



Female Circumcision in Islamic and Health Perspective in Bogor, West Java

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Abstract

This study was aimed to find that medically speaking, the practice of female circumcision was carried out by the community in Jasinga, Cigudeg, and Cileungsi Districts. This research is a quantitative study of 110 respondents. This study is also supported by qualitative research with the type of Rapid Assessment Procedure (RAP). The source of this research consisted of mothers who had daughters aged one to five years and performed female circumcision both to health workers and to traditional birth attendants. The results showed that circumcision did not have a significant negative impact on children's health and psychology. Traditions that collaborate with religious teachings are a strong reason for someone to take any action, even though from the other side the benefits have not been found. The practice of female circumcision is still ongoing, although there is a prohibition against such activities because it is seen as a violation of human rights, it can result in shock, stress, and even sexual dysfunction.

Keywords: *Circumcision, Health Perspective, Human Rights*

Introduction

The tradition of circumcision has been carried out several centuries ago. This tradition has few complications and reduces the incidence of asymptomatic urinary infection (Simforoosh, et al., 2012). The emergence of the circumcision which is a tradition in Egyptian society in particular and the world in general (Siraj, 2014). Circumcision aims to bind sacred covenants like men.

In historical, Siti Hajar was the first women whose circumcised, According to one narration, when Siti Sarah permitted Prophet Ibrāhīm to marry Siti Hajar, Siti Hajar became pregnant, Siti Sarah was jealous and vowed to cut three parts of her body, the Prophet Ibrāhīm advised Siti Sarah to perforate both ears and circumcise Siti Hajar (Maisarah, 2015).

Anthropological researchers found the data practice of circumcision. It was popular in ancient Egyptian society, as evidenced by the discovery of mummies of women with clitoridectomy marks in the 16th century BC. (Rakhman, 2016). In fact, in the 2nd century BC, female circumcision was used as a ritual in the marriage process. (Umar, 2014). In addition, the Islamic review stated, the circumcision for

women has taken place a long time ago even before the arrival of Islam, especially in the Nile valley such as Sudan, Egypt and Ethiopia. (Hakim, 2017).

In addition, many other studies show that circumcision has been found in nomadic nations, namely the Semites, Hamites and Hamitids in Southwest Asia and East Africa, such as the Negroes in East Africa and South Africa, and Indonesia. Especially in Indonesia, the discovery of ancient objects before the arrival of Islam in Central Java which is now stored in the Batavia Museum shows circumcised penis. Likewise, the tradition of circumcision carried out by the Bedouins (the original Sundanese tribe) shows that circumcision existed before Islam came to Indonesia (Muhaimin, 2006).

The polemic regarding female circumcision does not only occur in the medical aspect but also among non-medical experts. A feminist activist, Nawal El Saadawi has written extensively about the death of girls and women due to circumcision in a 2001 International Planned Parenthood Federation seminar, the effects of circumcision are very diverse, such as depression, pain during sexual intercourse, reduced sexual pleasure, urinary tract infections, chronic pelvic inflammation, frigidity, bleeding, and death (Syafudin, 2010).

In the perspective of Islam, circumcision is one of the *sunnah* (Prophet's tradition) *fitriah* which Allah commands humans (Bolnick, Koyle, & Yosha, 2012). The scholars explained that what is meant by *fitriah* is a habit of religious teaching and it has become a *shi'ar* and the greatness of Islam. Circumcising a woman according to Islamic rules will add to the beauty and pleasure of having a relationship with her husband.

Meanwhile, from a health perspective, female circumcision is useful practices should simultaneously be encouraged to eliminate hypersex for women, reducing the incidence of urinary tract inflammation, avoiding infection of the genital organs, and preventing bad odors from the vagina (Dirie, 1988). A similar opinion was also expressed by Pikers who stated that more than 30,000 women, it is rare to find Arab women who suffer from venereal diseases, be it reproductive herpes, gonorrhea, chlamydia, *trekomunaz* and cancer (Joseph & Nağmābādī, 2003).

Circumcised women are more likely to avoid various types of venereal disease than those who are not, especially genital herpes and urinary tract disorders (Basyar, 2003). Venereal disease often occurs in those who are not circumcised. Rosario, Kasabwala, & Sadeghi-Nejad, 2013) stated that AIDS can be Minimize HIV Transmission by circumcision. Even the women who were not circumcised will spread the AIDS virus than those who were circumcised.

Various views on circumcision both from scholars and health practitioners as explained above, In the Jasinga, Cigudeg and Cileungsi District areas. It was different from the community tradition which considers that female circumcision is the same as male circumcision, which is mandatory, so that almost every child woman in the three subdistricts were definitely circumcised. Here it is clear that the people in the three districts have constructed female circumcision as a compulsory law. Construction is an arrangement of objective reality that is accepted and becomes a general agreement, although in the construction process there is a negative side in other views.

The construction of female circumcision is a reality that is built and accepted by society regarding traditions that have been carried out from generation to generation, it is obligatory to be implemented. The existence of female circumcision is a form or assumption that applies to society. Female circumcision that occurred in the three sub-districts has been passed down from generation to generation until today. Based on several aspects such as religion, social and culture. The tradition of female circumcision in the communities of Jasinga, Cigudeg and Cileungsi district carried out on babies between the ages of 30 to 40 days after birth. Therefore, this study aims to observe the impact of each method of female circumcision

in the three districts through a survey of circumcision practices that focus on the practice of circumcision for girls from Islamic and medical perspectives and the practice of circumcision in three districts.

Research Method

This type of research is field study which is analytic observation. The observational study only makes observations on the subjects, subjects were not assigned to treatment giving treatment (Rosenbaum, 2010). To strengthen the analysis, this study used qualitative methods with the type of rapid assessment procedure study, namely the period study 1-2 months, which is intended to study, explore more in-depth and natural information about female circumcision performed by mothers with 0-1 years old in Jasinga, Cigudeg and Cileungsi Subdistricts. This study conducted on January-December 2014. The reason the researchers chose these three districts as research objects, is because the majority of girls get circumcision treatment like boys.

Research Result and Discussion

1. The Practice of Female Circumcision

The practice of female circumcision to all of the respondents, 110 respondents in three districts, answered that most of the mothers who had daughters took their daughters to health workers for circumcision. The information was obtained in three sub-districts give the answer that they also took their children to the media and that they also took their children to be circumcised by maternity traditional birth. The object of this study is the behavior of female circumcision in terms of child age, method, tools used, drugs given and complaints after circumcision.

Fifty percent (50%) of girls in the health centers areas in Jasinga, Cigudeg and Cileungsi Districts circumcised their daughters, as many as 80.0% and 20.0% did not circumcise their daughters. The strong influence of parents plays a crucial role in decision making to circumcise girls, where 88.5% of parents recommend doing female circumcision.

From the results of the FGD conducted on the group of mothers who performed circumcision on non-health workers, the questions given to the mother's child was circumcised, the majority of mothers answered, the age of the baby circumcised before 40 days. Several sources provide answers regarding the age of circumcision baby as follows:

- “.....tipuluh dinten..... (pada saat bayi berusia 30 hari)
(when the baby is 30 days old)”(EP)
- “....Langkung ti sabulan...(lebih dari 30 hari setelah kelahiran)
(more than 30 days after birth) (NI)
- “.....sami neng.... tilupuluh..... sama dilakukan ... (same done) (WA)
- “..... sepuluh dinten (when the baby is 30 days old)” (EP)
- “... stepping out every month ... (more than 30 days after birth) (NI)
- “... sami neng ... tilupuluh ... (same done) (WA)

There are some sources that girls circumcise around 12 months of age,

“....biasanya di Wargi abdi rata 12 bulan

One of respondent said, the daughter circumcised at 2 years old felt sick at that age. The researcher in-depth interviews with children who were circumcised by health workers. The information got not differ much from information from FGD sources in providing answers.

*“..... biasanya kalo di wilayah sini hampir semua ibu ibu melakukan khitan pada anak perempuan di usia antara 30 hari sampai dengan 2 bulan dilakukan khitan.....(TI)
Usually, in this area, almost all mothers perform circumcision on girls between the ages of 30 days to 2 months(TI)*

According to the respondent, in general, mothers circumcise their daughters after the child's age of 40 days, because there is a tradition that says that babies can be taken out of the house after the child is 40 days old.

“.....rata rata ibu membawa ke puskesmas untuk melakukan khitan pada anak perempuannya setelah anak berusia 40 Hari setelah kelahiran (Bidan Senior Puskesmas Kecamatan Jasinga)....”.

“.....In general, mothers take them to the in the health centers to circumcise their daughters after the child turns 40 days after birth (Senior Midwife at the health centers, Jasinga District) ”.

From the results of the FGD, the reason the respondents performed circumcision when the girls were still babies because they will feel fine however if they were teenagers circumcision they would find difficult, felt ashamed and did not want to be circumcised.

“...kalaupun sudah besar malu, dan susah untuk di bujuk untuk di lakukan khitan pada anak perempuannya, jadi sebaiknya dilakukan pada saat masih bayi....”(NN).

“....if the children are older, they are difficult to be circumcised, so it is better if they were circumcised when they were babies.”(NN).

“..... “sebelum mereka mengerti (anak perempuan) sebaiknya dilakukan khitan lebih awal, jadi pada saat sudah mengerti mereka tida

“.....before they understand (girls) it is better to do circumcision early, so when they understand they don't know that they were circumcised as a baby k tau kalau sudah di khitan pada saat bayi..... (MR)

Methods and Tools Used to Circumcise Women

The results of in-depth interviews with respondents stated that so far, the practice of circumcision in women is by scratching the foreskin a little without injuring the clitoris. The health workers involved in performing circumcisions are usually based on the “legacy” of their seniors or asking and observing traditional circumcisions performed in the local area, either symbolically or by incision and excision. From the results of in-depth interviews with a group of health workers, most of the health workers (midwives) performed female circumcision, as revealed by one source:

“.....Jika nggak ada batasan dalam mengkhitan hanya mengambil bagian klitoris sedikit yang di lukai atau di gores, sehingga mengeluarkan darah, yaa.. itu saja dan harus mengeluarkan darah karena itu merupakan syarat syah pada khitan perempuan “

“...If there is no limit to circumcision, only take a little part of the clitoris which is injured or scratched, so that it bleeds, yeah ... that's all and you have to bleed because it is a legal requirement for female circumcision..”

“.....Karena menurut agama sudah menjadi ketentuan, bahwa khitan perempuan harus di lakukan, Cuma mengikut anjuran Rasūlullāh itu sendiri, tidak ada pemaksaan karena

kedudukan khitan merupakan tradisi kampung bahwa khitan perempuan wajib dilakukan, jadi maksudnya wajibnya sebatas hanya dalam tradisi”

“...Because according to religion it has become a condition, female circumcision must be circumcised, only following Rasūlullāh's advice, there is no compulsion because the position of circumcision is a village tradition that female circumcision is obligatory, so the meaning is only limited to tradition....”

Their expressions of astonishment can be seen from the answer of one of the sources when asked why they performed circumcision on girls:

“.....Ya itu sudah seharusnya dilakukan, karena apa ya sudah tau sendirilah. Itu tidak pantas diomongkan, malu bicara itu..... (YA)”

“...Yes, it should be done, because what do you know for yourself? It doesn't deserve to be said, embarrassed to talk about it (YES)”

Circumcision which is done symbolically is not a problem by health circles, the problem is when the practice of female circumcision involves cutting off female genital organs, such as the clitoris. Because the clitoris is the center of female sexual arousal sensitivity. Therefore, injuring or damaging or cutting the clitoris is not permitted, but if only washing, rubbing with turmeric, gemstones and others on these organs is permitted, however in Indonesia, usually the practice of circumcision involves cutting or slicing the clitoris or clitoral area.

From the results of in-depth interviews with the health professional source group (midwives), it found that most sources knew about government regulations (Regulation of the Minister of Health of the Republic of Indonesia number 1636 / Menkes / Per / XI / 2010):

“.....Saya dalam melaksanakan proses Khitanterhadap perempuan selalu mengikuti aturan yang berlaku mbak. Saya melaksanakan Khitanterhadap perempuan pada tempat yang bersih atau di rumah orang tua yang akan menyunatkan anaknya. Biasanya mereka menaruh bayi perempuan mereka di kamar mbak. Alat-alat yang saya gunakan juga sudah saya sterilkan dengan alkohol. Setelah selesai menyunati anak tersebut saya langsung membersihkan alat kelaminnya dengan air hangat dan untuk mencuci tangan.....” (JB).

“..... in carrying out the circumcision process against women, I always follow the rules that apply, sis. I perform female circumcision in a clean place or at the home of parents who are circumcising their children. Usually, they put their baby girl in your room. I sterilized the tools that I use with alcohol. After I finished circumcising the child, I immediately cleaned his genitals with warm water and used to wash my hands ...” (JB)

At the Cigudeg sub-district health center, female circumcision is performed by scratching the genitals. Scratching the genitals means that humans should remember to control their desires and scratching is a sign that man has been purified, for that he must always maintain his own purity by keeping his genitals and offspring. In addition, as a symbol for maintaining chastity, female circumcision for some sources is considered to maintain the continuity of their reproduction. From several sources, there are also those who think that female circumcision has a very important meaning because it is considered to be able to carry on offspring. This assumption arises because being circumcised makes it easier to give birth. An expression can be seen from the statement of a source who is a traditional birth attendant. About this he said:

“.....khitan perempuan harus dilakukan, jika perempuan yang sudah dikhitan melahirkan lebih mudah, biar bersih dan hal ini merupakan tradisi agama yang sudah dilakukan sejak dulu, yang dimaksudkan untuk membersihkan, kalau tidak khitan susah nantinya mendapatak anak.....”

“....female circumcision must be done, if it is easier for women who have been circumcised to give birth to it so that it is clean and this is a religious tradition that has been practiced for a long time, which is intended to clean, otherwise it will be difficult to have children...”

“.....Khitan terhadap perempuan itu membuang sukere (bagian yang kotor) perempuan yang ada di bagian dalam alat kelamin. Walaupun sedikit tetapi ya tetap harus dibuang mbak. Harus ada darahnya tetapi jangan sampai terlalu dalam.....” (dukun bayi)

Circumcision of women removes the dirty parts of women that are on the genitals. Even though it's a little bit, you still have to throw it away. There must be blood but don't get too deep ” (traditional birth attendants)

The above expression showed that implementing female circumcision is a religious obligation that does not need to be questioned. Its function is as a means of reproduction, namely to continue the offspring, and is a must for the continuation of the offspring. They do not circumcise if girls, it is difficult to continue the offspring. This is according to what (MI) the *traditional birth attendants* (60 years).

“Khitanterhadap perempuan adalah khitanyang dilakukan pada bayi perempuan dengan menggores kulit yang menutupi bagian depan klitoris tetapi tidak boleh sampai melukai klitoris”

“Female circumcision is circumcision that is performed on a baby girl by scratching the skin covering the front of the clitoris but not to injure the clitoris”

Circumcision which is done symbolically is not questioned by health circles. Problems arise when the practice of female circumcision involves cutting off female genital organs, such as the clitoris because the clitoris is a sensitive center for women's sexual arousal. Therefore, injuring or damaging or cutting the clitoris is not permitted, but if only washing, pinching with turmeric, gemstones and others on these organs is permitted, however in Indonesia, usually the practice of circumcision involves cutting or incising the clitoris or clitoral area.

There is a Minister of Health Regulation concerning female circumcision, namely the Minister of Health Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia number 1636 / Menkes / Per / XI / 2010 concerning female circumcision, which explains that a female circumcision is an act of scratching the skin covering the front of the clitoris, without injuring the clitoris. Female circumcision can only be performed by certain health personnel, namely doctors, midwives, and nurses who already have a license to practice or work permit. Those who perform female circumcision are prioritized by female health workers.

Conclusion

The correct implementation of circumcision does not violate human rights at all. As the MUI (the Council of Indonesian Ulama) institution again emphasizes the correct procedure for circumcision according to Islamic law. The more so regarding the implementation of circumcision for women. That many factors play a role in the practice of circumcision for women. Based on this research, the increase in knowledge and education related to the practice of circumcision for women is accompanied by increased knowledge about the benefits and dangers of the practice of circumcision for women. In addition, using an interdisciplinary approach has succeeded in obtaining a comprehensive and in-depth picture of female circumcision.

The implementation of circumcision against women that occurred in the three sub-districts of Jasinga, Cigudeg and Cileungsi, Bogor Regency, is that the practice of circumcision in the research area in 2014 is still ongoing today. Of the respondents who were willing to be examined, 80.0% of mothers

under five had circumcised their daughters, for various reasons. Among them are due to religious and customary demands. Treatment of circumcision is done by cutting the skin on the clitoris and some are doing it symbolically. Lack of information regarding the correct implementation of circumcision causes 91.3% of the majority of families to carry out circumcision operations for girls even without observing the implementation rules according to the guidance of the Shari'a. Parents with low education are not aware that clitoral cutting affects their sexual and psychological health. The practice of female circumcision in three sub-districts is motivated by the belief that female circumcision is part of religious teachings that must be obeyed. In addition, female circumcision is also motivated by the belief that female circumcision is an ancestral tradition that must be preserved.

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