

# Local Culture Influence in Transforming Disease Knowledge and Understanding of Lere Community

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**Abstract:-** Health problems, in this current time, are considered a serious problem in the community. This serious problem is often getting worse by the high level of morbidity by the high spreading rate. Illness is often considered a deviation from normative social circumstances. The deviation is caused by biomedical disorders of human organs or caused by emotional and psychological disorders. Paying close attention to the contradictory phenomena above makes us aware of the need to rethink the alternative strategies for health management. As far as we understand, health problems in society are often in conflict with medical principles in which are resulting with a very dangerous situation for patients.

**Keywords:-** Perspective; Culture; Behavior.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Disease is distinguished from illness. Disease is often interpreted as an impaired physiological function of an organism as a result of infection or environmental stress. This means that the disease is objective. While illness is an individual's assessment of the experience of suffering from a pain and generally loses the appetite and passion for work and cannot optimally carry out the daily duties or strength loss often called a subjective phenomenon.

The phenomenon above is often found in the daily life where someone is medically considered suffering a disease but in the society's perspective, it is not considered an ordinary disease. One such example is what Lere's Community known as *Ronda*. Most people believe that the disease is a non-medical. Meanwhile, according to modern medical practice, *Ronda* is a type of acute eczema that requires special treatment.

Thus, based on the aforementioned arguments, the following formulation was carried out.

- What is the cultural view of the local community regarding the concept of healthy and ill?
- What is the public's view of the origin of the disease (etiology) of *Ronda* disease?

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### ➤ Cultural Perspective on the Concept of Healthy Life

In sociological perspective, the concept of healthy people can be interpreted differently according to the level of the community. People's views about the criteria of healthy or ill are not always objective. Public perceptions regarding health or illness are strongly influenced by past experiences besides the socio-cultural elements. Solita Sarwono, (2004) states that medical judgment is not the only criterion that determines a person's level of health. Many situations where individuals can normally carry out social functions even though they are medically ill are present. Conversely, it is not uncommon for individuals to be social/psychologically disturbed when they are considered physically healthy.

According to Sundari (1998), health is a condition where a person is still able to carry out its functions as usual. The World Health Organization (Mariyati Sukarni, 1999) defines that health is a physically, mentally and socially good condition and not just without disease or weakness.

From the explanation above, it is clear that healthy does not only include physical condition, but also mental condition and social condition of a person (Taheri & Biriya, 2013). A more critical explanation was given by Linda Ewles and Simmet, (A.E. Dumatubu, 2002) that a *healthy* conception must be viewed in several aspects:

- The concept of health seen from physical perspective is the most obvious health dimension because of its attention to the mechanistic functions of the body.
- The concept of health seen from mental perspective is the ability to think clearly and coherently.
- The concept of health seen from emotional perspective is the ability to recognize emotions such as fear, pleasure and anger to appropriately express emotions.
- The concept of health seen from social perspective is the ability to act and maintain relationships with others.
- The concept of health seen from spiritual perspective is the religious beliefs and good practices, principles of behavior and ways of achieving peace in solitude.
- The concept of health seen from societal perspective is related to the individual level that occurs due to the social, political, economic and cultural conditions surrounding the individual.

Aforementioned explanations, when related to cultural context can be adopted with the relativistic thinking of Wilson (Kalangie, 2004), focuses the idea of health is a functional ability to carry out social roles in everyday life. Thus, someone can determine *health* differently based on their culture (Taheri & Bayyazi, 2013; Taheri & Biriya, 2013) (Dumatubun, 2002).

➤ *Social Studies Regarding the Community's Healthy Behavior*

Social studies regarding public health behavior have long been conducted. Foster Anderson (1986) has conducted many studies on public health behaviors such as Indians in America and the Dobalan Malanesia. Foster Anderson concluded that public health behavior is characterized by two characters, the first is a naturalistic view and the second is a personalistic view. In the naturalistic view, all events that occur to humans are explained systemically from the influence of nature. While the personalistic view all the events that have befallen humans because of an outside force (*Supernatural Power*) that enters humans.

In that context Fosfer Anderson states that in the tradition of naturalistic medicine at Cina is known as the concept of Yin and Yang which teaches human balanced healthy behavior. The concept of Yin and Yang was then translated as a representation of natural elements. What is understood as something positive represents the elements of heat such as *sky, sun, fire* and *happiness*. While Yin is the opposite which understood as something that represents negative elements such as the *earth, moon, water, poverty* and *chaos*. The dominance of one of these elements in the human body will affect the balance of the body.

Likewise, the treatment in India is known as Ayurvedic treatment. In Ayurvedic treatment there is a known concept of Trisodha, the fluid element in human body in the form of *phlegm, bile* and *wind*. An imbalance of the three elements of *dosha* can affect one's health and is even believed to relate to forms of behavior according to the dominance of each of these elements.

The aforementioned studies explain the existence of community attachment to the environment. The formed perception is born from a cultural process which passed down and maintained from generation to generation. The interesting point from all aforementioned studies is that those studies shows the tendency that individual health behaviors tend to be influenced by the questioning of the concerned person as a hereditary inheritance of desirable health conditions and less based on biological knowledge (Kosa and Robertson in Soekino Notoatmodjo, 2004).

➤ *Community's Belief Regarding Diseases*

Humans, for example, in all age range will continue to experience illness. Pain according to the community has had various forms such as stomachache, headache, fever, etc.. The healing process will have a different context. The characteristics of this disease are commonly known by the community, even in remote villages.

People of Lere, especially the Kaili ethnicity, are familiar with the term *Ronda*. This disease is medically known as eczema which is very disturbing to someone who is suffering from it. For the Kaili community, this disease takes two forms, namely aqueous / wet (*Ronda Noue*) and dry (*Ronda Ngau*). Based on the data, *Ronda Noue* is not too itchy, but will smell over time. While *Ronda Ngau* is very itchy but does not smell. The results of interviews with several informants showed that *Ronda* in the community of Lere was real and witnessed by the community. Thus, from some of the evidence that can be witnessed by the community to strengthen their belief and confidence in the presence of *Ronda*. The form of public trust in *Ronda* is a form of traditional belief that has taken root in their lives. Thus, it seems very difficult to influence the flow of public trust even though it has been proven by the advancement of modern medical science. To prove the trust of the community of Lere against *Ronda*, in the interview regarding the disease with the 62-year-old informant stated that:

*The people of Lere believed strongly in the Ronda disease, a form of community trust where the disease was actually a known disease in our ancestors days. Thus, until now the name of the Ronda disease was still believed and trusted by the community. Whereas the development of science, especially in the modern medical department, has progressed. Nevertheless, the name of the Ronda disease and its traditional medical treatment process is still often done by the community.*

The statement above illustrate a community's trust in *Ronda* disease and the statement was clarified again by the 53-year-old informant, stating that:

*The local community believes that Ronda disease is caused by environmental influences, such as pollution, dust, insect bite. Other factor including climate changes such sudden heat or rain. The influence is believed to be the main factor causing someone suffering from Ronda. But, there are still a small number of people who believe in the magical element behind Ronda.*

Mr. Amir (45-years-old) stated in the interview that:

*The Ronda disease is characterized by spots, itching and stingy sensation. This disease arises not because of an allergy such as food allergies, but this disease arises and occurs through witchcraft, or is commonly referred as Doti, as a revenge against others. The treatment must be done by a shaman.*

The results of interviews prove that not only native people but also migrants trust in *Ronda* as a witchcraft, as further stated by Mr. Dahlan which stated that;

*Usually those who suffer from the Ronda disease are treated by shamans through bathing and smeared with traditional medicine powder.*

Mr. Dahlan's statement above illustrates that the community's trust in *Ronda* is very strong to able to convince other ethnic communities and migrants. Thus, the public trust in *Ronda* can be said to be a hereditary belief to each of the generations to come (Kim, Yeon, Lee, & Lee, 2015).

The information about *Ronda* disease was further conveyed:

*The Ronda disease is an allergic disease which further categorized into two types, Ronda Api and Ronda Poko. Ronda Api is characterized as to inflict a hot and itching sensation. Ronda Poko is itchy and watery and will spread wider when scratched.*

Erna (42 y.o. mother) who had suffered from *Ronda Poko* said that the treatment had to go through a shaman and had its own method using a powder that was smeared all over her body.

The results of interviews with respondents above provide an understanding of *Ronda* diseases that believed by the people of *Lere* as non-medical diseases. Nowadays, along with the advancement of development in the medical science which is supported by adequate facilities, the development of the treatment is less able to provide confidence to the wider community especially those in *Lere*. Up until recently, there are people who are infected by *Ronda* disease treated by shamans.

#### ➤ *Traditional and Modern Medical Perspective Regarding the Ronda Disease*

Based on the knowledge and experience of the informants and the observation results, it can be concluded that *Ronda* has two types, aqueous/wet and dry variant. The treatment process is often carried out by through traditional treatment rather than modern medical treatment because people believe that the modern medical treatment is slow and can cost a lot of money compared to a traditional treatment through a shaman. The name of *Ronda* basically arises not based on science but only based on lay understandings of the previous generations. Therefore, the emergence of *Ronda* is often related to a traditional solution. The results of interviews with informants Mr. Kisman (68 years old) stated that:

*The emergence of the term Ronda is actually based on the results of the thoughts and beliefs of the past generations of the Kaili tribe. At that time, the term treatment was not yet known through doctors, hospitals and health centers. So the term Ronda arises based on their ordinary minds, in correlation with the popularity of shaman. In addition, there is also no one who can cure Ronda. Then the knowledge that can cure this disease is passed down to their descendant with the aim that the future generations can treat it. Thus, the development of Ronda and its treatment at a glance is still known today by the community.*

The disease's term is specifically recognized by Kaili ethnicity (*Lere* and its surroundings). The disease is quite possibly be known by other ethnicities from several regions with the same or different name. It also quite possibly be a different variant of the diseases known in modern medical terms. The category of disease in question is a *Ronda* which the Kaili ethnicity relate *Ronda* with a burning fire (*napapu napapu*). In this case, the meaning refers to the burning sensation to the skin and the black coagulated pus that broken or cracked are quite similar to a charred skin. In line with the emergence of *Ronda* mentioned above, key informant *Lere*'s village head Mr. Azhar Langkuati (46 years old) stated that:

*The early stages of Ronda feels like the skin is burning (napapu-napapu). Then the wound became runny, dried and itchy. To cure this disease, people immediately go a shaman to treat it. The word Ronda itself is taken from the Kaili Rai language which is adapted to the characteristics and circumstances of the disease. Ronda disease is caused by two factors: environmental such as insect stings, ash, dirty water and other; and spiritual which caused by intentionally inflicted through witchcraft based on an evil intent.*

In the past, medical treatment is less known. Thus, making the disease which was medically unknown is approached based on local knowledge and understanding of it. In the epidemiological approach of this disease, the Kaili community conducts qualitative treatment to explain the problem or events that befall the local community about the emergence of *Ronda*. At that time, the community only knew traditional treatment provided by a shaman. Regarding the history of the disease presence in the Kaili Rai community, Mrs. Hayati (51years old) stated that *Ronda* has long been known by her community. Based on her knowledge and experience, the word *Ronda* refers to the word *naronda* which relates to *napapu napapu* (burning fire). The nature of this disease in no way endangers a person's life.

In the modern medical understanding, the term *Ronda* disease is known as an acute fungal eczema. This disease mainly be caused by fungus. The sickness cause imbalance of the body elements such as temperature (sudden hot/cold shift in body temperature) or the presence of viral/bacterial disorders. As a fungal based disease, the provided treatments are mainly based on repeated fungal therapy. *Ronda* or acute fungal eczema as a fungal based disease are categorized into mycoses.

It is undeniable that there are still many people who suffer *Ronda* seek treatment to shamans because of the background understanding regarding the cause of *Ronda*. Along with better education and understanding, patients who suffers *Ronda* are gradually lean towards more modern medical treatment. Regarding those who still seeks treatment by a shaman is is largely determined by two factors:

- *Strong Belief in Shaman and Witchcraft*

People of Lere generally lean toward the treatment by a shaman they know in the village. According to the informants in the community, the treatment is very easy and practical and treat the treatment result as the proof of non-medical treatment efficacy (Pan et al., 2019). Because the treatment recovery process is also relatively quick, the people are no longer buy medicines at the pharmacy as a mistrust action based on the stronger beliefs in non-medical aspects (Gershman, 2016).

- *Habitual Tradition*

Since the emergence of *Ronda* in the community, the treatment was always done traditionally through a shaman. These habits die hard, especially because the treatment itself is very practical, cheap and easy to do.

### III. CONCLUSION

An illness is usually associated with medical aspects based on the environment. In this context the disease arises due to an interference with the immune system. However, the results of this study indicate that people's cultural based perceptions regarding this disease are not all in line with modern medical understanding. People differently experience disturbances in their bodies, one of which is due to the existence of an element of witchcraft based on a revenge, anger or envy. Such beliefs influence the perspective regarding *Ronda* which is considered a form of witchcraft by the community Lere. Because of such beliefs, the people of Lere are more into cultural approach treatment through a shaman. Their experience shows that by traditional approach, they were all healed. The facts regarding local understanding of *Ronda* are certainly different from modern medical understanding which views *Ronda* as an acute fungal eczema.

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