

The Dialectics Of Local Wisdom-Based Health Communication (The Presence of “Indung Beurang” in Kampung Naga Indigenous People during Modern Era)

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Abstract. *Indung beurang* currently receives good attention from society as shown by the behavior of the pregnant women who will initially check their pregnancy to the *indung beurang* who performs non-medical practices using makeshift equipment and various ingredients from certain plants. Indigenous people have applied this practice for generations by considering prevailing local wisdom. The habit of pregnant women and their families to check the pregnancy by *indung beurang* is a form of adherence to ancestral traditions without any pressure or coercion from any influential people in the community. This practice just flows as a living habit internalized in the community through their attitudes and behavior. This research aims to describe the reality of the health behavior of the Kampung Naga people. The research employed the descriptive method and qualitative paradigms with inductive thinking to find out the inheritance of cultural values in the context of health communication. The research results show that public health behavior, especially the childbirth process, has taken place over generations and still maintains the trust of underground communities. Keeping, obeying, and passing on customs are dogmatic needs, which will eventually shape the community's personality in accordance with their traditional philosophy of life. Kampung Naga people use myths and ethos as environmental communication through the concepts of *pamali*, living with nature, and good role models. These concepts become the inheritance values to awaken the community and the younger generation and convey traditional events as a manifestation of their belief in nature.

Keywords: local wisdom; traditional medical personnel; indigenous people; health communication

INTRODUCTION

The role of traditional health workers that were popular in the past among the community is now replaced by modern health workers. *Dukun beranak*, also known as *paraji* or *indung beurang*, are women who traditionally help the childbirth process, pregnancy care, and after-birth care. These practices have been passed over generations (Hastuti et al., 2018). However, along with the development, the community, especially urban communities, starts to forget the role of the *indung beurang*. Moreover, *indung beurang* in rural areas has lost her role. Her main job is no longer to assist the childbirth process because people prefer medical assistance from modern health workers. However, the community still requires the role of *indung beurang* for non-medical matters, such as *ngangsurkeun* which includes fixing the position of the baby to prevent breech, praying for the baby inside the womb to be healthy and protected from calamity and supernatural beings, and massaging the pregnant women.

In the past, the community trusted *paraji* or *indung beurang* to help the childbirth process. However, the Constitution Number 29 the year 2004 concerning medical practices has

prohibited the involvement of *indung beurang* in childbirth processes and traditional health workers in direct handling of the labor process. They only serve as companions in the childbirth process. Nevertheless, their roles are not ruled out because they periodically socialize assistance to the childbirth process to reduce the number of deaths; this program is organized by community health centers. *Indung beurang* who attends the coaching program will receive a training certificate; but this certificate does not legalize their medical practices in the community.

The traditional community of Kampung Naga, Salawu District, Tasikmalaya Regency, still gives a respectable place to *indung beurang* because pregnant women in this village will first check their pregnancy to *indung beurang* although they perform non-medical practices using makeshift equipment and various ingredients from certain plants. The indigenous people have applied this practice for generations by considering prevailing local wisdom.

The habit of pregnant women and their families is getting health care during their pregnancy from *indung beurang*. This habit embodies their adherence to ancestral traditions over generations without any pressure or coercion from anyone influential figures in the community. Moreover, their habit has been internalized in their attitudes and behavior. Moreover, this habit is performed without interference from other cultures and believed as a form of respect for their ancestors [1].

Kampung Naga community has practiced the behavior of getting health care during pregnancy from *indung beurang* for generations. This practice is influenced by the culture of health communication. There is an important relationship between culture and communication; culture is communication, and communication is culture [2]. Someone learns perspective and cultural patterns in the process of communication. Social interaction will make people realize certain values, norms, languages, and cultures. Health behavior practiced by parents will be the role model and initiate the next generation to conduct the same health communication in the families or society.

The inherited health behavior is conducted through formal and informal learning. An *indung beurang* does not get medical training but handles the childbirth process using her experiences inherited by the previous *indung beurang*. Indigenous people of Kampung Naga learn the childbirth process by believing in *indung beurang*; this learning is a hereditary cultural internalization. This internalization is influenced by the role of public figures and families to form healthy behavior [3].

In cultural internalization, health behavior is one of the health communication types that cover information transformation that influences an individual's or society's decision-making of health management, in this case, is indigenous people of Kampung Naga [4]. The process of internalizing the cultural health behavior of indigenous people in Kampung Naga cannot be separated from the traditional elders' role models led by *kuncen*. These practices include the behavior of *indung beurang* to handle health problems of pregnant women, provide after-birth care, and take care family of the pregnant women.

A role model is a method believed to change people's attitudes and behavior, especially the younger generation [5]. *Kuncen* of Kampung Naga states that instructions, orders, and firmness are not required to change the characters and attitudes of a younger generation because they need an exemplary figure who can set an example and provide a model of how one should behave and act. *Indung beurang's* role model can be seen from her experience as a *paraji* who holds trust and integrity in communicating with pregnant women and is cooperative with modern health workers or village midwives by considering applicable regulations.

This study describes the health behavior of Kampung Naga people. A descriptive method and qualitative paradigms with inductive thinking were employed to find the inherited

cultural values of health communication. The informants were selected using the purposive sampling with the following criteria: 1) knowing the duties and functions of *indung beurang* in the traditional community of Kampung Naga, 2) participating in and receiving medical and non-medical treatment from the *indung beurang*, and 3) knowing and carrying out the customs of Kampung Naga. Based on these criteria, the research informants were *kuncen* Kampung Naga, *indung beurang* in Kampung Naga, spokespersons, and several mothers treated by *indung beurang*. Then, a literature study was carried out to investigate research results in published journals that agree with the reality under study.

Local wisdom, cultural inheritance, and dialectics of health communication

Culture is defined as rules of behavior that include values, norms, and civilizations inherited from one generation to the next [6]. The process of inheritance occurs from the smallest environment, namely the family, to the community because the family plays a pivotal educational role. The inheritance of cultural values plays several critical roles, including 1) inheriting cultural values and norms characterizing a particular culture, 2) providing individuals with social signs and general social knowledge as the basis for selecting social roles, and 3) helping individuals to socialize and interact with various different identities in the general society.

Talking about culture, people in Kampung Naga still hold their customs and traditions. For example, they prefer using traditional cooking and farming tools and other daily equipment, not modern equipment. They assume that natural disasters, curses, death, hunger, and other bad things in their lives are the result of human behavior which violates the values of their religious and belief systems. They believe that nature is God's creation and has “*welas asih*” (mercy) that will not cause a disaster without a reason. A disaster occurs due to human behavior, not God's intervention. Their strong belief has finally created various valid and adhered to traditions [7]; [8].

The behavior of Kampung Naga society is the result of their obedience in carrying out traditions through the process of inheriting socio-cultural values (enculturation) over generations through various orders, prohibitions (*pamali*), traditional ceremonies, and other rituals to form a solid custom. Obedience, preservation, and cultural inheritance of Kampung Naga community cannot be separated from the role of *kuncen* — a key figure who becomes a role model, guides, and explains good and bad behavior, obligations, and various taboos [9]. Prohibition (*pamali*) in Kampung Naga community is a social sign that cannot be asked or bargained for because disobedience will result in disaster. For example, it is not allowed to enter and take something in the forbidden forest (*leuweung* prohibition).

The concept of health and illness in Kampung Naga society cannot be separated from their attitudes and behavior formed by customs and internalized through inheritance processes for generations. A person is considered healthy or sick by his biological, psychological, and socio-cultural abilities or disabilities to adapt to the environment. For example, a person is considered sick if he suffers from an illness that causes a physical disturbance, such as fever, cough, or flu, but he still can perform his activities; thus, he is not considered sick [10]. Kampung Naga society assumes that illness is a condition in which they are no longer able to carry out physical activities, and this illness is the result of their behavior that violates a prohibition intentionally or not intentionally. There is an expression, “*amanat wasiat akibat, upami amanat dan wasiat di langgar, sangsi na kanu ngalanggar*”. This expression means “there are rules to apply. If these rules are violated, people will get social and magical sanctions. Illness is one of the consequences of violating the applicable rules.”

Kampung Naga is located on the edge of the province; thus, this village is influenced by modernization from the neighboring villages. Consequently, Kampung Naga society could still maintain their lifestyle because they have a cultural heritage base and a philosophy of living with nature. Nature is God's creation with natural compassion. Meanwhile, natural disasters occur because of humans' greedy attitude in treating nature. One of the ways to be grateful for living with nature is to perform *Hajat Sasih* every six times a year to coincide with big Islamic days or months.

Lifestyles of living with nature and adapting to natural changes have enabled Kampung Naga society to use simple equipment without modern technology. Therefore, they prefer using hoes instead of tractors, wood fuel instead of gas stoves, oil lamps instead of electricity, and bamboo for the house walls [11].

The laws and regulations governing the attitudes and behavior of Kampung Naga society are not written but passed by word of mouth across generations in the form of prohibitions, wills, and consequences. The unwritten rules regulate layouts of house constructions, the behavioral patterns of communicating with older people, health behaviors, house directions, clothing, ceremonies, arts, etc. These rules were composed by their ancestors, must be upheld, and cannot be violated. Any violation will not get clear sanctions but consequences.

Kampung Naga people's behavior in the context of health communication is their trust in *indung beurang* to assist the childbirth process. *Indung beurang* only helps during the pregnancy and after giving birth; in contrast, the labor process is handled by health workers or village midwives [12]. As a traditional childbirth helper, *indung beurang* should work with the village midwife to handle pregnancy health problems. One of the *indung beurang's* tasks is to motivate the pregnant women to check their pregnancy and have the labor process with the assistance of a midwife; however, some people still ask for *indung beurang's* help for the labor process [13].

Kampung Naga society considers that an *indung beurang's* position is more than a health worker. She acts as a parent who gives the people peace and motivation and cuddles pregnant women. However, during the childbirth process, *indung beurang* can position herself and accept the task divisions for handling health during childbirth with the village midwife. Cooperation with the village midwife is considered neither violating local traditions nor risking the childbirth [14]. In addition, the *indung beurang* provides non-medical treatment, such as massaging, praying against reinforcements, and giving herbs from plants to provide positive benefits for the mother and her baby. Thus, the community visits the village midwife to give birth because she has credibility certified by the government [15]. At the same time, they visit the *indung beurang* because she has an efficacious "jampe-jampe" to resist reinforcements and reject disasters; thus, a mother who will give birth will feel peaceful [16].

The public trusts *indung beurang* because the inheritance of cultural values is internalized by teaching about childbirth and implemented through various rituals for generations. In addition, the *indung beurang* has effective communication skills that can foster a sense of comfort and security for pregnant women. Society perceives that these skills emerge because *indung beurang* has more experience and attention and more patiently deals with patients than village midwives. As a result, some villagers still ask *indung beurang* to help their childbirth process [17].

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that *Kuncen* plays an important role in the process of inheriting traditional culture through various kinds of rituals by providing good role models followed by

the young generation. Thus, they can recognize and understand the indigenous culture and have a strong cultural foundation to fence off negative influences from other cultures. Role models are believed to be the right and effective method to internalize values and norms for the young generation.

Public health behavior, especially related to the childbirth process, has occurred and been inherited for generations. As a result, the public still trusts *indung beurang*. Keeping, obeying, and passing on customs and traditions are dogmatic necessities and will eventually shape the community's personality in accordance with their philosophy of life and traditional characteristics.

Kampung Naga society uses myth and ethos as environmental communication through the concepts of *palali* and living with nature. They use these concepts as good role models to inherit valuable values and awaken the community and young generation. These efforts are frequently conveyed at traditional events as a manifestation of their belief in nature.

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