BALINESE TRADITIONAL TREATMENT (BALIAN) IN PATIENTS WITH MENTAL DISORDERS

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Abstract

Background: Balinese believe that mental disorders are caused after being possessed and cursed by one’s ancestors, so Balinese choose traditional Balinese treatment (balian/shaman) in handling mental disorders patients. Objective: The purpose of this research is to explore deeply about the use of balian in treating patients with mental disorder. Methods: Qualitative method with an interpretive phenomenological approach was used as the research design. The researcher conducted data analysis using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Results: The research found five themes; 1) ancestors’ curse, 2) possessed by a spirit, 3) believe that balian has healing power, 4) balian becomes the first choice prior to the hospital, and 5) the use of traditional and medical treatment at once. Conclusion: The result of the research showed that balian became the first choice in treating patients with mental disorders. It is because Balinese still believes that mental disorders caused by the ancestors’ curse and possessed by the spirit.

Keywords: mental disorders, traditional Balinese medicine

INTRODUCTION

Mental disorders in various countries have increased significantly for each year. Mental disorder is a syndrome or behavioral pattern that is clinically related to suffering or distress and may cause interference with one or more functions of human life (Keliat, 2012). Every person can experience mental disorders, regardless of age, race, religion, or socio-economic status. The society still believes the wrong myths about mental disorders, that mental disorders are caused by possessed demons, spirits, or jinns, and others believe that mental disorders are caused by the sins of the sufferer himself or the sins of his family (Subu, 2015).

The Balinese treat mental disorders traditionally, which in Balinese conception; mental disorder is believed to be caused by being possessed by evil spirits (or in Balinese language is called bebai), anger of the ancestral spirits (kepongor), or because of a curse. In determining the cause of mental disorders, Balinese usually seeks for help from a shaman or often called a balian. The role of balian in treating patients with mental disorder in Bali is still very large and still trusted by the Balinese (Kumbara, 2007).

Traditional treatment (balian) becomes the first and main choice for society or Balinese families, besides the hospital treatment. The
use of traditional treatment (by balian) and hospital treatment (by doctors) by the society at the same time is a very common phenomenon in Bali. Balinese tend to seek out balian in early treatment. About 76% of them, will continue treatment to a psychiatrist and after being treated by a psychiatrist, about 80% will return to the balian/shaman for further treatment (Lesmana, Suryani, & Tiliopoulos, 2015).

Traditional treatment is a combination of skills and knowledge practice based on theories of belief and experience of different cultures. These beliefs and experiences can be used in the health care, prevention, diagnosis, repair, or treatment of physical and mental illness (WHO, 2014). Traditional treatment becomes a phenomenon which commonly found in society (Fanani & Dewi, 2014). Various types of treatment methods are performed, either from those who use plants as a medicine or those who use supernatural things like prayer and mantra modern (Ardiyasa, 2012).

The data from Basic Health Study (2013) showed that 30.4% households in Indonesia utilize traditional health services in the past year to maintain their health. The proportion of households utilizing traditional health services in the past year is 32.2% of the urban population and 28.7% of the population in rural areas. Based on the data from Bali Provincial Health Office (2014), it is showed that 25.6% Balinese living in urban areas and 24.2% of Balinese living in rural areas have used traditional health services.

Cultural and historical factors have caused people to choose traditional treatments, as found in Singapore and the Republic of Korea. The conventional health care system in those countries are well established, but 76% of Singaporeans and 86% of Republicans of Korea still use traditional medicine (WHO, 2014). Low and middle-income countries, most people with mental disorders prefer to use traditional medicine (Gureje et al., 2015).

Recovery or treatment process in mental disorders patients can be influenced by culture and beliefs from society. In Sudan, the most common sufferers who seek traditional medicine are patients with psychotic disorders. They have never visited psychiatric services before and they express their strong beliefs about the role of shaman in the treatment and management of mental disorder (Sorketti, Zuraida, & Habil, 2012). The research about Balinese traditional medicine (balian) in mental disorders patients needs to be done to explore deeper about Balinese opinions on the use of Balinese traditional medicine (balian) in treating patients with mental disorder.

METHODS

Study design
This research used qualitative research design with interpretative phenomenology approach. This interpretative phenomenology approach is based on philosophy from Heidegger which emphasizes that the phenomena experienced by individuals is not only described but also interpreted and the researchers are able to understand the phenomenon (Polit & Beck, 2012).

Research subject
Characteristics are determined in the selection of participants according to the research objectives (Polit & Beck, 2012). This research used a sampling technique, which is purposive sampling in order to select and classify sample. The inclusion criteria in this research were: having a family member with mental disorder, caring family member as well as decision maker in patient care, having experience using Balinese traditional treatment (balian) for at least three months and willing to be participant by signing the participant agreement sheet (informed consent). The exclusion criterion was a family member who also treats patients other than mental disorder patients.

The sample of this research consists of nine participants. The age range of most participants was 36-45 years old. Most participants were Elementary School (SD) and Senior High School (SLTA) graduates, but there was one participant who was not
attending school. Most of them were married, only one of them was not. All of the participants were Hindu. All of the participants already used traditional treatment for more than one year and seek for more than three baliens (shamans).

Data collection
The data in this research are collected using in-depth interview technique with semi-structured interview guidelines. The strategy of data collection in this research are;(1) Researcher fosters a relationship of trust with participants, (2) The researcher explains the research objectives, research benefits, and research process of the participants, (3) After the participants agree, the participant signs the informed consent and makes an appointment for the interview, (4) Researcher prepares instruments for interview ranging from field notes and sound recorders, (5) Researcher begins to conduct interview with open questions in accordance with interview guidelines, and (6) During the interview, the researcher noted the participants' non-verbal and emotional responses.

Ethical considerations
This research has been approved by Research Ethics Committee of Udayana University, Medical Faculty/Central General Hospital Sanglah Denpasar with approval number: 119/UN.14.2/KEP/2018. The researcher highly value the dignity of the participants by maintaining the confidentiality of the participant's identity, confidentiality of data, respecting privacy and dignity, and respecting the autonomy of the patient. The researcher also pays attention to the welfare of participants by taking into the benefits (beneficence) and minimizes the risk (non-maleficence) of the research process by paying attention to freedom from danger (free from harm), exploitation (free for exploitation), and discomfort (free from discomfort). In this research, the researcher keeps the principle of justice for all participants. The researcher received informed consent from all participants after the researcher gave an explanation of the purpose of the research, the research procedure, the time of the participant's involvement, the participant's rights, and the participation form in the research process.

Data analysis
The researcher transcribed word for word from interviews that were recorded and coded manually by the researcher. After data encoding, the researcher conducted data analysis using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Jeong & Othman, 2016). In the first step the researcher reread the transcript result until the researcher find information that has not been recorded in the initial reading. The researcher used different fonts or underlining to identify information related to their research on each text. In the second step, the researcher identified which theme appears by referring to the three types of comments that have been made in the first step. In the third step, the researcher looked for connection from the various themes that have been found and create a chart, so that the relationship to the theme is obvious. In the fourth step, the researcher did a repetition from step one to step four for the next participant. In the last step, the researcher searches the patterns and relationships between cases and themes found.

Trustworthiness
Researcher conducted peer-checking to preserve high credibility, which can be done with panel discussions with experts to re-analyze obtained data from this study (Afiyanti, 2008).

RESULTS
From nine participants, the researcher found five themes which is correlated with the use of traditional treatment to mental disorders patient, there are:

Theme 1: Ancestor’s curse
Balinese believes that one of the causes of mental disorders is ancestor’s curse. According to one of the participants, ancestor’s curse happens because the person chosen in the world is unreal and those who
get special duty from the ancestors did not carry out his/her duties so that he/she got the curse of the ancestors that caused him/her to experience mental disorders.

“Yes, he seemed to experience a kepingit (the person who was chosen in a niskala way/unrealized world), but the temptation is too big and he did not follow the task that he got. The symptoms are he became berserk, the problem is, he had a problem but never told other person” (P1)

Theme 2: Possessed by a spirit

The mental disorders caused by the possession by evil spirits are a major factor that is still commonly believed by the Balinese until now. According to some of participants, there is a change of behavior on his family members because of an evil spirit that enters the body of that person.

“Indeed, talking alone means his brain already damaged, it means he got possessed by the evil spirit so I took him there (balian/shaman)”(P6)

Theme 3: Believe that balian has healing power

The role of balian/shaman in treating patients with mental disorders in Bali is still very large and still trusted by Balinese. According to some of participants, balian/shaman is believed to have the ability and can provide healing.

“To heal them. The condition didn’t improve in Batu bulan, I have a family from Celuk, and so I try it. Who knows, maybe he’ll get better.” (P8)

“It is common among Balinese, if there is mental disorders (medical) they’ll seek Balinese. Balinese shamans are also believed to have the ability but if no results” (P7).

Theme 4: Balian becomes the first choice prior to the hospital

Traditional treatment (balian) becomes the first and main choice for Balinese, beside the treatment in hospital. According to some of participants, the first action to take is to bring the patient to balian/shaman, because according to the family, the case of mental disorder experienced by his family is caused by possession.

“First, I took him to balian/shaman because he seemed possessed, there is also no improvement” (P3).

“Well I admit, the first treatment that I got was a non-medical treatment (balian/shaman) in Batu bulan” (P8).

Theme 5: The use of traditional and medical treatment at once

The use of traditional treatment (balian) and the treatment in hospital (doctors) by Balinese at the same time is a very common phenomenon in Bali. Some of participants use traditional and medical treatment at once because with the medical medication patient tends to be calm, and traditional treatment (balian) has become a belief in their family.

“We used both, so not only we went to the hospital we also went to the balian”(P5).

“Well, together, I believe medical drugs because it is more proven. The drug was given as a sedative and we went to balian because it is believed here” (P7).

DISCUSSION

Balinese still treat mental disorders traditionally, where they believe that mental disorders are caused by possession and ancestors’ curse (Kumbara, 2007). The result of this research showed that Balinese still believe that mental disorders caused by possession and ancestors’ curse. Ancestors’ curse happened because the person did not do her/his duties in glorifying or honoring their ancestors. Mental disorders caused by possession of evil spirits also believed by Balinese. It happened because there are people who do not like or jealous to someone, so they send a demon that cause someone to undergo changes in behavior, such as talking to himself and went berserk. The belief of mental disorders caused by possessed spirits, demons, or evil jinn also believed by some of cultures in Indonesia (Subu, 2015). The western countries may not support the idea of supernatural as a cause of mental disorders, but for non-western cultures such as Nigeria which are the majority of caregiver (72.0%) stated that the cause of mental disorders is supernatural such as possessed by spirits and curses (Igberase & Okogbenin, 2017).
The process of mental disorders patient treatment can be affected by culture and society’s belief. In Africa, belief in the spiritual becomes the main determinant in the selection of treatment (Asare & Danquah, 2017). Balinese’s belief on the cause of mental disorders between naturalistic and personality becomes a major significant factor on the use of traditional treatment (balian) (Kumbara, 2010). The result of this research showed that Balinese believes that balian/shaman can provide healing. The role of balian in treating patients with mental disorder in Bali is still very large and still trusted by the Balinese (Kumbara, 2007). Traditional treatment is widely used in most of the countries (WHO, 2014). Traditional treatment for people with mental disorders in Sudan is famous and popular. Most patients who come to traditional treatment in Sudan commonly have psychotic disorders and they have never visited psychiatric services before. This is largely due to their strong beliefs about the role of shamans in the treatment and management of mental illness (Sorketti et al., 2012).

Subu, M.A’s research in 2015 shows that traditional and alternative treatment in Indonesia has an important role in health, which is to meet the needs of mental health treatment, where traditional treatment becomes the first choice of mental disorders patients and family. The result of this research showed that Balinese choose traditional treatment (balian/shaman) becomes the first choice before go to hospital. The Balinese belief about being possessed as a cause of mental disorders becomes main factor that society chooses balian/shaman in treating patients with mental disorders. In India, the belief is a strong tool in health care. The belief of supernatural power such as possessed by spirits, magic, and breaking religious rules are the cause of mental disorders. Those beliefs makes them to use traditional treatment and becomes the first choice by family member who has mental disorders (Biswal, Subudhi, & Acharya, 2017).

The phenomenon of the use of traditional and medical treatment at the same time is commonly done by the Balinese. The result of this research showed that Balinese used medical treatment because the result of the treatment is obvious. The strength of Balinese belief in the ability of balian/shamans keeps the society to use traditional treatment, so that Balinese use traditional and medical treatment together. In Gujarat, people still highly appreciate the contribution of medical treatment. Preferences for doctors or shamans depend on the outcome of the care the patients receive. Those who receive traditional treatment but have no improvement will tend to hate traditional treatment. There are also people who love medical care, still retain their spiritual outlook, but it is only temporary and will disappear along with the loss of confidence in traditional strengths to cure mental illness (Schoonover et al., 2014).

The society’s view of traditional treatment is different with western practitioners. The western practitioners tend to have a negative view of traditional medicine because they consider this traditional method of treatment harmful to mental disorders of patients. The western practitioner also conducted an evaluation of 30 patients who are using traditional treatment. The result was eight patients claiming traditional medicine gave very large negative results for patients (James & Peltzer, 2012). Most of mental disorders patients prefer traditional treatment when first experiencing a mental disorder that will delay the patient's treatment to a psychiatrist, thus negatively impacting the prognosis of bipolar affective disorder (BAD) (Assad et al., 2015).

CONCLUSION

The result of this research indicate that Balinese still treat mental disorders traditionally, where the Balinese consider mental disorders are caused by possessions and the curse of the ancestors. The role of balian/shaman is still believed in treating patients with mental disorder and traditional treatment (balian/shaman) becomes the first...
choice of Balinese before the hospital. Balinese still maintain the tradition, where they use medical drugs and traditional treatment at the same time. The result of this research showed that society’s belief strongly agrees towards the use of traditional treatment in treating patients with mental disorders. This is shown by the attitude of society who continues to use traditional treatment, although already using medical drugs. This society’s attitude can be used as a basis in providing mental care with cultural approach. Further study is needed to analyze the dominant factors associated with the selection or use of traditional treatment in treating patients with mental disorder, and to see the perceptions of health workers and government agencies associated with traditional treatment in treating patients with mental disorder.

REFERENCES


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