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Traditional Beliefs, A dark and Bloody Cage for Young Girls; An Ethnography Study

Running Title: Traditional Beliefs, A dark and Bloody Cage for Young Girls

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Abstract: The Pinamou traditional procession is a ritual performed on female adolescents over the transition to adulthood. They were exiled to Posune (small hut) to undergo the Pinamou ritual during menstruation. During this procession, there are various activities related to personal hygiene that can adversely affect the health of young girls. The present study elaborated and traced the beliefs adopted by the Nuaulu female adolescents displayed in their local customs using ethnographic designs. Sources of information were traced through the snowballing technique. The findings reveal that the belief adhered to by girls related to personal hygiene is a ban on bathing during seclusion in Posune. Their bodies are only covered with charcoal. Replace traditional pads made of cloth that are used repeatedly only 2-3 times a day. Defecation is done in the middle of the forest and should not be seen by the opposite sex. Violation of the provisions of the Pinamou traditional procession is believed to trigger disasters for individuals, families, and village communities.

This finding has implications for the need for a cultural communication strategy to wisely shift traditional activities that negatively impact the health of young girls through customary stakeholders, community leaders, and the local government.

Key Words: *Traditional beliefs, young girls, menstruation, personal hygiene, Nuaulu tribe*

1. INTRODUCTION

The implementation of cultural beliefs is highly practiced by the Nuaulu tribe as one of the determinants of behavior. They assume that cultural beliefs are pivotal to their lives. According to Foster and Anderson (1986), one aspect of culture that influences healthy behavior is the beliefs prevailing in society (1). This belief contributes to behavior that can support or otherwise harm health. Indonesia is known as a multi-ethnic and multicultural society. This can be seen from the diversity of ethnic groups and cultures that inhabit Indonesian territory. Each ethnic group shows its identity with its cultural background. The diversity of these tribes has a unique culture that develops over time.

A local study, revealed that Nuaulu tribe has cultural characteristics in the form of seclusion of women during menstruation called *Pinamou* (2). This cultural construction of seclusion is subject to discrimination against the meaning of menstruation experienced by women. The order of beliefs adopted by the Nuaulu community through the institutionalization of the *Pinamou* exile tradition is intended to regulate shared life. The beliefs understood by the Nuaulu tribe that young girls who experience menstruation are very easily disturbed by evil spirits. Therefore, they carried out a *Pinamou* traditional ritual procession to ward off the evil spirit. Their cultural perspective views that young girls who are menstruating must be exiled and hidden from evil spirits. Thus, in the customary procession of *Pinamou*, young girls are tossed with turmeric mixed with charcoal to avoid being seen by evil spirits. During the period of exile, girls are prohibited from leaving in 4 square meter huts (called *Posune*). All food and drink are prepared by her sister or mother. Besides, they are prohibited from bathing and changing clothes. After the menstrual period ends young girls are taken to the river to be bathed. (3).

The tradition of exile was not only experienced by young girls of the Nuaulu tribe. The same practice is also found in some rural part of Nepal. The people in Nepal believe that blood impurity during menstruation requires young girls to be exiled to emergency shacks in the forest every month. Many of them died in exile. This is because they are exposed to very hot temperatures, shortness of breath due to too much inhalation of campfire smoke, bitten by cobras snakes, and some are even victims of rape (4). The tradition of isolating oneself in a hut during menstruation was also carried out by the Maya and ancient Japanese society. Women who experience menstruation must isolate themselves in the "Women's Hut" to undergo rituals and exchange experiences. During the isolation period, people took over the daily tasks of women who were exiled. Cultural beliefs and habits like this also occur in several cultures in Asia, Africa, and South America. In Ethiopia and certain tribes in Nigeria, menstruating women must isolate themselves in the hut, because they assume that menstrual blood can pollute the house (5). Beliefs held by ethnic groups from various regions, according to Foster and Anderson (1986), are called ethnocentric, in the form of the belief

that their values, attitudes, ways of life are the best (1). For them, pride in one's own culture is good. Pride gives individuals a healthy psychological identity that gives them respectable space in life.

Despite both the pride and entity of a culture, a traditional procession like *Pinamou* is subject to public health problems, especially for women. In the tradition of exile valued by the Nuaulu tribe, the problem of personal hygiene is a major concern. The pads used are traditional pads made of cloth that are used repeatedly. Treatment for cloth pads that have been used is washed only using water and then dried, but not exposed to sunlight. This can trigger the growth of microbes that can disrupt the genital organs of young women. Besides the prohibition of bathing or being exposed to water during the period of exile, especially to clean the genital area will be vulnerable to disease. Behavioral problems in caring for personal hygiene, especially during menstruation, make young girls at risk of reproductive organ infections. A study in rural Nepal found that the majority of respondents (67.2%) stated that sanitation was ideal for use during menstruation, but only 54.1% used it. Half of the women (50.8%) changed pads twice a day. The majority of respondents (62.3%) did not believe that maintaining personal hygiene was related to menstrual problems (6). Findings in Bangalore (an Indian city) practicing personal hygiene are crucial during menstruation. The research found that during menstruation 34.7% of the population used cloth, 44.1% used sanitary pads and 21.2% used both cloth and sanitary pads. To clean intimate organs, 31.3% used soap and water, while 28.6% of respondents used hot water and 20.1% used an antiseptic solution mixed with water. As many as 39.8% of respondents stated that the frequency of changing pads or cloth is twice a day during menstruation (7).

Consequently, unhealthy personal hygiene behavior during menstruation triggers the onset of skin diseases and infections. Health Service Data of Maluku Indonesia records that skin diseases and infections in 2012 were 1,587 cases, and there was an increase in 2014 to 15,854 cases (8). In addition, the results of the Basic Health Research (2013) in Central Maluku showed a high incidence of allergic skin diseases in 2013, which were 2,480 cases, and continued to increase in 2014 as many as 13,542 cases due to the lack of clean and healthy living behavior in the Maluku region (9). The custom of the Nuaulu tribe who resides in Central Maluku to isolate menstruating young girls into a small hut that is placed behind a resident's house is suspected to cause numerous health problems relating to genital organs. The existence of taboo which is treated by Nuaulu tribal female adolescents who are menstruating in the *Pinamou* ritual is driven by the obedience, fear, belief, and values they believe in carrying out the tradition. These were reasons to explore these believed values as a basis for finding health improvement efforts for young women who continue to uphold local customary policies.

2. METHODS

The present study focused on describes the *Pinamou* traditional procession that is lived by Nuaulu young girls who are traced using an ethnographic design. This design is robust in elaborating the unique beliefs of young women who have not been revealed in the dressing of community habits that affect their health. The study conducted in the Nuaulu tribal settlement area in the Nua Nea Administrative Country, Amahai District, Central Maluku Regency, Maluku Province Indonesia. The source of information determined through a snowballing

technique which started with meeting the traditional stakeholders (the King of Nuauulu) to get information on young girls who have and will carry out traditional rituals of *Pinamou*. Information from traditional leaders referred to one young girl who has passed the *Pinamou* procession. Then, from this young woman obtained information that there were 2 other young women in her village who had also followed *Pinamou*. There were 2 young women parents who were willing to share their involvement as a family that supports *Pinamou* activities. Furthermore, one of the female adolescent families, said that the one who best understood the series of *Pinamou* ritual processes was *Nuhu Ne Upu e*, the *Posune* keeper.

Description of collecting data by snowball method

Traditional stakeholder is the king of Nuauulu tribe in the Nuauulu tribal settlement region. Researchers met the king to obtain information about young girls who have and will carry out the *Pinamou* tradition, as well as asking for verbal permission to enter the study site. The king gave permission for an interview and appointed a girl who had carried out the customary procession of *Pinamou*. The first girl then mentioned two of her friends who would follow the *Pinamou* tradition in the near future. The two girls who were met then said that the researchers could also interview their parents to confirm the reason for including them in the traditional *Pinamou* ritual. Furthermore, the two young women parents said that the person who best understood in detail the implementation of the *Pinamou* traditional procession was the keeper of the *Posune* hut which they called *Nuhu Ne Upu e*. The guard could also provide information about the activities of young girls while undergoing rituals in the *Posune* hut, because researchers were not permitted to enter the *Posune*.

The information was explored through an in-depth interview. In addition, passive observations were made to complete information details during *Pinamou* ritual. The field notes also became a significant reference to elaborate on these study findings. The analysis used referred to the theme of culture to present aspects of the culture that surrounds the *Pinamou* ritual procession.

Table 1 outlines the data collection process carried out in this study. It Contains information about the subjects involved, what information is traced and the data collection techniques used. To meet the customary processors and visit the research area in the location of the Nuauulu tribal settlement in Central Maluku Regency, the researcher was accompanied by local residents and had obtained permission from the customary stakeholders. During data collection, researchers were not allowed to enter the *posune* hut and saw the activities inside. Information about the activities in the hut was obtained from the results of in-depth interviews with young girls and *Nuhu Ne Upu e*. Activities that could be directly observed were all traditional processions held before the young women entry the *posune*.

Table 1. Data collection process

| Participants | Information traced | Data collection technique |
|--------------|--|--|
| Young girls | - Traditional beliefs - The purpose of the customary procession - <i>Pinamou</i> custom procession | In-depth interview and Passive observation |

| | | |
|-------------------------|---|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Personal hygiene during the customary procession - Activities in the hut | |
| Parents | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Traditional beliefs - The purpose of the customary procession - The reason for including their young girls in the <i>Pinamou</i> custom procession | In-depth interview |
| Traditional Stakeholder | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Traditional beliefs - The meaning and purpose of the <i>Pinamou</i> procession | In-depth interview |
| <i>Nuhu Ne Upu e</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Traditional beliefs - The meaning and purpose of the <i>Pinamou</i> procession <i>Pinamou</i> custom procession - <i>Pinamou</i> custom procession - Personal hygiene during the customary procession - Activities in the hut | In-depth interview and Passive observation |

3. RESULTS

Religion and Belief of Nuauulu tribe

The Nuauulu people at the research site believed in the existence of God. They call God "*Upu Kuanahatana*" which means "The Almighty God of the Earth".

Demographic characteristics of participants

Participant 1; 15 years old Nuauulu tribe. She's a girl who is quite open to new people. This adolescent was met when she had just returned home to help her parents in the garden. She claimed to follow the tradition of *Pinamou* when he was 12 years old. She clearly told about his first experience in the *Posune*. She said there was fear but she tried to be calm in order to live in the *Pinamou* tradition.

Participant 2; she was also a 15 years old girl and first followed the *Pinamou* tradition when she was 12 years old. She was a rather shy girl. When asked to tell a story she responded by occasionally bowing her head while looking towards her mother and grandmother who were beside her when the interview took place. She stated that she was very enthusiastic about following the *Pinamou* tradition. In fact, she had waited a long time to enter and feel life into *Posune*, a place that was considered sacred by the Nuauulu tribe.

Participant 3; she was older than the two previous informants. She was 18 years old. She was the second of three children. She grew up in a family that was quite respected in the Nuauulu tribal community. Her father was the chief of the Sounawe clan. Her mother was a *Nuhu Ne Upu e*, the guardian and supervisor of the *Pinamou* procession who was also the guardian of the traditional house of Sounawe. Like the Participant 1, she was also quite open in providing information about the *Pinamou* tradition. She also described a lot about personal hygiene as a

Nuauulu tribal female adolescent who underwent a procession of traditional *Pinamou*. Her personality is friendly, even willing to accompany researchers during the data collection process.

The Pinamou tradition Procession

The *Pinamou* tradition according to the key person of the King of the *Nuauulu* tribe in the administrative State of Nua Nea, is a hereditary procession and has existed since the ancestors of the Nuauulu tribe. This customary procession must be practiced by all Nuauulu tribes. The purpose of this tradition is the belief that menstrual blood is dirty. Thus, young girls who are menstruating are included in *Posune* so that their blood does not pollute traditional lands or villages. The informant *Nuhu Ne Upu e* confirmed that this *Pinamou* tradition had been carried on for a long time. The belief is embedded in menstrual blood as dirty blood. It is also believed that this blood contains magical powers. Therefore, female adolescents who are menstruating are considered easily disturbed by evil spirits so they must be confined to *Posune*. Ideally, the *Pinamou* tradition will be held for 3 months depending on the choice of time and the family's ability to hold this ceremony. Usually, the expenditure of adolescents from *Posune*, awaits the harvest of the family. Due to families who hold *Pinamou* processions must feed the people in the same village. However, currently, the implementation of the *Pinamou* tradition only lasts 2 weeks. This change was agreed upon because many Nuauulu tribal girls had received education (stated by one of the residents of the Nuauulu tribe).

The meanings, prohibition, and things required in the Pinamou Tradition

There are several meanings behind the *Pinamou* procession namely; (1) to protect young girls from evil spirits, (2) indicates the adolescents have entered the adult phase, (3) so that young girls more respect for nature, (4) to make adolescent independent, (5) practice patience and restraint, and (6) prepare adolescents to the marriage (expressed by; King of the State Nua Nea, family, and *Nuhu Ne Upu e*).

Some restrictions or prohibitions that must be obeyed by young girls during the *Pinamou* procession include; the prohibition of bathing, the prohibition of speaking out loud, should not use jewelry, prohibited from using modern technology (for example; mobile phones, stoves, pots, plates, glasses and etc.), the prohibition of leaving *Posune* without permission from *Nuhu Ne Upu e*, and should not meet men. Meanwhile, some things that are required such as; the whole body must be covered with charcoal (so as not to be seen by evil spirits), using only a special cloth that covers up to the chest (may not wear full clothing), only using *damang* as lighting (a type of torch in the form of traditional lights of local residents), eating utensils used only made from bamboo, using firewood for cooking, the food eaten is *kasbi* (boiled cassava), and *papeda* (sago doused with hot water).

Activities of female adolescents during exile in the Posune

Routine activities

Posune is a small hut that measures 4 square meters. Routine activities carried out by young women in *Posune* such as; cooking, eating, washing dishes, and sleeping. They only come out of *Posune* if they want to defecate. This activity is carried out in the forest and tries not to be seen by men. As long as the female adolescents are not bathing in the *Posune*, the entire body of the teenager is covered with charcoal except for the palm of the hand. When speaking they only whisper. Men are prohibited from approaching *Posune*. All the needs of

adolescents during the confinement period are assisted by *Nuhu Ne Upu e*, the mother, and sister of the teenager. In *Posune* there is only one bamboo mat as a base for sleeping on the ground floor (information sources: young women and *Nuhu Ne Upu e*).

Personal Hygiene

The young girls who inhabit *Posune* during the customary procession of *Pinamou* are those who are menstruating. They claim to only change pads 2 to 3 times a day depending on the amount of menstrual blood. The pads are cleaned used water only. The pads used are traditional pads made of cloth that are used repeatedly. For 14 days in *Posune* they were not allowed to bathe. The whole body is coated with charcoal. The charcoal material is made from a type of cacao wood that is burned and then mashed and mixed with the juice of cotton leaf water. The charcoal which is distributed also functions as a body scrub to clean the dirt on the body and eliminate body odor (acknowledgment of female adolescent participants and *Nuhu Ne Upu e*).

4. DISCUSSION

As the results of the information investigation in this study, it can be said that the cultural themes that emerge cover the background of the implementation of the *Pinamou* tradition, namely beliefs, myths, and obedience.

One subcultural theme that appears in table 2 is respect for ancestral traditions. Culture is something that is learned, transmitted, and passed down from generation to generation. Culture is inherited through human action in the form of language interaction and communication. A strong culture can inherit traditions. Tradition is a pattern of behavior or belief that has become part of a culture that has long been known to be a tradition and belief that has been passed down for generations (10,11). Cultural knowledge can trigger action; in this case, the actions patterned by Triandi's (1971) are called habits. Activities in the *Pinamou* procession carried out by female adolescents are hereditary habits that are institutionalized so that they are labeled as a tradition (12).

There are findings about menstruating women in remote villages of the Himalayas still practice segregation due to the belief that menstrual blood is impure. There is a belief in this region that circulates that men will get ill if they stay with bleeding women. This causes great stress to an adolescent girl not only because she has to stay away from her family, but also because she is terrified of causing harm to ones she loves (13). In a different place, girls aged 16–19 years in Pakistan sensitive to the gendered and deeply embedded local socio-cultural values and beliefs around menstrual hygiene management (14).

Table 2. The themes and sub-themes in *Pinamou* tradition

| Cultural Themes | Sub-themes |
|-----------------|--|
| Beliefs | Respecting ancestral traditions Perception of menstrual blood Protect the village from bad luck/disaster |

| | |
|-----------|---|
| | Kinship and togetherness |
| Myths | Belief in mysticism Belief in the magical power Fear of disturbing evil spirits |
| Obedience | Adhere to customary processions |

Cultural themes derived from meanings and prohibitions in the *Pinamou* tradition include: generation protection, obedience, and respect for nature. The sub-theme description can be seen in table 3.

An important cultural theme found in table 3 is that the *Pinamou* tradition teaches the cultural actors involved to respect nature. Strengthening this argument is found in Lucas (2011) which describes that the Nuulu Bonara tribe community still adheres to their customs, especially the rituals of maturity and self-cleansing (15). They believe that these ceremonies are a whole relationship between humans and humans, humans and nature, humans and creators, aiming for prosperity and survival of their lives to better times.

Table 3. The themes and sub-themes regarding the meaning and prohibition in *Pinamou* traditions

| Cultural themes | Sub-themes |
|-----------------------|---|
| Generation Protection | Protecting young girls into the adult phase Preparation toward marriage Restricted area for men |
| Obedience | Stay away from all restrictions Comply with all compulsion |
| Respect for nature | Use of traditional materials and equipment Stay away from modern life |

Cultural themes derived from the activities and personal hygiene of young girls during the isolation period in *Posune* are; obedience, independence, and simplicity. There are several sub-themes identified on this theme, which can be seen in the table 4.

Table 4. The themes and sub-themes regarding activities and personal hygiene of female adolescents during *Pinamou* ritual

| Cultural themes | Sub-themes |
|-----------------|---|
| Obedience | Stay away from all restrictions Comply with all compulsion |
| Independence | Doing things independently Meet their own needs Protect oneself from the opposite sex |
| Simplicity | Sleeping on a bamboo mat Only eat boiled yams and sago |

As the description in tables 2, 3, and 4, it appears that the cultural theme that often emerges is obedience. Obedience in undergoing the *Pinamou* procession in *Posune* is not without reason.

The main things that triggered this obedience were fears of sanctions and respect for ancestral traditions. Activities undertaken in the procession are not without intent or purpose. Table 5 show the activities and objectives of the intended activity.

Table 5. Procession activities and purposes

| Activities in tradition | Aims/purposes |
|--|---|
| Keeping menstruating young girls into <i>Posune</i> | So that menstrual blood does not pollute the village |
| Covering the entire body of young girls with charcoal | In order not to be seen by evil spirits so that they are not disturbed Eliminating body odor due to not bathing during the process of <i>Pinanou</i> |
| Restriction on bathing | In order not to pollute the villagers' water source |
| Prohibition of using modern equipment | To better appreciate nature |
| Sleeping on bamboo mats | To learn to live simply |
| Using traditional pads made of cloth and worn repeatedly | To avoid using disposable sanitary pads that are disposed randomly and can be carried by pets |

During their stay in the *Posune*, adolescents who are menstruating use traditional cloth pads and are used repeatedly. Even though the pads are replaced 2-3 times a day, the treatment of the repeated use pads is quite alarming. Sanitary pads are only cleaned with water and dried in a place not exposed to sunlight. Some of the girls from rural Maharashtra in India were using sanitary pads, while most girls still use old cloths. Financial concerns and difficulty in obtaining sanitary pads were major obstacles for their use (16). More than three-fourths young girls in rural and urban areas of Ajmer district of Rajasthan reported using old cloth during menstruation, and a large proportion of them were reusing the same during subsequent periods. These findings strengthen the need to bring them out of traditional beliefs, misunderstanding and limitations, and encourage safe and hygienic practices (17). Menstruation is covered in secrecy and silence, coupled with lack of access to sanitary towels secondary school-aged young women in Oyugis, Kenya (18). Use of sanitary pads may be increasing, however not among girls from rural and poor families in Mansour Egypt. Other aspects of personal hygiene were generally found to be poor, such as not changing pads regularly or at night, and not bathing during menstruation (19).

There are a number of unhygienic practices and misconceptions regarding menstruation that prevail among female adolescents of urban Karachi, Pakistan, particularly in regards to menstrual hygiene. Nearly 50% of the participants reported that they did not take baths during menstruation. Factors such as; using unhygienic material, using washcloths, and not drying under sun were found to be significant in among those going and not going to schools. This study concludes that there are unhygienic practices and misconceptions among girls requiring action by health care professionals (20).

Study on young women in Delhi India stated hygienic menstrual behavior is only possible if young girls are empowered with easy access to knowledge and resources to reinforce their

capacity to manage menstruation effectively and improve their health. Given traditional resistances, young girls alone cannot bring about change in the practices and beliefs regulated by culture (21). Good knowledge of personal hygiene during menstruation is closely related to the act of cleaning menstruation. Findings in Tanzania provide that knowledge and actions regarding menstrual hygiene are linearly related (22). In addition, other findings in Aceh and Bulukumba Indonesia found that there was a significant relationship between the knowledge and behavior of young women regarding personal hygiene during menstruation (23),(24). Likewise, the study for the teenagers in high school in Northwest Ethiopia found that the practice of self-cleaning during menstruation young girls is still low (25). With different methods in this study, through passive observation, it appears that aspects of personal hygiene are not the main concern of young women during the *Pinamou* ritual in the *Posune*. Researchers noticed that female adolescents stayed in 4 square meters of *Posune*. adolescents did not bathe, did not change their clothes for days so the cloth hardened due to dry menstrual blood.

Menstruation practices are still shrouded by taboos and socio-cultural restrictions that leave adolescent girls which sometimes result into adverse health consequences (26). During the traditional *Pinamou* ritual in the *Posune* hut, there are many prohibitions or taboo things that should not be done by young girls. The prohibition includes; no bathing, no loud talking, no jewelry, no modern items, no leaving *Posune* without permission from *Nuhu Ne Upu e*, and should not meet men. Similar conditions are experienced by young women in the Pindar Valley in remote villages of the Himalayas Nepal. Since they are seen as ritually impure, they are not allowed to show their face to men in the family. As one of the girls said, "For nine days my father didn't even see me". Some of the women interviewed mention seclusion in a cave in the forest or a hut in the fields. In such cases, there is bound to be fear of attacks by wild animals, snake bites, sexual abuse and assault at night (13).

There is evidence of a combination of lack of information, cultural taboos and experiences of poverty and menstrual hygiene practices among young women in the Mongu District, Western Province of Zambia. The girls suffer from poor menstrual hygiene, originating from lack of knowledge, culture and tradition, and socio-economic and environmental constraints, leading to inconveniences, humiliation and stress (27). Menstruation is associated with taboos and restrictions on work, sex, food and bathing, however the taboos observed by most of the women in urban slum India were avoidance of sex and not participating in religious practices; the taboo on not going into the kitchen, which had been observed in rural joint households, was not being observed after migration from rural areas due to lack of social support mechanisms (28).

Most world religions view menstruation, with varying degrees of severity, as a major problem, a sign of impurity and uncleanness, and therefore menstruating women are isolated, prohibited from polluting the holy places, and shunned. Unfortunately, these diverse mythological, cultural, and religious misinterpretations of the menstrual process persist to the present time, reflected in a wide and usually negative range of social attitudes toward menstruation. Considering the increasingly globalized nature of current clinical practice, it is important that health care providers are cognizant of extant cultural and social views and attitudes regarding the menstrual function. A bio cultural approach to managing menstrual

disorders is recommended with the ultimate goal of providing women with culturally sensitive and medically appropriate treatments (29).

Young girls in the Pindar Valley Himalayas are not allowed to interact with others. Menstruating women continue to defecate in the open because they are not allowed to use sanitation facilities used by others. Menstrual taboos have an impact on the mobility, health, education and self-esteem of women and adolescent girls. Cow dung and urine are considered purifying and every month when a menstruating woman enters the cattle shed, she is purified with a sprinkling of cow urine. Menstruating women are also forbidden to use the toilets and have to go to the stream to defecate, wash and bathe. Clothes are handed to them separately as they cannot enter the house. Food is served to them in separate dishes reserved for menstruating women. They are not allowed to drink milk (13).

Prohibitions, restrictions, taboo, myths, unclean practices during menstruation are associated with many aspects of trust that are culturally believed by young girls. Perceptions about what may, may not, good or bad be done are covered by the socio-cultural environment that accompanies their life cycle. A phenomenological approach showed that menstrual attitudes among Taiwanese adolescents were comprised in 4 dimensions: self-perception, information, and cultural practices with regard to menarche; physiological symptoms and psychological reactions during menstruation; coping mechanisms during menarche and menstruation; and methods for coping and cultural practices for menstruation (30).

There are many parties and resources that can be accessed by young women to improve their beliefs and perceptions. Mass media were the main source of information about menstrual hygiene, followed by mothers, for young girls in Mansoura (19). Mothers, sisters and friends were found to be the major source of information for rural adolescent girls in Maharashtra, India. Much of this information imparted to a young girl is in the form of restrictions on her movements and behavior (16). Information about aspects of cultural beliefs that surround the behavior of young women during menstruation can help provider develop a culturally-specific intervention to promote self-care among adolescent girls. In China, the findings should help providers to a better understanding of the girls' self-care, and also contribute to the development of a culturally specific educational intervention to promote self-care and thus improve quality of life among Chinese adolescent girls (31). The cultures in which girls living in rural and urban areas of Mexico are brought up have an impact on their expectations. Urban girls are more exposed to media which present a picture of menses as a debilitating event, while rural girls link menses with health because it is associated with the ability to have children (32).

5. CONCLUSION

The beliefs adopted by young girls in undergoing a procession of traditional *Pinamou* are: obedience, fear of violation, resignation, respect for tradition and belief in results. These beliefs lead them to follow the whole process, although some are uncomfortable with various restrictions while in exile huts. Personal hygiene is not a priority for young women during the *Pinamou* ritual, because the fear of violation more dominantly influences their behavior. The need for a cultural communication approach to wisely shift customary processions that negatively impact the health of young girls through involving traditional stakeholders, community leaders, and the local government.

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declaration of interest statement

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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What does this research add to existing knowledge?

- This study provides additional insight that until now there are still certain ethnic isolation practices among adolescent girls who experience menstruation.
- The research findings reveal cultural-based beliefs that contribute to practices which is not support health among young girls who experience menstrual exile in certain tribes.

What are the implications of this new knowledge for?

- The results of this study could have implications for designing health literacy interventions to shift inappropriate cultural beliefs in the treatment of menstrual periods among isolated young girls.
- understanding the beliefs of young girls in undergoing customary rituals of exile during menstruation, provides an opportunity for local providers to embrace them in health education programs that still consider their cultural values.

How could the findings be used to influence policy or practice or research?

- By involving community leaders, providers and local government, it is possible to negotiate efforts to wisely shift customary activities that have a negative impact on the health of young tribal girls.
- Through the right communication strategy, it will be able to bring young women out of the confines of customary which makes them powerless, of course the communication needed is communication through a cultural approach that is easily understood and accepted by traditional leaders, parents and local residents.
- Through these findings, further research can design intervention studies aimed for capacity building of young girls so that in the future they will have a bargaining position to be able to make their own decisions about appropriate health care for themselves.

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