
Onen Culture as a Traumatic Counseling Approach for the Timorese Hoineno Ex-East Timor

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Past traumatic experiences often hinder a person's transformation and progress. When mental health is disrupted due to unpleasant events in the past, it is necessary to provide traumatic counseling services.

Design/methodology/approach: This research, healing in traumatic counseling, uses Onen culture as its approach. Through observation and interviews, this qualitative research examines the phenomena that occur in the lives of the Timorese Hoineno Ex-Timtim.

Findings: The meaning contained in one moment of grief can be a cultural-based traumatic counseling approach for the Timorese Hoineno Ex-Timtim to start a new life after returning to Timor.

Paper type: Research paper

Keyword: *Traumatic counseling, Onen, Timorese Hoineno Ex-East Timor*

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I. INTRODUCTION

The word Onen comes from the dawan language which means prayer or prayer. Toh & Taniu, (2022) As religious beings, almost the entire life cycle of the Timorese is colored by Onen. When experiencing sad or happy events, the Timorese always bring it up in the expression Onen. Based on its purpose, Onen is categorized into two parts, namely Onen when you are happy and Onen when you are sad. Onen when they like, is usually done when the Timorese are about to start activities such as farming, or when they experience good luck in life such as successful harvests, births and the process of proposing traditional marriages, and so on. On the other hand, Onen is during grief, for example when confessing sins or mistakes, when experiencing problems such as illness, accidents and death, as well as during post-conflict. In the past, Onen was led by an adat elder. Now Onen is led by traditional elders but is also attended and witnessed by religious figures. The contents of the Onen story are addressed to Uis Neno (the Transcendent), the Holy Spirit (Smanaf Knino), the ancestor (Nai Bei) and the god of nature (Uis Pah). Onen during times of joy aims to express gratitude, maintain kinship and so on, while Onen during times of grief is useful for repairing relationships, asking for protection, peace and blessings from Uis Neno, Nai Bei, Uis Pah for the Timorese people.

In particular, in this research, the study of Onen will be focused on the time of grief, namely when the Hoineno Ex-East Timor (Ex-Timtim) Timorese chose to return to Timor Land after the conflict in East Timor (East Timor or Timor Leste). The Timorese people of Hoineno Ex-East Timor, saw and experienced first-hand the violence, vandalism, destruction of their homes and everything they owned during the conflict that occurred in 1998-2002. This has left its own trauma for them.

When they chose to become Indonesian citizens and returned to the Land of Timor, they had to start everything in their lives from scratch, with various emotional wounds that still linger. Thus, it is in this context that Onen during grief can be used as a traumatic counseling approach with a cultural basis for them. Onen culture is an offer to support and heal mental health during the post traumatic stress disorder experienced by the Timorese Hoineno Ex-East Timor, post-conflict.

A. Literature Review

The literature review was conducted to see previous research related to this research. Researchers found research conducted by Jacob Daan Engel, with the title 'Traumatic counseling with a logotherapy approach (handling of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) for trafficking victims)'. Engel in his writings sees traumatic counseling with a logotherapy approach as a logotherapy concept that is translated into a counseling process. Meaning-centered counseling is a force against personally meaningful post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). PTSD as a means to train and assist victims of trafficking in persons in achieving the meaning of suffering. This is a source of value in understanding the suffering of victims of trafficking in persons which is rich in meaning (Engel & Daan, 2017). The research perspective conducted by Engel has similarities with the research that the researcher wants to describe, namely about traumatic counseling, but the difference is in substance, this traumatic counseling is for the Timorese Hoineno Ex-East Timor, and not for trafficking victims. In addition, the advantage of this research is that it adopts the local wisdom of the Hoineno Timorese, in the Onen culture, to be applied as a counseling approach to support and heal post-conflict mental health, which has not been used in previous studies.

Then, there was also research conducted by Nurhafiza et al., (2023) with the title 'Reality therapy approach to traumatic victims following natural disasters: library research studies'. Nurhafiza, et al, see reality therapy as an approach to support traumatic victims due to natural disasters, but Nurhafiza, et al's research does not utilize the power of culture as a traumatic counseling approach.

Then, there is also research conducted by Castro-Bedriñana et al., (2021), with the title 'Traumatic counseling guidance and desensitization techniques for victims of covid-19 in the city of Padangsidimpuan'. Dela, et al saw that the victims of Covid-19 in the city of Padangsidimpuan were traumatized by the spread of Covid-19. So, they use desensitization as a technique in traumatic guidance and counseling services for victims of covid-19 trauma. On the other hand, researchers actually maximize the meaning contained in the culture belonging to the Hoineno Timorese people, to provide support and support for traumatic victims in the aftermath of the East Timor conflict.

From the several studies above, it shows that traumatic counseling in general has not touched the cultural base as one of the original strengths of the community, to be used as an approach. Thus, researchers are interested in harnessing the power of local wisdom contained in Onen, in order to support and heal mental health during post-traumatic stress disorder experienced after the East Timor conflict. On the other hand, the researcher sees that there has never been a review of the Onen concept. Thus, this research is increasingly interesting to be published.

II. METHODS

This study uses a qualitative method. Qualitative research is carried out in natural conditions, is descriptive in nature, emphasizes process, data analysis is carried out inductively and places more emphasis on meaning (Teresia & Hermi, 2016). The choice of qualitative method is because the researcher wants to enter directly on the research object and dig deeper information. Researchers chose to use this method with the consideration that the problem under study is a phenomenon that requires the use of observation. With qualitative research, it will be easier when dealing with reality, and there is a close emotional relationship between researchers and respondents so that it will produce in-depth data.

The approach used in this research is phenomenology. Phenomenology seeks to uncover and study and understand a phenomenon along with its unique and unique context experienced by individuals to the level of the individual's "beliefs". Thus, studying and understanding it must be based on the point of view, paradigm and direct belief of the individual concerned as a subject who experiences firsthand (first-hand experiences) (Herdiansyah, 2012). Phenomenology is generally known as an approach used to help understand various social symptoms or phenomena in society (Nindito S, 2013). There is an interesting statement from Husserl relating to qualitative research and phenomenology. According to him, all qualitative research has a phenomenological aspect to it, but the phenomenological approach cannot be applied to all qualitative research. That is, all qualitative research has phenomenological aspects in it, but the phenomenological approach cannot be applied to all qualitative research (Padilla-Díaz, 2015). The phenomenological approach is used with the aim of seeing Onen as a traumatic counseling approach to post-traumatic stress disorder in an effort to support and heal the mental health of the Timorese Hoineno Ex-Timtim. The focus of the phenomenological approach model is the experience experienced by individuals. How do individuals interpret their experiences related to certain phenomena that are very meaningful for the individual concerned. The experiences discussed here are not just ordinary experiences, but experiences related to the structure and level of individual consciousness directly or indirectly. Because the phenomenological approach model focuses on individual personal experiences, the

research subjects are people who directly experience events or phenomena that occur, not individuals who only know a phenomenon indirectly or through certain media (Almanshur Fauzan, 2012). Thus, in this regard, the Timorese Hoineno Ex-Timtim were key respondents, because they were the ones who had direct experience of the East Timor conflict.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Research Results: *Onen* as a Traumatic Counseling Approach for Timorese Hoineno Ex-Timtim

1. Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a type of mental health problem. PTSD means post-traumatic stress disorder (Roseli et al., 2021). To be clear, conceptually, PTSD is a disorder that some people experience after experiencing a shocking, frightening, or dangerous event. The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) defines PTSD as a disorder in the form of anxiety that arises after a person experiences a life-threatening or physical event. These traumatic events can be in the form of violent attacks, natural disasters that befall humans, accidents, or war (Roseli et al., 2021). PTSD can occur after a single traumatic event or past experiences (Sacks et al., 2017).

Individuals who experience PTSD have depressed memories or thoughts that last more than one month (Kotijah & Pristama, 2020). The disorder is characterized by three core symptoms: first, disturbing memories, recalling gruesome details of tragic events or frequent nightmares about them. Second, the tendency to avoid talking about or thinking about traumatic events. This condition is manifested by avoiding places, activities, or people that trigger memories of the traumatic event. Third, emotional changes (Kirkpatrick et al., 2014). These changes are indicated by differences in physical and emotional reactions, such as difficulty concentrating, being very alert, easily startled and afraid, easily irritated or angry, and difficulty sleeping (Dongling et al., 2017).

2. The East Timor conflict and the trauma of the Timorese Hoineno

In 1998, the fall of the Suharto regime provided a 'gap' for the pro-independence people of East Timor (East Timor or Timor Leste) to become independent. The emergence of pressure from the international community to respond to the cases that occurred in East Timor forced Indonesia to issue policies to accommodate the aspirations of the people of East Timor. This pressure also prompted the Indonesian government to discuss this issue at the international level. Finally, in June 1998, the Indonesian government decided to grant broad autonomy to East Timor. Indonesia's proposal was submitted to the UN Secretary General and then held triangular talks between Indonesia, Portugal and the UN. During these discussions, there were still riots between pro-independence and pro-integration parties in East Timor. East Timor was also released from Indonesian sovereignty in 1999 and became officially independent in 2002 (Pinem, 2013).

East Timor gained sovereignty as a new country with the title Timor Leste (Leste is Portuguese, which means East) and gave its inhabitants freedom to choose citizenship. So, there are those who choose to remain citizens of Timor Leste, but there are those who choose to become Indonesian citizens and leave the land of Timor Leste. Some of the people who chose to return to Indonesia include the Timorese, who chose to return to their homeland in TTS. However, because they returned to their homeland with "empty hands", the experience of conflict that brought bitter memories, as well as demands to start a new life, became pressure, stress and traumatic for them to start over a new life in their ancestral land. In particular, the Timorese of the Toh clan who come from Hoineno Village who are experiencing post traumatic stress disorder, are accompanied by their extended family and given psychological support to improve their mental health, through the *Onen* culture.

B. Discussion

1. *Onen* in the Life of the Timorese Hoineno in general

The word *Onen* comes from the Timorese language (or Dawan language) which means prayer. (Toh & Taniu, 2022) *Onen* is the foundation and philosophy of life for the Timorese Hoineno. On a daily basis, the *Onen* performed by the Timorese Christian Hoineno is the same as the prayers generally practiced by other people, which are addressed to the Triune God (or in Dawan's language it is called *Uis Neno* which means Lord God, Neno Anan or Usif Jesus which means God the Son or the Lord Jesus and Smanaf Knino which means the Holy Spirit), for example during thanksgiving for building a house, celebrating birthdays, celebrating promotions, celebrating wedding anniversaries, and so on. However, when the Timorese Christian Hoineno has an unusual intention, such as when experiencing an illness, misfortune and conflict in life, as well as to empower kinship and harmony between family members, then the content of the song is addressed not only to the Triune God (*Uis Neno*, Neno Anan or Usif Jesus and Smanaf Knino) of course, but there is a position and

role of the fourth divine being which is very decisive and distinguishes it from the usual *Onen*, namely *Nai Bei*, through certain traditions or rituals.

In carrying out its tradition, *Nai Bei* occupies a central position in the life of the Hoineno Timorese. *Nai Bei* has an important role in the tradition that is carried out, in order to strengthen their social relations. This is in line with the thoughts of Sztompka, (2014), a Polish sociologist who is well-known for social belief theory, who sees tradition as a binder of society (Sztompka, 2014). According to Sztompka, (2014), tradition has a functional dimension in society. Traditions provide a cogent symbol of collective identity, reinforcing primordial loyalties to nations, communities and groups. Similarly, the Hoineno Timorese also maintain their unity, among others, through the traditions addressed to *Nai Bei*. The community is bound and united through traditions to *Nai Bei*. *Nai Bei* has an important role in the traditions that are carried out, in order to strengthen their social relations. *Nai Bei* is a Dawan language term that comes from the word *Nai* which means *Ba'i* or Grandpa, and the word *Bei* which means *Nene* or Grandmother, which is then used in everyday language to refer to their ancestors (Taniu et al., 2022).

The vital task of the *Nai Bei* for the Timorese Hoineno people is seen when *Onen* with an unusual purpose is raised. According to the Timorese elder Hoineno, the function of *Nai Bei* Timtimhat is as the God of the World (Taniu et al., 2022), who is near and influential in their lives (Taniu et al., 2022). This opinion is in line with the thoughts of Ebenhaezer Nuban Timo, a writer in the field of Cultural Theology in NTT, that ancestors are *Uis Neno* Pala (Timo & Ebenhaizer, 2016). Schulte Nordholt, a professor of Indonesian History at the University of Leiden, said that the ancestors were a form of *Uis Neno* Pala (God of the lower heavens) (Nordholt, 1971). The Hoineno Timorese believe that the *Nai-Bei* live in the ground, live close to them, so that when they want to carry out various rites related to their life cycle, *Uis Neno* Pala (in this case what is meant by *Nai-Bei*) becomes the target for *Onen*. *Uis Neno* Pala in the form of *Nai-Bei* became the only *Onen* link between the Timorese Hoineno and *Uis Neno* Mnanu. *Uis Neno* Mnanu is God of the high heavens, far from humans, who is the source of life and the giver of blessings (Middelkoop. et al., 1982). Thus, the role of *Nai Bei* in *Onen* is very important for the dynamics of the life of the Hoineno Timorese.

2. *Onen* as a Traumatic Counseling Approach for Timorese Hoineno Ex-Timtim

Generally, *Onen* in the life of the Hoineno Timorese has three meanings, namely first 'nekaf mese ansaof mese makait kit okay', secondly '*Uis Neno* nokan kit talan tia nabal-bal' and lastly, '*Uis Neno* nokat al-alkit ok oke' (Selan, 2022). Especially *Onen* when mourning, to support the Timorese Hoineno Ex-Timtim, then the second meaning is applied. The meaning of *Uis Neno* nokan kit talan tia nabal-bal means the Lord God bless us forever, without time limit, in every situation. Toh & Taniu, (2022) This means that under any circumstances, *Uis Neno* and *Nai Bei* will still be with the Timorese Hoineno people, if they always come, greet and offer requests to *Uis Neno* and *Nai Bei* as their Rulers of Life. This also includes the Hoineno Timorese who used to migrate and leave their ancestral lands (Timor land) and choose to live in East Timor, but because of divisions, conflicts that occurred when East Timor wanted to separate from the Indonesian state, the Hoineno Timorese wanted to return home (or the local people called the Timorese Hoineno Ex-Timtim) to the land of their ancestors, they had to raise the *Onen* when they mourned, with the hope that when they would reveal their various limitations and problems to *Uis Neno* and *Nai Bei*. When *Onen*'s story was raised, *Uis Neno* and *Nai Bei* were pleased to open the door of blessing for them to start a new life in Timor. It is hoped that various bad experiences that have disturbed their mental health will improve, because through *Onen*, it is believed that psychologically they will receive support and welcome from their extended family, *Uis Neno* and *Nai Bei*. It is believed that the trauma and unpleasant experiences of the past will not be repeated, because the Timorese Hoineno Ex-East Timor have received the blessing and protection of *Uis Neno* and *Nai Bei*.

Here, *Onen* was carried out by the Hoineno Timorese to provide support for the Hoineno Ex-Timtim Timorese to become a new force for those who chose to return to their homeland (the land of their ancestors) and left all their possessions in East Timor (East Timor). *Onen* which was raised aims to heal the trauma and stress during the riots in East Timor which were faced by their clan, which caused mental pressure for all family members, who witnessed the violence and the destruction of their property firsthand. *Onen* is carried out as a form of assistance by companions (East Timorese Hoineno) to family members who return to their homeland (East Timorese Hoineno Ex-Timtim), so that they can increase their self-confidence, have the enthusiasm to start over and adapt to a new environment. *Onen* is a traumatic counseling approach to post traumatic stress disorder for family members of the Timorese Hoineno Ex-East Timor, after the riots.

IV. CONCLUSION

Researchers found that post traumatic stress disorder is a type of mental health disorder that occurred in the Timorese Hoineno Ex-East Timor after the East Timor riots. So, *Onen* was carried out by the family of the Timorese Hoineno Ex-Etimtim as a form of traumatic counseling carried out by the companion (East Timorese Hoineno) for those who were accompanied (East Timorese Hoineno Ex-East Timor) who chose to return home and start a new life in their homeland (the land of their grandmothers). their ancestors. *Onen* became a supporting medium and a source of strength for the Timorese Hoineno people to start a new life after the ex-East Timor conflict.

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