

## **ASSESSING FAITH-BASED STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION AGAINST PEOPLE WHO USE DRUGS IN INDONESIA**

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### **Background:**

Religions play an important aspect in Indonesian life, as shown by most Indonesians who considered religion important in their lives (95%). This predisposition to following religious teaching might result negatively for people who use drugs (PWUD) considering many religions deem drug use as a sin. This research aims to examine how PWUD perceive religious teachings and their experiences interacting with religious leaders.

### **Methods:**

This study used a mix-method approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data were collected using a survey with purposive sampling of 198 participants whose religious beliefs represent six big religions in Indonesia (Islam, Catholic, Protestant, Buddha, Hindu, and Confucianism). Researchers conducted Focus Group Discussions (FGD) with 12 religious leaders to complement the data.

### **Results:**

PWUD faced discrimination in the form of being abandoned by their circle of friends (58%), excluded from communal events (50%), prohibited from holding positions in religious communities (22%), forced to undergo exorcism (9%), and used as a negative example in preaching (7%). Those experiences contributed to them feeling guilty (77%), ashamed (69%), and worthless (69%). Only 24% seek assistance from religious leaders, while others stated that reaching out felt embarrassing (22%) and unthinkable (19%). Their hopes for faith-based organizations and religious leaders are for them to actively help PWUD (43%), reach out and guide PWUD (33%), accept PWUD (12%), and be non-judgmental (12%).

### **Conclusion:**

PWUD still experience faith-based discrimination and the lack of tolerant narratives of drug use exacerbates their condition. This research underlines the importance of involving faith-based organizations in activities that could support PWUD, such as harm reduction services.

### **Disclosure of Interest Statement:**

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