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The attachment among generation in perpetuating the female genital mutilation in Lombok

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Abstract

FGM is maintained by local people in Lombok from generation to other generations. This study aims to explore how FGM practice still exists in Lombok. The qualitative research was used to discover the point of view of the subjects. The data was analyzed by content analysis. The data were gained from Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and in-depth interviews in three generations: Baby Boomer, Gen X, and Gen Y (Millennial). The research results show that the FGM perpetuates continuously because the attachment among generations. The attachment as one of the factors in perpetuating the FGM because of the obedience among generations. Moreover, the religious aspect has a pivotal role in performing the FGM. The practice perpetuates the symbolic violence to the women. As result, both factors lead society's perspective to consider that FGM as a collective responsibility. This study is suggested for policy-maker.

Keyword: attachment, baby boomers, female genital mutilation, gen x and gen y

Abstrak

Praktek sunat perempuan oleh masyarakat Lombok masih dipertahankan secara turun-temurun. Studi ini mengeksplorasi praktek sunat perempuan yang ada di Lombok. Pendekatan kualitatif digunakan untuk menemukan sudut pandang subjek. Analisis data menggunakan analisis konten. Data diperoleh dari Focus Group Discussion (FGD) dan wawancara mendalam pada tiga generasi, yaitu Baby Boomer, Gen X, dan Gen Y (Millennial). Praktek sunat perempuan berlangsung terus menerus karena keterikatan antargenerasi dan menjadi tanggung jawab bersama. Keterikatan sebagai pemicu ketaatan masyarakat untuk melanggengkan FGM, terlebih lagi aspek agama memiliki peran yang sangat penting dan menjadi alasan utama dilakukannya FGM. Akibatnya, alasan secara implisit mengarah pada normalisasi. Praktek tersebut melanggengkan kekerasan simbolik terhadap perempuan.

Kata Kunci: baby boomer, gen x dan gen y, keterikatan, mutilasi kelamin perempuan



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Introduction

In Lombok, the Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) practice is still implemented by the local people for various reasons. Based on the National Commission for Women (Perempuan, 2018) note that in the context of religion, the FGM practice is carried out simultaneously with the haircut process (*ngurisan*) and it is believed as one of the requirements to become a good Muslim. This is also supported by the MUI fatwa on May 7, 2008, concerning the Law on the Prohibition of FGM which allows/legalizes the practice of FGM, as a must for Muslims because Mazhab, Imam syafi'i put the obligation for women to do FGM. In Islam this practice becomes sunnah while society ignore to do FGM, it is being haram (Kakal et al., 2021), particularly 'the response of Indonesian and Malaysian Ministries of Health should be understood in the context of religious identity and political change'(Dawson et al., 2020).

In the cultural context, it is carried out simultaneously in the ritual of *peraq api* and *betepong* (earrings) which aims to control the women to not become "flirty/wild". As a result, it refers to controlling women's sexual behaviors to be not to be naughty. It shows that the FGM is a form of controlling women and depriving women of their rights. The perpetuating of FGM has a close relationship with the attachment of the social beliefs so that they can be perpetuated among the groups either religious leaders, traditional leaders, or among the women community.

The attachment of the Lombok people to religious and cultural values certainly strengthens the sustainability of the practice of the FGM, as well as strengthening the understanding of the values of controlling women through FGM. Thus, it increases the inequality of women in social construction. This is reinforced by the statement of the traditional leader Paer Bat Raden Rais that customary rules must not conflict with religious provisions and government regulations, especially religious rules. This implies that cultural values and rules are direct derivatives of religious values and rules, so they have the strongest influence on the behavior and habits of the Lombok people. This case is also in West Lombok, thus, the practice of female circumcision in Lombok will continue to be preserved from time to time.

Based on the National Commission for Women and Kakal's researches, the process and the basic reasons for conducting the FGM are illustrated. Thus, the results show that they have a strong attachment between religion and beliefs. We believe that every woman has a strong attachment and instinct to what her child feels in postnatal care. It has a focus on the cognitive-affective processes of human (individual) development. The complexity of human development is shaped by genetic factors (the child's attachment to the primary caregiver) and environmental

interactions. Genetic factors, long-term emotional ties of individuals are a basic part of human nature and determine attitudes in their environment (Morgan, 2010). It is relevant also to Barrett et al. (2020) and (Dawson et al., 2020) discussed of FGM that exist in all over the world with similar factors.

Those previous researches merely reveal that existence of FGM occur because of parents' decision. They didn't answer how the decisions are influenced by previous generation. However, few studies have conducted research on the phenomenon of female circumcision that goes from generation to generation; therefore, this current study try to fill the gap by scrutinizing in perpetuating the FGM practices in Lombok. It is crucial to provide data through the experience of women themselves. Through this cross-generational experience, which will be documented, can be seen the journey of FGM in Lombok, particularly in decision-making. In addition, this study is expected to contribute in preventing or reducing the FGM practices in Lombok. Eliminating FGM also becomes one of the targets of United Nation in 2016 aligned with the SDGs targets in achieving gender equality (Barrett et al., 2020).

Research Method

This research is qualitative research. An investigation into the phenomenon of FGM in Lombok was conducted to describe, identify, and describe how experiences can influence/encourage women to adhere to the practice of FGM. This experience of women were explored and revealed the reality of the practice of FGM from time to time (between generations) to provide new insights by providing a broader and concise description of the phenomenon. Consequently, it leads to a qualitative approach (Creswell, 2012). The discussion of this research is limited to women's voices from a Feminist Standpoint point of view.

This study uses phenomenology as a way to find awareness and experience of the subject. The respondents were taken from four generations, namely Baby Boomers Generation (1944-1964); Gen X (1965-1979); Gen Y or Millennial (1980-1996); and Gen Z (1997-2012). The participants in this study were 35 people, determined using a purposive sampling approach with the following criteria: (1) aged 18 years and over; (2) have experienced FGM; (3) have practiced FGM for their children, grandchildren, and or great-grandchildren. The data of this research are in the form of textual data obtained from in-depth interview, FGDs and articles referring to the practice of FGM in Lombok.

Primary data was collected using Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and in-depth interview while still following the Health protocol from 12-13 November 2021 in East Lombok area; 18-20 November 2021 in North Lombok; 20-21 November 2021 in Central Lombok region; and November 27 and December 2, 2021 in West Lombok. Researchers interacted directly with respondents by acting as FGD facilitators and interviewers. As a result, in the FGD and interview processes, these are more flexible to be explored and sharpen to the respondents' responses related to the research context. Data collection began with FGDs to get an overview and then continued with in-depth interview to get a specific picture of women's experiences in the practice of FGM in each area. The preliminary results of the FGDs serve as a reference in determining the number of respondents, who will be the respondents and the issue of deepening the exploration of women's experiences through in-depth interview.

In the analysis process using open coding and axial coding techniques (Klenke, 2008). Open coding to express data in the form of initial code (the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing and categorizing data). Axial coding follows open coding as the next step to refine and differentiate categories generated from open coding by making links between categories. This is done by utilizing the coding paradigm which includes conditions, contexts, action strategies, interactions and consequences according to the research context. To be more specific with coding, the researcher followed the process suggested by Löfgren (Logfren, 2013) which considered the following steps: (1) Interview transcripts: all transcripts were read and notes were made on first impressions. (2) Coding: important words, phrases and sentences are labeled to start the coding process. Coding was based on repeated statements, facts that surprised the researcher or facts that were explicitly stated to be important by the participants. (3) Categorization: the researcher decides which code is the most important, and creates a category or theme by combining several codes. (4) Conceptualization of data: the researcher analyzes which categories are most relevant and how they are connected to each other. (5) Results: categories and their relationships are the main results of this study.

Result

The Attachment among Generations

In the practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) in Lombok, a mother does not decide for herself, nor does she have her own decisions. The decision to perform FGM generally comes from one generation. Respondents from Generation X and baby boomers explicitly require their

children to carry out FGM on their female offspring in the future. In Central Lombok, West Lombok, and North Lombok, even FGM is an obligation that must be fulfilled. A surprising response was obtained from the Central Lombok region, respondents showed an angry attitude if their offspring refused to perform FGM in the next generation (children).

Different conditions were found in the East Lombok region. Respondents across generations in East Lombok have a more open mind. They gave up the decision to perform FGM on their children (generations below it) in the future. Moreover, Wirna, who initially had the thought of requiring his descendants to perpetuate the practice of FGM, began to question the importance of the tradition. He admits that this practice is not mandatory.

In the Sasak community, intervention to perform FGM from the upper generation to the lower generations has become an inherited habit. Not infrequently this obligation is also a mother's will to her child. In the case of the people of North Lombok, the neighbors also have a responsibility to remind (young) mothers to circumcise their daughters. FGM in the context of the locality of North Lombok is a collective responsibility. It can also be seen that FGM in North Lombok is no longer a private area for a family (mother and daughter) or close one, but is a problem for a community. But again, this matter remains a woman's business without male intervention.

Different conditions were found in the East Lombok region. Respondents across generations in East Lombok have a more open minded. In the future, they let the children (other generation) to make a decision to practice the FGM. Moreover, Wirna, who initially had the thought of requiring his descendants to perpetuate the practice of FGM, began to question the importance of the tradition. He admits that this practice is not mandatory like Wirna said "If I have another granddaughter, I want to deepen it first. How far is this holy law. If that's not the case, I don't have to, maybe I won't beat it again. I have a plan if I go south to the place where my teacher wants to ask me this." (Wirna, personal communication, November 12, 2021)

Wirna herself plans to open a discussion with religious leaders and consider midwives to get clear and precise references. If it is mandatory, later if he has grandchildren, Wirna will make an event or party like male circumcision. Wirna's perspectives are revolutionary compared to respondents in other regions. Wirna is a representative of the Lombok people who have received education about the position and condition of women. She is one of the participants in the Women's School organized by the Partner Resource Development Institute (LPSDM) East Lombok.

Sekolah Perempuan is an initiative by the KAPAL Perempuan Institute since 2000. Sekolah Perempuan is a model for empowering women at the grassroots. Sekolah Perempuan aims to develop a leadership spirit so that women have critical, caring, solidarity, and become agents of change for their communities (KAPAL Perempuan, 2019). In the learning process, women's experiences become the core so that participants can reflect on things that (have) happened around them. In research conducted by Rizki Sekolah Perempuan not only builds critical awareness of women, but also women's schools are able to provide access to education, increase active participation, and build control through knowledge for women (Rizki, 2016).

The ability and belief is to carry out FGM in the lower generation from intergenerational attachment. This attachment is in the form of an emotional bond between individuals (Nurhidayah, 2011) A child's attachment to his mother becomes a binder that makes the child able and confident at his mother's orders. Because of that attachment, the mother who circumcised her daughter could not-and-may-be disobeyed her mother's orders. This became clear when respondents were asked whether they would circumcise their child and a definite answer to do so consistently was given. This intergenerational attachment gives rise to impeccable obedience, except in the case of Wirna.

Impeccable obedience is referred to in this context when mothers practice FGM on their daughters without seeking rationale or further questioning the things that require them to do so. Except in the case of Wirna, the respondents did not question it more deeply when their mothers required them to circumcise their daughters. Control is literally a generation above them (mother to daughter). "It's a tradition." (Sularni, personal communication, November 20, 2021)

Broadly speaking, the reason why mothers circumcise their daughters is based on their belief in the truth (without definite references) conveyed by the mother or generations before them. Health, religion, and behavior are the main reasons given by mothers across generations to answer why they have to circumcise their daughters. However, it is religious reasons that are said to be the basis of the practice. No matter how far the respondents across generations explain the reasons for health and behavior, in the end their answers converge on religion. "So, the FGM is cancelled, the prayer is cancelled, but the FGM has been cancelled." (Baiq Ruhian, personal communication, November 20, 2021)

This understanding is maintained and reproduced. FGM which has been going on for a very long time, from generation to generation, has become a culture in Lombok. The strength of FGM that has become entrenched has made this practice normalized. Normalization is a

social process that makes an idea or action appear normal and acceptable without being questioned or criticized. Normalization in Discipline and Punishment is mentioned as an effort to discipline by using "idealized" rules of action .

The practice of FGM in the Lombok context has been normalized through an approach to religious and social norms. Normalization of FGM is carried out by placing the object in a situation that is faced with religious and social norms, namely by including the bad possibilities that will be faced if you do not perform FGM. Besides, by building negative stereotypes against women who are not or have not been circumcised. That way, like it or not, women or mothers will have a stronger urge to (immediately) circumcise their daughters. This is done to avoid possible violations of religious and social norms. "In Islam it is obligatory, to purify, to purify oneself." (Interview of Central Lombok Respondents¹, personal communication, November 20, 2021) "It is mandatory, Mbak, if it is in Islam." (Solehah, personal communication, November 20, 2021) "Islamic if circumcised, it will be Islamized" (Solehah, personal communication, November 20, 2021)

The respondent's statement shows that in this situation women who have not been circumcised will be questioned about their Islam. So what is considered normal is the one who is circumcised, on the other hand the abnormal assumption (not yet Islam) will be pinned on those who have not done FGM. However, in this case, it is not normal or abnormal that is the benchmark, but obedience (in Michel Foucault's terms, namely discipline) for everyone (women) to the norm.

The involvement of religious and social norms in the practice of FGM shows a form of maximum control over women with minimal power. Women's bodies are controlled to conform to societal expectations. "Secondly, I'm sorry, mother is a girl, later in a husband and wife relationship is (Baiq Ratmawati, personal communication, November 12, 2021). "A difference, the taste" (Baiq Annisa Pratiwi, personal communication, November 12, 2021). The process of normalizing the practice of FGM in Lombok from Fromm's perspective is considered to be able to balance aggressive and destructive behavior. In other words, normalization can "tame" the animal element of humans. Not only about behavior, even in sexual matters, are women still the ones who are disciplined. "According to other people, if it's not purified, it's hard." (Baiq Ratmawati, personal communication, November 12, 2021).

¹ Based on the inform concern that the interviewee asked to be anonymous

The purpose of FGM related to sexual intercourse was also mentioned by the respondents, as stated in the excerpt of the interview. Through this statement, it can be seen that women are considered as determinants of the quality of sexual relations. Women's bodies must be treated in such a way as to meet the expectations of their community.

The practice of FGM in the Lombok contexts also has similarities with practices in other regions. It's not about the process, but about the structure of the relationships within it. The practice of FGM still exists in Lombok, not only about the intergenerational attachment, but also about the power relations between them. Power in Foucault's perspective is not about ownership, but a network that spreads in all directions (Foucault, 1980; Sarup, 2003). Power in this case is no longer seen as an effort to suppress, but the creation of a "true" reality. The upper generation builds a truth and transfers it to the lower generation (baby boomers to gen X, Millennial, and so on) so that it becomes a rational knowledge. Power and knowledge have "forced" the next generation to accept FGM as a rational thing. "Enggih, so we, as the younger generation, must continue" (Sularni, personal communication, November 20, 2021). FGM in this case appears with two faces. On the one hand, FGM is a space created by women for women, as admitted by respondent Wirna. "Yes, this is a rule made by women, what women do." (Wirna, personal communication, November 12, 2021).

FGM is indeed carried out and perpetuated by women. This "rule" applies in private areas and there is no involvement of men in it. Some even call it a shameful thing to tout like male FGM. But on the other hand, this regulation actually shows the inability of women to make their own decisions. The FGM is perpetuated because there is a pivotal role from older generation becoming this practice as an inheritance.

In addition, FGM has directly perpetuated various forms of violence against women. Violence includes physical and symbolic violence. Physical violence is seen when the pain after FGM is felt by girls who are circumcised over 5 years old or who have been able to express their feelings. Meanwhile, symbolic violence is in the form of distribution of negative labels for women. "Lighty lust" (Baiq Mariani, personal communication, November 20, 2021).

Through this distribution, society is forced to admit the truth about women if they do not perform FGM. Although the respondents themselves could not be sure of the truth, they still acknowledged its existence with confidence. Bourdieu mentions that symbolic violence in two ways, namely euphemism and censorship (Bourdieu, 2010). Euphemism makes the violence invisible because it works subtly but hits the victim directly. In this case, language becomes a

tool to carry out the symbolic violence. For example, by pointing women are naughty, stubborn, and others, while sensorism makes people have a desire to perpetuate these assumptions because they are considered good. FGM is considered to reduce the emotions and desires of women so that they become obedient individuals. By performing FGM, the "moral honor" of women is considered to have been preserved.

Conclusion

FGM in the context of Lombok is a collective responsibility. The local community is responsible for reminding women in the neighborhood to perform FGM. The ability and belief to carry out FGM in the lower generation stems from intergenerational attachment. Because of that attachment, the mother who circumcised her daughter could not-and-may-be disobeyed her mother's orders. The beliefs among generation have a crucial role in existence the FGM practice from time to time. However, it is religious reasons that are said to be the basis of the practice. The strength of FGM that has become entrenched has made this practice normalized. Normalization is a social process that makes an idea or action appear normal and acceptable without being questioned or criticized.

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