

Taboo in *Momandalo Tadulahu* (Parenting towards Young Women) Tradition in Gorontalo, Indonesia



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ABSTRACT: The present study seeks to explore taboo in parenting tradition to young women in Gorontalo. It employed a qualitative approach that relied on primary and secondary data. The results highlight that the parenting tradition towards young women in Gorontalo involved taboo narratives, some of them also involved the use of myths. The taboo narratives that are discovered in this study are: 1) taboo as education of discipline and time management, e.g., prohibition of taking a nap in the afternoon due to the myth that if someone does it, s/he will transform into a ghost. 2) taboo as education of manners, e.g., prohibition of removing fleas from hair in front of stairways due to the fear of difficulty of finding a partner. 3) taboo as a form of respect towards others, e.g., prohibition of stepping over someone who is laying down or sleeping due to the myth that the person's good luck will be removed from one (if someone already steps over a lying person, s/he must step over the person again, but backwards). 4) taboo as a form of encouragement of work ethic, e.g., prohibition of reminding someone to store some food for oneself before leaving due to the myth that the person's fortunes will be hindered. 5) taboo as education of caution, e.g., prohibition of opening an umbrella inside the house due to the fear of suffering from short stature that will also impact the person's children.

KEYWORDS: Phenomenon, taboo, parenting towards young women

INTRODUCTION

The word 'taboo' was firstly used by Captain James Cook in his third world roundtrip in Tonga Island, Polynesia, in 1777. The meaning of the word has remained relatively the same since then as a "prohibition". However, the contents, sources, and punishment of taboo have gone through a shift (Laksana in Sutarman, 2013: 13).

In other words, the concept of taboo and magic is relatively similar on the idea of words that can influence actions. The belief on taboo matters is very common in the Indonesian society in the past, and in select communities, at present. The previous definition of taboo indicates that it can involve actions and/or words. The present study focuses on linguistic taboo, i.e., those that derive from utterances or words.

The terminology of taboo has developed along with the progress of time. It does not only revolve around the fear towards spirits, but also the manners and social relation. Other forms of the linguistic taboo comprise the avoidance or prohibition of mentioning and discussing topics that may make other people uncomfortable. The consideration towards politeness are the main features of anthropological use of taboo. In other words, the tradition of taboo refers to the prohibition of all attitudes and conducts that are considered deviating from the norm of politeness.

During the preliminary study, it is discovered that taboo is commonly practiced in the parenting method in Gorontalo community. Despite that it is considered as an irrational myth for some people, the use of taboo contains a philosophical meaning as a function of social control in the community.

For Gorontalo community, taboo is an unwritten, yet binding set of rules. Taboo is introduced to children even before they start formal education. In the perspective of Gorontalo community, taboo is aimed to instill moral and religious characters to children.

Often spoken in Gorontalo language, the use of taboo by the parents is a form of parenting style that they employ to the children. Parenting that uses taboos is considered by some to be a method of parents in the past in teaching their children because of the low level of education and understanding of parents' religion. Along with the increase in education and better understanding of religion, the use of taboos has no longer practiced by most parents.

Taboo is a form of verbal prohibition that is usually practiced in ancient times from generation to generation. The research findings also confirm that taboo as a prohibition is no longer used as the parents' understanding of religion and level of education increase. Although taboos no longer have binding consequences as in the past, for the people of Gorontalo, the meaning of taboo is

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directed at character building. The meanings and values contained in taboo are also seen as educational media used by the Gorontalo community for their children.

LITERATURE REVIEW

One of the previous studies that is relevant to the present research is the dissertation by Dewi Anggariani (2017) entitled "Bugis Women: A Study of Shift in Domestic Roles in Makassar City". The dissertation explores the shift of domestic roles of Bugis women with focus to parenting method, food preparation, and laundry. These three work items are often considered to limit and hinder women's participation in the world of work. Furthermore, the values of ideological ethnic traditions that influence women's views and the existence of new institutions in the business world that handle domestic work are also observed in this study because they are related to domestic roles and strategies used by women. Research shows that there has been a shift in the role of women, especially in the domestic area due to economic conditions, the rise of food stalls, and the emergence of child care services.

Regarding parenting, the researchers found a study that compared parenting patterns in two ethnicities, i.e., Asiah Hamzah's (2000) dissertation entitled "Parenting Patterns for Javanese Migrants and Mandar Ethnic: Study of Local Culture with Ethnometodology Approach, Symbolic Interaction, and Analogy of Kasper Model in Parenting". The dissertation composed in the Postgraduate Program of Universitas Airlangga is based on the infant mortality cases in migrant Javanese (low) and Mandar (high) ethnicities and the difference in parenting style that would result in parenting problems. By using various approaches, the findings of this study conclude that the Javanese parents employed an attached parenting style to their children, while the Mandar ethnic uses loose parenting. The proposition as a general conclusion is that the attached parenting style is a product of Javanese culture and the loose parenting style is a product of the Mandar culture.

Regarding parenting, another relevant study is identified with the title of "Parenting Patterns in Bugis Families: A Study of Social Change in Rappang Families in South Sulawesi" by Nasir Baki (2005). This dissertation was written at the Postgraduate Program of UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta. This is a descriptive qualitative study that focused on religious and cultural point of view. The approach used is an ethno-methodological approach in an effort to find out the meaning of the symbols released by the mother from parenting style according to the meaning of the parents' ethnic origin. This study found that in a Bugis family, there are ideal values that a child must possess, i.e., *topanrita* (religious scholars), *toacca* (general scholars), *tosugi* (rich people), *towarani* (brave people), and *pangalung nappaddarek* (rice and plantation farmer). Meanwhile, the parenting style in Bugis Rappang family employs three patterns: 1) *resoppa temmangingngi, namalomo naletei pamase dewata* (devoting oneself sincerely in raising children will receive blessings from God); 2) *melo manre dekna melo mareso* (parents' wish that their children will support them financially and provide serenity in their old age); and 3) *wija lawo mubakko, wija batu tellekko* (raising children with full commitment).

In addition, Muhammad Mahpur's (2013) research entitled "Local Wisdom and Improving the Quality of Community-Based Childcare: A Participatory Research Approach" examines community-based childcare. This research explored the problems of mistreatment, neglect, and an unsupportive parenting culture that is part of the problem of child care in poor areas such as in Sidorame hamlet. Through a community approach, this research seeks to solve problems in the community by encouraging the community participation and utilizing the potential of local wisdom that had been neglected to solve parenting problems. The findings of the study indicate that there are elements of local wisdom that appear in the practice of parenting: a) strong determination and optimism as liberators of pessimism; b) harmony as an explanation of the parents' patience in raising children.

The distinctive values that distinguish the previous literature and the present study are in the approach and methods used that will indirectly have an influence on the paradigm and research results. This study also focuses on exploring the case with an ethno-parenting approach in the Gorontalo community, especially with regards to the instilment of Islamic and cultural values. In addition, this study identifies a potential shift in religious and cultural values as a result of modernization, such as the parenting style in determining children's education which was initially authoritarian but turned to a democratic style along with the development of parental knowledge, so that the children can decide by themselves regarding their education future. Further, this study seeks to investigate the extent to which the philosophy of traditional ceremonies is portrayed and internalized in the behavior of individuals or families as part of parenting institutions outside of school.

METHODOLOGY

The topic of taboo in parenting towards young women was chosen based on three considerations. The study employed a qualitative method that relies on primary and secondary data. The data were collected from field study and mapping of research aspects. The data were in the form of challenges of parenting towards young women in Gorontalo.

This study involved two types of informants in the data collection phase, i.e., local scholars and parents in Gorontalo in order to obtain an overview regarding challenges of parenting in Gorontalo. Moreover, several informants that function to evaluate the research validity were also involved. The research was conducted in two months, starting from desk-review, field observation, to interview. Prior to the field study, numerous secondary materials such as online news were collected.

The data analysis stage was twofold. First, the data were processed by Miles and Huberman's (1996) concept, starting from data reduction, observation and interview, data display in the form of summary and synopsis, and data verification for conclusion

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formulation. Second, the data were analyzed by an interpretation technique starting from "restatement" of the data from observations and interviews, "description" to find patterns or trends, and "interpretation" to reveal the meaning of the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Taboo as Education of Discipline and Time Management

Taboos that contain disciplinary meaning refer to the command that one must obey the rules that apply in the community and behave accordingly. In this case, the taboo is used as a means of education of discipline for children in Gorontalo.

"*Djaporuluhe dulahu ma tumolopo mowali ponggo or jamowali motuluhi lolango, alihu dila maali ponggo*" ("do not sleep so late in the afternoon, otherwise one will turn into *ponggo* or ghost).

The taboo contains an implicit meaning to discipline children and to educate them regarding time management. Since Moslem community is the majority in Gorontalo, it is common to see children going to Quran teaching centers to learn about Quran and Islam from the afternoon up to the *maghrib* or dusk time. Children usually learn the Quran in mosques or in the Quran tutor's house. In some areas in Limboto, there are some Quran learning centers established to help children learn the Quran.

Hence, it is already accustomed to Gorontalo culture that afternoon is the time for religious activities. In addition, the use of *ponggo*, a local ghost from Gorontalo is intended as a warning. *Ponggo* symbolizes the intention to threaten and scare the children should they do not study during the afternoon.

"*Endtela liyo monga'ato huyi sababu riziki molahi atau Dila mowali monga'ato huyi, riziki Lumuwalo*" (do not clean the room in the night, it makes your good luck go away).

This prohibition is often given to young women to educate them so that they can manage time, not be lazy, or procrastinate on work that can be done during the day. Daytime is interpreted as a time to work, while night time is a time to rest and gather with family.

The prohibition of cleaning at night is actually practiced almost everywhere in Indonesia. Some interpret the meaning of this taboo as an ineffective activity, since it is usually darker and harder to see in the night. The term loss of good luck can be interpreted as the possible loss of valuables, such as gold necklaces, rings, etc., due to being carried away by the current. Losing such a thing was interpreted as to mean losing luck. In an interview, MP (27 December 2021) stated that: "In the past, our parents often used taboo as prohibitions to raise and nurture us, this method was the easiest for children to understand." Similarly, AA (7 January 2022) said: "We were given the knowledge of taboo in educating the children so that they will listen and obey to what the parents say and be more disciplined."

SMN (30 August 2021) also said: "Taboo was used as the medium of education for children in the form of prohibitions of sitting on a pillow, waking up late, and playing around until dusk time. The use of taboo was effective, as children became more obedient and disciplined."

Based on the interview, it was concluded that parents teach their children by conveying taboos as a medium for discipline and time management. This can be seen from the prohibition of playing and sleeping at sunset. The Gorontalo community is a Muslim majority community who follows the teachings of the Shari'a, so that all activities throughout the night or at dusk are stopped for worship.

Meanwhile, the ban on sleeping at dusk was delivered to maintain the human biological clock cycle. If a person forces to sleep in the afternoon, the body will find it difficult to adapt to sudden changes. As a result, the body begins to feel sore and uncomfortable because it is not actually sleeping or resting. In addition to being seen from the health side, the prohibition of sleeping in the afternoon is not good in the view of Islam. This taboo contains advice so that one always maintains health and uses time properly.

2. Taboo as Education of Manner

The taboo in Gorontalo community is used as an informal source of manner education of children. One of the taboos in this category is as follows:

"*Endtela liyo mololohu utu to wala'o tabuwa to tutu'adu, sababu jodoh mopolamingo atau Djapo'utuwa huyi to tuadu, mowali wongo Lo,*" (young women are prohibited to perform *mencari kutu* at the stairways, it will make them hard in finding their love.)

Traditional houses in Gorontalo usually take the form of stilt house with stairways. People often perform *mencari kutu* (removing fleas from hair) tradition on the stairways since the position makes it easier for them. This is unethical and impolite, because the stairs are where people go in and out of the house. People sitting on the stairs may block others from passing or may be distracted by being kicked accidentally, and so on. Hence, the stairs should not be for seating.

"*Endtela liyo wulula haya-haya'o maali wulula lo longgongo, sababu jodoh mopolamingo atau Djapohi'angalula Lo heputo odungga Lo wongo,*" (do not use the bolster as head pillow and vice versa, it will make you harder in finding your love mate).

The meaning of this taboo is to treat something according to its proper function. This taboo can be a symbol of education so that young women are able to apply manners in all aspects of life, and are able to solve problems with the right solution. As extracted from the interview with AM (27 January 2022), it is mentioned that:

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"The use of taboos in the past was closely related to the value of politeness, such as the prohibition on sitting in front of the door or stairs because it would be difficult to get married, and the prohibition of pointing at the roof of the teacher's house to avoid bad luck due to disobedience. Taboo was indeed the way parents used to teach their children, because at that time the level of education of parents was still low and understanding of religion was still lacking. It's different now that parents don't use taboos because the level of education is getting higher and they understand more about religious values."

Moreover, ML (30 August 2021) also stated that: "To me, taboo is still effective to be used in teaching our children due to its value of manners, respect towards others, and so on." In line with that, FP (15 August 2021) said that: "The taboo teaches many things, for example, about politeness, such as the prohibition of sitting on a pillow or the prohibition of sitting in front of the door or stairs because it is considered not good; stairs are places where people pass by or go in. Out of the house, if women sit on the stairs, it will prevent people from going up, afraid of being kicked or unexpected events, so sit in a place that doesn't hinder other people."

From the informant's statement above, Tabu became one of the ways parents in the past in educating their children. Parents can instill the values contained in taboos so that they have ethics, manners, and follow customs in the Gorontalo ethnic community by instructing them to follow traditional social values in society. Taboos are used in a way to scare children. But actually, the meaning contained in the taboo contains a prohibition that teaches the ethical value of politeness, i.e., placing something in its proper place.

3. Taboo as a Form of Respect towards Others

Taboo is not just a ban. Taboo is also a way for parents to educate the next generation about how to respect fellow humans and nature and everything in it.

"*Endtela liyo molambanga tatulu-tulu, mopalingo wibawa liyo. Wanu mayilolambanga, momunduru ulangi*" (it is prohibited to step over someone who is sleeping, because his/her fortunes might go away with you. If you already step over someone, you must step over again in reverse direction).

The meaning of this taboo expression means the advice of parents in the Gorontalo community who teach their children to respect others. One cannot step over a sleeping person because it is tantamount to humiliating and demeaning that person. Stepping over a sleeping person is a trait that is less commendable because it does not respect that person. Therefore, if one has already stepped over, s/he must step back in a backward direction.

"*Endtela liyo molawodu totalu lotapanggola wanu jamopermisi, kutukiyo liyo maali lati,*" (it is prohibited to pass by someone older without asking for permission, you might get cursed and turn into ghost).

Passing in front of older people without their permission is a taboo because it can show bad behavior or disobedience. The Gorontalo community emphasizes the ethics of politeness with older people.

Most of the informants stated that this taboo had been passed down from generation to generation. For example, the prohibition to leave food that has been prepared by the host so as not to get bad luck, the real meaning is that it is a form of acceptance of sustenance and also a form of respect for the host so as not to feel offended. In line with that, FP (15 August 2021) said that: "I think that it is still effective in a modern era like today, using taboo to teach the children is still relevant in the present."

Therefore, it can be concluded that taboo is still relevant to use in order to instill social values and respect towards others to children.

4. Taboo as a form of Encouragement of Work Ethics

The taboo used to encourage and motivate work ethic is as follows:

"*Wanu mlokaluari londto bele, jamowali me'tahu u'alolo, mali susa rijiki,*" (it is prohibited to remind someone to store our food while we go out, it might hinder our fortunes from reaching us).

This taboo means that it is forbidden to ask other people to save food to eat later, because it has the potential to bring laziness to work. The habit of people who like to store food that is being eaten is strictly prohibited in the Gorontalo community. People who store or leave leftover food are just lazy people, and will often find it difficult to get good fortunes.

5. Taboo as a Form of Education of Caution

Taboo can be interpreted as a form of prudence by learning from the past so that past events will not happen again in the future. One of the examples of taboo in this category is: "*Endtela liyo momake toyungo todolombe, alihu jamali kape sambe mongowala'o*", (one cannot open an umbrella inside the house, or else s/he and the offsprings will suffer from short stature).

The prohibition implies the education of caution for Gorontalo children to place something in its proper place. In this context, children are warned to immediately come back to the house if they are playing and it is raining outside.

"*Endtela liyo monga nasi kuning lolango, sababu mo'otapu dile panggola wawu mo'aputo,*" (One cannot eat yellow rice in the afternoon to avoid from getting older people as their couple).

Yellow rice in Gorontalo is a part of offerings in a local thanksgiving ritual, therefore, it is prohibited to consume yellow rice in the afternoon.

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“*Endtela liyo monga tota’ubu polakasi,*” (one cannot eat from the lid of a food container).

This taboo has a meaning as a form of instilment of the values of decency and propriety to children. For this context, eating from the lid of a food container is regarded as impolite. The concept of “*passampo siri*” in Gorontalo culture is interpreted as someone that bears and covers others’ disgrace. As extracted from the interview with AA (7 January 2022), it is mentioned that: “In Islam, the term *pamali* does not apply, because people who believe in taboo are a form of minor shirk which if done continuously can become major shirk.” Moreover, MP (27 December 2021) also stated that: “Depending on the taboo itself, if the taboo has a bad impact and can damage someone's faith or belief, then this is considered deviating from Islamic law.”

In line with that, ML (30 August 2021) said that: “Effectiveness or ineffectiveness depends on the era. In the past, taboos were effective for parents to educate their children. Now, the taboo is no longer effective due to the higher level of understanding of parents. Even the children won't believe it, they will say that it's just an old myth.”

From the information above, it can be concluded that taboo can be interpreted as a form of caution to avoid the recurrence of bad events in the past. The people of Gorontalo believe that everything happens by God's will. However, because something happens repeatedly and continuously, people look for the cause of the event and avoid the consequences so that the same incident will not happen again.

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