

# Social Construction of Falun Dafa Practitioners in Increasing the Body's Immunity to Prevent COVID 19 Through Cultivation Practice in East Java

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## ABSTRACT

The corona virus pandemic, known in its scientific language as Covid-19, is currently the most deadly health threat in the world. Death rates worldwide have reached more than 1 million. Drugs to overcome this disease have not been found so that one way to fight infection with this disease is to increase the body's immune system so that the method is still one way to fight this virus. One of the Falun Dafa (or Falun Gong) communities in Surabaya has become one of the choices of the people of Surabaya to improve their immune system. Members of the Falun Dafa community believe that the mind and body in Falun Dafa cultivation are able to create a positive energy for themselves both mind and body to create an immune system. Along with the improvement of the body's immune system, the body is expected to be able to fight off disease, one of which is Covid 19. The purpose of this study is to look at the cultivation pattern (practice) of the Falun Dafa community as part of efforts to increase body immunity, especially in fighting various diseases so as to increase quality of one's life. The research method used in this study is a mixed methods method in the form of combining qualitative and quantitative methods in order to obtain an overarching perspective with the help of theory in order to obtain comprehensive, reliable, and objective research data. Research locations are in the cities of Surabaya, Sidoarjo, and Malang. That is because the Falun Dafa community can be met intensely when this community is doing the exercises. Data collection techniques are done by means of observation (observation) and interviews with people involved in the Falun Dafa community in addition to data collection done with documents in the form of books, writings and films related to the community and cultivation activities of Falun Dafa.

**Keywords:** *falun dafa, cultivation, covid 19, immunity, social construction*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Cultivators in ancient eastern spiritual traditions often introduce a practice of Meditation in their activities, namely as a mind-body practice [1]. This practice was a common consciousness in the Eastern world at first. However, with the increasing influence of the western consciousness system in medicine, this practice was initially largely ignored and abandoned. However, with the increasing awareness of the eastern world towards what it has, today many individuals both in the eastern and western hemispheres are looking for alternatives to this western consciousness by adopting an Eastern spiritual meditation approach to meet their health and fitness needs.

The varieties of eastern meditation are numerous. One of them is meditation introduced by Falun Gong. The eastern meditation practice of Falun Gong, or Falun Dafa, is known as the advanced form of qigong [2]. Falun Dafa was first practiced by Master Li Hongzhi and then popularized to the public [3] [4] [5]. The practices introduced in this meditation practice are standing, sitting meditation, and anchoring. In addition, it also teaches moral teachings that refer to the principles of Zhen, Shan, Ren namely Truthfulness, Compassion, Forbearance. Falun Gong is an advanced form of qigong. This meditation practice is heavily influenced by

Buddhist Law traditions. Elements of ancient Buddhist and Taoist philosophy take root in this practice [6] [7] [8] [9].

The spread of Falun Gong is worldwide. In Indonesia, Falun Gong started in 1999, it is a social movement [10]. As a social movement, Falun Dafa is considered to have a very good communication system. This can be seen from the ability of Falun Dafa to move so many times. Falun Dafa is a large, solid community of one group. Culturally, Falun Gong campaigns a vision and mission containing spiritual values that are attained through a set of values and cultivation practices towards a broad community of various ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds.

The various meditation models available in the eastern world, Falun Gong is a very popular meditation practice. Many reasons for the popularity of Falun Gong have become an important meditation choice. The underlying reasons are related to the therapeutic effect, moral improvement and extraordinary health healing [11] [12] [13] [14] [15] [16] [17] [18]. Awareness of the benefits of meditation that can be used in the use of therapeutic practice, moral improvement or health allows people who practice Falun Dafa to feel changes in themselves such as peace, forgiveness, increased energy levels, stress reduction, feeling that if they act unkindly will get karma, peace, and to cultivate their hearts and minds to become morally better people. Besides, there was a feeling that by practicing, he felt he would recover from various life-threatening ailments and ailments

The results showed that the benefits of practicing Eastern meditation include not only improved emotional and mental health, resilience, reduction of stress and anxiety, but also healing of other health-related conditions. The two of them are a pair that cannot be left behind. Therefore, moral improvement or improvement will go hand in hand with attaining mind-body health.

Based on the description above, the objectives of this study are (1) to analyze Falun Dafa practitioners' understanding of the benefits of their practice; (2) interpret and interpret the relationship between Falun Dafa practitioners and current conditions. Thus, the urgency of this research leads to the construction of the benefits of practicing Falun dafa against Covid 19.

## 2. METHOD

This research is a mixed qualitative - quantitative research. Quantitative is intended to obtain initial data in the form of maps of Falun Dafa practitioners and qualitative to describe in depth. The purpose of this research is to understand what is hidden behind the phenomenon which is sometimes difficult to know or understand as well as to explore individual experiences in defining a problem and people who become informants can freely express these definitions. Qualitative research is able to describe social events or realities from the subject's point of view rather than from the perspective of the researcher as an observer. Things that are researched include understanding, feelings, and emotions of the research subjects. To produce authentic understanding, observation and in-depth

interviews are considered in accordance with the research objectives [19].

Quantitative and qualitative data are also needed in order to describe or describe objects and phenomena related to the phenomenon of Falun practitioners. Sources of research data come from the words and actions of research subjects consisting of informants who are directly related to the research problem. According to Lexy A. Moleong [20], qualitative research is a research that intends to understand what phenomena experienced by subjects such as behavior, perception, motivation, action, and others, holistically, and through descriptions in the form of words and language, in a special natural context. and by making use of various natural means. To obtain more accurate data and information, in-depth interviews, observation and documentation are used; The instrument used for qualitative research was a questionnaire with open questions and observation guidelines. The observation guide includes arrangements that are within the scope of the home and ward.

This study used a purposive sampling technique in a group w.a with a phenomenological approach. Then an in-depth interview was conducted. In-depth interviews are intended to find out the views, events, activities, opinions, of Falun Dafa practitioners. Interviews were conducted to determine the development of the imaging strategy undertaken. The use of this technique according to Creswell [21] is very important for qualitative research, especially for completing data and obtaining accurate data and appropriate data sources. Participants The research informants were Falun Dafa practitioners. This research was conducted from April to August 2020. The author analyzed specific statements, then categorized and created themes ranging from describing individual experiences with the phenomenon under study, making significant checklists and analyzing data manually, to encoding and ordering themes.

## 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Practicing Falun Gong has both moral elevation and real health-fitness effects for practitioners. Several health surveys show the tremendous health-fitness effects of Falun Gong. A survey of practitioners in Dalian, Liaoning Province (China), 1998, showed that 6478 respondents had a health status of which 92% reported complete symptom relief, 7.74% observed moderate improvement. The disease cure rate did not show a big difference between practitioners with multiple diseases or with one disease, namely 89.73% and 88.83%, respectively. 6,192 participants (95.59%) of whom suffered from various diseases and medical conditions in the cardiovascular system, nervous system, digestive system, respiratory system, urogenital system, hemic and immune systems or the musculoskeletal system. It is interesting to note that those who achieve the best results use no medical treatment at all [22].

The 1999 North American Survey Report, conducted by medical researchers on a small scale of practitioners in the US and Canada. The number of respondents was 235 practitioners. The results of the survey showed that 224 practitioners, or

97%, experienced tremendous health improvements after practicing. Of the practitioners who consumed alcohol before practicing, 100 of them stopped drinking after practicing [23].

The 2001 Russian Survey Report, conducted by a senior forensic specialist, Professor Guluoqi from the Forensic Office of the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs, and Head of the Forensic School Doctor Simintani of the Judicial Forensic Bureau conducted a survey of 12 practitioners. Two of them practiced Falun Gong for more than 1 year and 11 of them practiced for more than 2 years. After they started practicing, Falun Gong practitioners reported no more complaints of illness. Blood and urine tests are all normal. Physical examination showed no abnormalities. All subjects exhibited a normal mental state - positive, responsible, sociable. Previously, all of the subjects suffered from several illnesses prior to cultivation. Three had stomach ulcers or infections. One experiences an internal hormonal imbalance. One is having respiratory problems. Eight of them have difficulty connecting with family or coworkers, and they get stressed easily and tire easily. The conclusions of this study (1) The effective rate of Falun Dafa in curing diseases and promoting health was 75%; (2) Health examinations of Falun Dafa practitioners show that cultivation practice has made tremendous improvements to one's physical and mental condition; and (3) Falun DaFa has no negative physical or mental effects [24].

Survey Report from Taiwan, 2002, conducted by Dr. Hu Yuhui from the Department of Economics at National Taiwan University. See, with 1210 respondents, by means of stratified sampling, by distributing questionnaires. The result was that 81% of respondents quit smoking, 77% stopped drinking, 85% stopped gambling, and 85% also stopped chewing betel nuts altogether. The level of satisfaction related to personal health increased from 24% before practicing to 78% after practicing, and the related level. daily activities increased from 36% to 81%. Falun Dafa offers tremendous psychological and mental benefits [25]

The Australian survey, 2016, involved 590 respondents in the category of 360 practitioners & 230 non-practitioners. The result was that 42% of men and 57% of women felt an increase in moral character and a positive change in attitude towards life since practicing Falun DaFa [26].

The survey of Falun Dafa practitioners in Indonesia was carried out by randomly sending questionnaires to a WhatsApp group and depth interview. The results of the preliminary 2020 survey, showed that of the 30 respondents who responded to the questionnaire 91% reported health status with regard to the complete disappearance of symptoms, 9% experienced moderate improvement. Health evaluations after practicing Falun Dafa cultivation practice 37.5% felt very special health conditions, 37.5% felt very good health conditions and 25% felt good health conditions. The disease cure rate did not show a big difference between practitioners who had various complex diseases and only one disease. Participants in this initial survey included practitioners who suffer from various diseases or have medical problems in the cardiovascular system, nervous system, digestive system, respiratory system,

urogenital system, hemic and immune systems or the musculoskeletal system.

Disease High blood pressure 50% no sign of change, 50% feel the change for the better. Asthma 100% feels the change for the better, 50% high gastric ulcer there is a sign of change, 50% feels the change for the better. cancer 100% no sign of change. Cholesterol 100% no sign of change. Allergy, 100% felt the change for the better, sinusitis, 66.7% felt the change for the better, 33.3% had a sign of change. Cysts, PCOS (irregular menses), 83.3% felt changes for the better, 16.7% had signs of change. It is interesting to note that those who achieve the best results use no medical treatment at all.

The ability and belief that practicing in Falun Gong greatly provides health and fitness benefits to practitioners from any disease, causing them to believe that by doing the intensive practice of Falun Gong, Covid-19 disease will also be avoided and can even be cured back to normal. They firmly believe that their life is getting healthier and very healthier. Their illness did not worsen or come back. Practitioners are increasingly convinced that by practicing intensively, they will no longer need to depend on taking medication or injections when they are sick. Even many ailments that doctors cannot diagnose or are difficult to diagnose can be cured by practicing Falun Dafa. In addition to a very significant increase in achieving complete recovery from various diseases they suffered. Practicing Falun Gong helps practitioners make financial savings in terms of medical and treatment costs. By doing so, practitioners' expenses were significantly reduced and brought great economic benefits.

Faith in the ability to practice Falun Dafa can overcome various things related to mild to severe illness, even Covid-19 disease, is a universal understanding in every Falun Dafa practitioner's mind. According to Berger, who emphasized the subject analysis, this phenomenon must be linked between knowledge and its social context [27]. For Berger, the relationship between humans and knowledge and their reality is a reciprocal relationship. That is, humans who live together and form society as knowledge so that knowledge becomes a reality which otherwise shapes humans [28]. This explanation really rests fundamentally on questions such as how is the process of reality constructed socially?.

Social reality has become a social reality in community life. Therefore, individuals are not born as members of society just like that. However, individuals are formed with tendencies towards their sociality so that individuals become members of society [29]. Each individual will go through a long social process or and takes place continuously until it dissolves into the dialectical participation of society until at this starting point it is then said to be a social construction Berger defines social reality as the meaning of a phenomenon even though that meaning cannot be changed just by humans [30].

Humans have the ability to give meaning to the reality they face, so that human consciousness in interpreting themselves and the objects in their life is based on the properties they have acquired or according to what they experience when dealing with these objects. Departing from their theoretical framework of society as an objective reality and the individual as a subjective reality, to be able to understand an adequate theory

about the individual and society at least starts from these two aspects.

Three important stages in Berger's thought are externalization, objectivation, and internalization. The internalization stages, for example, define humans to be a product rather than being formed by society. For this reason, this internalization will then function as an institutionalized channel for becoming a reality that is stand alone especially for new members of society, so that the institution can always be maintained even though basically the institution is also formulated by members of the community itself. Internalization occurs through the socialization mechanism.

Meanwhile, objectivation is an institution that will automatically shape people's awareness so that it is maintained. This process then forms a relationship between humans and society. If it has previously been said that humans form society and vice versa, society forms humans, then the two remain interrelated and cannot be separated. Externalization is a moment of adaptation made by each member of society where the means used is language. Objectivation is a moment of self-interaction with the socio-cultural world. This moment sees social reality as if it is outside the human self. This reality then appears as an objective reality because it considers that there is a difference from objective reality, as when it sees the subjective self-reality and other realities that are outside of its objective reality. Between the two realities, a network of interactions called intersubjective will be carried out through an institutional process.

Based on the results of in-depth interviews, we will see that in the Falun Dafa community there are three social constructs, first practitioners who understand and define social reality as the meaning that Falun Dafa meditation is more influential on the health aspect, second defines social reality as a meaning related to the development of moral character and third is linking how changes in health aspects are influenced by thoughts or moral character.

In general, Falun Gong practitioners consider Falun Gong to be a very great cultivation method. This method can enhance or improve one's mind and body. The attainment of improvement that occurs in one's mind and body as a whole is triggered by the accumulation of *xinxing* (moral character). Cultivating *xinxing* itself is the driving force behind the growth of the gong (cultivation energy). The process of increasing the cultivation energy of every practitioner is obliged to carry out the principles taught by Falun Gong teachers, namely, to follow the principles of "Truthfulness-Compassion-Forbearance" in everything they do and be good people wherever they are. When the process is carried out continuously, it will have an effect on the development of the body. A person's body can be avoided or healed, so that one's health can improve.

Practitioners who define the meaning of meditation on Falun Dafa have more influence on the aspects of health, moral character development, and both generally. In the process of externalizing Falun Dafa practitioners, they try to make studies and adjustments to Master Li Hongzhi's work, then review the interpretations of previous practitioners about the benefits of practicing Falun Dafa. In general, all studied meditation acts

have a strong knowledge base regarding health and moral development. This is where practitioners adapt to the socio-cultural world of the Falun Dafa community. Furthermore, practitioners' self-interaction occurs in the socio-cultural world. There is an interaction of meaning that is manifested by other people's subjective processes regarding aspects of health, moral character development, and both generally. Habitualization will eventually become a pattern of human actions regarding health, moral character development or both. Thus the word health, moral character development becomes subjective meaning for the individual. This stage is what makes the individual part of society. Meditation is a tradition that must be done when interacting.

In the process of objectivation, awareness of the meaning of healthy and moral through meditation is formed and repeated through communication with fellow practitioners so that the awareness is maintained. The moment of self-interaction with the socio-cultural world forms a close relationship between humans and their communities.

In the internalization process, self identification with the socio-cultural world occurs. Through the socialization process from other members or reading from books. Practitioners have had various experiences with new things which are always associated with a very profound improvement in their health and their need for a healthy body.

**Table 1.** The Social Construction of Falun Dafa Practitioners

Phenomenon	Process	Conditions
Externalization	Self-adaptation to the socio-cultural world	Practitioners adapt to Li Hongzhi's text, Falun Gong and Zhuan Falun and the predecessor practitioners' interpretation that all actions such as practicing meditation have a beneficial basis for the body.
Objectivation	Self-interaction with the socio-cultural world.	Awareness and belief that the practice of meditation in a cultural space is a positive action for creating changes in the practitioner's body. Habitualization of action is carried out through a repeated meditation process as a tradition and institutionalization within the existing cultural space.
Internalization	Self-identification with the socio-cultural world	Bringing up a categorization based on benefits to the body that can give birth to groups who feel the benefits of meditation as a means of improving moral character, a means of healing illness and a means of improving morals and healing illness.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The results of this study concluded that all Falun Dafa practitioners considered the introduced meditation practice to be the best meditation practice. The meditations offered can affect the practitioner's body in everyday life. Using Peter Berger's thoughts, we try to see the practitioner's social construction in understanding the meaning of meditation in everyday life. Berger's thinking offers a process of stages such as externalization, objectification, and internalization. Through this process, starting with the adjustment and interpretation of canon texts, then interacting with them through a tradition that takes the form of repeated meditation in a cultural space, until it becomes a habituation. Finally the practitioners, try to identify themselves in the socio-cultural world. Self-identification comes in the form of a group of practitioners who see the practice of meditation as a means of improving bodily health, improving morals and improving both.

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