

## Cultural Dimensions and The Spread of HIV/Aids in The People's Community

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### ABSTRACT

*HIV/AIDS is a disease that attacks the immune system of human body, causing weaker body in fighting infection., despite that Tanah Karo district is known as areas that living the cultural and karonese tradition. The study used qualitative explorative approach. The results show that there are different cultures and customs among Karo communities affect their sexual behavior. Rebu tradition, which is a norm that limits close interaction among different relatives, to a certain extent resulted in the omission of the attitude of his own family members that will affect the lack of prevention of HIV / AIDS. Patriarchal culture that prioritizes the interests of men, resulting in esclusion of women's voice including in the reproductive sexual issies.*

**Keywords:** HIV/AIDS, Karonese Culture, Patriaarchal society.

### ABSTRAK

HIV/AIDS merupakan penyakit yang menyerang sistem kekebalan (imunitas) tubuh, sehingga tubuh menjadi lemah dalam melawan infeksi. Jumlah orang yang terkena penyakit HIV/AIDS untuk daerah kabupaten Karo mengalami kenaikan. Hal tersebut sangat memprihatinkan melihat masyarakat Tanah Karo yang masih sangat menjunjung tinggi budaya dan norma kesopanan yang berlaku dalam masyarakat tetapi masyarakatnya banyak yang terkena penyakit HIV/AIDS. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah penelitian eksplorasi dengan pendekatan kualitatif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ada budaya-budaya dan kebiasaan masyarakat Karo yang mempengaruhi perilaku seksual mereka. Budaya *Rebu* pada tingkatan tertentu mengakibatkan sikap pembiaran terhadap anggota keluarga sendiri yang nantinya mempengaruhi pada minimnya pencegahan penyakit HIV/AIDS. Budaya Patriarkat yang memprioritaskan kepentingan laki-laki, sehingga mengakibatkan peran perempuan semakin dikucilkan dan tidak bisa memiliki ruang untuk berpendapat termasuk dalam masalah kesehatan seksual

**Kata Kunci:** HIV/AIDS, Budaya Karo, Patriarkat.

### A. INTRODUCTION

HIV / AIDS is a disease that attacks the body's immune system, so that the body becomes weak in fighting infection. Seeing the terrible impact of HIV/AIDS, making this disease the most feared disease by the world, including Indonesia. The number of HIV/AIDS cases found in Indonesia during 2012 reached 21.511 HIV cases and 5,686 AIDS cases, and for North Sumatra in particular, the number of HIV/ADIS cases encountered in 2012 reached 6,781 HIV cases and 515 AIDS cases (Directorate General of PP & PL Ministry of Health RI, 2013).

This increase in HIV/AIDS sufferers is not only found in big cities such as Medan, but also in districts far from big cities, which are also a major contributor to the high rate of HIV/AIDS sufferers in North Sumatra. One of them we can see in Karo district. The

increase in HIV/AIDS sufferers in Karo district is quite high when we compare it with other areas. The number of people living with HIV/AIDS in Karo district has increased from 2011 to 2012, while in the city of Medan itself, the number of people with HIV/AIDS has decreased. Karo Regency is an area where the community still adheres to customs and believes in the religion they profess as a guide for their life and has social norms and sanctions in society.

The initial assumption is that there is a certain Karo culture which in fact can influence the sexual behavior of the Karo people which can cause the spread of HIV/AIDS. Like the Patriarchal culture, where men still hold dominant power over women, so that women cannot have an opinion and have free space for movement. In addition, the culture of *rebu*, which is a taboo, is not allowed to do anything according to the Karo custom (Bangun, 1986), so that it can create distance in the family which can have an impact on the lack of prevention of HIV/AIDS itself.

Such as the research conducted by (Dumatubun, 2003) entitled Knowledge, Sexual Behavior of the Marind-Anim ethnic group in the Papuan community, which shows that there is a certain culture that regulates their sexual behavior. Marind-Anim tribe has a culture that regulates how their sexual behavior. The main basis of various sexual activities, both homosexual and heterosexual among the Marind-Anim ethnic group, is based on the concept of "Semen Culture" or "Sperm Culture". Sperm for the Marind-Anim tribe is a strength obtained from a man who is strong and mighty. Sperm conceptually has a strong meaning, as a concept of fertility, beauty, healing power and lethal power. So that in the life activities of the Marind-Anim tribe, the concept of sperm plays an important and structured role and functions well in cultural life. The concrete embodiment of the sperm concept is realized in various forms of traditional activities in various forms of religious ceremonies. The consequences of the culture and sexual behavior of the Marind-Anim ethnic group will cause various infectious diseases, such as HIV/AIDS.

In connection with this description, the formulation of the problem in this study is to explore the dimensions of Karo culture in increasing HIV/AIDS sufferers. The purpose of this study is to explore the dimensions of Karo culture that influence sexual behavior in the spread of HIV/AIDS.

The benefits of this research are:

1. Theoretically: The results of this study are expected to provide information, understanding, and contribution to students, especially sociology students and the wider community, in increasing knowledge about the dangers of the HIV/AIDS virus and can contribute to the development of science, especially in the field of Health Sociology.
2. Practically: the results of this study can provide benefits to the community and local government in Karo Regency specifically to carry out more specific programs and later reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS sufferers in the Karo land area.

## **B. LITERATURE STUDY**

### **2.1 Social Construction Theory**

Berger and Luckman say that societal institutions are created and maintained or changed through human action and interaction. Although society and social institutions look objectively real, in reality they are all built in subjective definitions through the process of interaction. Berger views society as a product of man and man as a product, society in objective reality and society as subjective reality. The dialectic takes place in a process with three simultaneous moments/stages, namely:

- a. Externalization (adjustment to the socio-cultural world as a human product),
- b. Objectivation (social interaction in the intersubjective world that is developed or undergoes a process of institutionalization), and
- c. Internalization (individuals identify with institutions sosial atau organisasi sosial tempat individu menjadi anggotanya) (Sukidin, 2002).

Based on the theory of Social Construction in the Karo people, all the results of culture and habits that are created are shaped by the construction results from the interactions they have lived in their social environment. The results of this culture become a structure in the social system of the Karo people in acting and in carrying out their lives as well as regulating the behavior of the people of the members of the cultural community.

### **2.2 Culture and Behavior**

Humans are social beings who have reason and mind to use as a basis for each individual in acting and behaving. In addition, humans are also referred to as cultural beings. So that wherever he is or in a group or in a certain community environment will

have a diverse culture because it is the result of interaction and adjustment to the environment and their respective needs. From the culture that humans have, it will shape the behavior of these humans in their daily lives.

Culture will change according to the development of the times and according to the conditions of the people in the area. This change in culture can have both positive and negative impacts, depending on how we respond to the changes. Especially with the advancement of technology and the era of communication which is currently very rapidly advancing, the influx of cultural influences from Western countries that enter Indonesia, if we cannot respond properly then we can be carried away into Western culture where life is very free which is different. with Eastern culture we have now.

### **2.3 Social Control Theory**

Social control or what is also known as social control is a force that encourages individuals to behave in ways and manners that have been determined by their respective cultures. According to Sarjoeno Soekanto, what is meant by social control is a process, whether planned or unplanned, which aims to invite, guide or even force members of the community to comply with applicable values and rules. (Soekanto in Asyari, 2007).

This social control is implemented through social norms. Every member of society expresses its values through a system of social norms. These norms provide instructions and limits to individual members of a community group about the behavior they should do in everyday life. One of the types of social norms that exist in society is the norm in customs.

The customary norms are made as social control from a community group to control the behavior of the community according to their culture. This social control is carried out to avoid unwanted deviant behaviors in the group that are obtained through the socialization process. Socialization shows what things must be done to avoid deviant behavior in our culture, form our habits towards prevailing customs, and in the end the individual will internalize the norms and values and the individual will behave in conformity (adjusting).

## 2.4 Feminism Theory

Early feminism which started in the 1800s represented the first wave of feminism. Early feminism began with feminist movements associated with the French Revolution (1789) (Arivia, 2003). This feminist movement which became the momentum of its struggle was gender inequality, women's rights, reproductive rights, political rights, gender roles, gender identity, and sexuality. The feminism movement is a movement for women's liberation from racism, stereotyping, sexism, women's oppression, and phallogocentrism. In general, women (feminine) feel disadvantaged in all fields and are seconded by men (masculine) in the social, work, educational, and political fields in particular - especially in a patriarchal society. (<http://www.scribd.com>, 2013)

Here are some types of feminism that emerged during the first wave:

### a. Liberal Feminism.

Liberal Feminism is a view to place women who have full and individual freedom. This school holds that freedom and equality are rooted in rationality and the separation between the private and public worlds.

Wollstonecraft said that women have the same right to an education that strengthens reason, as men. According to him, by getting an education that allows people to develop rational and moral capacities, their potential to become human becomes complete, so that women are no longer just tools (Tong, 2004).

### b. Marxist Feminism.

This school views women's problems within the framework of a critique of capitalism. The assumption is that the source of women's oppression comes from class exploitation and the mode of production. Marxists argue that the state has the ability to maintain welfare, but on the other hand, the state is capitalist in nature which uses a system of slavery for women as workers.

The Marxist Feminists, consider that the state is capitalist, that is, considers that the state is not just an institution but also the embodiment of social interactions or relations. This school seeks to eliminate the class structure in society based on gender by raising the issue that the inequality of roles between the two sexes is actually caused by natural cultural factors (Nasarudin, 2001).

### c. Socialist Feminism

Socialist feminism struggles to abolish the property system. The institution of marriage which legalized the male ownership of property and the husband's ownership of the wife was abolished like Marx's idea of wanting a classless society, without gender distinctions. Socialist feminism emerged as a critique of Marxist feminism.

### d. Radical Feminism.

This flow rests on the view that oppression of women occurs as a result of the patriarchal system. The female body is the main object of oppression by male power. Therefore, radical feminism takes issue with, among others, the body and reproductive rights, sexuality (including lesbianism), sexism, power relations between women and men, and the private-public dichotomy.

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The emergence of sexual violence in the household is also known as Marital rape. Marital rape is an act of violence that occurs within the family, both in terms of sexual violence by a husband against his wife and mental suppression of a husband against his wife. If the values adopted by a society are still patriarchal in nature, what emerges is the superiority of men before women, the manifestation of these values in family life is the husband's domination over the wife which in the end often gives birth to acts of violence in the domestic scope, where in this case the wife is always there in a disadvantaged condition.

## **C. RESEARCH METHOD**

The type of research used in this research is exploratory research with a qualitative approach. By using exploratory research with this qualitative approach, researchers will obtain information and develop appropriate cultural concepts that have been obtained in the field regarding the causes of the increase in HIV/AIDS in the Karo district.

The research location is the People's Love Association, which is in Medan, North Sumatra. Where this association concentrates on handling the problem of HIV/AIDS sufferers in Medan and is one of the first associations in dealing with HIV/AIDS problems in Tanah Karo, North Sumatra. The informants as sources of information for researchers are as follows: men and women affected by HIV/AIDS, the head of the People's Love Association, the Medan AIDS Commission (KPA), and Karo traditional leaders.

The method of data collection in this research is by observation, to see what activities are carried out in the Kasih Rakyat association and to see data on the sexual behavior of people living with HIV/AIDS. Then conducted in-depth interviews with informants about the sexual behavior of the sufferers and their previous knowledge of HIV/AIDS, their participation in Karo culture itself.

The data that has been obtained from the field will be arranged, sorted, and grouped into certain categories. In this study, the author will simplify and edit the data from the field and compiled and interpreted qualitatively. At the end of the data analysis is the confirmation of conclusions and giving suggestions.

## **D. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

### **4.1 Development of HIV/AIDS in North Sumatra**

According to the results of the study, the growth of people living with HIV/AIDS in North Sumatra, especially in Karo district, has increased, so that people who used to be very afraid of people living with HIV are now quite familiar with people with HIV/AIDS.

The AIDS Commission (KPA) stated that prevention efforts had been carried out as much as possible, in collaboration with the regional government, relevant agencies to provide socialization of this disease, in addition to providing condoms to localization areas, such as Bandar Baru. Different things were conveyed by the HIV/AIDS sufferers, that they never knew anything about this HIV/AIDS socialization. They only know about HIV/AIDS through word of mouth.

### **4.2 Factors Causing the Spread of HIV/AIDS.**

The spread of the HIV / AIDS virus can only be transmitted through blood. As long as we are not directly exposed to HIV-positive blood, it is okay for us to live and live

with people with HIV/AIDS. Based on the results of research through interviews with informants with HIV/AIDS at the People's Love Association, most of them were exposed to the HIV virus from the habits of men who 'snack' in the localization area. They contracted the HIV virus from localization and unwittingly they had brought the virus into their own home environment, especially to their own wives.

In addition to free sex behavior, HIV/AIDS sufferers in this association are caused by blood donation provided by the hospital in their village. The transmission of the HIV virus through blood transfusion activities is caused by the use of unsterilized syringes and repeated use. Syringes should only be used once and after that they cannot be used again for hygiene reasons. In addition, the blood received by the hospital was not checked properly and correctly, thus giving an opportunity for the blood received from outside to be infected with the HIV virus.

### **4.3 Cultural Dimensions and the Spread of HIV/AIDS**

According to Berger, reality is not scientifically shaped, nor is it something that was revealed by God. But instead, it is shaped and constructed. With this kind of understanding, reality is multiple/plural. Everyone can have a different construction of a reality. Everyone who has certain experiences, preferences, education, and certain social or social environments will interpret the social reality with their respective constructions. (Bungin, 2008)

This social construction will later become the culture of each society. The cultural value system will function as a guide and also as a driver of human behavior in life, so that it functions as a system of behavior. The guidelines made are used as norms in the community and have been mutually agreed upon by each member.

#### **a. Karo Patriarchal Culture**

Patriarchate is a social system that places men as the main central authority figure in social organization. In the culture of the Karo Batak people they adhere to a patriarchal system, which places men as the main authority figures in social groups and always as decision makers. Men are considered as "resource owners" which are legitimized by patriarchal culture and values. This system also aims as a distribution of power so that every activity can run well and do not overlap with the mixing of the distribution of power between men and women, and in the household itself.

According to the results of the study, it was found that men from the Karo community have a major role in controlling household conditions, both in terms of household finances, decision making, while working in the fields, men have a very dominant role over women so that space moves women become narrow and everything must be based on the husband's decision.

Seeing the behavior of men who take advantage of this role, causes sexual violence and mental suppression of the wife. This is called the Marital Rape. This practice of domination has also been explained by Mave Cormack and Stathern (1990) as quoted by Keumalahati, who explains the formation of male domination over women in terms of nature and culture theory. In the process of transformation from nature to culture, conquest often occurs. Men as culture have the authority to conquer and impose their will on women (nature). Culturally, men are placed in a higher position than women, because it has the legitimacy to subjugate and coerce women. These two theories show that sociocultural aspects have formed a social structure that is conducive to male domination over women, thus influencing individual behavior in family life.

As a result of this marital rape behavior gave rise to the theory of Radical Feminism. The patriarchal nature of society and the rule of law is the cause of injustice, domination and subordination of women, so as a consequence there is a demand for gender equality. In this radical feminism, we see when the female body is the main object of oppression by male power. Therefore, radical feminism takes issue with, among others, the body and reproductive rights, sexuality (including lesbianism), sexism, power relations between women and men, and the private-public dichotomy. (www.wikipedia.org, 2013)

Seeing from every example of behavior carried out by these men and associated with HIV/AIDS is the behavior of men who act as they please with the power they have, opening up opportunities for them to get sexual satisfaction from Commercial Sex Women (CSWs) in localization places. . After the man gets satisfaction in the lokalisasi and takes it home and will indirectly pass it on to his wife. Women who actually know the unfair behavior of men, cannot do much because of the culture of the patriarchal system, which requires them to obey men's rules and think about the social impacts that women must accept when fighting men, where women as the weak side of the culture, its existence is increasingly isolated in a cultural order. Furthermore, women are increasingly reluctant to

propose to check the state of their partner's sexual health and it is increasingly difficult to discuss sexual problems with their partners.

b. *Rebu's Culture*

According to the results of interviews with informants, stated that in the Karo community, knowledge about sexual education is still very minimal, this is because it is taboo to talk about sexual behavior problems in the family, even though the things discussed are still in the context of education, not vulgar things. According to him, talking about sexual behavior is not something that is told openly in the family because it is considered a personal intimate matter.

The thing that is done to prevent mistakes in free sex behavior in the family, then made the *rebu* custom which is useful to be able to respect people who should be respected (Bangun, 1986). *Rebu* means taboo, forbidden, not allowed, not allowed to do something according to Karo customs. Anyone who violates, is considered not to know the custom, and was scorned by the community. This *rebu* occurs when a marriage has been completed, so that certain people are prohibited by custom from communicating directly and must use other people as communication intermediaries in the *rebu* pair. This usurpation is a sign that there is a limit to one's freedom, through this kind of behavior reminding people and being aware of social principles in the way of living in a kinship, then through *rebu* people will be able to control their own actions. *Rebu* gives rise to *mehangke* (reluctance), from reluctance to respect and respect to courtesy (Bangun, 1986).

The Karo people themselves do not feel very disturbed by the existence of this bamboo culture, because it has become a habit that has been rooted for a long time and has built a sense of reluctance to interact directly with their bamboo partners. At a certain level, the application of *rebu* has several obstacles, namely causing distance within a family, so that it will lead to an attitude of omission between the *rebu* pair. The initial goal of the *rebu* culture, which avoided free sex behavior as a social control in the Karo community, actually created distance and eventually led to neglect within the family itself. As a result of this omission, the prevention of free sex behavior becomes hampered and weak within the family scope.

In this day and age, talking about sexual education shouldn't be a shame to talk about it openly. Providing sexual education is expected to be able to guide and nurture

someone to understand the meaning, function, and purpose of sex so that he can channel it properly, correctly, and legally, and what impact will occur if he has free sex. If the family does not provide strong control as a primary socialization agent, and getting information from the outside environment can result in misinterpreting the information received.

#### **E. CONCLUSION**

1. Cultural aspects greatly affect a person's sexual behavior. Culture can also change along with the times and these changes can have a positive impact that benefits each member of the culture and can also have a negative impact that can harm its members.
2. Rebu culture is created as a social control from the customary norms of the Karo people, to avoid free sex behavior in a Karo family. In addition, the Karo people are still taboo in discussing sex education, which is too vulgar. Whether we realize it or not, this attitude at a certain level results in someone who is about to grow up to be an adult not being given a good and directed provision of proper sexual behavior.
3. The Patriarchal culture adopted by the Karo people has a detrimental impact on women, as the weak side. Where men are superior and women are inferior so that men are justified to dominate and control women. This makes women subordinated.
4. There is a misinterpretation of very long socialized gender stereotypes where women are seen as weak, while men are generally stronger. So that with the weakening of women, it makes women unable to express opinions and make decisions in various matters, including in sexual matters, which in turn can have an impact on injustice and sexual violence in the household and lead to the spread of the HIV virus.



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