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Child Value and Gender Preference Among Konjo Tribe: A Rapid Ethnography Study in Bulukumba Rural Coast Indonesia

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Abstract

Parents' perceptions and expectations for their children are different in various culture; it depends on how families assess the presence of children in the family and their preference for specific gender. This research aims to assess the perception of children value and gender preferences in Konjo Tribe of Bulukumba Rural Coast, in Indonesia. Using compressed design approach, through rapid ethnography assessment. The subject consist of 30 informants, with specific various couple, public figure, and health workers and assistant Family Planning Staff. The results show that value of children for Konjo Tribe community divide into, 1) children are treasure, 2) children are symbol of pride, 3) children are special and precious, 4) children are symbol of family wholeness. While parents preferences of specific gender in a single family of Konjo Tribe shows different meaning for the existence of sons and daughters, they do more prefer to have son rather than daughter for their first born.

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It means that in Konjo Tribe, the population will be enlivened with males more than females, considering man as a successor of their generation.

Keywords: value of children; gender preferences; Konjo tribe; rural coast; rapid ethnography assessment.

1. Introduction

Fertility rate in Indonesia is influenced by number of children expected by a family. There is positive relationship between value of children and number of expected children [1,2]. When the children are perceived to have potential usefulness and substantial benefits, then the parents want more children. Children gender preferences also affected fertility rate. Gender preference associated with the role of children that based on gender. Sons and daughters have different roles [3]. If parents prefer sonsto daughter, then efforts to build prosperous small family will find potential obstacles. Parents who only have son will keep on trying to get daughters so otherwise. The number of birth will continue increase until the goal gender varieties is achieved. [4].

Konjo Tribes is one of Indonesian tribes living in Bulukumba, South Sulawesi. Socio-culture of Konjo community is ready to accept changes, particularly in the form of material or something that can bring benefit for their life, yet without changing traditions and traditional belief. Their slogan were “we never leave custom regulation”. Even, in the ceremony, new ideas are introduced and accepted properly, but it still added in the traditional way because they never change the old custom. Konjo people do not hesitate to spend a lot of money to hold traditional feast. Furthermore, the major economic problems for people Konjo is the need to hold the traditional feast [5,6].

Konjo Culture may be considered as life guidance for generation to generation, agreed socially to be applied in everyday life. The culture is reflected in social behavior and it has become habit and similar pattern in the environment. One of the aspects affecting the views on value of childrens and gender preferences is socio-culture of a community, including this tribe. This research aims to assess the perception of children values and gender preferences in Konjo community of Bulukumba. Here introduce the paper. The paragraphs continue from here and are only separated by headings, subheadings, images and formulae. The section headings are arranged by numbers, bold and 10 pt. Here follows further instructions for authors.

2. Method

Conducted a qualitative research using compressed design approach: Rapid Ethnography Assessment. Rapid Ethnography Assessment is an instrument to collect data, which is relevant with qualitative method to collect various understanding about social, economic, and policy factors contributing on the root of health problem [7]. This research was conducted in BontotirtoSub-district, Kajang, Bonto Bahari, and Herlang. Involving 30 informant selected purposively with a varous criteria such fertile-age couple, public figure, religious leader and Assitant Family Planning Staff. The data collection method used interviewing technique, observation, as well as review on official documents during four month. Then, the collected data were processedand analyzed using content analysis approach with ethnographic contenct analysis proposed by Altheide (1987) [8]. Data processing

includes reduction, presentation, data display, and conclusion.

3. Result

3.1. Value of children for Community of Konjo

Parents' perception and expectation on children are different in various cultures. In Konjo Tribe, informants see that value of children as: 1) the children are treasure, stated by RHM, ABM 2) the children are symbol of pride, stated by MBA, HAR 3) The children are highly valueable and special, stated by RSM, MBR 4) the children are symbol of complementary for parents happiness, stated by SPN, BKR 5) the children as the next generation for family, stated by BDL. The views on these value of childrens cannot be separated from the principles of life that they embrace, which are reflected in the everyday community behavior that is "Hajusiparappe, tallasipahua" (If we float, we will stranded together and if we sink, we will float together) constitutes a strong determination and shared responsibility in facing every conditions, either in a good or bad condition, principle of simple life, "Siri'naPacce" (shame and pain) and serves as the principle of solidarity of the Konjo tribe individual and refers to the principle of firm, straight, smart, bold, and strictly stick to religious orders.

The views of community in Konjo Tribe about "More Children, More Money" also stated by informants who were grouped into two (2) perceptions. First; informant who agreed that if they have many children, their works and economy in household would be helped, in a large family of Konjo Pesisir community, households with more children will obtain more support (food or money) more than other relatives, it was stated by SPH, ABM, NFT, RSM. According to IAH, MBA and HAR, this statement is also considered to be relevant with the teachings of Islam. Second, informant who disagree with that statement assume that the statement is out of date and does not conform to the modern age in which all family affairs are difficult and burden life increase, stated by DRM, KMR, MBR, RAH, KDR and BDL. In addition, this condition are only suitable for families whose economically wealthy, while poor families are not supposed to have many children because it would be society's burden, if the parents cannot take care of them, as proposed by BKR and RTN.

3.2. Children Gender Preferences on Konjo Tribe

In starting the life, most of sons are more fortunate compared to daughter. The birth of son seems to be more expected by various family, and therefore it would feel more exciting when compared to the birth of a daughter. It can be concluded that the results of interviews with some informants show that Konjo community has views related to different gender preference between son and daughter as follows:

First, If the family has a son, then that family would be lucky because the son can help them to make a living, it was stated by NFT, JMR, KMR, BKR and RAH, according to HAR, son can elevate family's prosperity, while according to KDR, it is easier to take care of son rather than daughter, but at the other side, son has another burden because groom must pay "uangpanai" (the amount of money to provide a wedding ceremony to give in for bride family) so the family should spend a lot of money to get married.

Second, as stated by SHN, IAH and RAH, If the family only have a daughter, then all she can do is staying at

home and doing house-hold work, in addition to that, according to SPH and MBR daughter could not help their parents to earn money because daughters have many slander and prohibitions, and even their physical state weaker. BKR also noted that, it would be more valuable if a family has educated daughters, who also have job because it will affect on higher “uang panai” when she want to married. Moreover, daughter in the family can lead to disaster if she does something bad and results in slender because it can aggravate family's image, then the “uang panai” money will be very low.

According to informants, Konjo community tends to wish a son as their first child because according to HAR and RAH, son has higher economic value, GTN and RHM also added that the son is as a symbol of family successor, while according to KMR, family considered their first son as the birth of a "king". In addition to the fact, that Konjo community would be happy if they have children with both gender, which means they have son and daughter, as stated by BDL and RTN.

Various views on children gender preference growing in Konjo and expectation on the fulfillment of the children preferences in a specific gender lead to efforts in the form, traditions or customs performed by Konjo community as an attempt to get a child with a specific gender in each pregnancy. According to informant, their efforts that have been done are: 1) Couple's sex position (by RHM, DRM, RSM, BKR and MBR); 2) Looking at the calendar month, (by NES); 3) who is dominant in sexual intercourse (MBA and HAR); 4) consuming a particular food (TRS and the RAH); 5) Doing some “sara'-sara” (ritual requirement) stealing neighbours' or relatives' panties or spoon, who have children with gender that they want. Cooking rice before the water has boiled, if families want a daughter then, they must split the rice with the spoon, in contrast if families want son, they must stick the spoon in the middle of the rice and let it stand, this information was proposed by the (IAH, RTN, KDR and BDL.). All the statements given by informants are a representative of culture values which has been consequently practiced among generations until nowadays it becomes revealed and influenced their social practice of modern life.

4. Discussion

Value of children constitutes children's function in serving or fulfilling parents' need [9,10], the value of children is parents' expectation consisting of the psychology value (the child as a source of satisfaction), social values (the child as a reason to prevent divorce and improve the family's social status). According to Konjo community's views on value of children in the family are: 1) the most valuable treasure, because children are the sustenance from God. 2) The symbol of pride for parents, therefore children should get a decent education. 3) The child is special and has high value, and then the parents shall provide what is the best for their children either in their livelihood or education. 4) Symbol of complimentary and happiness for the parents, because without children, parents will feel deprived and always feel sad because family does not have a successor for the next generation.

Meanwhile Arnold and Fawcett explained children concept has several dimensions: 1) Emotional Benefits, in which the children could bring joy and happiness into their parents' life. Children are the target of love, and a friend of their parents in future life; 2) Economic and calmness benefit: Children can help the family's

economy by working in the fields or in the company of other families or by donating their salaries obtained from another place. They can do much housework (so that their mothers can work and make money); 3) Sustainability and Harmony benefit for family are: Children can help to strengthen their parent's marriage and fill the needs of a marriage. They continue the family line, family name, and family traditions [11].

In rural areas, children have high value for their family. Children can give happiness and would constitute a guarantee in their parents' old days and can help the family economy. Most of Indonesian living in rural area assumed that by having more children they will have more benefit. This assumption is integral part of the kinship principle of community in Konjo Tribe, because if they have many children, the economy and housework will be assisted by their children (if the children have grown up and have job), in a large family of Konjo Pesisir community, households with more children will obtain more support (food or money) more than other relatives, this statement is also considered to be relevant with the teachings of Islam that every children would bring their own fortune, which means having more children lead to more fortune, and that fortune will be combined for parents.

Based on research by Mohamad Koesnoe in the area of Tengger, a farmer who has wide land will look for a foster child as additional labor. Another study conducted by the VOC (Value Of Children) project found that families living in rural area of Taiwan, the Philippines, Thailand has many children because they assume that children will bring economic benefits and security for their families [12].

The majority of culture in the world shows a tendency of the birth preference of son to daughter. A preference of male sex is particularly common among culture of Moeslim Religion, and culture in China, India, and Indonesia, this culture is found in Batak and Bali. Gender preference culture seems only exist in specific cultures.

Based on the research result, meaning of children gender in a family in Konjo Tribe are as follows:

- If a family only has a daughter, she will always stay at home and do houseworks, cannot help her parents to earn money because woman has many slender (women come from crooked bones) and prohibitions, and she does not have a strong body as men. In contrast, it also would be more valuable if a family has educated daughters, who also have job because it will affect on higher "uang panai". Moreover, daughter in the family can lead to disaster if she does something bad and result to slender because it can aggravate family's image, then the wedding money will be very low.
- If a family only has a son, it means that the family will be lucky because he can help his parents to earn more money and even he will be able to work and leave his town to find job after he has graduated from junior high school, it is not necessary for him to have higher education because he has strong body that can be functioned to work. According to coastal communities, the presence of son is very valuable because he can help to sail for fishing (sahi), and his parents' fishing vessels can be inherited for him. Furthermore, it is easier to take care of son compared to daughter because daughter needs a lot of additional necessity. However, it will be also considered as unlucky, if the parents only have sons because when their children grow up and want to marry someone, they have to pay "uang panai", so the family will spend a lot of money for that.

In Konjo community, there are still a lot of negative traditional views on women; they consider women as source of slender. In addition, women who have low education (because they do not continue their study and due to early-age marriage) will be considered as to have low status in community group. The existance of "uang panai" culture when there is marriage also provide negative value for women, which is miss-uderstood by community, they assumed that women has lower status than men.

Konjo Community more likely to has son as their first child because men have higher economic value, in which they can help their parents to earn money, they also have strong body so there will be no restrictions in any work, they are as a symbol of successor family, as a symbol of king for a family who descended from the kingdom, men who have full responsibility to save their younger siblings.

The findings are consistent with the the study of Lewelen, who found that sonsare consistently more aggressive and competitive, while daughters are more integrative [affectionate and sentimental, willing to share (heart), and the cooperative]. The study on the behavior of infants shows a similar pattern [13].

A cross-cultural studies (cross-cultural) which has been conducted, discover the facts as follows: 1) people who obviously prefer sonsto daughters, are in South Korea, Taiwan, India, Turkey (Ankara), Mexico City and among the Chinese population in Thailand; 2) a mixed pattern, where the choice of gender children preference depends on the measure used, not absolutely choose sons, these people present in communities of Betawi tribe in Jakarta, East Java, the Philippines and Thailand and Malays in West Malaysia; 3) the presence of firm desire, at least one child of each gender, found in communities of Europe and North America [14].

In many cultures of other communities, the survey performed by Williamson showed that, generally, parents prefer to have son, or at least have son and daughter in the same amount [15]. Analytically the relationship between value of children and the status of women, according to Peter Hagul [16], can be explained as follows. First, indirect relationship, which means if the value of children for parents is high, then the fertility still will not go down. If fertility does not go down, it means that it will be difficult for women to be exempted from domestic roles (housewife) and it would also mean that it will be more difficult to empower mother's status that is already low.

Various views on children gender preference growing in Konjo Pesisir ethnic and expectation on the fulfillment of the children preferences in a specific gender led to efforts in the form, traditions or customs performed by Konjo Pesisir community as an attempt to get a child with a specific gender in each pregnancy. Here are the efforts to be done: 1). Couple's sex position; 2) Looking at the calendar month; 3) who is dominant in sexual intercourse; 4) consuming a particular food; 5) Doing some sara'-sara '(ritual requirement) stealing neighbours' or relatives' panties or spoon, who have children with gender that they want. Cooking rice before the water has boiled, if families want a daughter then, they must split the reice with the spoon, in contrast if families want son, they must stick the spoon in the middle of the rice and let it stands.

The same research was also conducted by Jannah in Urban Village of Bidaracina, she stated that if parents would like to have son, they should eat meat, fish, seafood, and chicken, wife should have orgasm earlier than

husband (dominant in sex intercourse), set the time to have sex intercourse a week after menstruation. Meanwhile, if parents are likely to have daughter, they should eat more vegetables, fruits, nuts and milk, besides, husband should orgasm earlier more often than wife, set the time to have sex intercourse a week before menstruation [17].

5. Conclusion

In Konjo Tribe Community, the presence of children is an event that is eagerly awaited by the family. The presence of children also reflects the success in terms of descendant. The value of children for Konjo community are as follows: the children are the most valuable treasure because children are gift from God, the children are symbol of pride, the children have high value and special, the children are symbol of family complementary. In addition, children gender preference in one family are: the presence of son is very valuable because he can help to sail for fishing (Sahi), and his parents' fishing vessels can be inherited for him. Then family status will be elevated if they have son rather than they have a daughter for their first born. The value of children effect for community becomes the main factor that lead to the increase of the number of children in the family. Therefore, this findings become a major recommendation for Family Planning Department to emphasize the concept that children quality must be prioritized over children quantity. In addition, it is necessary to provide understanding for the community that there is no difference between sons and daughters because they are have equal status.

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