



The practice of female circumcision in Palopo city between religious and cultural teachings: A study of the Living Hadith Perspective

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Abstract

This study examines the practice of female circumcision in Palopo City from the perspective of living hadith, which integrates religious and cultural teachings in daily life. The practice of female circumcision, although controversial, is still practiced in Palopo as part of family and community traditions. This study uses the living hadith approach to understand how the people of Palopo interpret and apply the hadith related to female circumcision in their local context. The findings show that female circumcision is seen as a form of fulfilling religious teachings and maintaining the purity and honor of girls, while also being an important rite of passage in the local culture. However, with increasing awareness of health and human rights issues, there have been changes in views and practices among communities. This research provides insight into the complexity of the interaction between religious and cultural teachings in the practice of female circumcision in Palopo City, and the importance of a holistic and contextual approach in understanding and addressing this issue.

Keywords: *Circumcision practice; girls; religion; culture*

Introduction

Circumcision of girls, which in the terminology of the World Health Organization (WHO) is referred to as female genital mutilation (FGM), is a tradition that existed and was known in human civilization long before the arrival of Islam.

The practice of female circumcision has been carried out more than 6000 years ago in various parts of the world as found in various tribes and races of South Africa, from Lybia, Egypt, the Middle East, South America, Australia and Southeast Asia. The practice of circumcision is carried out with various motives, purposes, methods and rituals.

The practice of female circumcision is one of the issues that often raises debates in both religious and cultural contexts. In Palopo City, South Sulawesi, this practice is still practiced and has become part of the local tradition. This article will examine the practice of female circumcision in Palopo City from the perspective of living hadith, which integrates religious and cultural views in daily life. The placement of female circumcision as part of Islamic teachings is based on a scriptural understanding, namely some traditions that although scholars have ruled as *dhaif* traditions, and their *fiqh* rulings are still debated by *fuqaha*, but have become a culture.

Despite a global campaign by feminist activists on the prohibition of female circumcision, this did not stop the long-standing tradition, but made some adaptations, including the emergence of the Regulation of the Minister of Health of the Republic of Indonesia No. 1636 of 2010 which is a response to the Fatwa of the Indonesian Ulema Council No. 9 A., 2008 on the Law of Female Circumcision. The study entitled *Circumcision of Girls (Khifaz) and the Protection of Girls in Indonesia: A Case Study in Demak District*, by Jauharotul Farida and friends (2017). This group study looked at the implementation of female circumcision from a child protection perspective. The researchers found that female circumcision is generally carried out symbolically, but there are still those who carry out circumcision for girls in real life; it is this second model that the researchers believe needs to be educated.

Makkatte' Tradition from the Aspects of Gender and Reproductive Health in Ethnic Bugis of South Sulawesi by Subriah and Andi Syintha Ida (2016). The research with the object of Bugis ethnicity in Benteng Tellue Village, Amali Subdistrict, Bone Regency found that the determining factors for the implementation of *makkatte* are beliefs in religious concepts that require *makkatte* for girls and culture or traditions passed down from Bugis ancestors, while the implications of female circumcision on gender and reproductive health do not cause negative effects if the practice of *makkatte* is carried out sterile and without excessive action or injuring the external and internal genitalia.

The article titled Female Circumcision between Local Culture and Religious Teachings by Agus Hermanto (2016). The researcher describes the circumcision of girls from the normative aspect (fiqh law) and concludes that circumcision can be done by women who do not have high sexual libido and bring *maslahat* and it is an honor, but if it brings *mudharat*, for example damaging female genital organs and female reproductive organs, it should not be done.

For the Muslim community of South Sulawesi, including in Palopo City, the tradition of female circumcision or commonly called *appasunna* (Makassar) or *makkatte* (Bugis) ceremony is very strongly held and still preserved by some community groups, and is considered as a complement to the life cycle. The community understands the tradition of female circumcision as a very important cultural ritual to be performed on girls. Children who have not been circumcised, including girls, are considered not to have legally embraced Islam. For some communities, late circumcision of girls and “parties” are considered a disgrace. Thus, it appears that circumcision, which was originally a symbol of religiosity, has shifted to a symbol of social status. In South Sulawesi, some Muslim communities in Palopo City preserve the circumcision of girls as part of practical religious provisions as in the hadith with various adaptations to gender and health issues.

Circumcision, including for girls, has been an aspect of Islamic fiqh since classical times. However, there is a difference of opinion among *fuqaha* about the ruling of circumcision for girls. The difference of opinion is partly due to the quality of the hadith that mentions the circumcision of girls, which is considered by the majority of scholars to be *dhaif* (weak), while *dhaif* hadiths cannot be the basis for determining the law. The hadith that is considered as the legal basis for the implementation of circumcision for girls is based on the hadith narrated by Abu Dawud, “that a woman was circumcised in Medina so the Prophet SAW, said to her; do not damage (her genitals), because it is an honor” (HR. Abu Daud, Hadith Number 5271).

The attitude of scholars towards the law of circumcision for girls is different, Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani mapped into two, Imam Syafii stated as mandatory, while the Hanafiyah, Malikiyah and Hanabilah madzhab consider it as a recommendation or *sunnah* (al-'Asqalani, 1993, XI: 531). Al-Syawkani al-Syaukani in detail mentions the law of circumcision, which is for men and women, *sunnah* for men and women. Both are obligatory for men and *Sunnah* for women without elaborating on each of the scholars who expressed this opinion and their arguments (Al-Shukani, 1973, I: 178).

Wahbah al-Zuhali in *al-Fiqh al-Islami wa Adillatuhu* outlines the differences of opinion of *fuqaha* about the law of circumcision that circumcision for men, following the Hanafi and Maliki madhhabs is *sunnah muakkadah*, for women is

sunnah kemulyaan (which if carried out), according to Imam al- Shafii, circumcision is mandatory for men and women. While Imam Ahmad said that circumcision is obligatory for men and a honor for women and is usually done in hot areas (al-Zuhayli, 1989, III: 642). One of the factors for the implementation and maintenance of the practice of circumcision for girls in various Muslim communities in Indonesia, including in Palopo City is the teachings of Islam, especially from the Prophet's hadith.

The teaching on the circumcision of girls contained in the hadith is practiced by some Muslim communities by ignoring the debate on the quality of the hadith that serves as its normative basis and the fuqaha debate on the law of circumcision for girls itself. Making religion the basis for the practice of female circumcision is a very big encouragement for the people of Palopo City to continue carrying out this activity.

The practice of circumcision for girls in the Palopo City community is a culture that is naturally controlled by social mechanisms, which are based on considerations of the meaning system and value system that motivate them to act and give birth to a series of behaviors or actions. Clifford Geertz emphasized the strength of religion as a motivation for action, Geertz formulated a definition of religion and its role. Religion is defined as a symbol system that serves to instill strong, deep, and lasting passion and motivation in humans by creating general conceptions of existence, and wrapping those conceptions in such an atmosphere of factuality that the atmosphere in the motivation seems very realistic (Keesing, 1999: 94).

Meanwhile, according to Clifford Geerts, as quoted by Robin, religion is not just a matter of spirit, but there is an intense relationship between religion as a source of value and religion as a cognitive source. First, religion is a pattern for human action (pattern for behavior). In this case religion becomes a guideline that directs human action. Second, religion is a pattern of human action (pattern of behavior). In this case, religion is considered the result of human knowledge and experience, which has often been institutionalized into mystical power (Roibin, 2009: 75).

The phenomenon of female child circumcision in the Palopo City community can be understood from the community's perception of the law of circumcision for girls themselves. According to Mead, perception is a process that is preceded by sensing, seeing, and hearing, namely the process that manifests the receipt of stimulus by the individual. The sensed stimulus is organized, so that the individual

realizes and understands what is sensed (Ritzer, 2004: 274-275).

In perception, the object causes a stimulus that hits the senses, the object that is perceived can be outside the individual who perceives, but can also be within the person who perceives. In perceiving oneself people will be able to evaluate and see themselves. If the object of perception is located outside the person who perceives, then the object can take the form of objects, situations and can also take the form of humans. If the object of perception of objects is called social perception (Walgito, 2003: 47). The tradition of circumcision for girls in Palopo City is a social action controlled by social mechanisms, which is based on consideration of the meaning system and value system that motivates them to act and give birth to a series of behaviors or actions.

The meaning system of the shared values is communicated through a symbolic system. Thus, the notion of culture in this paper refers to the concept of culture offered by Geertz, that a symbolic system functions to communicate meaning and value (Kleden, 1988: 12). Thus, the concept of culture according to Geertz consists of two parts, namely culture as a knowledge system and meaning system, and culture as a value system (Kleden, 1999: xiv). Based on this concept, it appears that there are at least two aspects that become the focus of this discussion, namely (1) the circumcision of girls as an element of Islamic teachings; (2) circumcision for girls as a culture formed from the spirit of religious teachings.

The implementation of female circumcision in this study is seen from three indicators. First, religious teachings as a pattern of human action make the circumcision sharia something that must be implemented; second, the implementation of circumcision for girls institutionalized in special rituals; and third, the dialectical pattern between the community and the dynamics of the pros and cons of the implementation of circumcision.

The variable of circumcision of girls as a cultural system will be seen from two indicators, namely first, the symbolization of the value system of Islamic teachings adopted by the community, and second, the meaning contained behind the implementation and preservation of the tradition of circumcision of girls.

Method

1. Design and approach

This research is a qualitative ethnographic model with a sociology of religion approach. This research will describe the ins and outs and the series of procedures or the process of performing circumcision of girls as a culture born from living hadith.

a) Interviews

are selected and determined purposively; certain considerations, especially on the intensity of contact with informants, namely: (1) knowing a lot about aspects of the problem being researched; (2) having a good grasp of the problem being researched; (3) involved and or directly related to the object of research; (4) easy to meet during the research process. Informants consisted of community leaders, religious leaders, midwives, traditional birth attendants, parents of circumcised children and the surrounding community who were related and relevant to the study of the problem.

b) Observation

The observation used is a structured and systematic observation of the phenomena seen in the object of research. Observation is carried out by observing the facts and phenomena that appear in families who carry out circumcision of their daughters and other matters relevant to the substance of the research. Researchers plan and determine the moments that will be observed specifically so that some facts related to the research can be more focused. For the implementation of good observation and accuracy of observation, during observation the researcher uses fieldnotes to record various things in the context of the research to be analyzed later.

c) Documentation

Documentation is in the form of written funds or images related to the location and implementation of the girls' circumcision process. This technique is used to examine in more depth some aspects that are not revealed in observations or interviews, as well as to explain the dynamics related to the object of research as well as evidence of research because it was born and is in the context of research.

2. Validities dan reliabilities data

Before conducting the analysis, researchers tested the quality of all data that had been collected by comparing data found in the field. This activity not only refers to the truth of the existing data but is also able to see the variation of the data. In other words, data triangulation, namely matching and comparing data from various sources, both interviews and observation results.

3. Data analysis

Analysis is carried out since data collection. Data from observations, interviews, and documentation that have been verified and validated are then read, studied, and reviewed. Next, data reduction was carried out by making abstraction, which is an effort to summarize the core. The next step is coding, identifying and classifying data according to the type, purpose and importance of the analysis, making it easier to interpret according to the research problem to be answered. The data was then processed in the form of a description of the data and reflective statements, then interpreted by looking for links between components that are in accordance with the problems in this study.

The data that has been obtained is then sorted and then analyzed by identifying key statements, providing codes for the list of themes and providing codes for observations based on the list of themes. Furthermore, compiling statements in accordance with themes and data interpretation.

Result

The majority of people in Palopo city understand circumcision as part of Islamic teachings that are recommended, although not required. The hadiths underlying this practice are often taken literally, without considering the historical and health context. Some religious leaders in Palopo city cite traditions that recommend female circumcision, but they also recognize that interpretations of hadith can vary and not all scholars agree on its obligation.

The practice of female circumcision in Palopo city is carried out by traditional birth attendants or traditional health workers. The procedure varies from very simple to more complex, depending on family traditions and religious understanding. The circumcision process is usually performed at an early age, often accompanied by traditional rituals and family celebrations. The practice is considered an important transitional mark in a girl's life, heralding adulthood.

In Palopo City, religious and cultural teachings reinforce each other in the practice of female circumcision. Communities tend to accept female circumcision as part of their cultural and religious identity, despite differences in how it is viewed and practiced.

This study found an increased awareness of the health risks associated with female circumcision. Some families are beginning to consider medically safer procedures or even opting out altogether. Human rights issues are also gaining attention, especially the right of children to be free from actions that could jeopardize their health and well-being. Some organizations and community leaders started campaigning for an end to the practice, while respecting local traditions and values.

The living hadith approach helps in understanding how the people of Palopo apply religious teachings in their cultural context. Hadith is not only seen as a text that must be followed literally, but also understood and interpreted according to local social and cultural conditions. Religious and cultural leaders in Palopo play an important role in mediating the understanding and practice of female circumcision, providing contextualized explanations and considering aspects of health and human rights.

Conclusion

The practice of female circumcision in Palopo City demonstrates the complex interaction between religious and cultural teachings. Although still widely practiced, there is a growing awareness of the health and human rights impacts associated with this practice. A living hadith approach provides important insights in understanding this dynamic, showing that interpretation and application of hadith can be adapted to local contexts. Continued education and dialog are needed to create wider awareness and encourage positive change in the community.

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