

## Letter to the Editor: Insights on Health, Religion/Spirituality, and Vulnerable Populations

Fides A. del Castillo

Department of Theology and Religious Education, De La Salle University, Manila, Philippines

Dear Editor,

In the November 2022 issue of the journal, various authors focused on a plethora of public health concerns and their prevention [1]. They stressed the importance of effective systems, healthy lifestyles, interventions, and support from multiple institutions for the well-being of the people. In addition to their valuable studies, the author would like to add that providing religious and/or spiritual support to community members, especially the most vulnerable in society, promotes human flourishing and alleviates the pressures of their day-to-day life. In this letter, the author would like to give insights into the relationship of religion/spirituality with the health and well-being of the people, particularly vulnerable populations.

Recent studies have shown that religion, spirituality, medicine, and healthcare are interconnected as part of a holistic approach to health [2,3]. Vulnerable populations who face adversity turn to religion for support [4]. This commentary presents an overview of scholarly articles on health, religion, and vulnerable populations. A review of published literature for the past 5 years has been conducted. Using Boolean operators with the search terms “health,” “religion and spirituality,” and “vulnerable population” in the EBSCO Discovery Service and limiting the results to peer-reviewed articles, the author found only 9 articles. A summary of the themes and insights on health,

religion/spirituality, and vulnerable populations can be found in Table 1.

As nations continue to deal with the many challenges caused by health and cost-of-living crises, the author agrees that special attention should be given to filling the gap of inequalities, particularly for the most vulnerable members of society. These crises have a profound impact on them. Therefore, supporting the poor requires collaboration among various institutions. Faith-based organizations may also be given attention as they provide religious and spiritual support, as well as public health services to the needy [5]. Last but not least, the limited number of studies linking health, religion/spirituality, and the vulnerable population presents a good opportunity for further research, particularly on tackling poverty and inequalities.

**Table 1.** Themes and insights on health, religion/spirituality, and vulnerable populations

No. of articles	Themes	Insights
1	Partnership for collaborative global health and well-being	Various organizations, including government, public health organizations, and religious institutions, are called to collaborate and support the well-being of the vulnerable in society
2	Religion and recovery	Faith-based organizations and other religious institutions are instrumental in providing recovery and public health services to the poor and needy
3	Need for public health and religious care	Empirical evidence shows that public health and religious care are needed by individuals experiencing adversities in life
3	Positive impact of religion/spirituality	Studies show that there is a significant and positive impact of religion/spirituality in improving the health and well-being of the vulnerable population

**Corresponding author:** Fides A. del Castillo  
Department of Theology and Religious Education, De La Salle University, 2401 Taft Avenue, Manila 0922, Philippines  
E-mail: [fides.delcastillo@dlsu.edu.ph](mailto:fides.delcastillo@dlsu.edu.ph)

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>) which permits unrestricted non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author has no conflicts of interest to declare for this study.

## ORCID

Fides A. del Castillo <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3124-3449>

## REFERENCES

1. Various Authors. November issue. *J Prev Med Public Health* 2022;55(6):499-603.
2. Balboni TA, VanderWeele TJ, Doan-Soares SD, Long KN, Ferrell BR, Fitchett G, et al. Spirituality in serious illness and health. *JAMA* 2022;328(2):184-197.
3. Wilde O. A history of religion, medicine, and healthcare. In: Koenig HG, King DE, Carson VB, editors. *Handbook of religion and health*. 2nd ed. New York: Oxford University Press; 2012, p. 15-34.
4. Koenig HG. Religion, spirituality, and health: the research and clinical implications. *Int Sch Res Netw* 2012;2012:278730.
5. Del Castillo FA, Del Castillo CD. Lessons from COVID19: advocacy toward the vulnerable. *J Public Health (Oxf)* 2020;42(4): 869-870.