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Healing Methods of Mental Disorders with *Malukat*: The Perspective of Balinese Culture

Putu Agus Grantika^{1*}, IGA Indah Ardani¹, IGA Endah Ardjana¹

¹ Department of Psychiatry, Faculty of Medicine, Universitas Udayana, Denpasar, Indonesia

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Corresponding author:

Putu Agus Grantika

E-mail address:

grantika.pa@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Balinese culture is known for its strong belief in spiritual influences on the occurrence of illnesses, especially mental disorders. Balinese people still believe that two factors cause mental disorders. The first factor is the real natural factor or Sekala where people will come to the doctor, and the second factor is the unreal natural factor or Niskala where people will consult the paranormal, traditional healer or Balian. In this study, a case was found, where a Balinese teenager experienced a mental disorder. Healing with the traditional *Malukat* method was used in this case. With this ceremony, it is hoped that all contamination, dirt, and disease will disappear and return to their homeostasis state.

1. Introduction

Cultural factors are still firmly embedded in the occurrence of mental disorders such as mental disorders that occur in people in Bali. Balinese people still believe that two factors cause mental disorders (Bagus, 1979). The first factor is the real natural factor or Sekala where people will come to the doctor, and the second factor is the unreal natural factor or Niskala where people will consult the paranormal, shaman or Balian (Sutana et al., 2017). According to Suryani, healing of mental illness in people who are still bound by tradition and religion cannot be done entirely by medical means (Suryani, 1988). Traditional methods and approaches through religion should also be included. In this study, we found a case; a teenager experienced an acute psychotic disorder where the patient hurt his left hand after hearing voices instructing him to do this. By the patient's father,

he was taken to a psychic because he thought that this was due to a spirit's disturbance. After the patient had *Malukat* therapy, the complaint disappeared entirely, and the patient had no more symptoms.

2. Literature Review

In Indonesia, not only because traditional healers or alternative treatment is perceived as more accessible, cheaper and more efficacious, but alternative treatment gains more popularity also due to its relevance with nature lifestyle (Adityanandana & Gerber, 2019). Traditional healing is believed not only cure illness, but also give spiritual therapy to patients by healing body, lighten soul, and grow social relation (Triratnawati, 2016). This is similar in with the notion of health in



Javanese, where being healthy is interpreted as a result of a balance between body and soul (Suartika & Cuthbert, 2020). The importance of such healer role increases as in this modern era modernity puts more emphasis on individualism. Consequently, the need of story sharing (i.e. telling other people one's problem, and receiving advises in return) has increased (Thong & Leimena, 1979).

Also, conventional doctors are only perceived to be able to cure one's illness, but not able to heal one. The use of traditional healing now increases along with population growth, particularly those of senior citizens who commonly contract degenerative diseases, as this group tend to trust traditional healing more than modern medicine. Also, the high cost of modern medical treatment and common Balinese practice to look for cheap and straightforward treatment as the first step in their health-seeking behaviour generate more popularity for traditional healing (Aditjondro, 1995). Accessibility in terms of cheap cost and the relatively high number of the traditional healer is a reason why patients opt for traditional healing, rather than modern medical therapy. When this first step fails, they return to modern medical treatment, and vice versa. People living in cities such as Jakarta, Semarang, Surabaya, Yogyakarta and Bali where life expectancy is relatively high are not exempted from traditional healing as it also enters their media landscape through the use of advertisement. Increasing life expectancy is also related to the improvement of healthcare facilities and the adoption of a healthy lifestyle. The inclusion of life expectancy as an indicator of public health level has made each regional government strive harder to reach higher life expectancy in order to meet the national agenda. (Aditjondro, 2008).

3. Methods

This study is a descriptive observational

study with a case report approach. The subject of this research is a Balinese teenager who has psychiatric disorders. Mental disorders diagnosed by a psychiatrist at Sanglah General Hospital Denpasar, Bali. Subjects received *Malukat* therapy. The *Malukat* ritual is led by a traditional healer (Balian) by using a mantra with the aim of purifying all contamination, dirt, disease will disappear and return to its original state (balanced). Healing with the traditional *Malukat* method was used in this case. This study has received approval from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Medicine Universitas Udayana with reference number: 2455/U.N.14.2/KEP/2020.

4. Results

Case presentation

A male, 14 years old, junior high school student, single, Hindu, Balinese, address Denpasar, Bali. The patient complained of seeing a shadowy figure in the corner of the fence of his house for approximately three weeks before being examined. This shadow figure is a man wearing a batik dress and speaking to the patient with a Javanese accent. Even though the patient does not understand Javanese, the patient says that he understands the meaning of the word imagery. The shadowy figure instructs the patient to smoke in the room. The patient's reaction is fear and obeying the shadow's orders. This incident only happened every night, and the shadowy figure was always in the corner of the fence of his house. A week before being examined, the shadowy figure ordered the patient to flush his left hand, and the blood that came out was rubbed on a cigarette, then the cigarette was burned and inhaled. The patient obeys the image command because if it is not obeyed, then the image threatens to erase his memory and erase the memory from his brain. This was caught by the patient's father and immediately scolded the patient and



then took him to his uncle's house for treatment. Two days later, the patient was taken to a psychic because the patient's father said that it happened because of a spirit disorder. After the patient is cleansed (purified) and given a spell, the patient no longer has any complaints, does not appear to be behaving strangely and no longer smokes.

Previous history of disease

The patient has never had complaints like this before. Patients are said to have seen shadows that were not able to be seen by others during kindergarten. No other family member has complaints like a patient.

Physical examination

Examination of vital signs and neurologic status found no abnormalities. In the left arm area, there were five incision scars with a size of approximately 2-5cm. The patient has a natural appearance, fluent verbal contact, clear awareness, euthymic mood/affect, realist logical thinking, coherent thought flow, no understanding of the content of thought, no hallucinations or illusions in perception. On the instinctual drive, there was no insomnia and hypobulia, psychomotor calm at the time of examination. From the results of supporting examinations in the form of laboratories, an examination of psychoactive substances and EEG, there were no abnormalities.

5. Discussion

To understand the vital role that traditional medicine plays in mental health services, it is necessary first to know the concept of traditional disease occurrence. The traditional concepts regarding mental disorders in Bali are (1) Pepasangan (other people's magical acts of evil); cursed by the ancestors or the gods; (2) Bebainan (possessed by evil spirits). *Malukat* is a purification ceremony performed or led by a priest (sulinggih, pedanda) or a shaman;

traditional healer (balian). Usually, a person who is sanctified is a person who feels that he has been contaminated (leteh, mala), for example, a person who has been abused to cause unrest in his heart; or people who have an illness. (Thong & Leimena, 1979).

In connection with the disorders experienced by these patients, according to the Balinese, the *malukat* ceremony can also be used as a medicine (tamba panglukatan). With this ceremony, it is hoped that all contamination, dirt, and disease will disappear and return to their original state (balance) (Bagus, 1979). After receiving treatment with *Malukat*, the patient recovered back to its original state. There was no longer any complaint of seeing shadows or hearing voices telling him to do something.

6. Conclusion

The concept of mental disorders in Bali is still related to the Sekala factor or the real world and the Niskala factor or the unreal nature, so the handling still emphasizes traditional methods and religious approaches such as *Malukat*.

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