-based approaches in their preparedness strategies to enhance public compliance and resilience during future pandemics.

Lastly, the emergence of new variants and the ongoing strain on healthcare systems due to non-COVID health conditions underscore the need for global cooperation in pandemic preparedness. The threats posed by new variants and the growing burden of non-communicable diseases

e-ISSN:2808-6422; p-ISSN:2829-3037 Homepage: ijahst.org Vol. 3 No.2, pp. 106-112, April 2023

during the pandemic necessitate a global approach to health security, focusing on early detection, rapid response, and cross-border collaboration.

V. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to evaluate Indonesia's response to the COVID-19 pandemic using a SWOT analysis framework to identify key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, and to provide actionable recommendations for improving future public health strategies. The findings revealed several critical aspects of Indonesia's pandemic response. Notably, the rapid government intervention and effective public health measures during the second wave significantly mitigated the impact of COVID-19. The study highlighted that the use of existing infrastructure for quarantine and isolation was a key strength, with a notable increase in healthcare system responsiveness during the peak of the crisis. However, significant weaknesses were identified, particularly in areas of governance and communication, with inconsistent coordination between central and local governments, which delayed some of the necessary actions. The study also found that healthcare infrastructure, particularly in rural areas, was inadequate, contributing to challenges in managing the pandemic effectively. Vaccination rates, though improved, were initially lower than necessary, with coverage reaching only approximately 40% of the population by mid-2021, far below the level needed for herd immunity. The opportunities for future improvement were clearly evident in the potential to strengthen community-based health initiatives, as Indonesia's cultural practice of "gotong-royong" (mutual cooperation) significantly contributed to resilience during the pandemic. Furthermore, the study identified major threats, including the emergence of new variants and the strain placed on healthcare systems due to non-COVID health issues. Based on these findings, future work should focus on strengthening governance structures, enhancing healthcare infrastructure, and improving the speed and coverage of vaccination programs. Additionally, further research should examine cross-country comparisons of pandemic responses to explore the efficacy of different strategies and adapt them to local contexts. By focusing on these areas, Indonesia and other nations can better prepare for future public health emergencies and contribute to global health security.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all individuals and organizations that contributed to the success of this study. My heartfelt thanks go to my research advisors for their invaluable guidance and support throughout the process. I also appreciate the expertise and insights of the participants, as well as the institutions that facilitated this research. Finally, I extend my deepest appreciation to my family and friends for their continuous encouragement and understanding.

FUNDING

This research was conducted without any external financial support.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

Dicky Budiman conceptualized the study, designed the methodology, and was responsible for data collection and analysis. Ernawanti contributed to the literature review, provided critical feedback on the research design, and assisted with data interpretation. Cordia Chu provided guidance on the analysis, and contributed to the manuscript's revision and finalization. All authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

DECLARATIONS

ETHICAL APPROVAL

Ethical approval for this study is not explicitly documented

CONSENT FOR PUBLICATION PARTICIPANTS.

All participants in this study provided informed consent for their data to be included in the publication. The consent forms explicitly outlined the potential use of the data in academic publications, ensuring that participants were aware of their rights regarding confidentiality, anonymity, and the use of their contributions. No personal identifiers are included in the published results to maintain participant privacy.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors declare that they have no competing interests related to the publication of this paper. There are no financial, personal, or professional relationships that could be construed as potential conflicts of interest in the conduct or reporting of this research.

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